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Cover photo: Yuguo Xie riding the subway in Mexico City on his way to attend a Dia de los Muertos celebration. Xie has lived in Mexico City for ten years. He is originally from the Anhui province of China. He studied at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and works as a software engineer. (Courtesy of Yuguo Xie, October 16, 2020).

A Chinese Man in the Andes

Migration and Racial Solidarity

Lorena Cuya Gavilano

A few years ago I asked one of my great-aunts if she had a photograph of my great-great-grandfather. I had heard he was Chinese. He was actually Sino-Peruvian—what Peruvians call a *tusán*, which refers to a person of Chinese descent born and raised in Peru.¹ His father, an indentured worker, was married to a Peruvian woman whose race and ethnicity are still unknown. In any case, there was only one photograph left in the family (fig. 1)—his portrait hangs on the wall of a modest municipal building where he had been mayor. In the family picture, seven men stand together in front of a warehouse, and only two of them have been identified. One is Enrique Baca Niño Ladrón de Guevara (EBNLG), my great-great-grandfather; and the other is Genaro Barragán Muro, who was the heir to the mill and plantations where EBNLG worked as the foreman and

a key source in the reconstruction of this story. This photograph led me to revisit assumptions about how and with whom it was possible for Chinese descendants to find or form a community since the early days of their forced immigration to Peru. This article explores how the history of my family reflects a series of strategic alliances or cross-racial solidarity that helped otherwise disenfranchised individuals reach some sort of social mobility.

As Rodríguez Pastor acutely points out, “Coolie immigrants should be considered as pioneers in a society that was foreign and hostile to them at the beginning”² (2004, 119). Their cultural and sociopolitical importance in the history of Peru is unquestionable. Not only did they work in plantations; once freed, they opened businesses or continued their agricultural work as wage earners; some of them



Fig. 1. Enrique Baca Niño Ladrón de Guevara (center, white suit) and Genaro Barragán Muro (third from left, gray suit). (Family photograph of Victoria Baca; reproduced by the author)

became *enganchadores*, i.e., middlemen who recruited other Chinese workers for the landowners. Over time interracial marriages allowed them to become part of Peruvian society and to play important roles as intellectuals and politicians. The fragmented and unknown story of my family exemplifies this kind of experience. Francisco Baca married a Peruvian woman and became a merchant and moneylender. His *tusán* son, EBNLG, became a foreman at different plantations, developed a relationship of trust with the landowner, married an Afro-Peruvian woman, and later became the second mayor of Chinese origin ever recorded in this Andean country. What follows contextualizes, first, the different perceptions of Chinese immigrants from economic, racial, and political perspectives through historical and cultural lenses. Then this article delineates Francisco Baca's possible origins and activities. Next it discusses EBNLG's identity, his marriage to an Afro-Peruvian woman, and his political transformation.

CHINESE WORKERS AND THE SOUL OF THE NATION

There is no doubt about the role race and ethnicity have played in the formation of nation-states in the Americas. In Peru, the Asian, African, and indigenous components have only enriched its pluriculturalism.³ In the nineteenth century, approximately one hundred thousand Chinese indentured workers, also known as coolies, arrived in this Andean country. Rodríguez Pastor recently stated that 10 percent of almost twenty-seven million people in Peru are of Asian descent (2017, 115). The latest 2017 census recorded that 3–9 percent of the Peruvian population of approximately thirty million inhabitants are indeed of Chinese descent. The reason for the 3–9 percent range is the lack of clarity on the question of ethnic identification. Different groups, including Asians, were clustered together under the “other” category (INEI 2018). This detail is not trivial for a country that prides itself for having integrated the Chinese population nearly completely and with ease. Today no one would question the “Peruvianness” of Chinese descendants. Paroy Villafuerte and Campos (2020) reiterated this idea in their presentation “Los latinos más chinos o los chinos más latinos: La identidad *Tusán en el Perú*”—which translates as “The Latinos Who Are More Chinese or the Chinese Who Are More Latino: *Tusán* Identity in Peru.”⁴ Although this is true to some extent, it is still necessary to question, “Why do we seem only to have evidence of the Chinese cuisine?” (Rodríguez Pastor 2000). The Chinese culinary culture and commercial influence are in fact very visible. The so-called *chifas*, i.e., Chinese restaurants, are prominent throughout the country, and it is still common to hear expressions such as “el chino de la esquina,” which refers to the owners of *bodegas*, small stores stereotypically run by *tusanes* and located in the corners of different neighborhoods. Although

they have been active social participants, there is no chapter in schoolbooks about Chinese immigrants, and there is little dialogue about this issue at the university level. Only in the last three decades has the interest in Asian studies grown, in part due to the development of Global South and South-to-South research, to the current Chinese economic influence, and to the political legacy of former Japanese-Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori.

The perception of Chinese indentured workers has been ambivalent and contradictory at times. Since their arrival in Peru, different intellectuals deemed them unfit to constitute the “national soul.”⁵ For instance, Clemente Palma observed, “The Chinese race has represented nothing, neither in the past, nor in the present. It will represent nothing in the future”⁶ (1887, 16). In the 1880s González Prada described them as a decrepit group that only aged the new Republic (2005). Hildebrando Fuentes called them “as barbaric as Attila”⁷ (Heredia 2016). Even for an intellectual such as José Carlos Mariátegui, who advocated for racial inclusion, the Chinese complicated his social theories on *indigenismo*. Moreover, he accused Asian workers of apathy (1928). Mariátegui trapped himself in the Indian-Spanish dichotomy from which Afro-descendants and Sino-Peruvians impeded the reformulation of a coherent national project (Lee-DiStefano 2019). Evidently such a project only vindicated indigenous populations within the national discourse. Along with González Prada, Clemente Palma, and Sebastián Lorente (1879), Mariátegui reinforces a social organization in which the Chinese occupied the lowest social scale.⁸

Paradoxically, for other intellectuals, politicians, and plantation owners, coolies were fundamental for the economic development of the country. Their arrival opened a cycle of economic and technological prosperity. The growing agricultural export capacity, the construction of railroads, and the creation of hydraulic mills are just a few examples. As Heredia indicates, from an economic standpoint, Chinese people were considered “efficient ants” (2016), and some discourses even foretold their worldwide dominance. In his medical thesis, César Borja (1877, 12) wrote that the Chinese migration was an evil that needed to be avoided, but at the same time indicated its economic potential. For Borja, coolies were imperfect, but working machines. French traveler Charles Wiener (1880) highlighted that Chinese people exhibited discipline, honesty, and good habits. For Wiener—and intellectuals such as Juan de Arona, González Prada, and Miguel Cárdenas⁹—Chinese people were deemed inferior to White people, although they were still better than other races. Their ancestral culture supported the idea of their potential but was also used to hold beliefs of colorism. According to Wiener (1880, 39), the coolie and his descendants had an entrepreneurial character: “Once freed, Chinese men own hotels, restaurants; they become businessmen . . . and, more recently, even doctors.”¹⁰ Thus their destiny was to control the country. Dora Mayer de Zulen (1924, 82) argued that Peruvians should learn from the cultural

maturity of Chinese people—by that, she meant that they should learn from their ancestral culture. Furthermore, she foresaw their power: “In few years, the God of Success will come, placing China at the top and destroying all prejudice. Women who do not have almond-shape eyes will paint them to shape them like the Chinese, and men will study the Chinese language”¹¹ (Mayer de Zulen 1924, 14). Thus, even when vilified and disparaged, the “weak” Chinese had the potential to rule the country they had migrated to.

Similarly, the historical relevance of the Chinese presence needs to be reconsidered in light of their sociopolitical participation and class formation:

Without Chinese workers, Peruvian planters could never have survived the crisis of the 1870s and 1880s and emerged as wealthy businessmen and political leaders in the 1890s. . . . Without Chinese laborers, Chinese labor contractors, opium traders, and others [landowners] could never have accumulated capital during this period of crisis and emerged as members of the petit bourgeoisie. (González 1989, 388)

The dreadful agricultural situation at the end of the nineteenth century only improved with the arrival of Chinese braceros. Back then, Peru was like a Venus de Milo, beautiful but with no arms (de Arona 1891, 86; de Trazegnines 1994, 17). In spite of the socioeconomic contributions of the Chinese, judicial scholars tried to erase their presence from the legal world. The modern Peru did not escape preconceptions inherited from colonial structures of servility. In attempting to omit details that would make the modern consciousness uncomfortable, judicial scholars eradicated any Chinese trace: “Anything referring to the Chinese was erased from the judicial discourse, from the jurists’ language, and from law books with theoretical perspective. . . . The world of Chinese immigrants not only did not exist in law studies, it should not exist either”¹² (de Trazegnines 1994, 723). This legal invisibilization ended about three decades later, when Chinese descendants appeared more prominently in cultural and political scenes. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the *tusán* Adalberto Fonkén, an anarcho-syndicalist, directed the protests leading to the formation of the Peruvian labor movement (Blanchard 1982; Lausent-Herrera, 2010, 151). Moreover, between 1923 and 1924 in the province of San Ramón de Chanchamayo, Martín Laos served as the first mayor of Chinese origin in Peru (Lausent-Herrera 2000, 11, 209). His political participation in that geographic area is indicative not only of an extension of the Chinese presence but also of its importance within new communities. In the 1960s other *tusanes* got involved in political debates. Pedro Zulen is without a doubt one of the most prominent ones for his participation in the pro-indigenous movement. Similarly, Emilio Choy Ma undertook an innovative Marxist reinterpretation of the historical and anthropological fields in Peru (Lausent-Herrera 2010, 164; López-Calvo 2014, 227–28).

If sociopolitical participation was limited for the first *tusanes*—children of Chinese parents born in Peru—it was

even more restricted for *tusanes* of mixed race. The cessation of political relations between Peru and Nationalist China, however, decreased the migratory flow and economic exchanges between the two countries. This issue created the opportunity for all Chinese descendants in Peru to participate in Chinese associations that, until then, had only accepted the participation of Chinese-born individuals. Over time the *tusanes* formed different kinds of organizations, such as charitable and welfare foundations as well as commercial societies in which Zulen, for example, was invited to participate. In the late twentieth century, they also formed the Chinese-Peruvian Association, or Asociación Peruano-China (APCH n.d.). Rodríguez Pastor has also explained how Chinese men and their descendants organized in a variety of ways: “by place of birth, clans, economic activities (merchants, shoemakers, hairdressers, butchers, etc.), by solidarity groups (aid institutions, elderly care, health services), religious beliefs, political affiliations, and so on”¹³ (2004, 119).

Although Chinese descendants engaged in profitable socioeconomic practices, miscegenation with Chinese people or *tusanes* was received with both familiarity and horror. This situation—and also probably the fear of an economic slowdown as a consequence of the Great Depression—led to their discrimination. In the 1930s anti-Chinese sentiment grew through the dissemination of pamphlets and laws that described and prescribed them as racially and behaviorally degenerate. As is well known, the coolie migration was male dominated. At some point after the first wave, only fifteen women arrived, according to Rodríguez Pastor (2004). Thus, interracial relationships with indigenous, mestizas, and Afro-descendants were a natural outcome. Once freed from their contracts, Chinese men formed families with Peruvian women of humble origins, especially in the rural areas.¹⁴ Many of them were also probably related to plantation duties, as in the case of EBNLG’s wife. “Thus, a generation of thousands of Chinese-Peruvians emerged. They were genetically and culturally new mestizos, who received the name of ‘scions’”¹⁵ (Rodríguez Pastor 2004, 115). Lausent-Herrera, though, indicates “it is impossible to know exactly when the term *injerto* appeared and when it was applied to Chinese-Peruvian half-bloods. The term brings to mind the world of agriculture, and no doubt originated among the rural classes which came into contact with Chinese workers.” Seemingly, *injerto* referred exclusively to children of Chinese and native women: “*indígenas, indias, cholas et natives* [sic], and not the Afro-Peruvians” (Lausent-Herrera 2010, 146). In 1877 Borja argued that the miscegenation with black women actually worsened the Chinese imperfection; their descendants could only be degenerate, pathological, and vicious (Borja 1877, 52, 87–89). Palma, too, claimed that the hybrid descendants had no future. Since Chinese *mestizaje* was still low at the time Palma wrote his comment, he suggested that those new generations would be “sterile as mules”¹⁶ (1897, 18). Yet arranged

marriages were on the rise. According to Ernest Middendorf's travel notes, there were Chinese intermediaries who set up marriages with Andean women (1973, 262–63). Chinese racial intermarriages thus added complexity to any position on indigenous racial inclusion.

In spite of being disparaged and marginalized, coolies and *tusanes* were simultaneously perceived as fundamental to the economic, political, and racial development of the country. Thus one may wonder why people of Chinese descent could not strengthen the national soul as some intellectuals thought. The answer relies on a series of emotional responses to the future, which oscillated between fear and hope. To recapitulate, coolies were weak and vicious but hard-working and diligent. They were economically productive but genetically sterile. They were perceived as racially and culturally inferior to White populations, yet they threatened the cultural and political development of the country—there was the chance that they would dominate the world. Then from what perspective did the Chinese descendant really become part of the national soul? How have they joined the “Peru of every blood” (*Perú de todas las sangres*), as has been suggested with so much conviction?¹⁷

Chinese descendants—whether they were *injertos*, *tusanes*, *mestizos*, businessmen, or employees—seem to non-Chinese Peruvians like people for whom everything was useful for self-preservation: exploitation and entrepreneurship, voice and silence, private and public life. Yet the Chinese integration in Peru has occurred with subtlety. It has been understated to the point that it is necessary to review social strategies that have not been as visible as the culinary expressions. For instance, as contradictory as it may be, cross-racial solidarity may confirm the complex character of Peruvian connections with the idea of the nation as a whole—with a nation whose spirit would prefer to be pre-Hispanic even though it has not abandoned its colonial views. The Sino-Peruvian integration has transpired by following racial, socioeconomic, and political paths that only through time have led to ethnic recognition.

During the past two centuries, different governments—from the left and the right—have continued subduing the country to commercial and political elites, preserving colonial structures. The results have been implosive. The history of Peru, as much as the history of every Peruvian, is written in the tension between the official and informal formulas used to survive any personal destiny. In different ways, legal and economic procedures may have actually crushed any individuals who have followed them, denying them the opportunity to satisfy their basic needs and desires.

How have the *tusanes* escaped from such formulas, if they have really escaped them? In some cases, after completing their contracts and accruing, with some luck, some sort of capital, coolies and their descendants initiated economic ventures. Such a step allowed them to formally join the communities they lived in. Over the years they also participated in the political and affective—marital—life of the country.

To exemplify this process, the following sections reconstruct the multigenerational story of Francisco Baca.

FRANCISCO BACA, A COOLIE IN THE ANDES

People say that my mother looks Chinese, that my brother looks Chinese, that I look Chinese. We are Peruvians who look Chinese. To this day I still wonder what the origins of my family really are. In a way this article is a response to my curiosity; but as part of a larger project, it also exemplifies the ways Andean societies have embraced Chinese populations, as well as their cultural and political influence. The information gathered here derives from my family oral history, a few archival documents, and an interview with Genaro Barragán Muro, a former plantation owner from the North Coast of Peru. My hope is that this fragmented and incomplete family history reflects the story of many other Peruvians of Chinese descent, whose stories, although unknown, are no less important in understanding the Peruvian national identity. This case demonstrates that as much as racial discrimination was based on Chinese exploitation, interracial solidarity repeatedly appeared as a means of integration. Thus, while my great-great-grandfather was a coolie, his *tusán* son—my great-great-grandfather—was able to become the mayor of a small locality in the Lambayeque region.¹⁸

Who was Francisco Baca? It is difficult to know with precision. I found his name on his son's death certificate.¹⁹ The same document states that Francisco Baca's wife, Agueda Niño Ladrón de Guevara, was a Peruvian woman of unknown race. Some members of my family and Genaro Barragán Muro, the heir to the plantations where my great-great-grandfather worked, affirmed that Francisco Baca was almost certainly a coolie. My mother, Zonia Gavilano Baca, and my great-aunts, Cayetana and Victoria Baca, used to mention that he arrived at the Lambayeque region with a brother. The latter died by hanging. It was a common belief that his brother might have had debts or been involved in brawls. There is no proof of such incidents, except for the fact that different family members seem to share that knowledge. If Francisco Baca was indeed a coolie, so should have been his brother. If so, his death should surprise no one. Rocca Torres (1985, 114), an expert in the history of the Lambayeque region—in Zaña, particularly—describes places such as *El cerro la horca* (the Gallows Hill), where runaway slaves and disobedient Chinese men were punished and hanged.

Francisco Baca's whereabouts are not clear either. In 2014 I was able to talk with Genaro Barragán Muro, who at the time lived in Chiclayo, Lambayeque's capital.²⁰ It was a common belief—he said—that, upon finishing his contract, Francisco Baca had a small store in Chiclayo, and later became a moneylender in the same place. Barragán Muro

also repeated a family rumor, that Baca and his son, EBNLG (Enrique Baca Niño Ladrón de Guevara), had personal disagreements that pushed the offspring far from the paternal house in Chiclayo. But did Francisco Baca always live in this city? It is difficult to know. Where did he first arrive? That has not been determined either. What we know, however, thanks to his *tusán* son, is that he was from Canton—i.e., Kwantgton, Guangdong, or Guangzhou—and should have arrived in Peru during the first Chinese immigration wave that started in the late 1840s. His last name was somehow forgotten. My mother and great-aunts have repeated, though, that it was something like “Yung,” “Yun,” or “Tun,” and “Zhang” (Chang?) or some name phonetically close. At least, that is what they heard from EBNLG. I have not been able to verify these possible names in the Lambayeque Regional Archive, and the Chinese Association in Chiclayo keeps records only from the 1940s onward. Nonetheless, I have been able to find information about a Spanish captain called Francisco Baca. The Lambayeque Regional Archive keeps records of slave purchases in which this Spanish captain appears to have acquired three African slaves in 1818 (fig. 2). Probably after the abolition of slavery in 1854, Captain Baca or his descendants replaced the labor of African slaves with indentured Chinese workers. It is possible that my ancestor Francisco Baca had worked for him and received the name of that family. Most likely, this could have been his baptism name.

After Francisco Baca’s contract ended and the bondage with his master was terminated, it is possible, like in other cases, that he accumulated some capital and opened a small business in Chiclayo, just as Barragán Muro pointed out. There are still some Chinese businesses located behind Chiclayo’s central market, at the intersection of Lora and Cordero Streets, close to where Barragán Muro indicated. It is difficult to prove how my ancestor could have become a moneylender. Maybe a stroke of good luck allowed him to position himself better than other fellow Chinese men at the time? When I interviewed Genaro Barragán Muro at the Union Club in Chiclayo, people passing by the lobby intervened at times in our conversation. What drew my attention from those interventions was the common, yet vague knowledge of the Chinese influence. The last name Baca seemed to enjoy good standing, the fact that my forefather could have lived there and run his business seemed pretty likely to those random observers: “Sure, that is very possible . . . there are still many Chinese men there.”²¹ Aside from their remarks, what it is true, though, is that there was a Francisco Baca who was a moneylender.

The Lambayeque Regional Archive has an “Obligación de deuda a Francisco Baca” (promissory note to Francisco Baca) from October 17, 1859.²² It states that José María Arizola and his wife committed to pay back six thousand pesos over a period of eight years with 2 percent annual interest. At the end, the document shows the signatures of all those involved

77	Venta de esclavo	don Gregorio Castañeda, viuda de difunto y hermano de don Joaquín y don Juan Becerra, don Juan Becerra al cap. Francisco Baca	21	"	156 vit.
78	Venta de esclavo.	doña Jacinta Bermúdez Cerrojo de Verras	22	"	160 vit.
79	Antestamento.	don José María de Rioja a Miguel Blanco.	23	"	162
80	Venta de sitio, de la finca y finca de Naxta, Bra del isno.	don Andrés de Uvalde.	23	"	163
81	Arrendamiento de pastos, en Tllina	don Juan de la Torre a Juan Alere Marques Villalobos.	23	"	166
82	Poder de cobranza y pleitos.	don José Gabriel Rubiños a don Pedro Estell.	24	"	171 (171)
83	Poder.	don Juan de la Torre a Juan Alere Marques Villalobos.	24	"	178 vit.
84	DETERMINADO EL CONCEPTO.	don José Gabriel Rubiños a don Pedro Estell.	27	"	180
85	Venta de esclavo.	doña Apolinaria Gomez de Silva a Miguel Blanco	03 - AGOSTO - 1818	"	189 - - -
86	Venta de 02 esclavos (esclavas)	don Pedro Lucas Calzal al cap. Francisco Baca.	04	"	193
87	Venta de tierras.	don Marcos Cartagena a Juan Villalobos	04	"	195 vit.
88	Cedencia	de doña Manuela Serulux.	04	"	197
89	Libertad.	de doña Manuela Serulux a María Concepción de Valle y uno hijo	07	"	196
90	Venta de esclavo.	doña María Isabel Sousa a doña Juana Oliva	07	"	196 vit.
91	Obligación en contribuciones.	don Jacinto Martiana a Benarce Barbares	07	"	199
92	TRUOCADILACION de documento.	R.P. cura de Chiclayo Fray Francisco Cerchade	07	"	199 vit.
93	Venta de esclavo.	don Mariano La Jara a doña Clara Fernandez de la Cetera.	08	"	200 vit.
94	Poder general.	don Francisco Xavier Delgado a Carlos Delgado, su hermano.	08	"	217
95	Venta de esclavo.	doña Juana Lopez a Miguel Blanco.	13	"	218 vit.
96	Venta de casa.	doña Evarista Veitez a lo heredero de Tomas Alarcon.	17	"	221
97	Fianza de hacienda.	don Manuel Navarrete a Baltasar Chocarro	19	"	222
98	Carta de pago, por 100 pesos.	doña Juana Paula Ruiz per Magdalena Villalobos.	19	"	224
99	Fianza de hacienda.	Juan Betere Leon per Casimiro Villalobos	19	"	225
100	Fianza de hacienda.	Francisco de Paula Ruiz per Juan de los Santos Usquiano.	21	"	225 vit.
			21	"	226

Fig. 2. Purchase of slaves by Spanish captain Francisco Baca. (Registro del notario Juan de Dios Peralta, 1818–1820, Archivo Regional de Lambayeque, folio N°185 [Public notary records of Juan de Dios Peralta 1818–1820, Lambayeque Regional Archive, file No. 185])

in the transaction except for that of Francisco Baca. The scribe signed instead. Would it be possible that Francisco Baca had some pecuniary capital but did not write or sign in Spanish? That is a possibility, but there are other questions that arise after reading this promissory note. Although the document correlates with the oral history, one should question if it was too early for an indentured laborer to accrue enough capital and, later, lend money. Again, one may ask if it was a stroke of luck or if, perhaps, Baca's marriage to Agueda Niña Ladrón de Guevara contributed to his enterprise. One should also wonder if Francisco Baca's arrival date could have preceded 1849 as the official date registered by many experts (Meagher 2008, Rodríguez Pastor 2000, Stewart 1976) or if his contract was among the few obliging Chinese coolies for three years (Hu-DeHart 2005, 86).

Like other former coolies at the time, Francisco Baca tried to advance his social condition and most likely succeeded to some degree. Rodríguez Pastor tells similar stories of former indentured workers who thrived in commercial and administrative activities. For instance, it is hard to determine when or on what ship "el chino Ayate" arrived, but this probably happened around 1850–1866. He went to work on a plantation called Palto, but in 1877 he received payments as a free worker. It seems that his employers wanted to retain him in spite of his rebellious character, according to Rodríguez Pastor (1987). They hired him as a foreman due to his intelligence and sagacious behavior, and Ayate remained in that position until his disappearance in 1882. Similarly, Rodríguez Pastor (2000) reconstructs the story of Fructuoso Baca, another coolie who arrived in Peru around 1865–1870 and who worked for the Aspíllaga family, owners of the Cayaltí plantation.²³ Presumably his good relationship with the Aspíllaga family led him to become an *enganchador*, i.e., a supplier of other Chinese men. At the beginning of the 1900s, Fructuoso was the only former indentured laborer recruiting other Chinese men, and he did that for seventeen years. There is no doubt that his was a story of success unlike the one of "chino Achén." Once the latter became a steward, he was assassinated by two coolies with the approval of others. The hierarchy, disposition, and personal attitudes of Chinese workers were of importance to plantation owners.

In some cases, they used Chinese workers as foremen—they used those who were sagacious and entrepreneurial, or who exhibited leadership skills, business mentality, and ambition. Those men were recognized as leaders among fellow workers sometimes; perhaps, because they were leaders or ringleaders in China as well.²⁴ (Rodríguez Pastor 2000, 300)

It is impossible to know if this was the case of Fructuoso Baca from Cayaltí or Francisco Baca from Chiclayo. But unquestionably the latter had commercial plans for his future, and they may have been somewhat successful according to his family. Although there is scarce documentation, it is likely that Francisco Baca opened a small

store in or near Chiclayo's main plaza, as Genaro Barragán Muro indicated. It is also possible that he had started lending some money—perhaps with the help of his wife? In any case, Francisco Baca's marriage helped him to establish his new home in the North Coast. Most importantly, if his case represents the social mobility of a first-generation Chinese indentured worker in Peru, then his son would have benefited from it and replicated his efforts.

THE NEXT GENERATION: A TUSÁN MAYOR

As suggested before, national economic development has been tied to the Chinese presence in Peru. This progress was also subject to political changes in the regions where such workers—coolies and their descendants, the *tusanes*—dwelled. One way or another, Francisco Baca, or Yung Zhang, must have obtained a certain social status, which his son would have enjoyed as well. According to my great-aunts and my mother, EBNLG read newspapers in Chinese, but that would not have been possible without his father's economic capacity to support such an education at the time. Nevertheless, after leaving the paternal house, EBNLG had to look for new economic means of survival. How could that have happened exactly?

My mother often talks about her great-grandfather, an old grumpy man who cursed every time he saw her working. He was used to strict routines, read newspapers in Chinese, and, according to some, enjoyed black tea. "Bien chinito era mi abuelo"—explains Zonia Gavilano Baca.²⁵ Everybody in the family simply called him "abuelo," regardless of any specific genealogical connection to him. Even though Lausent-Herrera (2010, 146) observes that the generation of "first-half Chinese, which became visible from 1870, was not called by any name," Antonio Saenz Baca, one of EBNLG's great-grandsons, recalls: "Yes, he was what people call 'Chignon Chinese.' Yes, he was truly Chinese."²⁶ The expression refers to the hairstyle of first-generation Chinese men—although he was actually the second generation. In any case, EBNLG's death certificate indicates his death occurred on April 29, 1972, at the age of 96, which means that he would have been born in 1876. Victoria and Cayetana Baca, my great-aunts, told me that he was 105 years old when he died, but there is no way to prove that there was any kind of mistake in the document. The same legal form indicates that he was of "raza mixta"—one should bear in mind that his mother, Agueda Niño Ladrón de Guevara, was a Peruvian woman of unknown race as well.

Expanding the interethnic connections, EBNLG married Santos Granda. Family accounts describe her as a "zamba," a colonial term used to describe some Afro-descendants, a mix of indigenous Peruvians and black slaves. The couple probably met while EBNLG was working at La Otra

Banda del Tayme, a sugar plantation right outside of the Zaña regional limits. There my great-great-grandfather “was something like a governor,”²⁷ as Genaro Barragán Muro explained during our conversation. Later the couple moved to the province of Ferreñafe fifty kilometers away, where EBNLG managed the Tres Tomas mill, a property owned by the Barragán family. The Barragán family also owned the Hacienda Luya, one of the most important sugar plantations in the region along with those like Cayaltí and Pomalca. The geographic proximity of Zaña, Luya, and Ferreñafe could very well explain the couple’s encounter and displacement.

The geographic movement of Enrique Baca Niño Ladrón de Guevara and his wife goes hand in hand with their ethnic and socioeconomic situation. As Rocca Torres acutely observes, Zaña is a historically black community. Many African slaves were taken to this province to work on the sugar plantations, and many stayed there after the abolition of slavery in 1854. The region’s sub-prefect reported in 1874 that La Otra Banda del Tayme recorded forty Asian indentured workers and other Chinese freed men (Arbulú 1874, 3). Thus interracial marriages and other interethnic bonds would have been a spontaneous consequence. And on plantations like La Otra Banda and Luya, which belonged to the same family, the connections between Afro- and Sino-Peruvian were highly likely. According to Marcial Sánchez’s personal account, “Some Chinese men stayed here to live. . . . They started businesses afterwards. . . . There was a Chinese cemetery—the ‘huaca china’—and many Chinese stores here in Zaña”²⁸ (Rocca Torres 1985, 153). There the tombs, oral histories, and interracial encounters attest to economic and ethnic developments. The Baca and Granda marriage was not shocking and definitely not unique. It not only exemplifies a social pattern but is also indicative of the economic circuit in this northern region.

Other oral histories described the labor exploitation linked to the Barragán family in the Lambayeque region. During the first decades of the twentieth century, many laborers began work strikes and denounced the deplorable working conditions throughout the region’s different plantations. In 1910 they protested against the Barragán, Carmona, and Montero families (Rocca Torres 1985, 188). Such mobilizations live on in popular songs and poems, like one about a priest from Ferreñafe, known as Chumán, who led some of the insurgencies: “Here come the bushwhackers/ they are led by Father Chumán/ they are searching for Juan Aurich/ and Genaro Barragán”²⁹ (Rocca Torres 1985, 211). The latter, Genaro Barragán, is also the protagonist of an oral tradition in which he makes a pact with the devil in exchange for money (Rocca Torres 1985, 209–10). This story coincides with one from Tres Tomas where EBNLG worked for the Barragán family. In this version the Barragán character is not very handsome, thus he asks the devil for both love and money (José Cieza, 2012). The power of this

family was notorious, but my ancestor seemed to have survived the adverse conditions.

After departing from the paternal house and possibly passing through Zaña, EBNLG would become the mayor of the lands where he formerly worked. Genaro Barragán Muro, the heir to Luya, Tres Tomas, and La Otra Banda del Tayme plantations,³⁰ explained in our interview that my great-great-grandfather was a trusted man for the Barragán family: “He was a serious man, quiet and respected. He had the trust of the family, that’s why he oversaw everything there. Trust is something very important and you can’t find it easily”³¹ (personal interview 2014). After working in La Otra Banda, EBNLG moved to supervise the Tres Tomas rice plantation and the first hydraulic mill that was built there by Genaro Barragán Urrutia, Genaro Barragán Muro’s grandfather.³² There this *tusán* supervised the rice production, from seedtime to mill processing. This plantation would give its name to the small district founded there in 1951—its name was changed to Manuel Antonio Mesones Muro in 1965 to honor a famous explorer from the same region.³³ Genaro Barragán Muro was its first mayor (1951–1955) and EBNLG became its second (1956–1957). For more than a quarter century, EBNLG built a reputation for his work as a plantation foreman. In such a position, he did not criticize the social order in any radical form, but instead gradually advanced the landowner-worker relationship. It is impossible to know for sure if his attitude was one of optimism to change either the familial or social reality. It is clear, though, that the social circumstances changed, allowing *tusanes* like him to occupy new social positions without raising eyebrows or without significant questioning. On the contrary, it seems as if the *tusán* identity was seamlessly integrated into his community, maybe even in an invisible manner. At least, this is what happened in Ferreñafe.

Here is an opportunity to focus on two related issues that are highlighted by EBNLG’s experience. One is the relationship of trust enjoyed by this *tusán*, and the other is the political reorganization of the region that opened the path to his municipal administration. Amid economic and technological changes, his personal relationship with the landowners, his wife’s notoriously amicable character, and his friendship with other members of his district facilitated his appointment as a mayor in 1956. He was eighty years old when he started working for the government; his advanced age was probably the reason he left his position prematurely in 1957. As mentioned before, EBNLG managed the Tres Tomas mill, located in the newly founded district of the same name. But Tres Tomas was not yet completely established beyond formal documentation when Genaro Barragán Muro left his municipal seat. The small district did not even have a municipal building, and EBNLG started being involved with municipal duties by offering one of the mill’s warehouses as a mayor’s office (Cieza 2012). I have not yet found enough documentation to know with precision what kind of work

EBNLG implemented later as an elected mayor. There is only knowledge about his work in the reorganization of lands and farms in the area (Cieza 2012). Overall EBNLG's socio-economic condition was not bad. Or at least it was not as bad as it could have been, especially if compared to the circumstances of other coolies and *tusanes*. His social mobility resulted from the confluence of at least three factors: (1) racial solidarity—that is, interracial marriage, relationships of trust with White landowners, and respect among workers of different racial backgrounds; (2) changes in the regional boundaries or redrawing of district lines; and (3) democratic developments that did not impede him from occupying a municipal seat.

AFFECTIVE BONDS OR THE ECONOMY OF AFFECTS

The themes of racial and ethnic identification along with that of class have a special significance in the history of Chinese descendants in Peru. The integration of Sino-Peruvian individuals had been possible due to their affective bonds within and outside their families. One must bear in mind that diverse cultures occupied the Peruvian territory before colonial times. Such heterogeneity was brought together under the Incas and later under Hispanic rule. During the past two centuries, however, the forced institutional homogenization under one nation's name has been modified by forbidden and feared interracial unions, as well as by other—sometimes unexpected—relationships of trust. These connections may be called affective bonds and have, inadvertently or not, determined many social destinies. Often values such as *personalismo* (close personal relationships) or *compadrazgo* (ritual kinship established through godparent relationships), for instance, have determined the social mobility of people who, under different circumstances of origin, would not have been able to advance their social positions. EBNLG exemplifies this point.

For a long time, Chinese blood has ceased to be foreign in Peru. Chinese descendants have come up with ways to enter social, economic, and political activities, while extending their affective interracial relationships and vice versa. This is how EBNLG was able to become the second mayor of Chinese descent in Peru. His marriage to an Afro-Peruvian woman helped him integrate into the culture of the Peruvian North Coast. Moreover, even when the hierarchical landowner-worker bond continued, a relationship of trust opened new opportunities for this *tusán*. Seemingly both Francisco Baca and his son, Enrique Baca Niño Ladrón de Guevara, followed similar integrative paths. These are, however, sometimes invisible social routes and stories that live on in local voices and familial stories. The Chinese integration in Peru, in sum, is not the product of any radical movement, nor the result of any armed or ideological revolution.

Instead, and without idealizing this situation, it has been the product of a subtle and slow process of interracial solidarity, or what may be also called an economy of affects.

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NOTES

1. The word *tusán* (*tusanes* in plural) is the Spanish version of the pronunciation of the Cantonese (广东话 *Guangdonghua*, 粤语 *Yueyu*) and Mandarin (普通话 *Putonghua*). At the same time the term comes from the expression *土生/土长* (*Tusheng*, which comes from *土生土长* (*tu sheng, tu zhang* in pinyin, *tou sang, tou zong* in jyutping), which means “born and raised in this locality” (Tusanaje 2017).
2. “Los inmigrantes culíes deben ser considerados como pioneros en una sociedad que al comienzo les fue extraña y hostil.”
3. In this regard, Evelyn Hu-DeHart (2009) explores the influence of the Asian component in the Latin American region at large, especially within academic debates.
4. “Los latinos más chinos o los chinos más latinos: La identidad Tusán en el Perú.”
5. I allude here to Juan José Heredia’s article “Robustecer o enflaquecer el alma nacional en el Perú: El ‘chino expiatorio’ vs. el chino trabajador (1860–1914)” (2016).
6. “La raza china en realidad nada representa, ni en el pasado, ni en el porvenir, ni en el presente.”
7. “tan bárbaros como Atila.”
8. See also Heredia (2010).
9. See Heredia’s works (2010, 2012, and 2016).
10. “Liberado es hotelero, dueño de un restaurante, negociante . . . y, desde hace poco, incluso médico.”
11. “Vendrá dentro de pocos años el dios Éxito a encumbrar a la China, y a destruir ese prejuicio, y las mujeres que no tienen ojos de almendra se los pintarán, y quizás los hombres se dedicarán a estudiar el idioma chino.”
12. “Todo lo que se refiere a los chinos es excluido del discurso de juristas y de los libros de Derecho con perspectiva teórica. . . . El mundo de los inmigrantes chinos no sólo no existía para el Derecho académico, sino que no debía existir.”

13. “por lugares de nacimiento, por orígenes clánicos, por las actividades económicas que ejercían (comerciantes, zapateros, peluqueros, carniceros, etcétera), por instituciones de solidaridad (sociedades de beneficencia, de auxilio mutuo, ancianidad, cruz roja) por creencias religiosas, por afinidades políticas, etc.”
14. In Lima, it was not uncommon to use intermediaries for arranged marriages.
15. “Surgió así toda una generación de miles de mestizos genética y culturalmente chino-peruanos a los que popularmente se llamó injertos.”
16. “infecundas como el mulo.”
17. The expression “a Peru of every blood” refers to José María Arguedas’s classic novel *Todas las sangres* (1964).
18. Lambayeque is the name of the political region; Chiclayo is its capital, while Zaña, Ferreñafe, Tres Tomas, and La Otra Banda del Tayme are some of its provinces.
19. Partida de defunción (death certificate) de Enrique Baca Niño Ladrón de Guevara. Digitalized copy. Registro civil de la Municipalidad de Ferreñafe, Perú.
20. Personal interview with Genaro Barragán Muro, July 1, 2014. He was eighty-nine years old when we talked; he passed away in 2018.
21. “Seguro que sí, es posible . . . si hasta ahora hay chinos allí.”
22. Obligación del 17 octubre 1859 de José María Arizola a Francisco Baca. Archivo regional de Lambayeque. Folio 184. V.
23. Any possible connection to Francisco Baca has not been investigated yet.
24. “En algunos casos los utilizaron [a los chinos] como caporales—aquellos chinos sagaces, emprendedores, con actitudes de mando, a veces con mentalidades empresariales, con notorias ambiciones de superarse utilizando cualquier medio, reconocidos a veces como dirigentes entre sus paisanos, quizás porque también en China fueron cabecillas, en ocasiones indeseables por levantiscos.”
25. Zonia Gavilano Baca’s quote comes from repeated family conversations.
26. “Sí, era lo que decían ‘chino de moño.’ Sí, era chino de verdad.” Personal communication with Antonio Saenz Baca, September 10, 2020.
27. “era algo así como un gobernador.”
28. “Algunos chinos se quedaron a vivir aquí. . . . Después se dedicaron al comercio. . . . Había cementerio de chinos—la huaca china—muchas tiendas había de los chinos en Zaña.”
29. “Ya viene la montonera/ a la cabeza de Chumán/ en busca de Juan Aurich/ y Genaro Barragán.”
30. Genaro Barragán Muro was the son of Genaro Barragán Rodríguez, grandson of Genaro Barragán Urrutia—who built the Puerto Eten’s railroad—and great-grandson of Genaro Barragán Agüero. All of them owned plantations in Luya, Tres Tomas, and La Otra Banda del Tayme.
31. “Era un hombre serio, callado, muy respetado, un hombre de confianza, por eso él hacía todo allá. La confianza es algo importante, así nomás no se encuentra.”
32. “Manuel Mesones Muro: Historia,” Municipalidad Provincial de Ferreñafe, <http://www.muniferrenafe.gob.pe/index.php/ferrenafe/distritos/54-mesones-muro.html>.
33. Manuel Antonio Mesones Muro was also known as “the Marañón’s man” (“el hombre del Marañón”). His family was related to the Barragáns. Rosa Muro Guevara, a relative of Manuel Antonio Mesones Muro, was Genaro Barragán’s mother. Manuel Antonio Mesones Muro was the son of José Mesones Ubillús de la Cotera and Juana Rosa Matilde de las Mercedes Muro Niño Ladrón de Guevara (Rivera 1986, 119; Tauro 2001, 1669). The latter could have been related to my great-great-grandfather as well because of the maternal last name: Niño Ladrón de Guevara.