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Walton Look Lai

anthuriumcaribjournal@gmail.com

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Images of the Chinese in West Indian History¹

The Chinese who entered the British West Indies² in the middle and late nineteenth century formed a marginal but distinct part of the global dispersal of southern Chinese characteristic of the period. Next to the United States, on the one hand, and Cuba and Peru, on the other, they formed the third largest regional grouping of Chinese arrivals to the Western Hemisphere in mid-century. About 15,000 arrived in Guiana, with just under 3,000 going to Trinidad and Jamaica, to work as indentured laborers in the sugar industry. In the last decade of the century, these immigrants were augmented by free voluntary small trader and family elements, many of whom were simultaneously migrating to old and new Latin American destinations during a period of Chinese exclusion from the United States (post-1882). About 7,000 found their way into the region between the 1890s and 1940s, with most of the new arrivals going to Jamaica and Trinidad, unlike the first period, when most went to Guiana.

While the pattern of their entry into these new societies represented a microcosmic version of the story of the broad Chinese Diaspora in the nineteenth century, there were a number of distinctive traits attaching to this regional experience which bears noting. As an indenture experiment, it was relatively mild, and there was a surprisingly large level of voluntary and even family migration, even within the framework of indentureship. This was largely due to the difference between the British and Spanish methods of recruiting laborers at the China end. The watchdog activities of abolitionist lobbies in Britain, which led to the distinctive indenture system in British India, undoubtedly played a role in British efforts to recruit Chinese labor for similar destinations within the British Empire generally. The prominent role played by Christian missionary elements in the China recruitment process also contributed to the relative mildness of the labor experiment.

The kinds of societies to which the Chinese migrants had to adjust were also more similar to the islands of the Western Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Reunion) than to their hemispheric counterparts. This would include not just the sugar plantation environment (with its prior history of slavery), but the specific nature of the new society's multiculturalism, being made up mainly of white minority elites, Black or Colored ex-slaves, immigrants from South Asia, and the political and economic framework of European colonialism. Other similarities would include the relative marginality of the Chinese contribution to the post-slavery economic revival, due to their small numbers, and their swift ascent out of the plantation environment to visible middleman minority status based on mercantile activity, a trend augmented by the large numbers of the later voluntary migration.

The Chinese were never central to the consciousness of the evolving colonial society. Never more than one percent of the population, they existed on the periphery of economic life and colonial consciousness for most of the early period. Hence, collective societal impressions of

their distinct presence in the West Indies would always tend to be circumscribed by this framework. Nevertheless, a study of some of these societal impressions as they evolved over time may help us to gain some insight into the special conditions of marginality applicable to their experience in the West Indies, as well as into the kind of multicultural environment being nurtured in a unique corner of the British Empire.

Who observed the Chinese in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and who took the time to record their observations, in whatever form? More important, how have these images altered over time, as the Chinese themselves evolved from agricultural workers to small and large scale traders, to office workers and professionals by the early twentieth century, and as the larger society itself progressed from a state of colonial dependency to national self-determination? We have a twofold task of first distinguishing between the different social players, all of whom had their own special ways of seeing, then distinguishing between different phases in the evolution of the society, in order to see how each phase often generated both changed perceptions, as well as new observers.

During the nineteenth-century indenture period we had different elements of the ruling colonial elite engaged in assessing the Chinese as a potential and actual settler group in the society. The ruling elite was essentially made up of British colonial officials, based in the East or in the West Indies. They were made up also of the White Creole planters in the society, former slave masters, who employed the newcomers. Next to these were traveling or resident British or European writers or missionaries who took the time to record their observations on the Chinese and other peoples in the society. Beside the ruling elite, there was the view coming from fellow laborers in the society, mainly the Blacks but also other immigrants entering the society at the same time, like the Indians. Of course, there was the occasional view coming from the Chinese themselves.

Secondly, as the Chinese progressed after the 1880s into the lower middle class, and eventually, partially into the upper middle class, and as the society found itself caught up after World War I in the growth of an anti-colonial nationalist struggle to remove the British, new nationalist voices emerged onto the scene. They came from the ranks of labor, but often from the ranks of the increasingly vocal educated Black middle classes.³ The emerging nationalist elite would bring its own special ways of seeing the possibilities and pitfalls of the multicultural West Indies. There is also a third phase, the post-colonial phase, which sees the withdrawal of the British and the coming to power of the new Black nationalist political elite in what is still a very racially stratified and unequal society. The Chinese meanwhile have been evolving still further into higher and more complex levels of economic and social influence, and generating totally new images about their place in the larger society. This corresponds with the environment of the late 1960s and after.

Colonial Elites

Colonial Officials can be divided into those who operated in China and those who functioned in the West Indies. Together they were concerned with putting into effect a colonial emigration policy and were asked to present their views on the prospects as well as the actual experiment of the 1860s. Consular personnel and immigration officers gave a view of the Chinese as an enterprising, hardworking element who would add to the strength of post-emancipation West Indian society. The earliest images are from reports of Eastern officials and experts on Chinese emigration to Southeast Asia giving their views on the prospects for a West Indies-bound migration. Here are some of the judgments of those contemplating the first 1806 emigration to Trinidad:

The Chinese are described as an “industrious, sober, and orderly people.”

The great ambition of a Chinese is to obtain a piece of ground no matter how barren, his labour and ingenuity soon making it wear the face of plenty. The indefatigable industry and habits of frugality of the Chinese, with their being the most fitted for the cultivation of the soil, seems to point out that of all people in the world they are the best calculated to transform the woody wastes and drowned parts of Trinidad into rich, fertile and productive land.⁴

Not all of this interest in Chinese labor was exclusively economic in motivation. Some even saw the Chinese as a potential buffer class between the Whites and the Blacks, and voiced such sentiments directly, with an eye to the Haitian revolution then very much in progress in the northern Caribbean:

The events which have recently happened at St. Domingo necessarily awakes all those apprehensions which the establishment of a Negro government in that island gave rise to some years ago, and render it indispensable that every practicable measure of precaution should be adopted to guard the British possessions in the West Indies as well against any future indisposition of a power so constituted as against the danger of a spirit of insurrection being excited amongst the Negroes in our colonies.

It is conceived that no measure would so effectually tend to provide a security against this danger, as that of introducing a free race of cultivators into our islands, who, from habits and feelings would be kept distinct from the Negroes, and who from interest would be inseparably attached to the European proprietors.⁵

Another motivation expressed in 1806 was the desire to see Trinidad become a trade link between the East and South American trade, and Chinese settlement on the island was seen as a step in this direction:

There cannot be a doubt but that the [British East] India Company might, by a well regulated intercourse of trade from India and China, to Trinidad, render that island a depot for this commerce. That we might thereby be enabled to supply the Continent of South America with the manufactures and productions of India and China, instead of leaving that source of wealth in the hands of the Americans.⁶

In any event, the 1806 experiment was a failure; most of the 192 Chinese arriving on the solitary vessel, the *Fortitude*, decided to return to China after a few years. It was not until the 1850s that British interest was again revived, this time in an atmosphere of worldwide Chinese migration, since this was the decade when Cantonese were emigrating in large numbers to Latin America, North America, and Australia. Similar kinds of judgments about the good potential of the Chinese as settlers for the West Indies were expressed by these colonial officials:

The climate [in Guangdong], at least at this time of the year, is very similar to that of the West Indies, and I think they would enjoy health and strength in their new location. The extensive cultivation of rice and sugar in the lowlands of the two provinces Canton and Fukien would seem to qualify them for a residence in Trinidad and Demerara,⁷ and I believe they will be found hardy and industrious.⁸

Some of their comments addressed the differences between a West Indian emigration scheme and the Cuban version:

The experience of this season [1853] has fully confirmed my former views as to the disadvantage, if not danger, of leaving the emigration from China in private hands, without sufficient responsibility, and paid by bounty or by a commission on each emigrant shipped. The system will lead to abuses, and bring discredit on the country. It must be conducted by a paid officer, responsible to Government, and to a certain extent under the orders and supervision of the local Government. The headquarters of the emigration office should be at Hong Kong, but the agent should have authority to procure emigrants at other places, and to send vessels there, if necessary. There will be a good deal of expense in organising an office, and proper establishment, at the commencement, but everything must be done to inspire confidence among the Chinese, so that they may come from the country to seek for emigration of their own accord, and not at the instigation of brokers, who may probably deceive them by means which our ignorance of the mainland, and our very imperfect knowledge of their habits and language, render it impossible to discover until it be too late to apply the necessary remedy ...

In order to disabuse the public mind of the strong feeling that now prevails adverse to all emigration, I have had ... notices and instructions printed ... (T)heir tenor will show the anxiety of Government that this new emigration should be

openly and fairly conducted, and in a manner likely to be conducive to the general benefit of all parties interested in its welfare.⁹

At the close of the 1854 season, the emigration officer concluded as follows:

... our acts and intentions were as different to those of the Chinese crimps as day to night ... Instead of collecting people by force or fraud, I ... employed the press to sow the good seed over the length and breadth of Quantung, and to make known to those who were in poverty that the British Government offered them a new home where comparative affluence was the reward of honest labour.

Instead of the Swatow dens of filth and iniquity where the sustenance barely sufficed to support life, and where husbands and children torn from their families were caged till their purchasers called for compulsory removal to the ships, I offered the best and amplest food at houses to and from which there was FREE ingress and egress, where every information was available from maps, pamphlets and notices, and from whence the labourers were at perfect liberty to return to their old homes, or to seek the new one offered to them. Instead of forcing the emigrants to indent themselves to worse even than slavery by renunciation of the advantages of free British citizens, the current wages of the colonies, house and garden rent free, correspondence free of cost with relatives left behind, and the punctual payment at Hong Kong or Canton monthly from the day of embarkation, of such portion of the wages to be earned as the emigrants desired to appropriate in China.

Lastly, instead of placing my ships where oppression could be practised with impunity, I selected Hong Kong and Canton for their anchorage, and facilitated their inspection, by the Chinese authorities and people as much as possible.¹⁰

There was some discussion about whether the Chinese could adjust easily to a different societal and racial environment like the West Indies. Two different kinds of judgments were expressed. One official thought that:

In all the islands and countries where the Chinese have hitherto settled as emigrants, they have found branches of the Malay family and races cognate to their own; this would not be the case in the West Indies, and I have very great doubts whether they would form connexions of a permanent character with the Negro women, so as to become contented and resident colonists. If this difficulty can be got over, I have no doubt as to the successful result of Chinese emigration on the future destinies of the West Indian colonies.¹¹

Another thought the opposite:

I have no doubt that the Chinese will readily amalgamate with the females they find in the country they are going to. They have no feelings of caste to restrain them in this direction, as the Hindoo coolies have. The natives of India in the Straits never intermarry with the Malays, whereas in three or four generations the Malay-Chinese females have become so numerous as to afford a sufficient supply for the Chinese population.¹²

Comments on the Chinese performance as laborers after their arrival in the West Indies varied widely among the elites, whether colonial officials or Creole planters. The migrants were a diverse group of people, and the different shipments brought all kinds of people to the islands. Many were displaced peasants (often families) seeking alternative work outside of China, many were from the unstable sectors of the urban population. A number of them were political refugees from the Taiping Rebellion. It is noticeable that there were hardly any of the entrapped debtor elements common to the Cuban and Peruvian migrations, although cases of recruitment based on false promises and false information often came to light. Official comments on the new Chinese arrivals ranged from widespread praise and enthusiasm to outright condemnation and disgust.

The first arrivals of 1853 generated much enthusiasm about their future prospects as sugar workers in Trinidad and Guiana:

The Chinese on this estate are some of my best labourers; for strength and endurance they are equal to the Africans. Last month I had an average of 90 of these fine labourers at work every day, performing the following work, viz: cutting canes, forking cane fields, supplying canes, hauling cane trash off the fields recently cut, working on the copper wall as boilermen, working in the distillery, loading cane punts, carrying megass, etc. Without our Chinese boys I do not know how we would manage for megass carriers, as there is not a single creole working with them.¹³

An official report concluded that:

The employers found them somewhat expensive at first, and difficult to manage, but augured well of their future industry. During the first few months, however, various misunderstandings took place on the subject of work and wages, and these, for want of competent interpreters, took long to settle, and in some cases were only settled by removing the people.

But this was exceptional; the majority of employers, though for some time they complained of the Chinese being difficult to manage, gradually came to look upon them as a valuable class of labourers, and those who had succeeded with them from the first preferred them to all others ...

Many of them hold situations of high trust and responsibility upon estates, and the numbers who are independent, and conversant with the French and English languages, would inspire their newly-arrived countrymen with hope, and dissipate that lowness of spirits, which, in their own case, coupled with abuse of opium, left so many unresisting victims to the climatic remittent fever.

... of 665 Chinese now remaining from the original allotments, 310 had remained on the estates to which they were originally attached, while 255 had purchased their remaining periods of industrial residence, and about 100 were unattached, from reasons given in the Annual Report for 1857.

The Canton coast is a sugar-growing country, and its inhabitants have been officially reported, on the best authority, by Sir Frederic Rogers, in his letter of 7 January 1853, to be strong, thrifty, intelligent and industrious, and of all Chinamen the best adapted for labour in the West Indies. The wages near Canton are \$2 per month with rice, and the people would certainly be content to emigrate for \$5 and rice, or \$7 without allowances ...¹⁴

At the end of the 1860s, after the arrival of most of the immigrants, another official report in 1871 compared the Chinese with their fellow workers as follows:

The Chinese labourer possesses greater intelligence than either the Indian or the Negro, and is much quicker at learning to manage machinery than either of them. He is also very careful and neat in his work in the field or buildings; is much more independent than the Coolie, and not so easily led away by discontented persons; rarely making a frivolous complaint. ... Possessing a keen sense of justice where his own rights are concerned, he is very capable of strong resentment at anything that appears to him unjust.

The Chinese, as far as we are aware, have never combined with the Indians in disturbances on estates; but, on the other hand, have occasionally taken the side of the employer in opposing them.

They have not the same objection to living with females of a different race from themselves that the Indians have. This may be owing in some degree to the small proportion of women who have emigrated from China, but the principal reason for it is that the Chinese have not the difficulty of caste to get over that the Indian has, and are more cosmopolitan in their habits.¹⁵

Many of the complaints centered on the immigrants' rebelliousness and runaway activity (in Belize they even ran away and lived among the native Indians), propensity to evade work, engage in praedial larceny, or to sponge off their fellow workers (whether of their own race or others). There were also complaints about excessive gambling and opium addiction:

Opium smoking is carried on by some to great excess, and it is not uncommon to see many of them quite emaciated, and almost unfit for work, from excessive use of this drug.

It appears, unhappily, that opium smoking is not altogether confined to the Chinese; a few Indians have picked up this habit from them.¹⁶

They often fought amongst themselves, on board the ships as well as on the plantations, if they came from different regions or ethnic groups e.g. Fukienese and Cantonese, or Hakka and Punti. One voyage in 1853 to Guiana threatened to break out into a mutiny, and the passengers were later described as,

... quite savage, many of them never having seen a European before coming to Amoy to go away, and having as little idea of right and wrong as the wandering savages of the wildernesses of America. They are fierce, cunning, ill-natured, revengeful, and hypocritical; and we have far more to do to keep anything like order among them than if they were so many monkeys.¹⁷

Preconceived planter prejudices abounded. One group, who landed in Antigua in 1882, was described on the first day as “the most miserable looking batch of humans that could ever be seen.” One week later the same planter-journalist wrote that, “they are not such a miserable batch as we had mentioned, but the majority are fine looking strong men.” However, he was still of the view that their introduction was a waste of money.¹⁸

While the planters and officials were passing judgments on their worth as laborers, many missionaries and independent critics of the indenture system commented on the exploitation of both the Chinese and the Indians. Chief Justice Beaumont, a severe critic of the indenture system, spoke out against the violence of the system, and gave several accounts of individual Chinese who suffered under it:

No doubt, to some extent, the immigrants suffer in this way in common with the Negro and other Coloured labourers, and indeed as to mere acts of contumely they, perhaps, do not suffer to the same extent as these; but as to more serious and systematic outrages of this nature they are far more exposed to them, are practically far less protected against them, and in fact suffer far more from them. The most common forms which they take are forcible intrusions into and extrusions from their houses, imprisonment without warrant upon the estates or at the adjoining station-houses, and assaults by managers, overseers, drivers and other persons in authority. ...

The details of the case [of Low-a-Si] are too shocking and harrowing to bear unnecessary repetition ... It appears by the [coroner's inquisition] proceedings that this poor Chinaman was, for no other reason than that he protested that he

was too sick to work, brutally beaten and kicked to death by some of the staff of overseers and drivers of a “first-class estate”, in the face of the whole staff of the estate’s buildings, a multitude of hands at work there, including many of his own countrymen. This barbarous murder was effected by a series of assaults thus publicly committed, and which were continued during a space of more than an hour, the actors coming and going, and the poor wretch piteously wailing, bleeding, vomiting, and yet feebly attempting the work which he pleaded in vain with his dying breath that he was too sick to do.¹⁹

The *Royal Gazette* in Guiana was equally graphic with individual case studies of migrants under pressure:

Cho-a-King was flogged for stealing plantains at Canal No.1. He pleaded guilty but was so severely beaten. On the Chinaman being examined he was found to be covered with bruises from neck to foot, and was so stiff from the punishment he had received, that he could hardly walk. Considering the severe beating the man had already received the Magistrate felt justified in discharging him.²⁰

It has been reported that two nights ago a Chinaman who was stealing plantains at the Sisters’ Estate near Plantation Wales was shot dead. Occurrences of this kind are rare nowadays compared to what they were a couple of years ago, and this we ascribe to the wholesome dread which most people entertain for the cat-o’-nine tails.²¹

Many immigrants complained of having been deceived by recruiters about the nature of the work they were expected to perform in the new environment:

We fear that, in the anxiety to procure a sufficient number of emigrants from China, the emissaries of our Agent have misled the people and that numbers of tradesmen and others have been induced to leave the country under the impression that they would be allowed to follow their own occupations, or else that the prospect of remuneration has been represented in colours far too flattering.²²

One missionary in Trinidad told the gruesome tale of a Chinese tailor who had been tricked into indenturing himself with a promise that he could practice his profession in the new environment, and who was brutally forced to work on the sugar plantations after arrival, whereupon he shot himself in the head before his startled superiors:

The evening of the third day after work he put on his best clothes and in the presence of the people of the estate before they had the time to stop him he blew his brains out. This act made the one who told me about it say that the English government is essentially false. Its politics are crooked.²³

Post-Indenture Adjustment

Many of the missionaries commented on the Chinese after the period of indenture was over, in the 1870s and 1880s. Sometimes the comments were about their peculiar cultural appearance or habits, sometimes about their swift acquisition of wealth, often about their assimilation into the society via Christianity or intermarriage. Commentaries about their vices like gambling or opium usage continued.

The *Royal Gazette* carried descriptions of their celebration of the Chinese New Year in Guiana in 1880:

The Chinese inhabitants of the city have been celebrating their New Year last week, after the fashion of their countrymen at home. For a succession of nights they marched through the principal streets in procession, dressed in costume, bearing aloft immense bright coloured paper lanterns of various clever devices, but mostly fish-shaped, and beating gongs and tom-toms. They were followed by a large crowd of the unwashed, who we have no doubt would gladly have had some horseplay at the expense of the celestials, if a number of policemen, wisely furnished by the Brick dam authorities, had not accompanied the procession to maintain order. In the Charlestown district of the city, where the Chinese most do congregate, the New Year festivities were held with much feasting, fuddling and gambling, but though the people were very hilarious and very noisy there was no single instance of conduct requiring the interference of the police.

In Trinidad in the 1890s, the Reverend Cothonay observed:

If there is under the sun a clever and industrious people ... who enrich themselves where others go bankrupt, that people are the Chinese. We have in Trinidad a good number of Chinese, and I assure you that their character, dress and customs contribute not a little to the stamp of originality of our population. All come here penniless, naturally, since these bands of emigrants are the rabble of Canton and other villages in the Chinese Empire. Today, some are extremely rich merchants, and the others at least comfortable in their roles as small shopkeepers or big traders. In the heart of the smallest village, if you find a shop, be sure it is owned by a Chinese. The creoles, and especially the blacks, are almost incapable of withstanding the competition.

There are no Chinese labourers here at all. Their preference is for trade.²⁴

On race relations, commentaries appeared to be contradictory, with some observers noting the levels of intermarriage with the locals, others noting the exact opposite, and still others noting the high level of unmarried bachelors among the Chinese immigrants. The Reverend Cothonay felt that:

Chinese and coolies intermingle willingly enough, creoles and coolies never. A good number of children are the offspring of Chinese and coolies; even after several generations one can recognise the descendants by their almond-shaped eyes.

The Reverend Bronkhurst wrote that:

between the Black creoles and Chinese there has existed a strong, bitter prejudicial feeling towards each other, and so far as I have been able to ascertain there is no likelihood of a Chinaman ever marrying a Black woman, or a Black man ever marrying a Chinese woman. A similar feeling exists among the East Indian coolies also towards the Black race. Of course I do not refer to the isolated cases of such marriages which have taken place in the Colony, nor do I refer to the illicit intercourse between the Chinese, East Indian immigrants, and Black women: but I speak of the immigrants as a whole.²⁵

Still other observers wrote that:

They freely marry creole women, and are careful in selecting those who are handsome ...²⁶

As Chinese women are scarce, the Chinaman has always a coloured woman as a concubine, and they generally manage to get the best looking girls in the place.²⁷

The *Royal Gazette* in Guiana commented on the “bachelor” nature of the Chinese immigrants:

In respect to immigration generally, the disproportion between the sexes is very great, particularly as regards the Chinese, and ... neither Chinese nor Coolies, except in very rare instances, ever mate with the other races in the Colony. As a necessary consequence the surplus males die out without progeny. (January 26, 1864)

Chinese women, of whom we catch passing glimpses during the period of their arrival in the 1860s, were sometimes viewed in a flattering, but often demeaning, light. Individual vessels in Trinidad sometimes produced hardworking, loyal families; some produced unstable male-female relations, which generated desertion or domestic violence. The *Royal Gazette* told the tale of many who were involved in domestic disputes with their husbands, and subsequently committed or tried to commit suicide or murder in the process. Many had undergone the foot binding process before embarkation to the West Indies.

... little eyes, plump rosy lips, black hair, regular features, void however of beauty - their feet are unnaturally small, or rather truncated; they appear as if the fore-part of the foot had been accidentally cut off, leaving the remainder of the

usual size, and bandaged like the stump of an amputated limb. Their dress is somewhat like that of the men.²⁸

By the 1880s, however, the social mobility evident among the Chinese had transformed their womenfolk as well. The Reverend Kingsley who visited Trinidad in the 1880s noted, with some curiosity, the Westernized Chinese females among his congregation:

[at] the end of the sermon - I became aware, just in front of me, of a row of smartest Paris bonnets, net-lace shawls, brocades and satins, fit for duchesses; and as the center of each blaze of finery ... the unmistakable visage of a Chinese woman. Whether they understood one word; what they thought of it all; whether they were there for any purpose save to see and be seen, were questions to which I tried in vain, after service, to get an answer. All that could be told was, that the richer Chinese take delight in thus bedizening their wives on high days and holidays; not with tawdry cheap finery, but with things really expensive, and worth what they cost, especially the silks and brocades; and then in sending them, whether for fashion or for loyalty's sake, to an English church.²⁹

Comments on the Chinese passion for gambling and opium smoking continued. A Catholic missionary stated in the 1880s:

Every day in Trinidad there are Chinese who ruin themselves by gambling and others to the contrary who recover their wealth. I was asking one day of a small Chinese girl the state of her father, she replied: "Formerly my father had several shops. He gambled and he has lost them. Now he is still gambling, sometimes he wins, other times he loses. When he has lost everything, his friends lend him a few dollars and he reimburses them when he wins." There is the life not only of this Chinaman but of many. They are nearly all merchants. Selling their merchandise at exorbitant prices they get rich quickly. But as the proverb says: "a good thing badly acquired profits the same." They ruin themselves as easily. The passion for gambling is so strong with them that even those who are communicants succumb sometimes to the temptation.³⁰

The *Royal Gazette* commented in 1884:

the dens of infamy in the Charlestown district carried on by the Chinese [which] are increasing in number and promise, before long to furnish material wherewith to mark a dark page in the colony's history. The poor, the starving, and the obscene are always amongst the visitors to these dens of iniquity—both women and men carry the few pence which they can either beg for, borrow, or steal, to be swallowed up by John Chinaman, and the visitors have to depart sadder, but by no means wiser, people. (November 15, 1884)

By the turn of the century, the upward mobility of the Chinese in West Indian society was very marked. The community of the 1910s and 1920s was by then a mixture of older, highly mobile Westernized traders and professionals, and the new immigration of small scale and itinerant mercantile elements. One of the most interesting commentaries comes from the pen of a visiting Chinese journalist, who wrote for the *China Weekly Review* in 1929:

With each succeeding generation, the picture of the land of Confucius grew more blurred, and finally disappeared altogether. First, celestial manners gave way to local customs, then Chinese speech was dropped, and, in many instances, Westernised surnames were substituted for the high-sounding Chinese titles. Chinese by blood, they were as English as Britishers. They knew as much of China as Indians. They had never heard of Li Po. The great arts of the Sung dynasty was unknown to them. Chinese music grated on their ears. Chinese speech was anathema. They were Britishers under yellow skins.

Unlike their fellow countrymen in America who are mostly engaged in the chopsuey and laundry business, the Chinese in the West Indies are engaged in shopkeeping and planting. There are practically no Chinese labourers. Every Chinese aspires to own a shop or a plantation. The stigma that China is a nation of shopkeepers is almost true, if applied to the West Indies, for under the freedom of British rule, the retail trade, especially in the towns and villages of the West Indies, are predominantly a Chinese monopoly. Black, white, mulatto trade with their yellow brother without any trace of racial awareness.

The new generation of Chinese in the West Indies, however, is more ambitious than their forefathers. Brought up in Western schools, they seek freedom from their hemmed-in lives and aspire to callings superior to those of shopkeeping and planting. That this ambition has been largely realised today is found in the fact that the Chinese in the West Indies have found a footing in the professions and higher commerce ...

When China made its attempt to cut itself off from the old monarchical form of government in 1910, a latent patriotism in the hearts of West Indian Chinese came to the surface. They were in sympathy with the movement, and contributed their financial bit to its support.

The period following the Chinese Revolution saw the birth of a number of Chinese clubs in the West Indies. Some were social; others political; and the majority a blend of the two. Speakers on China were popular, and an October Tenth anniversary was made the occasion of great celebration. ...

While the belief is general that the overseas Chinese usually hoard their money to return to China, it is not true of those in the West Indies. Here the Chinese are

contented. As British subjects, they have opportunities to embark in any adventure, enterprise, or project as any other citizen. What savings are made are usually invested in West Indian property. Then, too, the young Chinese are not acquainted with Chinese customs or language, and were they to return to China, they would be as foreign as Americans.³¹

Many people in the host society, however, continued to see the Chinese as an essentially alien and mysterious element. A White Creole writer in Trinidad in the 1920s described them as follows:

As an economic class in Trinidad they are the most powerful section of what can be called here the middle class. They range from clerks, grocers, merchants down to not too large scale financiers. They possess a free masonry of their own which is very powerful. In fact so powerful that with a few exceptions they do not bother to watch their interests in the political field. Like the class of which they form so representative a part they seem to be entirely devoid of public spirit and to be arrogantly individualistic.

As a race, physically they have remained comparatively Chinese, mixing to a very small extent with the other races of the island. But culturally they have lost almost all connection with the country of their origin. In no other part of the world has this happened so finally and so completely. In San Francisco, in New York and even in London the Chinese inhabitants have their native festivals and follow the ways of their people also. Here in Trinidad they ape the religion and manners of the white merchants whom they are emulating in the unscrupulous acquisition of commercial wealth. It is to be wondered if they are aware that those whom they imitate are backed by powerful home governments in their ventures and that while they might tolerate another racial group playing second fiddle in their commercial games they would certainly and seriously resent any threat to their commercial superiority.

In art the loss of their traditional background shows painfully. They who belong to the race that has the finest most delicate art values of all mankind make pretty-pretty water colour sketches and horrible concoctions of modern European painting that are not worthy of a pupil of a correspondence art course. The houses they build are quite the worst among the worst in the Western world. Their only artistic contribution to Trinidad seems to have been in the exquisite features and limbs of their women.³²

The View from Below

Turning now to the view from below, we have to recognize several distinct stages in the relationship between the Chinese and the majority Black society. First, there would be the relationship between the early indentured Chinese and their fellow labourers (1850s-1870s), then there would be the larger societal attitudes towards the Chinese as they steadily evolved from being a part of the rural proletariat to being a small and eventually large merchant class (1880s-1900s). Even later, when these voices became more imbued with the sentiment of anticolonialism and nationalism after the First World War, a further question would be to what extent these larger forces influenced perceptions of the Chinese.

As far as the first period is concerned, the West Indies has produced nothing like the autobiography of the Cuban runaway slave Esteban Montejo, who recorded some very acute observations on the Chinese coolies in Cuba in the mid- and late-nineteenth century. What views we have from the Blacks are views we derive from the colonial documents relating to incidents involving both groups, often three groups of people. These accounts tend to be scant in nature. There are newspaper criticisms from the independent Black Press in 1850 criticizing the whole idea of Chinese immigration, reminding the readers that the 1806 experiment had been a signal failure, and that in Mauritius in the 1840s, it had not proved successful either.³³

There are not a lot of work-related commentaries coming from the Black community during the indenture period. Most of these came from the white officials. There are several accounts of clashes between the Chinese immigrants and Black workers in Guyana in the 1860s. In one early clash with Black villagers arising out of language and communication difficulties, six (6) Chinese were sent to jail, while the Black villagers later promised the authorities that they would try to live on good terms with the Chinese, whom they claimed to consider more “respectable” than the Indian coolies.³⁴ There are accounts of rebellious Chinese laborers killing Black drivers or foremen in plantation-related disputes, as well as accounts of harsh treatment by the latter group towards immigrant laborers. There are also accounts of clashes between Chinese and Indian workers, as well as Chinese siding with one side or the other in Indian-Black clashes.³⁵

There are also many accounts of both groups participating in each other’s recreational pastimes. Blacks are supposed to have learnt gambling games from the Chinese, and even Indians are supposed to have picked up opium smoking from them, while Chinese often participated in the celebration of a few Indian religious processions.

This year the Coolies called in the aid of the Chinese to build their gaudy temples, and these ingenious fellows gave the Coolies better temples than they have ever had before. As on former occasions the black people followed the procession in thousands, and seemed to look on the [Tadja] festival as one designated as much for their spiritual benefit as for that of the Coolies.³⁶

Once the Chinese left the plantations in the 1870s and 1880s, however, and became small peasant gardeners and rural shopkeepers, new images began to appear. Altogether, there are three distinct phases in the society's evolution (and consequent attitudes to all other groups): the late nineteenth century, the nationalist emergence (early twentieth), and the post-colonial period (post-1960s).

In all phases, one constant has been an element of amused and bemused tolerance of a foreign entity, with distinctive physical and cultural traits. This was shared not only by the white elite, but also by the larger society at all levels. Sometimes this judgment would be tinged with affection, often by malice, almost always with a serious ignorance about who the Chinese were as a group. This aspect has remained to this day, and expresses itself in daily life at all levels, often by the educated as well as the uneducated. Ironically, it is often expressed by creolized Chinese themselves in a self-conscious, self-deprecating fashion.

The main preoccupation, however, has been with the economic emergence of the Chinese. There were those who praised their economic advancement as models to emulate, there were those who expressed concern that they were becoming a kind of economic threat. They are seen as vigorous competitors with Black retailers in Jamaica, with Portuguese and Indians in Trinidad and Guiana.

A letter in the *San Fernando Gazette* as early as the 1880s declared:

The Chinese do not raise agricultural products, they are not laborers; but reap the benefits of others' labor, and become prosperous, while the poor people, proprietors and others are gradually getting ruined. The Chinese are to be compared to horse leeches, or to a parasite which settles on a plant not vigorous to throw it off, and which it saps of its strength. They resort to all manners of devices to cheat the people even in the buying, selling, weighing and gambling.³⁷

Emerging into the ranks of the foreign middleman minority, a figure familiar to many Third World societies, the Chinese found the response of the larger society to be ambivalent. Influencing the societal perceptions was the extent to which they were viewed as a group apart, or a group with an inclusive attitude towards Black society. Evidence of racial intermarriage was usually seen as a good sign. Even though in Trinidad and Guiana there is evidence that no more than twenty percent of the original indentureds entered into interracial liaisons, most of them conforming in fact to the stereotype of the bachelor immigrant, nevertheless the perception in the society was one of readiness by many to intermarry into the larger society. At that level, then as well as later, a comparison was always being made with the more racially exclusivist Indian community.³⁸ The presence of a large Indian community, on whom the Blacks always vented most of their racial antipathies, tended to generate a more ambivalent attitude towards the Chinese in Trinidad and Guiana over time, despite the anxieties mentioned above. David Lowenthal has mentioned that in this multicultural atmosphere, the Chinese often appeared in the

role of conciliators, and arbiters between the two groups, rather than as stark middlemen exploiters.³⁹

This is a situation that did not exist in Jamaica, which experienced very little Indian immigration, and probably helped to explain the widespread phobia that developed towards the Chinese in the early twentieth century. During this period there was a very noticeable increase in the Chinese voluntary migration to Jamaica, an island that had not experienced a large Chinese indenture phase. From 481 in 1891, the community leapt to 2,111 in 1911 and to 3,696 in 1921. A vigorous correspondence in the Jamaican press took place in 1912 and 1913 protesting the “Chinese invasion.” In 1918, a year of worker unrest generally in Jamaica (and the rest of the West Indies), this hostility erupted into a major anti-Chinese riot in the parish of St Catherine.⁴⁰ A community meeting resolution best expressed Jamaican popular attitudes:

RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE PAROCHIAL BOARD OF ST ANN AT ITS MEETING ON THURSDAY 4TH OCTOBER 1917.

RESOLVED.

That in the opinion of this Board the time has come (in the absence of Trade Unions etc. in this island) when it is the duty of this government to protect the native shopkeepers as well as the community against the overincreasing number of Chinese shopkeepers throughout the island for the following reasons:

- (1) They are not desired in any enlightened and progressive country.
- (2) Their custom and manner of living along with the skilful manipulation of their goods make it impossible for the natives to compete.
- (3) Directly or indirectly they are the cause of many bankruptcies, vagrants, paupers; and a very large percentage of our best citizens who have left the island for foreign parts have lost their business or jobs on this account.
- (4) Present war conditions demand that something be done to protect the fathers, mothers and relatives of the men who have gone to fight, while the Chinese are left to become rich and enjoy all safety and privileges; not even a special tax levied on these aliens to compensate the men fighting for them.

That the other Parochial Boards of the island be asked to cooperate with a view of putting the matter strongly before the government.⁴¹

Similar cries came from Guiana over the new immigration, but these were tempered by an appreciation of the role of the early Chinese in the colony. The *Daily Chronicle* editorialized in 1923:

... today we would direct the attention of our readers to ... the steady influx of Chinese immigrants to the colony for some while past. Perhaps, at the outset we should say we have no fundamental objection to Chinese colonists. Those already with us have made exemplary citizens. They are the most law-abiding section of the community, without exception; frugal and painstaking in all their undertakings, they provide a worthy example to other colonists; while they have identified themselves with every form of colonial endeavour. But, nevertheless, we suspect that this section of the community, no less than any other, is as anxious as ourselves in their desire to ward off the evil we would today indicate.

Steamer after steamer arriving in the colony brings its quota of Chinese immigrants, small in number it is true, but they come just the same, and were we assured that all these immigrants were of a desirable class we would have nothing to say about the matter; but are they? Jamaica has had rather bitter experiences lately, and it behoves this colony to take steps before it finds itself in that into which Jamaica was plunged. Communities, no less than persons, must benefit from the lessons of their neighbours. In Jamaica the stream commenced in quite the same way as we now see it in British Guiana. First there was a trickle, then it grew to a brook, and persons raised their eyebrows in gentle protests; whereupon a benign government stepped in, and introduced an ordinance drafted, we believe, by no less a person than the Hon. Hector Josephs.

At this sign of government appreciation of the danger ahead, public apprehensions were allayed. Unfortunately, however, the ordinance became a dead letter, gradually the brook became a wider stream, and eventually developed into a flood. When the good people of Jamaica awoke in the tossing deep they realised that their armour and defences, duly provided, had been sadly neglected, and the island was in the grip of an economic situation brought about by the large influx of a most undesirable type of immigrant. Immigrants who were neither agriculturists nor colonists in any sense, but just parasites: gamblers, thieves and cutthroats were everywhere. Some embarked upon trade to the great sorrow of those who gave them credit; others just gambled, and devoted their wits to the exploitation of the unwary, while the growing effect upon the morale of the community was being gradually undermined in another direction altogether, since these men, of an extraordinarily low type themselves, consorted with such women as they could find, possibly equally depraved as their husbands, and produced a type of half caste which is even a greater menace than their fathers.

These are dangers we would warn the community against today. The colony needs agriculturists, not petty traders and laundrymen. However, we do not think it is particularly the province of the government to keep out traders and laundrymen, provided that in admitting men of that type we do not admit

undesirables of the class we have indicated! Already the city is flooded with Chinese laundries, and the homely old washerwoman is being gradually driven out of business ...

[It] would possibly be an advantage if the local government would explore the policy pursued by the United States of America in its latest immigration policy, that only a given percentage of the population of any one race already resident may be admitted as residents in any one year; always, of course, in so far as this colony is concerned, excluding immigrants brought in as agriculturists under any well thought out and approved scheme with due protection for those already in our midst, even of that class.⁴²

In 1924, the Jamaica Chinese Benevolent Society reported to the Chinese ambassador in London of the murders of six immigrants by Jamaicans, and the atmosphere of fear and violence in which they lived.⁴³ Anti-Chinese riots occurred again in Jamaica in 1938, again a year of general labor unrest throughout the British West Indies, and twice after Independence: in 1965, and during the 1970s. These occurrences of anti-Chinese activism by the larger populace in Jamaica can be compared to similar outbreaks against the Chinese in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s, although the end result was not official support for mass expulsion, as happened in Mexico.

Nationalist anti-colonial sentiment during the early and mid-twentieth century definitely influenced perceptions of the Chinese, whenever social observers bothered to comment on their presence (which it has to be stressed they did not always). There were those who were baffled by Chinese “inscrutability,” unsure of where they stood and whose side they were on in the developing anti-colonial struggle against the British dispensation. There were those whose positions were influenced by nationalist idealism about the multiracial and multicultural potentialities of West Indian society and who yearned to see a new kind of society emerge in the region that would be an example to the rest of the world. There were those of more leftist persuasion, from Garvey in the 1920s to Walter Rodney in the 1960s, who sought to locate the Chinese in West Indian society in ideological-universalistic terms, seeing them essentially as honorary whites, and as a conservative and anti-nationalistic petit-bourgeoisie.

The new West Indian novelists, whenever they did mention the Chinese at all, either saw them as valuable additions to the multicultural mosaic of the Caribbean, like George Lamming in *Of Age and Innocence*, or Wilson Harris in *The Whole Armour*, or saw them as part of a complex and problematic multiculturalism with more problems than solutions, like Edgar Mittelholtzer's *Morning at the Office*. Lamming's *Of Age and Innocence* is a fictional account of a nationalist leader and movement in a fictional Caribbean island, San Cristobal. In a visionary outburst, his main character declares:

Here Africa and India shake hands with China, and Europe wrinkles like a brow begging every face to promise love. The past is all suspicion, now is an argument that will not end, and tomorrow ... is like the air in your hand. I know San Cristobal. It is mine, me, divided in a harmony that still pursues all its separate parts. No new country, but an old old land inhabiting new forms of men who can never resurrect their roots and do not know their nature.⁴⁴

More often than not, the Chinese are presented as peripheral figures in stereotypical roles, as inscrutable or clever or linguistically deficient rural shopkeepers, preoccupied with money and profit. Such characters appear in the writings of Samuel Selvon, Michael Anthony, V.S. Naipaul, and even in the short stories of the Chinese Trinidadian Willi Chen.⁴⁵

Even calypsonians in Trinidad often voiced similar ambivalent sentiments about the Chinese in an age of anti-colonialism. Gordon Rohlehr's *Calypso and Society* contains the following comment:

Smiley, a calypsonian, who often sings on racial themes (*What is wrong with the Negro man; the Chinese*) identified the Chinese negatively as a small exploitative commercial group.

“Them Chinese don’t lend, they don’t give, they don’t spend ...

According to Mr. Guy, they sucking the country dry.”⁴⁶

Leftist activist Walter Rodney also picked up the refrain in Jamaica, giving it a special ideological twist:

The Chinese are a former labouring group who have now become bastions of white West Indian social structure. The Chinese of the PRC have long broken with and are fighting against white imperialism, but our Chinese have nothing to do with that movement. They are to be identified with Chiang-Kai-Shek and not Mao-Tse-Tung. They are to be put in the same bracket as the lackeys of capitalism and imperialism who are to be found in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Whatever the circumstances in which the Chinese came to the West Indies, they soon became (as a group) members of the exploiting class. They will have either to relinquish or be deprived of that function before they can be re-integrated into a West Indian society where the black man walks in dignity.

He was careful to make the same criticism of the mulatto class:

The same applies to the mulattoes ... characterised by ambiguity and ambivalence ... the vast majority have fallen to the bribes of white imperialism, often outdoing the whites in their hatred and oppression of blacks. Garvey wrote of the Jamaican

mulattoes: “I was openly hated and persecuted by some of these coloured men of the island who did not want to be classified as Negroes but as white.”⁴⁷

One of the consequences of the society’s ambivalence towards the Chinese middlemen in an age of anti-colonialism has been the sporadic outburst of animosity towards them (and other middlemen minorities) during the intense stages of the anti-colonial struggle (Jamaica in the 1960s and 1970s, Trinidad and Guiana in the 1970s), and the nervous migration of a sizeable segment of this community away from the region to metropolitan destinations like Canada, the USA or Europe in the last 30 years.⁴⁸ This despite the fact that in all of the regional nationalist movements, there were often several Chinese figures who were prominent and influential supporters of the new nationalism.

Ironically, the age of globalization (post-1980s) has witnessed a new and renewed interest in the Chinese community by the mature post-colonial nationalist leadership. This is a situation, which is still evolving, and it lacks clear direction. But the signs are that after many decades in which the community was seen as a fringe minority incidental (or hostile) to nationalist aspirations, a new appreciation of its potential to assist in the development efforts of the society is being forged. The impetus for these changed and changing perceptions comes primarily from external factors, principally the changed parameters of the new global economic order and the global ascendancy of China, which has had a beneficial impact on Caribbean public attitudes towards the Asian minorities in their midst. Increasingly, the local-born Chinese professionals are finding themselves thrust into positions of major decision-making in the region, in keeping with their acquisition of professional skills and (perceived) international outreach capabilities. This signals a new departure in societal attitudes, a transition from relative marginality and peripheral status to one of growing centrality and significance to the nation-building effort.⁴⁹ It may be a regional micro-version of the kind of evolution, which has already taken place in other societies, or it may prove to be just a current ethnic fad in transition. Whatever it proves itself to be ultimately, it is clear that the century-long passage from foreign sugar worker to peripheral petit-bourgeoisie to prized multicultural citizen represents a new stage of self-identification in the transition from sojourner to settler in these young and still growing societies of the Caribbean region.

Notes

¹A version of this paper was originally published in Wann Anderson and Robert Lee, eds. *Displacements and Diasporas - Asians in the Americas* (Rutgers University Press 2005, pp. 54-77).

²Mainly British Guiana, Trinidad, and Jamaica.

³The rise of West Indian creative literature, for example, was a direct product of this era of nationalist sentiment, reflective of the voice of the new nationalism, rather than the voice of the established colonial elite.

⁴Colonial Office Correspondence, C.O.295, Vol. 2, 16 July 1802, excerpts from Captain William Layman's "Hints for the Cultivation of Trinidad" (London, 1802).

⁵Colonial Office Correspondence, C.O.295, Vol. 17, 18 Feb. 1803, Secret Memorandum from the Colonial Office to the Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East Indian Company.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷British Guiana; Guyana since 1966.

⁸British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter.P.P) 1852-53, LXVIII (986), Despatches respecting Chinese immigrants introduced into British Guiana and Trinidad, p.80: White to Barkly, 19 July 1851.

⁹P.P. 1852-53, LXVIII (986): Duke of Newcastle to Lt Governor Walker, 29 June 1853, Enclosure to Despatch No.16, Sub-Enclosure No.1.

¹⁰Twentieth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Appendix No.45. P.P., Emigration Series (Irish University Press), Vol. 14.

¹¹P.P. 1852-3, LXVIII (986), Despatches respecting Chinese immigrants introduced into British Guiana and Trinidad, p.73: White to Barkly, 21 June 1851.

¹²P.P. 1854-5, XXXIX (O.7) Despatches respecting Chinese immigrants introduced into British Guiana and Trinidad, p.7: Winchester to Bowring, 22 July 1854.

¹³P.P.1852-53, LXVIII (986): Acting Governor Walker to Duke of Newcastle, Despatch No.16, 8 July 1853, Enclosure No.3.

¹⁴Nineteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners (1859), Appendix No. 42: P.P., Emigration Series (Irish University Press), Vol.14.

¹⁵P.P., 1871, XX (C.393): Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the treatment of immigrants in British Guiana.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷P.P. 1852-53, LXVIII (986): Governor Barkly to Duke of Newcastle, Despatch No.11, 12 March 1853, Enclosure No.2.

¹⁸Antigua Times, Wednesday 1st, 8th February 1882.

¹⁹Joseph Beaumont, *The New Slavery: An Account of the Indian and Chinese Immigrants in British Guiana*. (London: W. Ridgway 1871).

²⁰Royal Gazette, 2 March 1866.

²¹Royal Gazette 16 April 1867.

²²Royal Gazette 31 July 1860.

²³The Diaries of Abbe Armand Masse (1878-1883), entry 6th February 1882 (trans. M.L. de Verteuil, Port of Spain: Scrip-J Printers, 1988).

²⁴R.P.M. Cothonay: Trinidad, *Journal d'un Missionnaire Dominicain des Antilles Anglaises* (Paris, 1893).

²⁵Rev. H.V.P. Bronkhurst, Wesleyan Missionary: *The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population* (London: T Woolmer, 1883).

²⁶Daniel Hart: *Historical and Statistical View of the Island of Trinidad* (Port-of-Spain: Chronicle Publishing Office, 1866).

²⁷Henry Kirke: *Twenty-Five Years In British Guiana, 1872-1897* (London: Sampson Low & Co, 1898).

²⁸Daniel Hart: *Historical and Statistical View of the Island of Trinidad* (Port-of-Spain: Chronicle Publishing Office, 1866).

²⁹Charles Kingsley: *At Last - A Christmas in the West Indies* (London: Macmillan & Co 1871).

³⁰The Diaries of Abbé Armand Massé (1878-1883), 22nd March 1881. (Port of Spain, Trinidad 1998).

³¹Arthur Young, CHINA WEEKLY REVIEW, May 11, 1929.

³²Jean de Boissiere, *Trinidad: Land of the Rising Inflexion* (Trinidad, self-published c.1945).

³³W. Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 167.

³⁴Thirteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners (1853), Appendix No.50: Gt Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Emigration Series (Irish University Press), Vol.12.

³⁵Trevor Sue-a-Quan, *Cane Reapers* (Vancouver: self-published, 1999), Ch.6.

³⁶Royal Gazette 11 March 1873.

³⁷San Fernando Gazette, 12 October 1889. See also W. Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar*, p. 207.

³⁸W. Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar*, Ch. 7.

³⁹David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 207.

⁴⁰W. Look Lai, *The Chinese in the West Indies 1806-1995* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1998), p. 263-68.

⁴¹British Foreign Office, F.O. 228/3466. Overseas Chinese, 1917-1927. No. 6A. Chinese in Jamaica. US Consuls to take charge of interests of: L. Probyn to Rt Honourable Walter H. Long, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30th September 1918, enclosure.

⁴²The Daily Chronicle, Sunday 1 April 1923, Editorial.

⁴³W. Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar*, p. 342, note 56.

⁴⁴George Lamming, *Of Age and Innocence* (London: Allison & Busby, 1981), p.58.

⁴⁵See, for example, the short stories by Samuel Selvon "The Calypsonian", "Holiday in Five Rivers", "Down the Main" in *Ways of Sunlight*, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957; by Michael Anthony "Many Things," "Drunkard of the River," "Village Shop" by Willie Chen in *King of the Carnival and other stories*; Naipaul's *House for Mr Biswas* and *Miguel Street*. The conservative V.S. Naipaul went furthest in his novel *Guerillas*, essentially a commentary on the mass movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Here his main character was portrayed as a person of mixed Chinese blood, a frightening pathological product of the radical movement. This portrayal is unusual, since political commentaries usually tended to see the Chinese as conservative rather than as radicals.

⁴⁶Gordon Rohlehr, *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain, self-published, 1990), p.510.

⁴⁷Walter Rodney, *Groundings with my Brothers* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Press, 1969).

⁴⁸See W. Look Lai, "The Chinese in the Caribbean" in *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 252-53.

⁴⁹A version of the same phenomenon has been taking place in Cuba, with its rediscovery of the Chinese contribution to Cuban multiculturalism, partly with an eye to catching the attention of the Chinese government.

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