

Forms of Violence

Comic strips, the comic magazine,
and the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico
1911-1940

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December 2021

A dissertation submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstracts

English abstract

My dissertation develops a media history of the anti-Asian aesthetics and forms of violence that I see as part of the cultural and industrial foundations of contemporary print culture. I have investigated how cartooned forms of race and the colour yellow, in formats printed in Mexico and in the Mexican comic magazine for the Latin American market, created meanings for mass distribution. During the first half of the 20th century, the growth of the media-based cultural industries took shape alongside campaigns for the expulsion, internment, and repression of Asians. In this way, my dissertation establishes a bridge between anti-Chinese actions, the industrial press, and the banality of violence with individual memories.

French abstract

Ma thèse présente une histoire médiatique de l'esthétique anti-asiatique et des formes de violence que je considère comme des fondements culturels et industriels de la culture imprimée contemporaine. J'étudie ainsi comment les formes de la caricature sur la race et la couleur jaune, dans les formats imprimés au Mexique et dans la Bande dessinée mexicaine pour le marché latino-américain, ont créé des significations pour la diffusion de masse. Durant la première moitié du XXe siècle, la croissance des industries culturelles médiatiques prend forme parallèlement aux campagnes d'expulsion, d'internement et de répression des Asiatiques. De sorte que ma thèse établit un pont entre actions antichinoises, presse écrite et banalité de la violence, mais aussi représentations et mémoires individuelles.

Acknowledgements

It was nourishing and challenging to complete this long breath effort under the supervision of Dr. Will Straw. Thinking hard and being curious about print culture, magazines, and academia with an experienced and kind scholar, was often light and joyful. Dr. Dominique Hardy offered very attuned feedback with my sensitivity as historian, and an unbeatable combination of expertise on cartoons and satirical humour, which were a dreamy soundboard for my work on comics.

The committee that participated in my defense, invested time in reading and making generous suggestions that will enrich the next iterations of this project. The intellectual finesse of Dr. Alanna Thain about the conceptual and the fantastical has sparked my own process to refocus theoretical angles and better animate my original ideas. I was very lucky to lay out my materialist transfeminist methodologies with Dr. Jenny Burman at the Institute of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies and her ongoing support as Graduate Program Director of the Art History and Communication Studies Department meant a lot to me. Writing and researching translocally is incredible productive and difficult, and I sincerely thank my external examiner Dr. Julián Durazo for his nuanced approach to the history of Mexico. I hope that soon enough, I will have an adequate opportunity to address the specific challenges of political philosophy, a field that was at first peripheral for this dissertation of media studies, but that became more intertwined and central as I continued to build my arguments. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Alice Jim for every smart word about Transpacific, Hemispheric and Asian-Indigenous futurity that I have had with her since 2014. Having access to the diasporic network of Asian thinkers and artists that you have introduced me to has enriched my perspective enormously.

During earlier stages of my work, Dr. Thomas Lamarre made specific suggestions to link fascist politics with cultural industries, and his rich approach to manga and the symbolic density of layout made an indelible impact on me. While I focus on print culture of the first half of the 20th century, I also track the legacies that the Transpacific slavery had on visual culture and modern categories of race in Mexico. I could not have done this without the analytical skills that I learned from Dr. Charmaine Nelson and her methodologies to work with what she conceptualizes as visual slavery.

I discussed my corpus of Mexican periodicals with academics based in Mexico and Colombia. Much of what I know about artisanal and industrial mechanisms of the press, complex ways to look at the printed sphere as well as rigorous periodization is a direct result of my continuous debates with the erudite of the press Dr. Laurence Coudart. I want to also thank Dr. Beatriz Urías for making available through constant direct dialogue her robust understanding of racism in Mexico, and her inspiring work on the mysticism connecting the revolutionary intelligentsia and bureaucratic apparatus. Finally, my discussions about trauma, historical episodes of terror, and narratology with Dr. Francisco Ortega were key to refine my writing about forms of violence.

I must thank my caring and inspiring colleagues Zoe De Luca, Kanwal Syed, Farah Atoui and Jessica Fontaine. My partner and collaborator Islandia Guzmán was incredibly patient, but I cannot thank her enough for her support reading every one of my words and offering the specialized bicultural advice of a Native English speaker and historian. This dissertation was made possible through the financial support of the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología and the Secretaría de Educación Pública in Mexico, research travel awards from Media@McGill and the Faculty of Arts, funding by the Department of Art History and Communication Studies and my advisor. Thanks to Natasha Klein-Panneton for her efficient and solid administrative support.

Preface

This dissertation is a work of original research by the author and analyzes comics as graphic mass media components of a political movement against the Chinese diaspora in Mexico. The *campaña antichina* (anti-Chinese campaign), as it was called at the time, was particularly vocal and violent between the 1910s and 1940s, when there was an observable peak in the creation and circulation of racist graphics, and in the coverage that newspapers gave to anti-Chinese actions and propaganda. I suggest that studying the ways in which this propagandistic, graphic, and journalistic synchronization was produced opens an urgent debate in Mexico about the public functions of mass media, and the visual materiality of racial violence.

Different aspects of the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico extended before and after the 1910s and 1940s, but I will focus on this period for methodological and heuristic reasons. In the first part of this preface, called "Canon and agon," I discuss perspectives from which my dissertation moves forward to study the anti-Chinese campaign as a phenomenon of formal mediatization of violence; the second part presents a methodological overview of my dialogue between context, theory, and heritage, on which I base my ethnohistorical account of this mediatization. This methodological part is titled "To be entertained means to agree,"¹ a sentence originally written by Theodor Adorno and Mark Horkheimer in the 1940s, when they were reflecting on the political functions that cultural industries performed for the Nazi regime. I should warn the reader that, in Mexico, the most extended interpretation of the first half of the 20th century is that the State that emerged from

¹ Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. "The culture industry", *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical fragments*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002 [Frankfurt, 1947], p. 115.

the Mexican Revolution was “authoritarian,”² and nationalist, but not fascist.

Throughout this dissertation, I will insist on putting forward evidence suggesting that crypto fascism and, not rarely, open fascism, was embraced by key figures of the postrevolutionary *apparatus*.

Heuristically, it makes sense to pay attention to the 1910-1940s because of the acceleration it represents in the production of printed matter, which, luckily, is reflected in abundant sources in the archives. Despite their political volatility, the years of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) detonated an intense acceleration in the printed sphere. In comparison with the Mexican press of the first half of the 19th century, as noted by Laurence Coudart, Mexican periodicals of the early 20th century achieved independence from foreign circulation, had large runs; developed audiences that began to have a national presence, and maybe, for the first time, had created local infrastructures to achieve at least some degree of material independence regarding “supplies (paper, for example) and technology (presses and types).”³

When the complicated panorama of multi-scalar, multiregional conflicts and armed resistance linked to the Revolution started to settle by the late 1910s, the steady course of modernization and regulation of the communications infrastructure which started in the mid 1850s was re-booted, and by the late 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, increasingly spectacular printed forms, in attractive sizes and bright colours,

² “The Mexican political system is not only an authoritarian system, but also a system founded in the control and manipulation of working masses without concessions.” Córdova, Amaldo, *La política de masas del cardenismo*. Ediciones Era, Mexico City, 2014 [1974]. p. 27.

³ Coudart, Laurence. “El espejo estrellado: La caricatura decimonónica,” in Lise Andriez and María Esther Pérez Salas (dirs.). *Impressions du Mexique et de France / Impresiones de Mexico y Francia*. Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme / Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. Jose María Luis Mora, Paris / Mexico, 2009, p. 258. My translation.

were supported by emerging media conglomerates with national presence and solid deals with international agencies of information. Among the most spectacular printed forms, we find the innovative and entertaining format of the comic magazine, which was specially supported by the Postrevolutionary State. In addition to the coherence of this acceleration and development curve, I am focusing my attention in the 1910s-1940s because archival sources on the 1950s-1960s period in Mexico are notably disorganized and scarce, and their absence too significant to ignore.

Doing the archival work that was possible for this dissertation was seriously challenging and required techniques and procedures that I discuss very briefly in the third part of this preface, called “Archival labor.” The fourth and last part of the preface describes the content of the dissertation. Before going into more detail of how and where I had to dig to find sources for this project, let me succinctly explain why my approach to the first half of the 20th century in Mexico had to depart from some classical practices present in existing scholarship.

The study of the interconnections between cultural industries and politics to uncover ideologies is a method that was employed by Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School, and the political philosopher Hanna Arendt. This generation that experienced totalitarianism firsthand—with reference to Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism—investigated mass culture and communication in order to explain the genocidal regimes that proliferated around them in the first half of the 20th century. This method of “passionate thinking,” in Arendt’s terms, was also used by the generation of the numerous “turns” since the 1970s (linguistic, historiographic, hermeneutic, decolonial, subaltern, and so on) in their production of critical knowledge. I belong to the post-Berlin Wall generation, but I am the first scholar to

think passionately about the interconnections between the Post-revolutionary Mexican State, the comics industry, and the anti-Chinese campaign.

I attribute this methodological absence to three biases that I would group together succinctly as the bias of “cultural imperialism” in Mexican media studies; the “revolutionary” bias that has romanticized Mexican authoritarianism—and its crypto fascism; and a somewhat crude denial concerning the scale of the anti-Chinese campaign linked to the biases of a “frontier provincialism” of the military men in the North who perpetrated violence and justified it as revolutionary pride. I should mention that as a Mexican Chinese scholar, I have a visceral investment in exposing these biases, and I use this dissertation to address the incoherence I was born into as the descendant of Indigenous Chinese survivors in Mexico. This is my first attempt at finding words with which to speak about the missing parts, the absent narrative, the absent transmission.

Canon and agon

The influence of the United States on the cultural industries of Mexico and other countries has indisputably been significant and powerful. As it is often the case, the more acceptance critical propositions acquire, the more they are at risk of being oversimplified. Inspired by the decolonial turn, in the early 1970s, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart co-wrote about animation and comics in Latin America as tools of “cultural imperialism.”⁴ In their analysis, graphic mass media created stories that carried ideologies of domination and capitalist ethics from the United States to South America. Dorfman and Mattelart’s ideas continue to inspire print culture scholars, as

⁴ Dorfman, Ariel and Armand Mattelart. *Para leer al Pato Donald. Comunicación de masa y colonialismo*. Siglo XXI Editores, Buenos Aires, 1972.

is evident in the notion of a “pulp empire” proposed by Paul Hirsch to expose the ways in which in U. S. “policy makers and propagandists played a vital role in shaping the contents of commercial and propaganda comics.”⁵

I agree with Dorfman and Mattelar’s classic proposition and I am looking forward to seeing how Hirsch’s application of their idea will have an impact among print culture scholars. Nonetheless, I depart from their mostly unidirectional understanding of top-down imperialism. Instead, I propose that anti-Chinese racial violence in Mexican comics operates too in quotidian ways, diagonally and horizontally. I also suggest that this racial violence is the combination of the Mexican “internal imperialism” theorized by Pablo González Casanova,⁶ and racial (post)colonialism. Daniel Nemser’s defines colonial racial infrastructure as the “socioethnic relation [...] into which both human and non-human objects were concentrated [combining] both confinement and circulation.”⁷ Nemser then arguments that colonial infrastructures of race enabled “the ongoing functioning of specific machineries of extraction and accumulation.”⁸

In this dissertation I approach comics as the materials and fantasies that manufactured modern race, the shapes of bodies and faces, colours, and narrative structures. Comics concentrated and put in circulation prototypical racial forms and situations in which interracial “contact” was valid, mostly in terms of the extraction of the labour of Chinese men, as well as other interracial forms that should be penalized, for example, sociability, marriage, and reproduction. I additionally propose that the

⁵ Hirsch, Paul S. *Pulp empire. The secret history of comic book imperialism*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2021, p. 9.

⁶ González Casanova, Pablo. “Internal Colonialism and National Development,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* I, No.4 (1965), pp. 27-37.

⁷ Nemser, Daniel. *Infrastructures of Race. Concentration and Biopolitics in colonial Mexico*. University of Texas Pres, Austin, 2017, p. 5.

⁸ Nemser, 2017, p. 5.

circulation of ideas of domination in Mexican print culture depends on the diagrammatic integration, which is convoluted, multidirectional and shifting, of colonial and postcolonial racial materials and forms of violence. As Kajri Jain argues, the shapes and shades that resonate through “visual print capitalism,” are never just internationally significant but, most importantly (because its success depends on them), always intervernacular: “like other forms of community manufacture, is not just about one *imagined* community called the nation; it can also be about many *enacted* communities and their *intervernacular* interactions.”⁹

The imperialist bias that transfers the responsibility of local violence to foreign and vertical (top-down) circuits of violence also depends on a miscalculation of the caliber and amplitude of printed matter in Mexico. Maybe imagining the notions of caliber and diagrams together helps us to visualize the extension, power, energy-drive, speed, multiple directions, and violent impact that illustrated printed formats that were made in Mexico have had on multi-scalar print culture markets. This diagrammatic amplitude is clear in the case of Mexican industrial comic magazines of the late 1930s.

During its industrial stage, Mexican teams wrote original stories and translated stories from the U.S. to assemble them into Mexican comic magazines that supplied content in Spanish for the South American and Caribbean markets. This convoluted Pan-American diagram connected North America with Latin America but, as my research documents, many of the themes, storylines, visual signs, formats, print culture entrepreneurs and forms of capital that shaped the booming print culture market of

⁹ Jain, Kajri. *Gods in the bazaar. The economies of Indian Calendar Art*. Duke University Press, Durham, 2007, p. 72

the 1930s started to take form in the 1910s, when multiple newspapers bought rotary printing press machines and comics and colour began to be industrially abundant in Mexico.

What I mean by revolutionary bias is part teleology, in the sense of a romanticization of the political nobility of the Mexican Revolution, in which social horrors are justified as a means to achieve the revolutionary future. During both periods in the history of comics that I study here, roughly the 1910s and the 1930s, the emerging printed market was sustained by key actors of the printed sphere who also belonged to varying factions of the Revolution. This is the case of the anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, as well as equally confusing figures of the chameleonic revolutionary right, such José Vasconcelos or General Salvador Alvarado.

General Plutarco Elías Calles, who did not direct nor own periodicals, but used mass media to distribute his anti-Chinese values for decades, became the most successful politician among the revolutionary right, and is, in my opinion, the historical figure whose reputation has benefitted the most from the revolutionary bias. Some of his anti-Chinese laws and actions as governor of Sonora in the 1920s have been studied by Evelyn Hu de Hart and José Gómez Izquierdo since the mid 1980s and early 1990s,¹⁰ but his commitment to the anti-Chinese campaign during his Presidential administration (1924-1928), as founder of the government party, and subsequent role of *Jefe Máximo de la Revolución* (1929-1936) have been notoriously understudied, blurring the symbolic structure and the political priorities of the Postrevolutionary

¹⁰ Hu De-Hart, Evelyn. "La comunidad china en el desarrollo de Sonora," in *Historia General de Sonora*, Vol. 4. Hermosillo, Gobierno del Estado de Sonora, 1985, pp. 195-211. Gómez Izquierdo, José Jorge. *El movimiento antichino en México, 1871-1934*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, 1991.

Mexican State. Given this context, the reader should not be surprised at the amount of attention I give him in my dissertation.

The third contribution, and point of divergence, of my research is that while most scholars of the first half of the 20th century in Mexico can articulate different ways in which the rise and fall of totalitarian regimes in Europe, the two World Wars and the Mexican Revolution marked the period, they have failed to fully acknowledge the dimensions of the anti-Chinese campaign and its particularities. On a national level, it was a mass media propaganda campaign that targeted the emotions of large audiences with the intention of mobilizing them. It was spread by deep, extensive, and frequent radio coverage and compelling standard forms in the booming market of comics for newspapers and magazines that included journalistic and fictional stories, comics, illustrations, and advertising for plays, and films.

When compared internationally, while the racist campaign against Asian diasporas was present across the Hemisphere, it was in Mexico that the hateful campaign reached its most deadly and gruesome scale. Internment camps for Asians created on Mexican islands in the Pacific in 1896, were the first of their kind, way before 1941, when it happened in most other countries in the Americas. Deportations of Asians started in the North of Mexico in 1896 as well, and became a regular practice in the 1920s, and then in the 1930s. The Massacre of Torreón in 1911, directly linked with revolutionary factions that I will discuss in pages ahead, is the massacre of Asians with the largest number of registered victims in the Hemisphere.

To be entertained means to agree

Adorno and Horkheimer framed cultural industries in terms of how they functioned as a collective apologia for horrendous tragedies: "the original affinity between business and entertainment reveals itself in the meaning of entertainment itself: as society's apologia. To be entertained means to be in agreement."¹¹ Industrially produced comics in Mexico align with this trajectory because Mexican comics were a mass media that commodified and humorized graphic violence at a large scale. This dissertation collects and studies series of cartoons, comic strips, and comic magazine covers with anti-Chinese values that have never been studied before. Furthermore, the study I present of how these cartooned versions of horrendous tragedies were formed, standardized, and arranged into sequences and series constitutes a new approach to the study of comics in Mexico.

The initial study of Mexican comics was written in the 1970s by Irene Herner and paid attention to how they modelled class and were "instruments of control and ideological domination."¹² Herner advised against treating comics as popular culture, and suggested instead that they were "a form of culture proposed, set, and produced by the dominant class."¹³ The most extended study of comics in Mexico, written in the 1980s, departed from Herner's combativeness and constituted the first attempt of creating a dictionary about Mexican comics. The authors of this effort were Juan Manuel Aurrecochea and Armando Bartra, who presented the comic as a

¹¹ And the quote continues: "Entertainment makes itself possible only by insulating itself from the totality of the social process, making itself stupid and perversely renouncing from the first the / in-escapable claim of any work, even the most trivial: in its restrictedness to reflect the whole." Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. "The culture industry," *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical fragments*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002 [Frankfurt, 1947], pp. 115-116.

¹² Herner, Irene. *Mitos y Monitos, historietas y fotonovelas en México*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México / Nueva Imagen, Mexico City, 1979, p. IX. My translation.

¹³ Herner, 1979, p. 19. My translation.

“cultural phenomenon [...] that comes from the influence, penetration and subsequent nationalization of North American daily and Sunday newspapers.”¹⁴

In the 1990s and early 2000s cultural debates inspired a growing number of comic scholars in Mexico. Under the cultural magnifying glass, comics created “narratives [that] helped to define what modernity meant,”¹⁵ shaping gender roles, society’s “sentimental education,”¹⁶ and its “affective behaviours.”¹⁷ At the time, Thierry Groensteen, in Belgium, led a semiotic shift that made space for increasingly systematic observations about comics, and the “translinear or distant”¹⁸ relations that emerged from their layout. Likewise, in Mexico, Armando Bartra started to refer to the particularities of the sequential visual discourse of *fotonovelas* or comics, and how their form produced meaning through “the spatio-temporal diversity of its panels, the symbiosis with the text and the distribution of both on the page.”¹⁹

I think these semiotic and formalist approaches to the comic can be substantially enriched by the diagrammatic dynamics that I started to introduce in the first part of this preface. In dialogue with Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, Parameshwar Gaonkar and

¹⁴ Aurrecochea, Juan Manuel and Armando Bartra. *Puros cuentos. La historia de la historieta en México 1874-1934*, Vol. 1. Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / Museo de Culturas Populares / Grijalbo, Mexico City, 1988, p. 9.

¹⁵ Rubenstein, Anne G. *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, & Other Threats to the Nation. A political History of Comic Books in Mexico*. Duke University Press, Durham, 1998. This book was translated to Spanish and circulated extensively in Mexico. *De los pepines a los agachados. Una historia política de las historietas*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, 2004.

¹⁶ Bartra, Armando. “Piel de papel. Los pepines en la educación sentimental del mexicano,” in *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre la Historieta*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 2001), La Habana, pp. 67-90. My translation.

¹⁷ Hernández Ramírez, María Elena. “El consumo de historietas sentimentales,” in *Comunicación y Sociedad*, No. 6, Guadalajara, CEIC / Universidad de Guadalajara, 2010, p. 39. My translation.

¹⁸ Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics*. Translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2009, p. 22 [Paris, 1999].

¹⁹ Bartra, Armando. “La narrativa fotográfica en la prensa mexicana,” *Luna cornea*, No. 18: La maquina de narrar, 1999, p. 40. My translation.

Elizabeth Povinelli, I have assembled a set of terms and techniques sensitive to the advantages of a relativist approach when studying “connectivity,”²⁰ the advantages of treating printed forms as “circulatory fields”²¹ rather than static fields, and to the ways comics “exude”²² meaning.

In his work on comics, Groensteen also identified the ways in which iconographic communication produced “typification,” defined as “the abbreviation of a character to several pertinent lines [...] that of stereotype, that answers to the necessity of fully visually expressing something through ‘exterior signs’ [...] that are simple and immediately decodable.”²³ This line of enquiry has had the greatest theoretical impact on comic scholars and is the one that has best supported the slow constitution of race as an analytical category for comics, in comparison to the categories of class and gender that were developed first.

The narrative and visual stereotypes circulated by the comic have been seen by the very few scholars of comics and race in Mexico as a material for the “construction of otherness,”²⁴ or as “behavioral guides” that disperse racial and social prejudices.²⁵ Racial perspectives on comics have been specially neglected in Mexico, where most writers and scholars have remained significantly enchanted by the softness of

²⁰ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Duke University Press, Durham / London, 2007, p. 223.

²¹ Gaonkar, Parameshwar Dilip and Elizabeth A. Povinelli. “Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition,” in *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2003, p. 392.

²² Bennett, Jane. “The Agency of Assemblages and the North American Blackout,” *Public Culture*, 17(3), Duke University Press, 2005, p. 447.

²³ Groensteen, 2009, p. 162.

²⁴ Voguel, Dominique. *La construcción de las figuras del Otro en la obra de Hergé*. Doctoral Thesis in Linguistics, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 2008, p. 12. My translation.

²⁵ Navarro Granados, Daniel. “Estereotipos, xenofobia y racismo en el humorismo gráfico de *El Universal* (México, 1924-1932),” in *Revista de la Red Intercátedras de Historia de América Latina Contemporánea* 24, Year 2, No. 3, Córdoba, December 2014 - May 2015, p. 40. My translation.

cartooning and the apparent privacy of reading comics. My approach to the racial politics of comics departs willingly from studies like this. Diagonally and diagrammatically, I want to disrupt the idea that fantasies—and more precisely, fantastical forms of graphic violence—were passive in any way, or that their effects were restricted to an artificially compacted socio-cultural sphere, placed at the limits or altogether outside of what is public.

The way that Martha Banta and Esther Leslie have, without the use of euphemisms, studied the force of graphic impact and theorized cartooned violence in terms of “language of attack,”²⁶ or a “flatness” that renders “domination without antagonism”²⁷ became another structuring dimension of my research. The main method of analysis of my dissertation is to pinpoint the shapes, narratives, emotions, and visual traditions that comics modelled to transmit violence, which is in debt in many ways to these two scholars. I will be forever grateful to the print culture scholar William Straw, who is also my advisor, for introducing and discussing with me this work, in addition to many other of the texts with which I enter into dialogue in this dissertation.

My second method for disrupting the tendency to project naiveté onto comics is to show how the imagined or fantastical violence circulated by comics was articulated with press reports about “real” (physical) violence. Thus far, it is the second golden era of Mexican comics (1960-1980) which has received the most scholarly attention. This emphasis partially explains why most scholars of the Mexican comic are not

²⁶ Banta, Martha. *Caricature and the Culture of Conduct, 1841-1936*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2003, p. 13.

²⁷ Leslie, Esther *Hollywood Flatlands. Animation, critical theory and the avant-garde*. Verso, London / New York, 2004, pp. 19 and 165.

aware that during the first period of industrialization of comic stories in Mexico, from the 1900s to the 1920s, comics circulated principally as newspaper strips and focused on ordinary, everyday situations and characters; moreover, they often provided commentary on the same events present in the news cycle. Additionally, newspapers assembled comics and journalism in a single format, so that they often echoed and amplified each other's violence.

By the late 1930s, comic storylines became more elaborate and fantastical, but this did not mean that comics stopped investing in the experimentation with different forms of violence or that the "real" anti-Asian violence stopped. Deportations, interment, and dispossession against Chinese, Korean and eventually Japanese in Mexico continued until the mid 1940s. In the late 1930s, the influence of the United States became more visible in mass media which were, as Hirsch suggests, "bound up with matters of race and capitalism."²⁸ Without invoking the "cultural imperialism" bias, in this dissertation I will point to some specific ways in which Mexican press entrepreneurs made alliances with their U.S. counterparts. This is not a dissertation about foreign policy or immigration, but I necessarily discuss anti-Asian actions and politics in Mexico in relation to these matters, and how they contrasted or aligned with anti-Asian actions in the larger North American context.

I began this section quoting Adorno, but the first scholar contemporary to fascism that I read was Hannah Arendt. Both my interest in pointing to the public coherence that the anti-Chinese campaign had within the press and the theorization of the political operativity of naiveté were inspired by several of her works. During my dissertation it seems crucial to characterize cartooning language and the banality of

²⁸ Hirsch, 2021, p. 21.

its "grotesque silliness,"²⁹ as one of the specific ways in which comics served racist imaginations and softened brutal acts of violence. As Arendt points out, one of the boldest effects produced by totalitarian and genocidal ideologies is historical dislocation between the past and the future, a sort of epistemological ruin of which historiographic storytelling needs to make sense. Along the same lines, the ideas of Veena Das about the academic narration of violence and trauma as an act of restitution for the community of the victim also impacted my vocabulary.³⁰ The work that Francisco Ortega, enthusiastic reader and translator of the work of Das to Spanish, has done with historical trauma, phantasmagoria and silence,³¹ as well as the haunting dimensions theorized by Avery Gordon,³² are some of the positions that I use to structure the phantasmagoric ontology I will be narrating about.

I would like to ask the reader to be careful with how they approach the parts of my dissertation that deal with trauma and haunting, such as "Inherited haunting," "Deep times," "Domestic ruins," "Flat trauma" and "Yellow pest". On one hand, it is a triggering subject, because I am dealing with slavery, forced migration, loss, genocidal ideologies, and intergenerational trauma, but also, I am in no way referring to esoteric subjects. My method is formal, materialist, slightly poetic, and even archeological. I will be referring to cartoons and comic forms, but also clandestine public mass graves of Chinese in Mexico, rituals of massacres and genocidal

²⁹ Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Books, New York, 2006, p. 252 [Viking Press, New York, 1963].

³⁰ Das, Veena. "Lenguaje y cuerpo: transacciones en la construcción del dolor," "La antropología del dolor," and "Trauma y testimonio" in Ortega, Francisco (ed.). *Veena Das: Sujetos de dolor, agentes de dignidad*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia / Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, 2008.

³¹ Ortega, Francisco. "Crisis social y trauma: perspectivas desde la historiografía cultural colonial," in *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, No. 30, 2003; "Violencia social e historia," in *Universitas Humanistica*, No. 66, July 2018.

³² Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008 [1997].

"mortuary patterns."³³ The depth and trauma made evident in these material remains sustains another central argument of the dissertation: that the anti-Chinese campaign was a genocidal, and in this precise sense also fascist, political movement.

Only in 2019 did Jorge Gómez Izquierdo refer to the anti-Chinese campaign as a "holocaust and planned genocide."³⁴ As I have mentioned, Gómez Izquierdo started to study the campaign in the 1990s, and is, to date, the only Mexican scholar who has published a book about it. His more recent genocidal argument emphasizes some regulations about interracial marriage and reproduction between Chinese and Mexicans. These policies represent a completely valid prism through which to study genocide, but until now there is no study of its multiregional application, which has allowed some to deny what happened there. To make my argument about the Chinese genocide in Mexico, I prefer to emphasize the administration of death and cruelty because these are both ideas, values, policies, and blunt practices, and because, in my opinion, there is an unfulfilled responsibility to acknowledge the terror and cruelties of the genocide.

As systematically as possible, I have put together an initial typification of anti-Chinese horror based on the close reading of reports circulated by newspapers, regional and federal laws, internal texts of the Postrevolutionary administration, and political plans. I am thankful that I could use the research of Evelyn Hu De-Hart, Gómez Izquierdo and Gerardo Reñique, as well as the most recent contributions of Elsa de la Rosa, Ignacio Almada Bay, Alberto Chacón Flores, Julia María Schiavone and Robert Chao

³³ Komar, Debra. "Patterns of mortuary practice associated with genocide. Implications for Archeological Research," in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 49, No. 1, February 2008, University of Chicago Press, pp. 123-133.

³⁴ Gómez Izquierdo, José Jorge. "El Holocausto chino. Biopolítica y racismo de Estado en México, 1896-1934" in *Dorsal. Revista de Estudios Foucaultianos*, No. 7, December 2019, p. 205. My translation.

Romero. It is about time the history of the Chinese Diaspora in Mexico experiences a boom; certainly, I could not have attempted to systematize and find patterns without the committed research of these historians. In sum, while I am not the first scholar looking at the anti-Chinese movement in Mexico, I am the first one clarifying its scale and the specific commitments that some of its leaders had across long periods.

The government party that General Elías Calles founded in 1929, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR)—which held public power for seven decades despite internal conflicts, fissures, restructuring and name changes in its foundational years had an anti-Chinese section.

The Comité Pro Raza promoted the election of anti-Chinese authorities in different branches of the State, organized meetings, wrote, illustrated, and made public all sorts of propaganda. This section supported anti-Chinese laws in different states and had an impact on national laws concerning Immigration, Labor and Land. The aggressively nationalist Postrevolutionary State and the printed market amplified each other, producing horrors that cannot be fully understand through the prism of authoritarianism. Throughout this dissertation, I will be moving constantly back and forth between political history and graphic analysis. This line of analysis makes evident several problems in the way the 1910s-1940s period has been seen, and, I hope, will affect how historians conceptualize it.

Archival labor

Comic strips made in Mexico were abundant since the early 1910s when they became a ubiquitous resource of attraction for newspapers of large circulation such *El Imparcial*, and humorist weeklies like *Multicolor* or *La Risa*. Among the main distributors of comics after the Mexican Revolution I have focused on tabloid size

newspapers like *Excélsior* and *El Universal*, that were printed for the first time in 1917, and the smaller *Heraldo de Mexico*, printed since 1919. There is no catalogue of Mexican comic strips that, for example, points towards which comic titles can be found in certain newspapers in a certain year. To be able to narrow my research on this list of newspapers, I had to first create my list of comics, cross referencing mentions in books and articles which are not systematic in the way they register the newspapers or the years when comic strips were originally published. Once my list with titles and periods had minimum functionality, I had to check a few issues of periodicals page by page, just to be able to predict where I could find comic sections.

As a scholar in a Canadian institution, I travelled to Mexico City to work in person at the Hemeroteca Nacional-UNAM (HN-UNAM) and the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada (BL) in Mexico City. While HN-UNAM is sadly, a very incomplete collection, it has the enormous advantage of its Hemeroteca Nacional Digital project (HND), where scholars can use search engines to work with newspapers and remotely access a good part of the collection. BL has a better kept and more complete collection of 20th century newspapers, but it does not have catalogues. The search engines at HND do not work for comics, and as I have mentioned, BL simply doesn't have any search engines. This means that any scholar interested in comics must diagonally read large and heavy compilations of newspapers, page by page, as fast as possible, trying to fish for comic hits. As the COVID-19 pandemic made painfully evident, one must be able to travel and sit to work for long hours at the archive to fish for miracles.

Let me briefly mention a more general problem that affects the entire field of periodical press studies. While the study of the press in Mexico has made substantial advances on 19th century newspapers, 20th century newspapers, in comparison, are

still *terra nova*. The main problem seems to be the underdevelopment of conservation policies and adequate registers for sources of the 20th century, as well as the interference that ongoing copyrights had created for digitization policies. There are very few academic monographs or articles about even the most widely read newspapers, or the titles that had national circulation. This means that, for most Mexican newspapers of the 20th century, frequency, periodicity, formats, sections, main actors, and technologies, must be established from scratch, and this often involves correcting incorrect information. In the dissertation I include serial information for almost every newspaper I used, and this took a lot of work. I also mention several regional periodicals, but since regional archives are totally inaccessible online, this depended mostly on secondary sources, such as theses from regional universities, and articles that adequately quoted regional periodicals. The little direct archival work I could carry out in this area was through the digital collections of older regional periodicals made available at HND and by paying a subscription to the digital historical collection of *El Siglo de Torreón*, printed for the first time in 1922.

The main problem with the HND collection for comic scholars, and this affects periodicals of national and regional circulation, is that, almost systematically, comic strips sections have been left out of the digitization of newspapers, negating any benefit that optical text recognition and search engines may have and making remote access impossible. Finally, in the truly exceptional instances when comics were digitized, they were scanned in black and white without exception, even though most of the comic sections since the 1910s were originally coloured. The possibilities of access to comics, or a fairer perception of how they used colour are then limited to in situ archival research.

One would think that, once comics were separated from the format of the newspaper in the 1930s—and started to be printed by millions in formats of their own—this boom would be reflected in healthier and better kept archives, but this is not the case. There is a collection of comics accessible to the public *in situ* at Hemeroteca Nacional. It is full of holes, and the combination of neglect, lack of consistent scholarly attention, lack of conservation policies designed to protect or at least consider comics as historical sources, as well as significant amounts of pillage, have left us with rather chaotic ruins. The contrast of these ruins with the state of online fan archives that have made at least some covers accessible, in an amateur, but significantly systematic way, is very telling.

In the early 2010s, Aurrecochea, who is probably the best-informed human encyclopedia of the comic in Mexico, initiated a digital effort to continue and update his classic publication *Puros cuentos*. This was in some ways a dictionary about Mexican comics, and the project to transform it into an online catalogue is today hosted by the HN-UNAM. The digital project does not consider comic strips, which were originally part of *Puros Cuentos*, but just comic magazines. More than 10 years after the digital project was initiated, a web page is currently online, but its search engines and database are not fully functional. While this effort has opened a field of possibilities for more in-depth scholarly work, it has many limitations. Additionally, it continues to affect the work of scholars *in situ* because some magazines are not available with the excuse that they are being digitized.

Finally, as I have made the reader aware, I work with the ways stereotypes of Chinese were modelled in comic strips and comic magazines. This specific interest meant that on top of the page by page work I had to do, I had to really dig for ethnic specific hits. In this sense, the collection I have put together of anti-Chinese strips is *per se* a significant contribution.

Content

My dissertation is divided into three parts in which I go back and forth between the forms of violence and political analysis. The initial part is Chapter 1, "Just the desert: Domestic orders, printed matter and the Mexican anti-Chinese campaign," which places printed matter in a relational field in which I can observe the anti-Chinese political movement in Mexico, the symbols of phantasmagorical ontology that represent the Asian Diaspora inside of national memory, and the material remains of the racial violence against it. I connect this field with the memory of my grandmother, who was Indigenous Chinese born in the city of Torreón, Mexico, in 1927, and with an overview of the how the racial category of the Indigenous Chinese was formed during the centuries of New Spanish Colonial regime and the Transpacific slave trade.

Furthermore, I list the clandestine mass graves of Chinese in Mexico as well as the differentiated genocidal patterns made against them between 1896 and 1942. My understanding of genocidal patterns is based on archeological discussions about rituals of massacres and the way aggressive treatment of human remains exposes the beliefs of the perpetrators of violence (Komar, 2008). Additionally, I analyse the history and iconography of the monument to a coolie worker, an indentured laborer of Asian origin, which was placed in Torreón in 2007 as the first act of reconciliation for the Massacre of Torreón, in 1911. The monument was removed from the public space in which it was originally placed after repeated acts that performed the "lynching" of the statue, but it returned as a drawn silhouette that served as the background for the act of apology that, only in May of 2021, the Mexican government offered to the Mexican Chinese community. I close this relational field presenting early 20th century and contemporary printed matter with anti-Chinese

"values" by introducing several political groups and media entrepreneurs which sustained the codification of "yellow" as a racial threat in Mexico.

The second part of my thesis focuses on the original corpus of comic strips that I have researched first hand in archives of the United States, Mexico, and Colombia and digitally, in Spain; it follows a chronological order and is made up of Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2, "The universe of graphic forms and the format of the comic 1880-1910," defines the specific functions of the graphic language caricaturing the Chinese in early comic strips within a larger context of illustrated printed matter. In it, we shall see, classic discursive drifts of the periodical press propagated eugenic ideas about the Chinese, who were viewed as a necessary resource of modernization and, simultaneously, an agent of racial degeneration. Chapter 3, "Comic strips and genocidal ideologies, 1911-1920," discusses the formal beginning of the anti-Chinese campaign as enacted and theorized by multiple militias of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). During this time of acute social crisis, the press coverage of violent actions against the Chinese was abundant while legal projects regulating patrimony, immigration, marriage, citizenship, deportation, and repatriation to exclude the Chinese were incessant. On a graphic level, between 1910 and 1920, the Mexican comic strip abandoned its Orientalist vocabulary, which was based on the exhilaration of female, erotic and sexually available Asian bodies. Instead, cartoons and comics began to manufacture and circulate a repulsive stereotype of the Chinese man. This shocking figure operated in a nationalist imagination, where the Chinese represented a danger for racial reproduction because he was perversely "masculine," dangerously "feminine," dubiously heterosexual, and his offspring with a Mexican woman could only be semi-human.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter 4, "The comic magazine and the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico, 1921-1938." While the printed market of graphic media continued to grow and the use of color became a pervasive resource of the booming, mass-circulation press, the Mexican comic magazine emerged as a commodity for exportation in Latin America. Since its creation in 1929, the government party, Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), promoted the election of anti-Chinese authorities in different branches of the State. In this political climate, the history of the innovative media of the comic magazine that emerges in my research clarifies the alliances between militias, media, and political elites. I document the legal initiatives these actors coordinated and propagated across the Mexican territory, which included sanctioned robbery, deportation, concentration, internment, prohibition of marriage with Mexican women, and the prohibition of the possibility of being a Mexican citizen for the ethnic Chinese.

At the same time as these values were upheld in laws and State institutions, the visual forms of the mass media of the comic propagated the figures of the abject and sickly Chinese, the subordinate and endangered women who shared their lives with them, and the degenerate mixed family they formed together. This racially degenerated and visually arresting mixed family contrasted with those of ideal, racially acceptable *mestizo* families. Towards the end of the 1930s, the Mexican comic magazine established a new narrative model that I call "exotic adventure." Stories like these followed the "Latino" superman, who was white, with black hair, hyper-masculine and athletic, in elaborated fantastic scenarios often focused on physical fights with Yellow-Black- and Brown-bodied characters.

Chapter I

El desierto nomás / Just the desert

Domestic orders, printed matter, and the Mexican Anti-Chinese campaign

This text travels paths of death and violence to form bridges of words where only ruins remain. Sometimes just the bones remain, and in others, just the open desert.

It is for María Luna, who was born a ghost. With difficulties, she was my *abuela*, in the sense of the words roof, sustenance or nurture. Her ancestors, *indios fronterizos* and *chinos* in North America, were chased by Mexicans, Americans, Spaniards, Germans, French and Irish. Her trajectory as non-settler laborer in colonial ruins, landscapes of war and cruel border histories, left marks that slip like sand between my fingers. Her historical condition of being Indigenous Chinese walks with difficulties across my language, the domestic orders, the notions of kinship or genealogies.

I have organized this initial chapter in two parts. The first one connects some aspects of my grandmother's history with the presence of Asians in Mexico in colonial times and the monument of a Chinese worker in Torreón. It opens with a section focusing on an altar portrait and obituary for my grandmother, it features a photograph of her as an adolescent, taken around 1945, wearing *china poblana* attire. I will conceptualize this altar in her honor as a haunting object, a notion I introduce to generate language about genocidal trauma. I will pair this haunting object with the notion of genocidal mortuary practices, which I propose to name as the ways in which genocide extends after violent death. I put forward this term borrowing Debra Komar's analysis of

mortuary practices.¹ In the second section of this part, I examine in depth the romantic figure of the *china poblana* and use it as the point of entry to baroque times. The historically traceable person we have now come to know as the *china poblana*, like other enslaved Asian people, arrived in New Spain in the 17th century and became one of thousands of ancient Asian ancestors in Mexico. In the third and last section of this first part of the chapter I consider the brief public life of the only *culi* (coolie) statue in Mexico. This bronze figure was exhibited in public in the city of Torreón between 2007 and 2012.

The second part of this chapter starts with the section “Periodical specters,” presenting my proposed periodization of the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico. It is anchored in the city of Torreón, where in 1911 “the worst act of violence committed against any Chinese diasporic community of the Americas during the twentieth century” took place.² I present this historical episode with some printed traces of genocidal mortuary practices against *chinxs*. The second section presents the terrain of printed matter. It shows sensitivities and conceptions about printed propaganda and graphic violence in the decades of 1920-1940 in Mexico when legislation, the government party, and the press, took on anti-Chinese values. The periodical presence of printed culture was key to circulating anti-Chinese ideas with regularity and, in this section, I pinpoint two printed works that played an important role in the anti-Chinese printed environment. The first one is the illustrated book *El Ejemplo de Sonora* (*The Example of Sonora*) which commemorates the involvement of government organizations and politicians in

¹ “[...] mortuary archeologists provide a valuable framework for interpreting modern examples of mass death.” Komar, Debra. “Patterns of mortuary practice associated with genocide. Implications for Archeological Research,” in *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 49, No. 1, February 2008, University of Chicago Press, p. 123.

² Chao Romero, Robert. *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2010, p. 149.

the anti-Chines campaign. The second one is the illustrated magazine *Sucesos para Todos* (*Events for All*), printed by Editora Sayrols, the first printing house of Pan-American comic magazines in Mexico.

In the mismatched collection of historical remains that I present here, the instances of communication between the past and the present are paradigmatic. Illustrated printed remains along with a revision of specters of colonial times such the *china poblana* and the coolie monument, are emblems and traces, in the Ginzburgian sense. According to the evidential paradigm by Carlo Ginzburg, historical investigation based on “details usually considered of little importance, even trivial, minor, provided the key for approaching higher aspects of the human spirit.”³ These historical remains reveal the long durational and adaptative aliveness of the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico and track genocidal relations between *chinxs* and national memory.

Part one

Inherited haunting

María Luna was buried with music, flowers, and *palabras* by women of her tribe who were dispersed by not-always voluntary migration and have not yet fully secured settlement in Mexico or the United States. María left a pile of bale clothes for assorted genders and sizes, still useful kitchen stuff, and a stack of haunted comic magazines in pocket format. She treasured their drawings, word puzzles and dirty jokes. She loved to make mocking tunes and rhymes. Making room to talk from my guts in my aunts' kitchens to remember her, I learned that she made clothes for herself and for the family, sold *nopales*, picked beans and specialized in cleaning big houses. The anti-

³ Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1992 [1986], p. 101.

Chinese genocidal violence in Mexico took away her right to call herself Chinese and her right to venerate her parents and grandparents (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Permanent altar for María Luna combining Mexican and Chinese mourning practices. Family archive, Los Angeles, California.

According to Debra Komar, the “treatment of deposition of remains reflects the beliefs and attitudes of the agents involved.”⁴ In the case of my grandmother’s altar, her old portrait is the only material remain that my family across the northern border of Mexico have. My aunts are the agents that created this place of veneration since their right to transit freely across the border and visit Mexico, where my grandmother is buried, has been suspended by migratory laws. As a material remain, it exposes “concepts of veneration and violation and the systems of space, time, and inhumation.”⁵ Resilient but wounded, my diasporic family has a complicated relation with words; we share an inherited haunting.

When events of social violence are narrated, says Francisco Ortega, “what comes back is not simply a repressed memory, but the event that is constituted in part by the impossibility of integrating it into consciousness.”⁶ Before I could visit my aunts and attempt to talk with them about our ancestry, I tried to do the same with María Luna. I was starting my Bachelor’s in History at the time. With the innocence I had left, determined to be the one who solved the mystery, I asked her if she was Chinese. Feeling exposed, she asked me precisely *que no la torturara y que la llevara al desierto nomás* (to not torture her and just take her to the desert). I have worked around that heritage of untold words for years and the answers I have found are the effects of cruel marks of a genocide that have eroded but are still everywhere.

As time passed, the once full force of anti-Chinese genocidal violence in Mexico has blurred and been codified in words and circumstances that allow its fabricated oblivion

⁴ Komar, 2008, p. 123.

⁵ Komar, 2008, p. 123.

⁶ Ortega, Francisco. “Violencia social e historia: el nivel del acontecimiento,” in *Universitas Humanistica*, No. 66, July 2018, p. 48. My translation.

to dominate. Trying to explain to myself why there is so much silence about my ancestors, I started to think about words. I started to collect words to explain the mechanics of death and the dynamics of burial, which interfered with the possibility of veneration of ancestors by their relatives and their place in national identity. Narratives centering the diaspora have not fully emerged yet, but the bones remember. In Mexico, the word *chinero* is used to refer a disorganized burial site of Chinese.

The most famous *chinero*, in an eroded hill in the desertic terrain of Baja California, advertises itself online as being the site where, without digging, you find bunches of Chinese bones. *Chineros* are *fosas clandestinas* (clandestine mass graves) produced by genocidal mortuary practices.⁷ Like other clandestine graves, a *chinero* is not only the ruin that violence has left, but also the place for social dispute to establish truth and memory. Their clandestine condition serves to prevent establishing facts and responsibilities. We do not know if the bones in Baja California are from 1902, and could be counted in dozens, or if they are from large groups of *culíes* trafficked in 1916, who entered Mexico from the United States, or through the ports of Ensenada and Guaymas that face the Pacific. Forensic investigation and proper burial and identification rites in this and other *chineros* remain pending.

⁷ A *chinero* is a clandestine mass grave that serves a genocidal logic, looking for the destruction of a racialized group. An operative definition of clandestine mass grave is: "a site where one or more bodies and/or human remains were buried or semi-buried, anonymously and/or illegally, with the intent to hide or destroy evidence, and which were later exhumed by individuals or authorities. This place of exhumation represents a social and political dispute to recover the identity of the person/s buried, to access justice, to re-establish individual and collective rights, as well as preserve the truth and memory derived from a context of human rights violations." *Violencia y Terror. Hallazgos sobre las fosas clandestinas en Mexico*. Universidad Iberoamericana Ciudad de México / Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, Mexico, 2017, p. 24. My translation.

I feel personally linked to the *chinero* in Torreón, Coahuila, the city where my grandmother was born in 1927. My words articulating here the narration of violence for the first time should be read with pauses, making space for those performing the work of grieving today. Most journalists and historians narrating the facts of the Torreón massacre have narrowly accepted that 303 Chinese were killed in May of 1911. The act of reference often excludes 4 Japanese killed during the episode. Allow me to explain that despite the notoriety of the episode in Torreón, none of the dead were entitled to the cemetery. In 1911, municipal authorities did not removed the bodies from the streets until animals stopped mincing flesh and the stink was unbearable. Militias ordered the digging of a ditch just outside the municipal burial ground to throw naked corpses and body parts in the most profane disorder, without any grave marks.

Digital versions of newspapers, in 2015, find new forms of infamy between “facts and myths” saying that there are several layers of *chinos* in that pit, the results, that is, of more than one massacre. The director of the cemetery admitted that: “there was not care to have a count or control of buried [Chinese] bodies.”⁸ This situation of limited access to partially destroyed information created by perpetrators of violence is a common circumstance affecting the possibilities of narration of the Chinese genocide in Mexico. The induced collapse of the possibility of understanding the genocide does not stop at death, it attacks the integrity of the bodies, and insistently marks the memory sites. It is in this plot that ruins and information that survived should be woven.

A few months after the 1911 Massacre of Chinese, an official report was printed in the form of a short anonymous booklet. There, the testimony of an eyewitness reports the

⁸ Ríos, Claudia. “Cementerios de Torreón, entre hechos y mitos,” *Milenio*, Torreón, Coahuila, November 2, 2015, <https://www.milenio.com/estados/cementerios-de-torreon-entre-hechos-y-mitos>. My translation.

level of entanglement between *chinos* and Mexicans. This printed testimony suggested a picture of the city under the burning sun, where a surface of dead *chinos* and *chales* intermingled: "The streets of Torreón at three in the afternoon are covered with corpses, even of Mexicans who resembled the Chinese."⁹ The word *chale* used in the testimony, in Mexico is said to single out a usually low-class man, suspected to have Chinese ancestry. Oriental features demanded recognition.

My family has certainly reclaimed the right of venerating the memory of the Chinese looking María, but the storying of the genocidal violence suffered by her ancestors has not been explicit until now. When violence propagates repetitively and is synchronized with genocide, in the small and translocal terrain of my experience, stories are exiled before they can be told. I am the first member of my family trying to express the genocide verbally and trying to grasp materials that can show and tell stories in common ways. I came up with the term haunting objects to refer to the objects charged with unresolved feelings that can assist in telling genocidal stories.

To complicate my work, although objects representing the values of the perpetrators of the Chinese genocide in Mexico are abundant, the history of this violence is precarious and the existence of such a genocide in Mexico is not generally accepted in academia. It was not until 2019 that Jorge Gómez Izquierdo referred to the anti-Chinese movement in Mexico, which he studied in the 1990s, as an "authentic holocaust and planned genocide."¹⁰ I will come back to this early research in the second part of this chapter. To continue clarifying my methodology and approach to genocidal violence, I

⁹ "Memoria de la matanza de chinos en Torreón," 1911, p. 10. Archivo Lerdo de Tejada, Mexico City (BL). My translation.

¹⁰ Gómez Izquierdo, José Jorge. "El Holocausto chino. Biopolítica y racismo de Estado en México (1896-19340," in *Dorsal. Revista de Estudios Foucaultianos*, No. 7, December 2019, p. 205.

should mention that Gómez Izquierdo's argument puts an emphasis on biopolitics of miscegenation, the criminalization of marriage and reproduction:

The matter was treated as a public health problem. Chinese men were not to marry or have offspring with Mexican women. Racist imagination consolidated the social perception that Chinese who had a marital life with Mexican women were committing a crime. To protect national sex from possible infections and certain degenerations was a biopolitical strategy of the State in its defense of society.¹¹

I agree that biopolitics was an important dimension of the Chinese genocide, but across this dissertation, I will give more weight to mortuary practices, printed haunting objects and the tracking of anti-Chinese legislation made and implemented in Mexico. I will approach these aspects trying to use words strategically. Taboo and loaded silence about the narration of the genocide are still painful for my family and myself. To start narrating it was useful to treat my grandmother's altar as the one haunting object that manages to survive in conditions of intimacy.

Haunting objects

Unlike objects of violence in public archives, haunting objects in personal archives are still charged with the ambivalence of unfolding violence and shattered personal testimonies. Their overflowing energy is inhabited by the seething suspended meanings that may cross to the world of words. They may also be the point of entrance to renewing dynamics between the actors bound by violence, objects and humans, victims and hunters, new specters and their ancestors, domestic spaces, and territories. Haunting objects are inhabited by seething memories. Visited by spectres

¹¹ Gómez Izquierdo, 2019, p. 209.

and spectators, they take hold of our guts with untold words. We touch them but they catch us, altering our bodies with their deposit of sensations and signs.

Operating at the margins of the most public or even official organizations of time, the force of haunting objects is enhanced by their repetition in private. Their intimate appearances become strong enough to return and chase through generations. For Avery Gordon, the manifestation of this haunting dimension conducts unfamiliar animation potentials that alter time perception and the structuring of periodization:

What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unsolved social violence is making itself known [...]. I used the term *haunting* to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar [...]. Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, the future.¹²

Haunting objects manage once and again –almost despite national temporalities– to have the paradoxical role of making you feel at home, while pointing at what has been violently taken and lost in transit. In this common level of the stuff around us, and of the possibilities of its accumulation, we can track connections between memory, identity, and territory that have the potential to ground stories of genocides. Over time, haunting objects expose how the present, in relation with the future, is chased by the past; they preserve the emotional charge of a never definitive loss or recovery. While their appearance evokes the realms of the domestic and what is recognizable as one's own, haunting objects remain rare, take by surprise, and suggest unfamiliar mystery. They seem trapped in the impermanence of dynamic suspensions of

¹² Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008 [1997], p. XVI.

meanings and belongings, material precarity and nostalgia that constitute what Svetlana Boym calls diasporic intimacy:

Diasporic intimacy is belated and never final: objects and places were lost in the past and one knows that they can be lost again. The illusion of complete belonging has been shattered. Yet, one discovers that there is still a lot to share. The foreign backdrop, the memory of past losses and recognition of transience do not obscure the shock of intimacy, but rather heighten the pleasure and intensity of surprise.¹³

The circumstances that make possible a scene animated by diasporic intimacy, haunting objects, scenography, stories, or protagonists —elements that attach the argument to flesh and terrain—, are in constant danger of disappearance. Resisting this threat, although unstable and not fully attainable, haunting objects preserve the traces of loss that are constantly pushed away towards silence and can be erased suddenly. In between testimony and silence, haunting objects, and the storying of violence they carry, create bridges that support the circulation between intimate symptoms of pain and the public world.

Their bewilderment is charged with inexplicable forces of attraction and materials rich in social phantasmagoria, its pain and trauma. Haunting objects resonate with still-forming material moving in the air of memory and vibrant sediments. They can host stories to be shared and nested, conjuring long overdue recognition, and even the sparkling glimmers of acknowledgement. They may transform the future, but haunting objects undoubtedly detonate flashes of a memory that takes hold of our guts.

¹³ Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, New York, 2001, pp. 524, 526.

Such qualities support what Veena Das calls “objectification of pain.”¹⁴ Based on what is available in the body, the objectification of pain is a process of oral narrative that conveys speaking from the guts to collectively create something that was inexistent for the public before. After its objectification, the testimony of the pain emerges from the body, with layers of words about what is lost and what has been destroyed: “it is the objectification of grief in the body, taken as both surface and depth, as well as in language, which testifies to the loss inflicted by death.”¹⁵

When a process of narrating pain starts, haunting objects channel disaggregated forces of violence, and have the plasticity to anchor different perceptions without losing integrity. They can carry the full weight of memory over and over on their small scales. Objects do not get tired, and the moment of the encounter can wait for as long as it takes. If there are discrepancies between the archived pain that charges an object and the pain that bodies can sit with to talk about, that becomes a space of possibility. Beyond merely documenting violence, a haunting object contains in its possible dialogues the propitious chance of changing historical courses.

Made out of materials that can outlive bodies, haunting objects are resistant to decomposition, and the circulation between pain and language they habilitate does not require being released immediately. The circulation between pain and language can be stored and detonated later, slowly, or abruptly. A haunting object does not need to speak right away. When a haunted object was handed to me by my elders, I could perceive how the descendants of María were slowly conjuring the restoration of

¹⁴ For the extended discussion about social pain refer to Das, Veena. “Lenguaje y cuerpo: transacciones en la construcción del dolor,” “La antropología del dolor,” and “Trauma y testimonio,” in Ortega, Francisco (ed.). *Veena Das: Sujetos de dolor, agentes de dignidad*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia / Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, 2008.

¹⁵ Das, 2008, p. 361. My translation.

the right to venerate our ancestors. Finding the way to deserts of words has meant telling myself what I could not hear, all that I have not read and has been repressed in national ontology, like ghostly matters. At the same time, starting this narration makes room for what has survived in the pit of my stomach, *lo que con mis ojos vide* (what I saw with my eyes). In the portrait of my grandmother (fig.1), I see a teenager performing being authentically Mexican for the camera. This shot was chosen by my aunt Alma for her permanent altar. My aunt cropped and pasted the portrait over one of María's treasured word puzzles.

My aunt fitted her collage into a dignified but cheap golden frame. She placed dehydrated purple petals over the aging common paper and transformed it into something out of the ordinary. A haunting object emerged, and was surrounded with fake candles, an image of *la virgen*, plastic chrysanthemums that never age and a joyful skull of polychrome clay. As I can see, in this altar a still single María Luna wore *china poblana* attire. Baroquely, the *china poblana* attire points to a romanticized colonial taste for Asian bodies and labor in the Spanish Asian Pacific. The name of the costume refers to a legendary *china* who was trafficked in the Manila Galleon that connected Asia with America between 1565 and 1815.

By then Mexico was the kingdom of New Spain and was fiscally and militarily in charge of the colonial Transpacific route between the ports of Manila and Acapulco. This route was navigated by *La Nao de China* or the Manilla Galleon, and trafficked textiles, spices, porcelains, men, women, and -very habitually- Asian enslaved children who allowed for the maximization of profit and space and had better chances of surviving the incredibly long passage. Their inheritance is entangled with Indigenous and Black cultures. Looking at the portrait of my young grandma, I imagine she would have liked to know about all the *chinxs* that were in Mexico since deep times.

Deep times

What has been deemed as “deep time” transcends the critical tension between what is archived, and what was bringing together the “nation and the clock” with personal experiences. According to Wai Chee Dimock, deep time speaks to durational interactions between “continents and millennia into many loops of relations.”¹⁶

Between 1565 and 1815, numerous formats of slavery and servitude of Asians, Indigenous and Blacks trafficked on board of the Manila Galleon linked empires, continents and diasporas, *haciendas*, *ranchos*, *fincas*, *obrajes*, and big houses.

The woman originally referred to as *la china* was from *Estado da India* and was baptized Catarina de San Juan in the port of Cochin in the early 17th century. *Estado da India*, established in the 16th century, was the Portuguese dominion administered from Goa. It extended over the coasts of the Indic Ocean and the South China Sea, as well as territories in the East African coast: “Goa, Cochin and Gujarat in India; Colombo in Ceylon; Bengal; Malacca, Macasar, Tidore and Terrenate in Indonesia; East Timor; Macao in China; Nagasaki in Japan; as well as Mozambique in East Africa, among others.”¹⁷ In the frame of the Iberian Union, that linked the Spanish with the Portuguese Crown via the House of the Habsburgs, the Portuguese were in charge of slave traffic of the Transpacific route since the late 16th century and during most of the 17th century. The Genoese and then the Dutch took control briefly. The Portuguese took over again before the Pacific slave trade decreased.¹⁸

¹⁶ Dimock, Wai Chee. *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2008 [2006].

¹⁷ Oropeza, Deborah, “La esclavitud asiática en el virreinato de la Nueva España, 1565-1673,” in *Historia Mexicana*, Vol. LXI, No. 1, July-September 2011, El Colegio de México, pp. 19 and 21. My translation.

¹⁸ The slavery of indios chinos slowed down after 1644 when the Portuguese were banned from Manila, while the Dutch and mostly the British increased their deals with the Spaniards and New Spaniards. Since 1672 the market of Asian slaves started to be dismantled since “they could no longer be legally held as

Catarina de San Juan, the colonial *china poblana*, died in 1688 and saw a variety of enslaved *chinos* in her lifetime as well as the beginning of emancipation. She was trafficked in Manila to be the domestic slave of Capitan Miguel Sosa and Margarita de Chávez in the city of Puebla. She was “one of fourteen slaves owned by the captain at the time.”¹⁹ The captain traded “silks, carved ivory, fine wood, spices, Chinese porcelain, glazed ceramics, lacquer screens, pearls, mother -of-pearl, and fine perfumes [...] Sosa’s other source of revenue was from buying and selling slaves.”²⁰ Like that of other members of the higher *criollo* caste, made out of the descendants of Spanish settlers, Sosa’s purchase of San Juan responded to the peculiar taste for a “modest and graceful *chinita* [teenage Chinese woman,] who would serve him as his consort as solace.”²¹

As this source suggests, the expectation of a pleasant but modest appearance was part of the understanding of the character expected from enslaved Asians. After she was emancipated, she bought the freedom of her husband Domingo Suárez, also an enslaved *chino*, “paying, with earnings from her work as a seamstress, the sum required by her spouse’s master.”²² Many *chinos* and *chinas* married among themselves, and like San Juan, they could have come from territories remote from each other in Asia. Entanglements between *chinos* and American First Nations and Afro descendants were also frequent. Seijas reports “the marriage of 165 free and enslaved

slaves in Spanish America,” Seijas, Tatiana. *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians*. Cambridge University, Cambridge, 2014, p. 74.

¹⁹ Córdova, Arturo. “Catarina de San Juan, the emblematic China of Puebla,” *Return Voyage. The China Galleon and the baroque in Mexico 1565-1815*. Brizzolis, Madrid, 2015, p. 67.

²⁰ AGNP, Notaria 4, Protocolos de 1619, fol. 430rff. Córdova, 2015, p. 66.

²¹ The words here captured by priest Alonso Ramos, confessor of Catarina de San Juan. Alonso Ramos, *Los prodigios de la Omnipotencia y milagros de la gracia en la vida de la venerable sierva de Dios Catarina de San Juan*, in Gisela Von Webeser (coord.), *Serie Documental*, No. 3, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas-UNAM, Mexico City, 2017 [1689], p. 215. My translation.

²² Oropeza, 2011, p. 42. My translation.

chinos, living primarily in Mexico City, Puebla, and Acapulco. Of these, 32 chinos married native Indian women."²³ Seijas also reports on the spouses of 106 enslaved *chinos*, 76 men and 30 women of the same area: "The legal status and ethnic category of the spouses are not always known, but at least 50 enslaved *chinos* married other enslaved people. The category breakdown for the enslaved spouses (men and women) is as follows: 13 Chinos, 23 Black (negros), 10 Mulatos, 1 India."²⁴

Enslaved people were not the main cargo of the Pacific routes, but travelers, traders and even sailors "brought them along as personal servants [...] through individual licenses or as contraband."²⁵ Scholars agree that the main colonial route linking Asia with America was marked by smuggling and contraband, and that along with this factor, to calculate the volume of the Pacific slave trade is complicated in a context of irregular and under-registered booking and the variability of individual contracts. Tatiana Seijas proposes a minimum calculus: "One hundred and forty ships landed in Acapulco from 1565 to 1700, which is the approximate period of the Pacific slave trade. Given that number, we can estimate that the trade overall involved at least 8,100 individuals."²⁶

Some critical situations exposed how the trade exceeded and avoided records. In 1620 "the viceroy of Mexico reported to the king that 330 people on board the *San Nicolás*" had died. The Governor of Philippines, Alonso Fajardo de Tenza, had to write an

²³ Seijas, 2014, 150.

²⁴ AGN Matrimonios 29 exp.43 f.106 (1634). Seijas, 2014, p. 169.

²⁵ Seijas, 2014, p. 107.

²⁶ Seijas, 2014, p. 84. Other scholars have made higher estimates "Guzmán-Rivas estimates a much larger number, suggesting that as many as 10,000 slaves went to Mexico during the whole course of the Galleon's history [...] Israel estimates a yearly entry of 600 chino slaves (300 illegally) [...] Luengo claims that the Manila Galleon carried more than 4 million "Filipino" slaves over its 350-year run. His estimate is based on secondary, nonacademic sources and is simply implausible." Seijas, 2014, p. 83.

explanation to The Crown. In it, the cause of the massive human loss was attributed to illegal boarding of the Manila Galleon. The people who died had to “have been blacks and slaves, who were hidden after embarkation by those who took them aboard, with an eye to saving the cost of the duties they owe.”²⁷ This may not have been that irregular, since the royal calculation of the yearly number of slaves that entered New Spain off registry was 300.²⁸ It is assumed that most of the smuggled enslaved Asians descended in ports north of Acapulco to avoid taxes. Fernando de Haro reported about a great number of *chino* slaves in the kingdom of New Galicia, that faced the Pacific but was north of the official port.²⁹ The Manilla Galleon made its first and partially off the record stops in the smaller and less regulated ports of “Chiametla, La Navidad and Salagua.”³⁰

The Passage across the Pacific was the longest of its time and could take between four to six months in the open sea. Mortality was particularly high in the 16th century, and the Iberian Crown did not rule mandatory food and clothing for workers on board until 1590. The Law of the Indies 53, book 9, title 45, threatened “to penalize” the captains of the galleons for lives lost because of inadequate clothing and lack of food. The sailors had to fish to supplement the rations given to “people in service,” which mainly consisted of hardtack.³¹ These people of service were mostly Filipino and Black of multiple origins, some of them free and others enslaved.

²⁷ Seijas, 2014, pp. 80-82.

²⁸ Seijas, 2014, pp. 83-84.

²⁹ Haro y Monterroso, Fernando de, to Queen Regent Mariana de Austria, Guadalajara, April 7, 1672, Archivo General de Indias-Guadalajara. Quoted by in González Claverán, Virginia. “Un documento colonial sobre esclavos asiáticos,” in *Historia Mexicana*, January - March, 1989, Vol. 38, No. 3, p. 529.

³⁰ Oropeza, 2011, p. 35.

³¹ 1590, Archivo General de Indias-Contaduría 897.

Coronel Hernando de los Rios, Procurador General of the Spanish Philippines, reported in 1605 on the “many offenses to God” that took place onboard of the Manila Galleon. According to the attorney “passengers and sailors regularly took female slaves as their personal companions” and “slave owners shared the women among the other travelers.”³² The enslaved women that survived the Pacific Middle Passage tended to arrive pregnant.³³ In 1608, the king of Spain ordered that any enslaved women be prevented from boarding the ships, but the practice continued, and it is plausible that its illegality just made the Passage less documented, more dangerous and deadly.

The most documented and historically known case of a *chinita*, an enslaved Asian girl, was the aforementioned San Juan, who arrived clandestinely in New Spain around 1619, a full ten years after the prohibition of traffic of women.³⁴ The covert and small-scale trade of enslaved Asians allowed for specific requests. For instance, in 1627, Teresa Serín, a resident of Mexico City, placed an order for a *chinita*. The following year, her contact in Manila sent a “white girl with small eyes” named Isabel, promising that this *china* was a strong “washerwoman and good slave.”³⁵

I have not found discussions or sources documenting the specific breeding practices of Asian slaves in the XVI and XVII centuries. But despite the lack of documents, as generations passed, it became a challenge to distinguish enslaved non-African people traded across the Pacific from First Nations people. This was a problem because by the 17th century there were limited legal possibilities to enslave members of First Nations. In 1660, Alonso Gomez described his runaway *china* María de la Rosa, “called *la blanca*

³² 1605, Archivo General de Indias-Filipinas 27 N.51 f.329v in Seijas, 2014, p. 79.

³³ Ríos reports of 20 slaves in this position in 1620.

³⁴ Domestic slave *chinitas* came mostly from Cochin, Ceilán, Bengala, Malaca, China, Brunei, Java and Japan according to Oropeza, 2011, p. 39.

³⁵ Seijas, 2014, p. 97.

(the white one,)" who also "looked like a mestiza."³⁶ Gomez branded María in the face so she could not be mistaken for Indigenous, as many other enslavers did with Asians, especially if they were recurrent runaways.

Most registered enslaved Asians were men, and, like their women counterparts, they were of multiethnic backgrounds. A *chino* slave could be "white (blanco), brown (moreno), dark (prieto), and the color of quince (amembrillado)."³⁷ Among those who were legally trafficked, they mostly came from "Estado da India, in second place from the Philippines and to a lesser extent from Japan, Java, China, Papua and Brunei."³⁸ Although some of these enslaved *chinos* were used in cocoa, coconut, rice and sugar farms that shaped national *cuisines*, and others worked in mines or with cloth producers, the most common destiny for an enslaved Asian in colonial Mexico seemed to be domestic work.

A few generations after the Transpacific trade started, the numbers of enslaved *chinos* in Acapulco, the official colonial port of the Pacific route to the Americas "were so great that Acapulco's population supposedly consisted mainly of slaves, with every household in possession of 'three, four, six, ten, twelve, and sometimes sixteen and even eighteen slaves."³⁹ Some Asian runaways founded *palenques* with other *castas* in remote areas. For instance, "Diego de la Cruz, a native Chinese from Malacca, and Andrés, a Javanese Indian, chose to run away from their masters, and [with] other Asian slaves even formed in the Acapulco area, nine leagues from the port, a kind of *palenque* together with Blacks and Mulattos."⁴⁰

³⁶ Seijas, 2014, p. 163.

³⁷ Seijas, 2014, p. 83.

³⁸ Oropeza, 2011, p. 28. My translation.

³⁹ Seijas, 2014, p. 90.

⁴⁰ Oropeza, 2011, p. 42. My translation.

The presence of enslaved Asians trafficked via the Pacific Ocean extended from the port of Acapulco, and other ports of register, to different areas of the kingdom, and had made a significant impact on the population by the time the trade was meant to be stopped. In 1671, King Carlos II and the Queen regent along with viceregal authorities in New Spain, New Galicia and New Vizcaya, proclaimed the liberation of Asian slaves. Fernando de Haro y Monterroso, designated to report the progress of the policy referred to an abundance of enslaved *chino* men, women, and children. They had been “bought in good faith” and since abolition would “irreparably damage” property that had already been bought, he asked to, instead, increase regulations in the Philippines:

in the New Spain and especially in Mexico City and the district of the Audiencia there is a large number of Chinese commonly held and understood as slaves as well as Chinese women and their children and this is why it would be convenient that Your Majesty demand there be a resolution in this matter and that it be the same and uniform for all these provinces; if it were executed in Mexico it would be very reparative because it is a large number of these Chinese men and women bought and sold in good faith. Your Majesty could have it seen and prevented it in the Philippine islands, (which is where without hesitation, scruples nor distinction they are hired and where they are transported to the New Spain).⁴¹

Entanglement “bursts categories and upends identities.”⁴² Interconnections in ruins, Anna Tsing continues, snake “in and out of nations, regions and local landscapes. They arise from common histories—but also from unexpected convergences and moments of uncanny coordination.”⁴³ In a context of unregulated and covert traffic, limited and reticent sources, reports of enslaved *indios chinos* (Indigenous Chinese) are numerous

⁴¹ Haro y Monterroso, Fernando de, 1672, in González Claverán, 1989. My translation.

⁴² Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalists Ruins*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2015, p. 137.

⁴³ Tsing, 2015, p. 205.

since the end of the 16th century through most of the 17th century.⁴⁴ Yet, the existence of this Asian root in what would become Mexico is seldomly recognized.

Besides naming enslaved Asians trafficked via the Manila Acapulco route, the term *indios chinos*, or just *chinos*, was used to refer to native Filipinos who traversed the Great Ocean as free or indentured “sailors and soldiers [...] that jumped ship when they reached a port.”⁴⁵ Along with this two, there was a third group formed by “individuals born in China, workers from the shipyard at Cavite and Manila” with “specialized knowledge of shipbuilding and the tropical hardwoods used in their construction.”⁴⁶

The case of the enslaved Indigenous woman Elvira from Nueva Vizcaya, who married Manuel, an enslaved *chino* from Bengal, is indicative of another situation. Indigenous people were not to be held as slaves in the 17th century, but there were operative exceptions. Indigenous people could become enslaved because of “fair war,” and if, like Elvira, they were “captured” and “condemned” during a rebellion.⁴⁷ This was the case of many of the Philippine Natives who arrived as slaves to the Americas. The slavery of other Asians was considered legitimate if they were Muslims. This was the case of “Pedro de Mendoza, a native Indian of Jolo, Andrés, a Javanese Indian of the Moor nation (from Java) and Catalina Burney, a Moor (from Brunei).”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ The reason was the establishment of the Caja de Real Hacienda in the port of Acapulco, that reported annually about Galleons and its cargo. Oropeza, 2011, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ Chong, José Luis. “The Chinese Indians of the Manila Galleon,” *Return Voyage. The China Galleon and the Baroque in Mexico 1565-1815*. Brizzolis, Madrid, 2016, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Chong, 2016, p. 61.

⁴⁷ Seijas, 2014, p. 169.

⁴⁸ Oropeza, 2011, p. 28. My translation.

The baroque entanglement continued and by 1692 the degree of mixture of Mexican castes was considered by some authorities of Mexico City to have produced: "the most infamous of all the plebes, because it consists of Indians, Blacks, criollos and bozales of different nations, of Chinese, of Mulattos, of Moors, of mestizos, of zambaigos, of lobos and also of Spaniards."⁴⁹

In 1720, the situation reached the point where words were not enough to explain the inextricable and confusing varieties of miscegenation and ancestral points of origins. Alarmed, the highest authorities of the kingdom of New Spain reported that these mixed castes could not be named by the regular language of the kingdom, and folks were making up words. These opinions were integrated within studies about the "political diseases" of the capital of the kingdom:

with untraceable origins [...] there are no longer words to explain and distinguish these classes of people who are the majority of the inhabitants of the Kingdom.⁵⁰

In the 19th century, long after Catarina was trafficked, she became a romantic feminine, cultural, and aesthetic icon. According to Ricardo Pérez Montfort, by the 1930s, "there was no doubt the *china poblana* outfit was the most representative among Mexican women. [...] the construction and consensus of a cultural standard for the 'typical' Mexican had reached the conclusion that the *china* was the best representation."⁵¹ As a national icon, the *china* was, despite her name, dissociated from her Asianness, but did

⁴⁹ Sigüenza y Góngora, Carlos. "Alboroto y motín de México del 8 de junio de 1692," in *Relaciones Históricas*. Biblioteca del Estudiante Universitario, No. 13, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 1954, p. 13. My translation.

⁵⁰ Virrey Linares [1720] quoted by Villarroel, Hipólito. *Enfermedades políticas que padece la capital de esta Nueva España*. Mexico City, Porrúa, 1999, p. 194. My translation.

⁵¹ Pérez Montfort, Ricardo. "China Poblana," in *Artes de México*, No. 66, 2003, p. 76.

not become fully independent of orientalist and slavery related signs of enticing gendered figures that were available for domestic and sexual services. Signs put together in colonial times around the submissiveness, gracefulness and modesty attributed to enslaved Asians were fit to sustain more modern and domestic but still exotic desirability in the 20th century.

The figure of the *china poblana* condensed characteristics expected to be performed by women of popular classes such my grandmother. She worked a good part of her life as a domestic worker and was dissociated from her Asian heritage. She grew up in a country where an Asian root was considered inexistent, despite the solid marks it had left since deep times. My project of storying attempts to explain how that is inexplicable and unsurprising at the same time.

Just before the beginning of Mexican Independence in 1810, Prussian explorer Alexander Von Humboldt made his accounts of the composition of the Kingdom of New Spain. By then the category of *chinos*, meaning Asians, was disappearing from specific racial classifications. Despite this, Humboldt decided to include Asians, and he distinguished those from Chinese or Malay origins. *Chinos* were not among the principal *castas* (castes) but were a significant presence among the *casta mixta* (mixed caste).⁵² Attention to Asians was also in Humboldt's initial notes from 1804, where he decided to contradict the belief that 6/10 of the population belonged to mixed classes. Humboldt's rather generalizing opinions were widely distributed and became the

⁵² "Leaving aside the subdivisions, there are four main castes: the whites, included under the general denomination of Spaniards; the Blacks; the Indians and men of mixed race, mixed of Europeans, Africans, American Indians and Malays; because with the frequent communication that exists between Acapulco and the Philippine islands, there are many individuals of Asian origin, Chinese or Malay, who have settled in New Spain." Humboldt, Alexander de. *Ensayo Político sobre el Reino de la Nueva España*. Porrúa, Mexico City, 1966 [1807-1811], p. 51. My translation.

hegemonic perspective on the period. According to him, only 2/5 fifths of the population were “mixed castes of Indian, American, European, Asian, and African.”⁵³

I think one of the explanations for the progressive erasure of the baroque Asian root in Mexican history is the distortion of memory that characterizes the colonial routes over the Pacific as more tasteful, compared to Atlantic routes, since they mainly trafficked with luxury goods. We have offered some context about the extended practice of slavery of *chinos* and the above review is just the tip of the iceberg of ethnic complexities we need to keep processing. A second aspect to consider is the objectness that operates in Orientalism, that is the semiotic conductivity that confuses Asian flesh with Asian objects. While exoticism perfumes ornaments and corporeality, orientalism emerges as affective “objectness,” where objects and skin emerge as decoration and “synthetic assemblage rather than fleshy corporeality.”⁵⁴ Asian flesh is less flesh and more an assemblage of exoticism and otherness that is reified.

Concerning the luxuriousness of the Transpacific route, scholars of the Manila Galleon have established that “elite consumption was only part [...] of a more elastic, broad and massive Spanish American demand for Asian articles” that “were not only elaborate merchandise or goods with high added value.”⁵⁵ A diversity of fabrics, spices and plants, furniture and ceramics “enriched and diversified the material culture of Spanish America giving its consumer markets access to a multifaceted array of Asian

⁵³ Humboldt, Alexander de. *Tablas geográfico-políticas del Reino de la Nueva España*. IIB-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 1993 [1804], p. 30. My translation.

⁵⁴ Cheng, Anne Anlin. “Yellow skin, white gold,” <https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas/ideas/yellow-skin-white-gold?fbclid=IwAR3cfPtl470yp69QXr2eM6LruletgiALF67hZ3tQFPTHn4B00-XZGcY6L4>

⁵⁵ Bonialian, Mariano. “The Manila Galleon and trade between the Philippines, Mexico and Peru in the viceregal period,” *Return Voyage. The China Galleon and the baroque in Mexico 1565-1815*. Brizzolis, Madrid, 2015, p. 42.

goods.”⁵⁶ This means materials and objects trafficked in the route left a cultural mark that is unavoidable in elite but also popular Mexican cultures.

The Spanish American Pacific trade of things and flesh fiscally and ethnoculturally linked empires across oceans with such macro and micro density that a history of the transcontinental trade needs to address multilocal networks and little fragmented stories in small *terruños* (boondocks). In that same scale of multilocal but concrete dynamics, we found exotic affects that modelled and conceptualized the historical deposits of Asian cargo in the Americas, the distortions that shape its objectness, deep belongings and trauma. Yearly, “Chinese junks loaded with spices, silk, and porcelain” arrived in Acapulco to return with Mexican silver. The process of “comparing the Asian and Spanish American Pacific to the Atlantic economy shows that the Mexican historical process could be regarded as a scientific laboratory for thought provoking experiments that can illustrate broader histories. [...] one of them is the recovery of Asian roots in Mexico.”⁵⁷

After the independence of Mexico was sanctioned in 1821, a new format of Asian exploitation began. Public records of Asian workers trafficked to Mexico started again in the 1840s. But, unlike the case in other territories in the Americas, the traffic of Indian and Southeast Asian enslaved laborers was already part of the national ethnic landscape and the mechanics of labor. Most of them were used as human instruments of colonization by being sent to remote areas of Mexico to develop infrastructure of all kinds. This era adapted slavery and coolie trade architectures and practices to industrial capitalism. Additionally, the model continued long after the *culi* or *culí*

⁵⁶ Bonialian, 2015, p. 39.

⁵⁷ Morales Moreno, Luis Gerardo. “The Asian Pacific: Missing link in the History of New Spain,” *Return Voyage. The China Galleon and the baroque in Mexico 1565-1815*. Brizzolis, Madrid, 2015, pp. 18-19.

system was formally abolished in 1877. During the Porfiriato, an era characterized by the almost-consistent re-election of President Porfirio Díaz, between 1876-1911 and which ended with the Mexican Revolution, negotiations over Chinese workers and their trafficking began. Starting in 1899, the diplomatic agreement between Mexico and China, *Tratado de Amistad, Comercio y Navegación* (Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation), regulated the entrance of Chinese laborers.

Domestic ruins

Generations of Chinese non-settler workers died, some others survived, in a process that linked the markets with the crops, the roads with the railways and the ports, the mines and blast furnaces. In Mexico, the concept used to capture this legacy, circulated in public by the press, spelled out in colonization treaties and accounting entries and pamphlets, was *motores de sangre* (blood engines).⁵⁸ The most common public designation was the misleading term *colonos chinos* which can be literally translated as Chinese settlers. Nonetheless, it was used to refer to often forced immigrants who worked in the system that extended the exploitative aspects of the coolie model in Mexico well into the 1900s and had several similarities to slavery. *Colonos blancos*, the very small groups of white settlers coming from the United States or Europe, did not experience such conditions of forced migration or servitude.

The only statue figuratively representing the Chinese diaspora in Latin America was made in Mexico, in the city of Torreón, in 2007. It was called “*El Hortelano*” (The

⁵⁸ The term was adopted and discussed in Mexican periodicals in the late 19th century. Jason Chang tracks the concept to an agro-industrial manual printed in Spain. Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino, Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico 1880-1940*. University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 2017, p. 51. I have tracked the reference and the location of a digital copy: Rodríguez, Eduardo. *Manual de Física General y Aplicada a la Agricultura y a la Industria*. Eusebio Aguado, Madrid, 1858. Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico, Spain (BV PB).

Gardener), and represented a peasant of Chinese origins, who had no tools, artisanal or mechanical. The statue referred to this second period of immigration of Asian *colonos*, *culies* and merchants that could be mapped crossing many nations such Peru, Cuba, and Panama. Among that list of Latin American nations with Asian roots, Mexico seems to have the largest number of architectural remains addressing its connections with Asia, such as Chinatown portals.⁵⁹

The figure of *El Hortelano* held in his bare hands the fruits given entirely by the land and offered them submissively, with his head down. This representation of a subdued and productive field worker resonated with the notion of *motor de sangre* that understood *chinos* as instruments of production to be operated by *colonos blancos*. His body was lean and muscle-less and seemed a docile human tool for harvesting national abundance. Despite all these codes that molded the figure with an unthreatening anatomy, the story of its exhibition shows how much violence is still required to control that which looks like a *chino*. (fig. 2).

The anonymous fieldworker in bronze, although visibly Chinese, is just named by his function: the gardener. It was inaugurated in 2007, during the centennial commemoration of the foundation of the city of Torreón, in the state of Coahuila. According to statements from the government of Coahuila, which circulated in the press, its display was an act of reconciliation with the Chinese community given the massacre of 1911. The statue was not inaugurated on the centennial of the episode in 2011 though. The *matanza de chinos* (The Slaughter of Chinese, as the episode of the

⁵⁹ In Mexico there are Chinatown portals in Mexicali, Tijuana and Mexico City and a monument to the *Nao de China* in Acapulco that represents the colonial ship crossing the ocean. In Panama there is a marble obelisk commemorating 150 years of the Chinese presence, that started in 1850, in a similar nautical visual code. There are also surviving portals in the Chinatowns of Cuba, Peru, and Costa Rica.

massacre is often called,) in 1911, was a decisive historical episode because it had the largest number of confirmed victims among the multiple mass attacks against Chinese on the American continent. Not in Peru, Cuba or the United States, which had the largest populations of Chinese in the Americas at the beginning of the 20th century, was there an episode of similar proportions.



Fig. 2. Castaño Orozco, Álvaro. "El Hortelano," bronze sculpture, Torreón, Coahuila, 2007.

"*El Hortelano*" wore traditional clothing, a sign suggesting that *chinos* did not assimilate to the Nation, while keeping them confined to the past. Traditional clothes were used by *chinos* in Mexico at the beginning of the 1910s, but it was more common for them to use clothes which blended with those of surrounding populations, and they even preferred them in the context of violence targeting traditional appearance. In any case, the ethnic apparel of the statue was incomplete since he was not wearing the usual slip-on cloth shoes or the class appropriate *guaraches* that field workers need to survive in desert terrains. The visual sign of being barefoot has been used frequently to mark the tie of the slave to the land. Additionally, in this sculptural composition, a pile of vegetables anchors the foot of the laborer, negating any mobility. The body of the statue was skinny and aged, its posture looked downward.

Considering the degree of erasure that Chinese diasporas in Mexico have experienced, the presence of this statue in a public park in Torreón was very meaningful. Despite all marks of control, his facial details were realist and overall transmitted humanness. The decision to inaugurate the statue before the centennial of the massacre created some distance from the grieving process, but the main limitation of this reconciliation act was that it did not question the narrative convention that sees genocidal violence as isolated outbursts. If the act of violence with the most victims on the Americas is told as a localized, inexplicable outburst, how can we expect the possibility of a narration of the genocide?

Attempts have been made to narrate the massacre of Torreón as low-class violence. The links between militias and the way in which local authorities handled the mortuary remains after the mass killing and defiling burial, to be discussed later, prove an uncontested level of top-down violence. When the Mexican revolution ended, anti-Chinese militias came back to action and were supported by governors, armed by the

municipalities and legislatures of multiple states, in particular from Sonora, Sinaloa, Coahuila, Tamaulipas and the territory of Baja California.

The official narrative of the anti-Chinese violence in Mexico has been broken down into isolated episodes that, despite their continuous presence across periods and regions, are inconsequential for national history. In this fallacy of outbursts, as Hannah Arendt observes, acts of violence “need no special explanation because they are natural consequences of an eternal problem.”⁶⁰ If anti-Chinese violence in Mexico is eternal, it will be mobilized as “a matter of course; it gives the best possible alibi for all horrors.”⁶¹ The doctrine of outbursts has successfully spread among academics and, I argue, it is complemented by a premise that separates being *chino* from other ethnic minorities who are considered to belong to national history.

Going against historical evidence, this perturbed vision insists on seeing colonial relations between Mexico and Asia as a material history without ethnocultural consequences. The Asians brought to Mexico by the Manila Galleon stayed and mingled with Indigenous and Black communities since the 16th century. The continuous commerce of Asian goods influenced decorative styles and techniques that involved furniture and architecture, ceramics, textiles, plantations, gardens and orchards with shared medicines and flavours. Following this logic, the historic debt of acknowledging the genocide of Chinese by the Mexican state in Mexican territory is truly a national matter.

⁶⁰ Arendt, Hannah. “Antisemitism as an Outrage to Common Sense,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1951, p. 7.

⁶¹ Arendt, 1951, p. 7.

It could be argued that the sculpture of the gardener directly represented the largest group of victims of the massacre. Between May 13th and 15th of 1911, one hundred and ten Chinese fieldworkers, sixty-two merchants, sixty-five bank employees, fifty-six travelers, and ten children under 15 years of age were killed. Witnesses and survivors documented sexual assault, mutilation, and torture.⁶² After the fieldworkers, the second largest group of victims was the urban class of *chinos mexicanos*, formed by merchants of different levels, and bank employees. The group of urban workers was less isolated, dressed up in urban fashion and had access to opportunities for class mobility. This group of Chinese Mexicans has been purged from national memory. The visual representation of working-class urban *chinos* has been avoided. Few figures of Chinese loosely assimilated within Mexican cities have survived in photo records available in public archives (fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Casasola, "Comerciantes chinos atienden una tienda," Mexico City, 1915. FINAH, Mexico City.

⁶² That is the case of the sister of Dr. Lim, married with Ten Yen Tea with whom she had three ten age daughters at the time of the massacre. Mexican soldiers raped her and forced her to swear that she will marry them in front of her daughters. "La Matanza de los chinos," *El Siglo de Torreón*, Tuesday May 11 2004, second delivery, Torreón, Coahuila, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/1620103.artemexicano.html?scroll>

Working class urban *chinos* also appeared haunted in some personal archives. This is the case of the photo that Roberto Chong presented in his defense to document the consensual but clandestine relationship he had with Delfina Siqueiros in Nacozari de García, Sonora. Accused by Delfina's father of trespassing, Chong

spent two weeks in jail before Frank Fong of the local business operation Frank Fong and Brothers put up his home, worth seven thousand pesos, for his compatriot's release. [...] to maintain her honor and obey her parents, Delfina Siqueiros denied both that she was his girlfriend and that she had invited him into the home. Chong soon produced a photograph of himself with Delfina, a small black and white image showing a smiling man standing side by side with a smiling lighter-skinned woman.⁶³

Working class Mexican Chinese could be found in grocery stores, in shops selling fabrics, furniture and decorative items, in hotels, apothecaries, laundries, restaurants, bakeries and cafes. Their public image was marked with cruel imagination and its presence was the target of paramilitary and legislative actions as well as graphic propaganda in the anti-Chinese campaign. Today, the legitimate urban settlement of Mexican Chinese is not yet an earned right, and the history of the only statue of a *chino* in national territory continues to illustrate the contemporary aliveness of classic anti-Chinese propaganda.

Maybe it was the uncommon humanness of *El Hortelano* statue that represented a problem for a city that had imagined itself vaccinated against *chinos* for a long time. Its exhibition in a public park detonated organized actions (fig. 4). The statue was dented multiple times, its plaque was stolen, then its hat. Ropes were tied around its neck to simulate the statue being lynched. This heavy bronze statue almost disappeared twice.

⁶³ Schiavone Camacho, Julia María. *Chinese Mexicans. Transpacific Migration and the search for a homeland 1910-1960*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2012.

In 2012, the Municipal Institute of Culture and Education answered requests from the local Mexican Chinese community and handed it over to the Lee Soriano family. In 2019, its restoration had not begun started and its return "to public exhibition" had no date.⁶⁴



Fig. 4. El Hortelano sculpture being lynched in 2012, before it was removed from the public.

⁶⁴ Roberto Iturriaga, "Buscan recuperar la escultura de El Hortelano," *El Siglo de Torreón*, Monday April 1, 2019, Torreón, Coahuila, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/1562069.buscan-recuperar-la-escultura-de-el-hortelano.html>. Visited in 2020.

The history of the limits of representation of this statue, its failed exhibition and battered state, also revealed the community of heritage around it that was supposed to be extinct. Chinese Mexicans currently living in Torreón strategically mobilized against “institutional [and communal] resources to attack and forget” transforming it into the space “to remember and grieve.”⁶⁵ The Lee Soriano family and other members of the community reclaimed the statue as their own and mobilized resources to protect it from public attacks.

A sustained effort is required now to put together more evidence of how survivors of genocidal violence have been trying to intervene. The expectation of this effort co-exists with the feeling of something incomplete, the collection of bones to be properly buried and words yet to be told. *Como dicen en el norte, es lo que hay*. These are the ruins that remain. They were produced through waves and repetition and printed forms that circulated regularly and have accumulated over time as archives, old bookstores and haunting objects in private collections which animate these ruins.

Part two

Periodical specters

Anti-Chinese violence in Mexico developed in waves that distend over half of the 20th century. In the early 1990s, José Gómez Izquierdo was the first scholar to research it systematically, proposing three periods: 1915-1920, 1921-1928 and 1928-1934.⁶⁶ My main concern with the construction of these periods is that they suggest that the

⁶⁵ Ortega, 2018, p. 51. My translation.

⁶⁶ The periodization made by Gómez Izquierdo goes from “exclusionist nationalism” to the “culmination of the anti-Chinese campaign” in 1934. Gómez Izquierdo, José Jorge. *El movimiento antichino en México, 1871-1934*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, 1991, pp. 111 and 119. My translation.

campaign stopped in 1934, and that it excludes the 1911 massacre. In terms of conceptualization, Gómez Izquierdo saw a continuous racist and xenophobic “political movement” looking to “exclude the Chinese from the national project.”⁶⁷ In his most recent article about the subject, Gómez Izquierdo is consistent with his original periodization, but as I mentioned before, he argues that this political movement was genocidal.

In 2017 Jason Chang authored the first systematic research to be published in English about anti-Chinese “racism” in Mexico. He observed one period from the 1910s to the 1920s, when Chinese were transformed into “killable subjects;” between the 1930s and 1940s he marked a second period that produced “pernicious defilers.”⁶⁸ I agree with Chang about the campaign continuing after 1934. Racism played a part in the anti-Chinese campaign, but since extermination and several genocidal policies were designed and implemented, I consider this violence was not only racist but furthermore genocidal, and that it had four different periods during the 20th century.

The first wave of the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico starts in 1911 with the Torreón Massacre, and extends until 1920 when other group killings of Chinese took place. The second wave starts in 1921 with the prohibition of Chinese immigration to Mexico and extends until 1930. The third wave starts in 1931, when the first “expulsion of any Chinese diasporic community anywhere in the world during the twentieth century”⁶⁹ happened in the North of Mexico. This generated a refugee crisis in the United States between 1931 and 1934 in which “several thousand Chinese men and their Mexican-

⁶⁷ Gómez Izquierdo, 1991, p. 100 and 126. My translation.

⁶⁸ Chang, 2017, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁹ Chao Romero, 2010, pp. 174-175.

origin families entered U.S. territory as illegal immigrants and became refugees from Mexico.”⁷⁰

The fourth wave is more ambiguous and distended; it starts around 1938 or 1939, when the first Chinese Mexicans deported to China in the early 1930s started to return to Mexico. This aspect is not the only one characterizing the period, because other expelled Chinese continued to return until the 1960s and even later. Chinese Mexicans who were not deported to the United States or China, and hid in Mexico during the 1930s, experienced a totally different reality. This was the experience of folks like my ancestors who managed to survive the campaign but were forced to live clandestine identities and quiet pain.

In May of 2021, the silhouette of the monument of *El Hortelano* came back as the main illustration for posters and flyers inviting the neighbours of Torreón to the public apology that the Government of Mexico made to the Chinese community. This historic public apology came 110 years after the Torreón Massacre. The apology to the “Chinese community in Mexico” was made “on behalf of the Mexican State [...] for the affronts committed against it through our history.”⁷¹ The apology was voiced by the Chinese Mexican Sergio Ley López with a broken voice. I think it was important that the apology was not limited to a singular event in Torreón. Despite its vagueness, it recognized the multiplicity of the violent actions against Chinese Mexicans and its long duration. This was reinforced by inviting one descendant of expelled Chinese who returned to Mexico to speak. It is a pressing concern for the Mexican Chinese

⁷⁰ Schiavone Camacho, 2012, p. 81.

⁷¹ Ley, López, Sergio. May 17, 2021. My translation.

community that the organizers of the event did not give the word to any survivor or descendant of the survivors of the Torreón massacre.

Along with the words *chinero* and *chale*, can be found the word *chinada*. This historical term, said as an insult, was used to circumscribe both historic and newly arrived groups of Chinese to Mexico. *Chinada* does not document gender, age or trade, but a derogatory attitude towards a common condition of origin that produces presence without belonging. To be named under the word *chinada* succinctly documents a situation that often-included unregulated indentured work and slavery at the moment of entry to Mexican territory. *La chinada* designate groups of sometimes forced immigrants or illegal workers who looked Asian. Since the late 19th century, two main areas had the greatest concentrations of these anonymous *chinos*. The first was Yucatán and reveals colonial continuities in the 1910s that link the Chinese and the Yaqui genocide with each other. The second area was Sonora, where most of the anti-Chinese national leadership emerged in the 1910s and significantly influenced Baja California and Mexico City between 1920 and 1940.

In the Yucatán peninsula, in the Caribbean, Chinese and occasionally Koreans arrived to “plantation work, small agricultural colonies, and urban enclaves.”⁷² Some of them arrived directly from Asia, but, more commonly, they would have been survivors of the coolie or *culi* trade from Cuba, Panama, or Guatemala. The coolie trade, based on the indentured labor of Asian diasporas was supposed to have been abolished in 1870’s. In 1910, in Yucatán, Caribbean *chinos* were still treated as coolies working in plantations that combined different practices of colonial and modern exploitation.

⁷² Chang, 2017, p. 75.

The classic testimony of John Kenneth Turner about life in such modernized colonial landscapes, documented the continuity of *culi* practices and their combination with slavery practices. Turner quotes ranchers in tropical *haciendas* in Yucatán explaining to him breeding practices that used Indigenous women and Chinese men. The justification of the ranchers was to make the *chinos* “less inclined to run away. And besides we know that every new babe born on the place will someday be worth anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000 cash!”⁷³

Indigenous women who were introduced to this system came from rebellious indigenous nations. The practice of enslaving indigenous people if they were rebellious started in the 16th century but returned in the 19th century. The Yaqui nation in the Sonora deserts maintained its rebellion against the Mexican State for decades, even into the 20th century. Men were killed or made soldiers. Women were abused, separated from their kin and infants. Survivors were transported as cattle across the Mexican territory to the Yucatán peninsula. When they arrived in the Caribbean plantations, they were flogged and sometimes linked with chains to working stations. This condition was shared with Chinese and a local Indigenous Nation, the Mayans: “Three races there were, the sharp-visaged, lofty browed Maya, aborigine of Yucatan, the tall, arrow-backed Chinaman and the swarthy, broad-fisted Yaqui from Sonora.”⁷⁴ The Yaqui genocide and the Chinese genocide in Mexico will have other connections through the State of Sonora.

Violent death was present in the Transpacific Passage since its colonial foundation, and *la chinada* was often exploited in working units with high mortality rates and slavery

⁷³ Turner, John Kenneth. *Barbarous Mexico*. Charles H. Kerr & Company Co-operative, Chicago, 1910, p. 62.

⁷⁴ Turner, 1910, p. 62.

practices. Since the 1890s the practice of killing Chinese started to be registered in the Americas. In Mexico the acceleration of this phenomenon can be observed since 1910s, when colonization projects decreased and stopped. During this decade, the periodical press covered the cruel murders of *la chinada* in singular, group, and mass categories in the states of Baja California, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Distrito Federal, Durango, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sonora, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Yucatán. This is more than half of the national territory.

After 1916, anti-Chinese violence began to be conceptualized as a propaganda campaign for newspapers in the state of Sonora. The main intellectuals and perpetrators of the anti-Chinese genocidal violence started their military careers in the first wave of the anti-Chinese campaign (1911-1920). Others were middlemen and bureaucrats administering multiethnic forced indentured labor and debt peonage production units that included *cuadrillas de chinos*. This military intelligentsia frequently printed their opinions about the Chinese and would become part of the ruling class after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). Many of them held middle ranks but at least three of them became presidents. Throughout this dissertation, I will present many of these characters, but in this general presentation of the anti-Chinese campaign, it is important to acknowledge the existence of an Indigenous-Chinese community in Sonora. In other Mexican regions, the existence of an Indigenous-Chinese cast was more of a theoretical fear based on eugenic arguments of racial degeneration.

Sonora faces the Pacific and was once part of the Spanish imperial kingdom of New Vizcaya, that received enslaved Asians, as I mentioned before, and no doubt led to ancient postcolonial Indigenous Chinese ancestry. In the 19th and 20th century, colonization projects in Sonora successfully used low class *chinos* in mines and railroads

in remote areas where there was often active Indigenous resistance. This created complex multiethnic dynamics and while *chinos* sometimes were mobilized against Indigenous, another result of this proximity was that during colonial times as well as since the late 19th century “Chinese workers frequently ‘married’ or lived with Yaqui, Mayo, Kumeyaay and Cocopah Indian women.”⁷⁵ This Indigenous Chinese group continues to be violently unrecognized and unnamed in national memory. Folks like my grandmother’s family, that united the Cantonese with the Indigenous nations from the north, and for generations did not find themselves in conditions of material or financial security necessary to preserve their stuff or stories, survived multiple and sometimes multicultural forms of genocide.

This is relevant for this story because the few sources concerning Chinese Mexicans survivors of the genocide belong to a higher caste. This is the case of the impressive corpus of testimonies that Julia María Schiavone made in 2012 with a handful of interviews and archival research with Chinese Mexicans who were able to stay in the United States after their deportation from Mexico.⁷⁶ Most of this group were once part of the emerging middle-class of *chinos* that moved from Arizona or California in the United States to the north of Mexico and married non-Indigenous Mexican women. This Mexican Chinese middle class started to acquire commercial contracts and continued developing multinational networks that supported a community of merchants and service providers across Mexico and the U.S.⁷⁷ Some of them had the means to gain Mexican or even U.S. citizenship.

⁷⁵ Chang, 2017, p. 72.

⁷⁶ Schiavone Camacho, 2012, pp. 81-82.

⁷⁷ Chang, 2017, pp. 72-74.

The peak of the genocidal violence happened in the second and third wave of the anti-Chinese campaign, 1921-1930 and 1931-1938, when this class of less disenfranchised Chinese was more visible. By 1926 "at a size of more than 24,000, the Chinese comprised the second largest immigrant group in all of Mexico."⁷⁸ During these waves anti-Chinese Sonoran leaders produced many printed sources and conceived the creation of Anti-Chinese propaganda as part of their sphere of action. This is revealing of the way in which low-cost graphic prints in different formats became present in daily life. The encounters with paper objects with anti-Chinese propaganda happened in everyday circumstances, and their familiarity and abundance left a recognizable imprint in popular culture. These specific conditions of periodical animation –in the sense of sustained everyday presence–, along with the details of the materiality and content they propagated, participated in shaping illustrated formats such as the comic.

Animated propaganda

The animation of periodicals was not politically neutral, and the way in which illustrations were tainted with exotic affections and genocidal postures contributed to their constitution as paper objects. At the time in which the format of the comic magazine emerged as a print format, desires and sensitivities were conceived to be a motor of propaganda. The format of the comic magazine, a more popular and mobile paper object compared to the pricier and heavier book, emerged at a time when propaganda was conceived as a massive yet precise mechanism with which to affect social forces.

In the terms of Edward Bernays, one of the earlier propaganda theorists, by the late 1920's propaganda was evolving. At the beginning it was an instinctive motor that

⁷⁸ Chao Romero, 2010, p. 1.

could “change our mental pictures of the world” through playing with “mental clichés and the emotional habits of the public to produce mass reactions.”⁷⁹ In the unfolding post World War I era, mass propaganda was gaining in individual and social precision, and claimed the power of addressing “interlocking” groups with versatility:

[propaganda] takes account not merely of the individual, nor even of the mass mind alone, but also and especially of the anatomy of society, with its interlocking groups of formations and loyalties. It sees the individual not only as a cell in the social organism but as a cell organized into the social unit. Touch a nerve at a sensitive spot and you get an automatic response from certain specific members of the organism.⁸⁰

Printed propaganda that targeted *chinos* was a global trend in the world left by the Great War (1914-1918). While empires and borders were renegotiated, printed propaganda mobilized alert against a population considered to be present everywhere, but perpetually external and dangerous for the anatomy of domestic societies. The recognition of this graphic trend grew when the promotion of the yellow peril became a multinational campaign.⁸¹ The anti-Chinese campaign continuously irritated the nerves of societies in crisis, to borrow a metaphor from Bernays. Fear, hatred, and disgust against *chinos* were made massively accessible by periodical print culture.

Recurrence and repetition are an important dimension of propaganda and the remembrance and narration of trauma. From a clinical perspective, trauma “denotes the recurrence or repetition of the stressor event through memory, dreams, narrative

⁷⁹ Bernays, Edward. *Propaganda*. Horace Liveright Inc., New York, 1928, pp. 26 and 28.

⁸⁰ Bernays, 1928, p. 28.

⁸¹ According to John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, the modern use of yellow peril emerges at the end of XIX century. German Kaiser Wilhem II “claimed to have had a prophetic dream of a seated Buddha riding a vicious dragon storm upon Europe.” Tchen and Yeats. *Yellow peril. An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. Asian / Pacific / American Institute-NYU and Verso, London, 2014, p. 12.

and/or various symptoms.”⁸² The traumatic event may come back disrupting daily conscious and unconscious life, but it can also manifest as oblivion: “it may intrude repetitively on everyday activities and sleep, but there may also be a total absence of recall.”⁸³ For Irene Visser, “it is the act of remembering as deferred action that constitutes trauma.”⁸⁴

Following this logic of repetition and belatedness in remembering trauma, it is important to agree with the assumption that anti-Chinese printed propaganda dispersed visual trauma periodically, allowing stressors to circulate continuously. At the same time, this printed archive of violence can allow us to remember trauma and narrate it differently. Periodicals propagated iconographic forms of violence but were also part of a general racist campaign that moved back and forth between xenophobic and genocidal social practices. Although graphic references to violent practices may have expanded violent social blows, and constituted violence, their act of propagation also created documentation of the violence that could sustain its belated narration.

Genocidal violence affects the course of historical transmission and interferes with regular notions of belonging to historical experience. It produces ghostly matters, blurry events, and subjects. It interrupts daily life and generates what Robert Lifton calls “psychohistorical dislocation,” which “concerns the breakdown of a symbol system associated with authority, religion, education, family and the life cycle.”⁸⁵ Being that

⁸² Visser, Irene. “Trauma and narratives,” in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 47, No. 3, July 2011, p. 272.

⁸³ Visser, 2011, p. 273.

⁸⁴ Visser, 2011, p. 273.

⁸⁵ Lifton, Robert Jay. “Whose Psychohistory,” in Peter Brooks y Alex Woloch (eds.), *Whose Freud? The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p. 227.

periodicals traffic with daily life, the way in which they negotiate with genocidal violence and its ghostly matters opens a fundamental discussion about how societies signify that violence and its resonance.

According to Bernays, propaganda targeted identity and images of “the mass mind alone,” as well as “the anatomy of society, with its interlocking group of formations and loyalties.”⁸⁶ The individual and the social organism rely on repetitions, memories, and the sense of day-to-day life to understand and organize their perception of time. Anti-Chinese printed propaganda targeted different audiences and supported the existence of a public anti-Chinese solidarity unifying a variety of social groups, revealing aspects about the perpetrators of violence.

The dimension in which the filaments of experience and perception of time are bound was conceptualized by François Hartog as “regime of historicity.” In a regime of historicity “heritage was linked to territory and to memory, which both operated as substrata of identity.”⁸⁷ Such a regime of historicity supposes a depth in the relations around heritage that genocide collapses only partially. In the tensions bouncing between memories, territories, domestic spaces, and the materials of national imaginations some clues can be dug up to signify historical heritage. Mine has a root in rural Zacatecas.

My Indigenous Chinese grandmother was born around 1927 in Torreón. Her parents escaped to a hidden rural area in the mountains of Zacatecas. She survived the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico by being only Mexican. She learned to read and write

⁸⁶ Bernays, 1928, p. 28.

⁸⁷ Hartog, François. *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2015, p. 151.

Spanish while the anti-Chinese imaginary was propagated. She knew a few words in Cantonese that she did not teach to any of her 14 children. Trying to find means of sustenance, she migrated back and forth illegally to the United States, crossing the desert between Mexico and the United States by foot at least three times. She learned to work as a maid in English, in California, while most of her family had to stay in Mexico, including my father who was a little kid. As María grew old in the United States, she was deported and lived her last years in Zacatecas. I met her there.

I found her collection of cheap periodical comic magazines when I was a kid. I don't have the impression I got to know her, but this chapter starts to tell the story of an arch of media and mourning that extends over her generation towards mine via an inheritance of counted words, open wounds, haunting objects. The comic magazines that I remember from her collection were called *libros vaqueros* (cowboy books). They had sick looking *chinos*, exciting infectious villains, and sexualized *chinas* that proliferated massively into unaccountable and irresistible popular variations.

Libros vaqueros were common visual prototypes of spicy frontier stories that focused on the adventures of *blancos rancheros* (white ranchers) in their encounters with invented Asians, "Indians" and Blacks. The sets were hotels, saloons, bedrooms, and the mountains in the open desert of the vast frontier between Mexico and the United States. *Libros vaqueros* had print runs of 1.5 million copies a week in the 1980s. As a child I knew they were not for me to read, and maybe that only increased their appeal. Now, I see in them haunting objects. They piled up in the humble house of María Luna, but they did not accumulate because she bought them. My great uncle, Espiridión Gutiérrez, between temporary fieldwork contracts, spent his time buying periodicals in the city of Zacatecas to rent them or sell them in the little towns of the rural territory where he lived. His recurring trajectories in small trucks, by hitch-hiking or *en burro*,

directly supplied the big houses of the remote town of Jerez and its *Cristero* local elite with fresh periodicals.⁸⁸

My uncle Espiridión went from his den in the periphery of Villanueva to the capital of the state of Zacatecas and back many times to deliver newspapers and illustrated magazines door to door to the hierarchy of ranks, classes, and relations around him. After serving the wealthier neighbors, he reached the neighbors of the small *ranchería* where he had his den. In this transit, he adjusted the price of the periodicals according to who the reader was. María, who lived right next to him, was the last stop. She paid him with *canelitas*: sweet bread made with cinnamon tea, sugar, arm work and —*si hay dinero que gastar*— three tablespoons of cream.

Blatant and arrogant, cartoons in popular comic magazines like the *libros vaqueros* ones serialized in her haunting collection, are one of the most accessible remnants of racial violence in Mexican territory. They are charged with adventurous, angry, and erotic depictions of racially based otherness. Read against the grain, they document both the motors of violence and some of the politics of its oblivion and attributed softness. Animation with cartoons is a powerful act of imagination and propaganda with the potential to produce graphic totalitarianism; in the intellectual work of Hanna Arendt, totalitarianism is characterized by the intention to “practice terror against innocent people” that belong to a group “limited by racial differentiation.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ The *Cristero* is a diverse group formed by a catholic militia active in different states in Mexico, during the first third of 20th century. The group mobilized landless peasants but also had a powerful branch among the former mining landlords affected by “constitutionalists” reforms, coming from the post-revolutionary political class invested in the constitution of 1917. *Cristero* elite was based in the states of Guanajuato, Guadalajara, Zacatecas, and Michoacán. They ceased most armed activities in the decade of 1930, becoming the last focus of civil war after Mexican Revolution started in 1910.

⁸⁹ Arendt, 1951, p. 6.

Totalitarian cartoons became a vehicle with which to publicly admit practices of terror and racial differentiation and look for their amplification through the mass distribution of propaganda.

As defined by international agreement in 1946, genocide is “a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups;” during the Convention on Genocide, passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, genocide was also associated with “killing, seriously harming, or interfering with the life continuity of a ‘national, ethnical, racial or religious group.’”⁹⁰ The mentality of genocide, according to Robert Lifton, “required extensive purification in order to achieve regeneration of nation and self -or, one might say, of national and racial self.”⁹¹ Once the genocide mentality establishes the “social theory of collective decay, a social diagnosis containing a clear direction or treatment” can promote a “healing ideology” that “promise new collective energy of life power” and furthermore focus on a “biologically demonic source of evil.”⁹² Graphic language gave materiality and texture to symptoms of difference and belonging to national imaginaries. In this binary, cartoons incarnated the visual models of the pure and the evil. Practices of violently intervening in the life of racial groups are materialized in alluring graphic adventures.

In the field of what is graphic, the ideologic goals of totalitarianism can model a type of body that is coherent with its values. Cartoons were able to fulfill fantasies that the genocidal machinery had yet to generate. Drawn scenarios became laboratories of dehumanization and graphic play with notions of decay, contamination, reproduction,

⁹⁰ Lifton, Robert Jay and Eric Markusen. *The Genocidal Mentality. Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat.* Basic Books, New York, 1991, p. 12.

⁹¹ Lifton, 1991, p. 12.

⁹² Lifton, 1991, pp. 53 and 55.

bestiality, viciousness, infection, national vigor, and extermination. A graphic punch could create a universe where racial difference was obvious and absolute, the monstrous deformation of Chinese characters was not resisted, and the successful contamination between Mexican and Chinese was stopped. In an illustrated book for elite circulation printed in Mexico in 1932, during the presidency of General Abelardo L. Rodríguez, the postrevolutionary regime admitted and celebrated totalitarian practices and plans for their amplification. The volume documented the *antichino* ideology, and the main motives of its propaganda campaign. The policy of representation was set clear. At the top of the hierarchy, rich photographs with matte finish celebrated regional and national genealogies of the *antichino* leadership. Shaped against these forms of distinction, cartoony Chinese pop up without the right to look like human forms (fig 5).

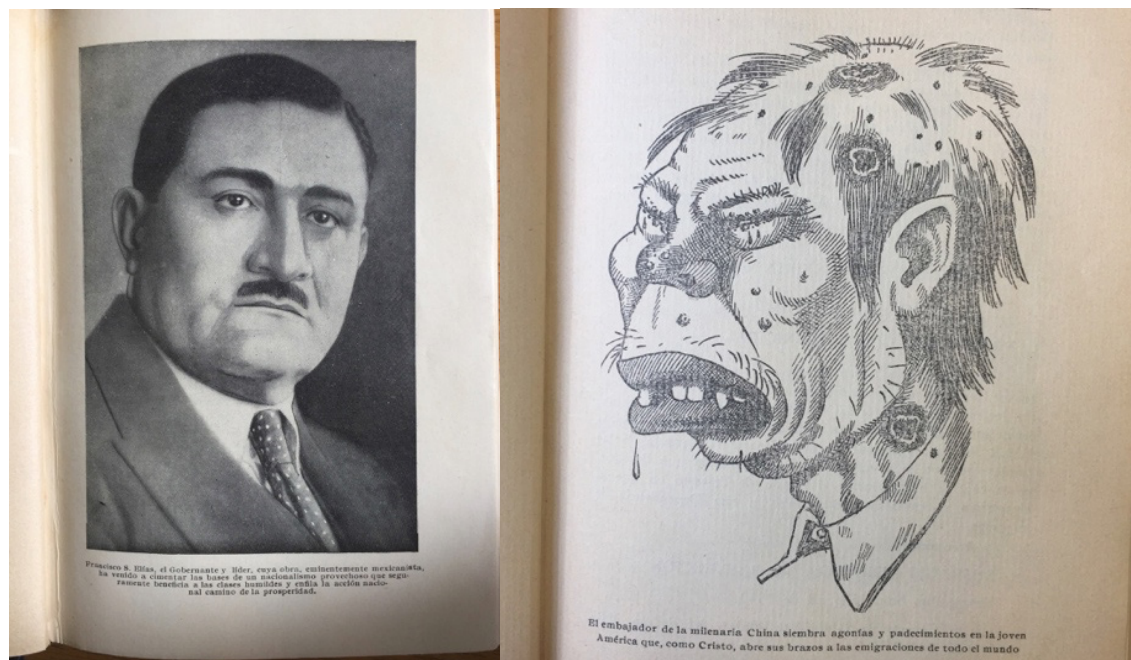


Fig 5. Portrait of Francisco S. Elías, one leader of the anti-Chinese Campaign and Caricature of “an ambassador of millenary China,” anonymous, in Espinoza, José Ángel. *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Mexico City, 1932, pp. 49 and 111.

Attending to the analysis of the visual systems of cartoon and caricature, Martha Banta sees a language that plays with the anxieties and the spectacle of creatures that seem to be out of place. Inside cartoon panels

purveyors of satiric fantasy pushed the social implications of biologically based ideas of visual extremes. [...] The nature of their appetites cannot be named or readily satisfied. What if further ruptures in the socio-biological fabric were yet to come about? What if fantastic hybrids were to spill out from zoo cages upon the public thoroughfares, unleashed, unharnessed?⁹³

The fear of bestially drawn creatures produced an electrifying graphic propaganda of domination. In the canon of realistic style for statues employed in the bronze figure of *El Hortelano* I have discussed as an example, Chinese retained its human form and its specificities as racially Asian were limited to character and attire. This figure was made visibly weak and had foreign clothes and hairstyle, but this difference only prevented integration, belonging or heroic glorification. In comparison to the statue, the possibilities of grotesque aggressiveness of drawn strokes in the cartooned graphic universe established difference as borders between species.

Genocidal printed graphics glorified the perpetrators of violence against forms that incarnated infections and deformations. These visual signs constituted themselves to become the visual evidence of what is deemed inhuman. These inhuman forms were twisted, intervened, and cartooned to a point at which they produced bodies so unclean that they justified their extermination in the rules of their constitution as forms. Graphic totalitarianism was made only in part of fantasy. The totalitarian graphic values of this book were commodified. This book was sold by organized fascist sectors that I will continue to discuss in this dissertation (fig. 6).

⁹³ Banta, Martha. *Caricature and the Culture of Conduct, 1841-1936*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2003, pp. 80-81.



Fig. 6. Salvador Abascal and other uniformed members of the Comité Pro Raza in Mexico City, c. 1932. In the top left corner, a selling sign for *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, (FINAH).

This photo has never been printed before in an academic publication, and it presents uniformed members of the Comité Pro Raza (Pro-Race Committee) in Mexico City. I have been able to identify only one of these uniformed men, Salvador Abascal, at the extreme left of the photo. He was a prominent member of several far-right Mexican associations, but his role in the Anti-Chinese campaign has not been studied. Abascal will become the leader of the fascist organization Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS), particularly active between the late 1930s and the 1950s. This anti-Chinese convergence between Abascal, the revolutionary party, and General Elías Calles is unusual in the context of a general dynamic of radical opposition between both figures. On the wall behind Abascal, the photograph shows a sign selling the book *El Ejemplo de Sonora*. This book put inhuman Chinese representations on paper together with text celebrating laws promoted by General Elías Calles that articulated the Chinese genocide in Mexico.

Domestic species

During the 1930s and 1940s the animated anti-Chinese propaganda imagined and printed in Mexico was explicit, horrendous, and sickening and depicted all sorts of violent fantasies. The illustrated book *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, available in many libraries, may be the most canonical among abundant printed formats. Some of its cartoons were used to illustrate almost every publication discussing the Chinese diaspora in Mexico. Despite its generalized presence, the researchers who have used these illustrations have not studied the book. Most likely, they are only familiar with a handful of its illustrations, while the book itself had more than 40, and more than 300 hundred pages. I found *El Ejemplo de Sonora* in the open shelves of a library in Los Angeles. A bit unsure of what I was doing, but proud, the youngest daughter of María Luna, one of my aunts who grew up in the United States, drove me to this library every day. I was flummoxed when, looking at the cover of the notorious illustrated book, I found a swastika that has not been discussed anywhere. This Nazi symbol was placed in the center of a strong male torso as part of a composition that uses a set of mystical signs. From the head of the strong Atlas emanate sunrays, and under his raised arms are placed twin triangular pyramids (fig. 7).⁹⁴

The book was authored in 1932 by José Ángel Espinoza, who deserves recognition as a professional *antichino*. Before being an author of Anti-Chinese books (he wrote at least two very important ones), Espinoza, in the 1920s, had municipal authority over the

⁹⁴ This mystical composition was the coat of arms of the state of Sonora until the 1940s and can be found across visual medias with diverse political affiliations, including the murals that Diego Rivera painted between 1923 and 1928 on the walls of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Public Education). While the association between the swastika and Nazi ideologies should not be automatic, in the particular case of *El Ejemplo de Sonora* I insist on a Nazi identification because the book commemorated a genocidal campaign and profusely used fascist terminology.

mining town of Cananea, which had the biggest Chinese community in the state of Sonora.⁹⁵

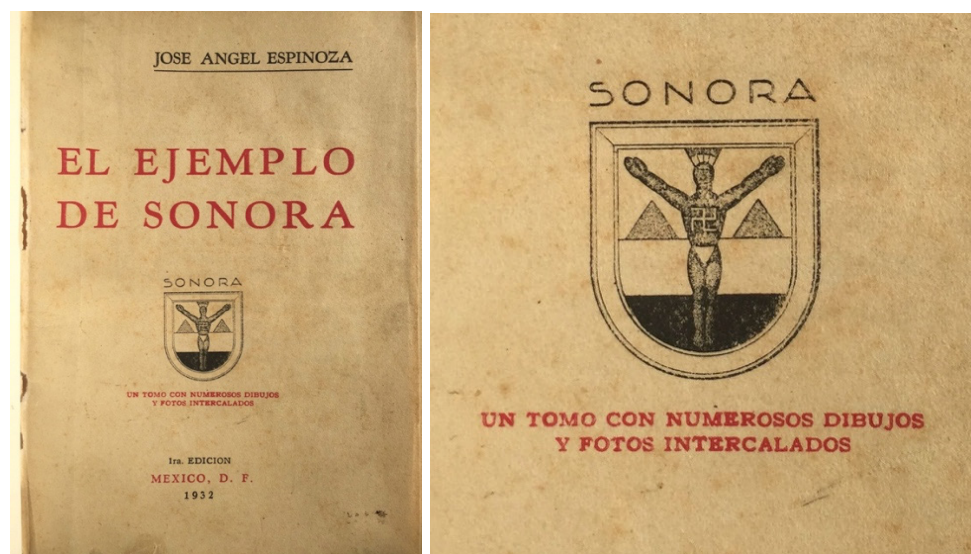


Fig. 7. Cover and detail of the cover with swastika. José Ángel Espinoza, *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Mexico City, 1932.

Espinoza later founded the newspaper *El Nacionalista*, as well as *El Semanario Pro-Raza*, which was printed in the capital of Sonora, Hermosillo. Both newspapers distributed anti-Chinese printed propaganda. During the early 1930s, he became the congressional representative for this state and the Oficial Mayor (Highest Official) of the Comité Nacionalista de la Campaña Antichina (Nationalist Committee of the Pro Raza Campaign), established within the State party called Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR). Before *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Espinoza authored *El Problema Chino en México*, in 1931.

The municipal term of Espinoza in the 1920s happened during the notorious rule of the Elías Calles family over Sonora, when a significant number of municipalities were also in

⁹⁵ Reñique, Gerardo. "Región, raza y el antichinismo sonorense. Cultura regional y mestizaje en el México revolucionario," in Aaron Grageda Bustamante (coord.). *Seis expulsiones y un adiós: despojos y exclusiones en Sonora*. Universidad de Sonora, Mexico City, 2003, pp. 275 and 276.

the hands of *antichinos*.⁹⁶ General Plutarco Elías Calles was governor of Sonora between 1915-1919, Francisco S. Elías, a cousin of Plutarco's father, took over between 1921-1923 and 1929-1931. Francisco S. Elías was honored with the full-page portrait I have presented in **fig. 5**. After Francisco S. Elías, governed Plutarco Elías' son, Rodolfo Elías Calles, between 1931-1934, with his uncle Francisco as his Secretary of Agriculture.⁹⁷ While the Elías Calles clan was controlling Sonora, General Plutarco Elías Calles became President (1924-1928). This was the period of consolidation of anti-Chinese legislation concerning migration, the regulation of work, taxes, marriage, the construction of ghettos and expulsions in the state of Sonora. Such was the patriotic exemplarity of the state, in which Espinoza took part and which he promoted in his canonical book. In its dedication, Espinoza clarified that he wrote to convince "the regional governments that are still making up their minds under the financial grip of the yellow race" that "the resolution of the Chinese problem [...] is a national yearning."⁹⁸

In this context, General Abelardo Rodríguez arrived at the presidency (September 1932- December 1934) by unanimous designation of the Congress after building his career and fortune in key areas of the anti-Chinese campaign. He was born in Sonora but concentrated military and political power as commander of Distrito Norte de Baja California (1921-1929) and Governor of Baja California (1923-1930). While the Peninsula of California was a federal territory, General Rodríguez made a fortune taxing the Chinese casinos of the city of Tijuana, a gambling destination that profited from

⁹⁶ The most important is José María Arana, founder of the antichinese Junta Comercial y de Hombres de Negocios, the newspaper *Pro Patria* and mayor of Magdalena Sonora (1918-1920). He was honored with a cartoon of himself giving antichinese speeches in *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, he wrote antichinese laws but also took the campaign to the States of Nayarit and Chihuahua.

⁹⁷ Reñique, 2003, pp. 281-284.

⁹⁸ Espinoza José Ángel. *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Mexico, 1932. My translation. This volume is also available by request at Biblioteca Nacional, UNAM in Mexico City.

being in a corridor with San Diego in the United States during the prohibition era. The other big source of income for the region was the Mexicali Valley, where a huge cotton industry was established based on renting land to the Colorado River Land Company and other conglomerates with foreign capital. Cotton picking season demanded an enormous human work force, and around half of it was of Chinese origin.⁹⁹ Many Chinese men stayed in Baja California and eventually owned “restaurants, bakeries, nixtamal mills, *tortillerías*, barber shops, laundries and ironing shops.”¹⁰⁰ Some even invested their own capital and handled contracts for processing and packing cotton with Chinese fieldworkers they hired (fig. 8).



Fig 8. Chinese Fieldworkers, Mexicali Valley, Baja California., c. 1915.

⁹⁹ “In 1919, the floating population of Mexicali, was close to 12,000 during the harvest season, about 5,000 were Chinese, 300 to 400 Japanese, and the rest were Mexican.” Pierson Kerig, Dorothy. *El Valle de Mexicali y la Colorado River Land Company, 1902-1946*. Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2001, pp. 159-160. My translation.

¹⁰⁰ Velázquez, 2010, p. 69. My translation.

What General Rodríguez deliberately remembers about this period, in his own recollections, were his *antichino* actions as governor, as a nationalist “remedy of evil” to “Mexicanize” his territory:

As I had been saying, almost all agricultural land was in the hands of foreigners and those areas were rented to Chinese and Hindus with preference over Mexican workers. There were also many other businesses, in Mexicali and Tijuana, in which foreign employees were preferred. To *remedy the evil*, I circulated a measure making it mandatory for all kinds of businesses to have at their service at least 50 % of Mexican nationals. Article 123 of the Constitution was still not in force: but I dictated a provision because with it, I cooperated with the goal of *mexicanizar* the State I commanded.¹⁰¹

While General Rodríguez was President, he tolerated supported other acts of “Mexicanization.” During 1933, Espinoza reported for the frontpages of newspapers about coordinated patriotic anti-Chinese actions. In a co-authored piece initially circulated by the government newspaper *El Nacional*, the anti-Chinese campaign made public its genocidal goals of elimination. As a nation-wide movement it had “numerous organizations operating in the territory of the Republic and which, for vital needs of economical and ethnic order, particularly on the West coast of the country, has been following a *radical campaign to eliminate undesirable foreigners*.”¹⁰²

The Anti-Chinese campaign had for some years organized militias called *Guardias Verdes* which harassed Chinese merchants. They also targeted Japanese, Blacks and

¹⁰¹ Rodríguez, Abelardo L. *Autobiografía*. Novaro Editores, Mexico City, 1962. p. 133 (BL). My translation. Italics mine.

¹⁰² “Solidaridad del Comité Pro-Raza,” *El Nacional. Periódico popular*, Wednesday March 1, 1933, p. 1, No. 1871, Mexico City (BL). My translation. Italics mine. This article includes extracts of a pamphlet written in Mexico City on February 28, 1933. It was signed by Senator Juan de Dios Bátiz and Jose Ángel Espinoza.

Jews.¹⁰³ *El Ejemplo de Sonora* referred to them in the text next to its only comic. The text defended the need of militias who, unlike policemen, were not corrupt and would not accept money from the Chinese. The comic next to this text offered a demonstration of the corruption among the police force. The sequence was organized in four vignettes of identical size, numerated in the top left corner (fig. 9).

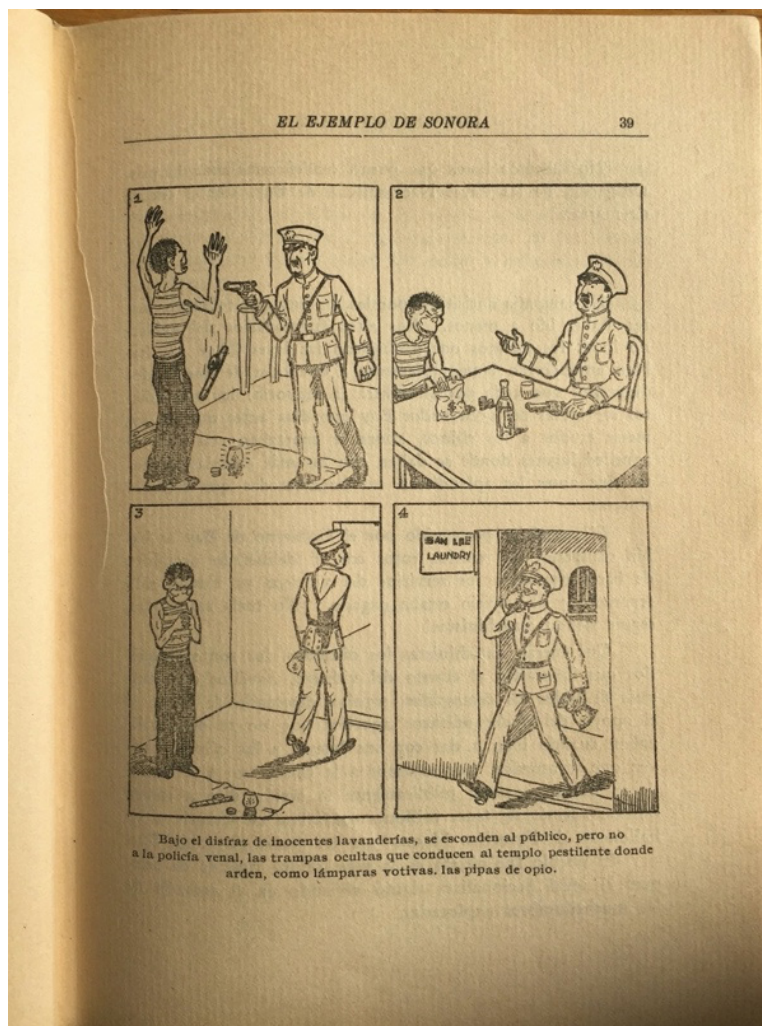


Fig. 9. Four vignette comic, anonymous in Espinoza, José Ángel. *El Ejemplo de Sonora*. Mexico City, 1932, p. 39.

¹⁰³ Velázquez Morales, Catalina. "Xenophobia y racismo: los comités antichinos en Sonora y Baja California," in *Meyibó*, No.1, January-June 2010, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas-UABC, pp. 69 and 75.

This comic used the entire page to tell a sequence in which a policeman moves across panels to enter and exit a fake Chinese laundry. Unlike the portrait in **figure 6**, that uses the entire page to highlight the horrendous details of the severed head of a Chinese, this full-page comic has multiple and more dynamic drawings. We see the full body of a Chinese figure with a cartoony and schematic shape that performs one action in each panel: he freezes with his hands up, he grabs money to bribe the policeman, he bows while the officer exits. In the fourth panel we only see the policemen and a sign that informs the reader that these actions took place in the Laundry of Sam Lee. The sign is intended to surprise the reader, who did not see any of the characteristics that a laundry is expected to have. At the same time, the opium pipe, an oil lamp, and some coins only confirm the racial suspicions that the reader is expected to have or, is expected to learn while reading the book.

The form of the comic organizes a racially tense transit between the outside and an inside of the city. The *chino* never leaves his station, but by accepting the bribe, the policeman, who was meant to be an agent of order, becomes an agent of contamination. The Mexican policeman catches *infraganti* a grotesque and skinny Chinese man smoking his opium pipe, but instead of reprimanding him, the policeman sits at his table and even accepts a drink from the *chino*. Next in the sequence, with a bribe in his hands, the policeman reaches for the exit door. In the last panel, at the level of the street, the corrupted policeman is about to rejoin public space. The trope in which the workplaces of the Chinese are facades of crime was not meant to be original but to be repeated and circulated in abundance. I think is important to register the larger theme that vilifies the possibility of Chinese having access to indoor spaces. The visual attacks to the possibility of establishing domestic spaces inside the city marked the urban edge with the emotion of the racial threat of contamination.

Anti-Chinese militias enjoyed the support of the Mexican State in the 1920s and 1930s but organized violence against the Chinese in Mexico was admitted in *El Ejemplo de Sonora* since at least 1860. When the Mexican Revolution started in 1910, targeting *chinos* was a recurring practice among militia factions of *villistas*, *orozquistas* and *maderistas*. This violence can be linked to pamphlets and to politicians who would eventually take over national positions and begin to translate war practices into institutional practices. Importantly, in this array of revolutionary factions, the *magonista* group, which was aligned with anarchist ideology, also participated in anti-Chinese racism. This will be discussed at length in chapter II.

Cartooned graphic violence in *El Ejemplo de Sonora* provided abundant evidence of the infectiousness of the Chinese cartooned body and how it continued towards its businesses, the things it touched, the food it prepared, its domestic orders and intimacies. In Mexico the word *chinera* reaches the most intimate compartments of life, attacking the space of affection, upbringing, and genealogies. The word was used to designate a Mexican woman who partnered with a *chino* and committed the crime of reproducing with one. Other scholars have worked with this cartoon, focusing on the Mexican women. As we can see, **fig. 10**, it also shows the cartoon version of a Mexican Chinese kid, referred to as “spit of nature.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Espinoza, 1932, p. 172.



Fig. 10. Cartooned *chinera* and her mixed race son, anonymous, in Espinoza, José Ángel. *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Mexico City, 1932, p. 172.

According to this book, this tormented semi-naked living corpse represents the subhuman specie of mixed-race Mexicans who, like my grandmother, had a Mexican Chinese father. Visually, there is nothing phenotypically Chinese about this nightmarish cartoon, but the text at its bottom attributes the monstrosity of its form to its Chinese ancestry. The father of my grandmother was Inés Luna, who was a cowboy and a *brujo* and joined paths with Mónica Venegas, the indigenous mother of my grandmother. The peasant family left Monte de los García, Zacatecas fleeing from the violence of the *Cristeros*, to Torreón. There, they had four kids; the first one was named Socorro. They managed to survive in the margins of the city, in an area without gardens or wells, while the geographical belts of the *chineros* were cordoned off. In Mexico *chinero* is not only the word that designates the clandestine mass grave of *chinos*, but also the Chinese ghettos, a pack of Chinese, or the defendants of Chinese. My grandmother could not settle in Torreón and moved back again to Zacatecas.

Just the desert

The high-cost special edition of *El Ejemplo de Sonora* most probably circulated among bureaucrats with salaries. Its capacity to reach an audience was limited. The anti-Chinese campaign obsessively cultivated the print stratum of newspapers and illustrated magazines, with a wider, more versatile, and mobile audience than that of the illustrated book. Together, this diversity of materials and formats clarifies ways in which print culture participated in the “environmental negotiation” of the anti-Chinese campaign, and the storying of genocide. In this environmental understanding of paper objects, “the acts of writing and reading are also meaningful and entangled modes of dwelling.”¹⁰⁵

The publishing house of the Spanish printer Francisco Seyrols, Editora Seyrols, was important for the configuration of the Mexican graphic printed environment. From 1933 and until the 1950s, Seyrols printed the illustrated magazine *Sucesos para todos*. In 1934, Seyrols will print the first industrially produced comic magazine in the Mexican territory, *Paquín* (1934-1947). *Sucesos* focused on cosmopolitan fascist propaganda, but anti-Chinese propaganda made locally added regional flavor. Occasionally, *Sucesos* gave more prominence to anti-Chinese propaganda including it on both its front and internal pages. This is the case of No. 185, published in the summer of 1936 (fig. 11).

¹⁰⁵ Calhoun, Joshua. “Towards an ecology of texts,” *The nature of the page. Poetry, paper making, and the ecology of texts in renaissance England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, p. 2 and 3.

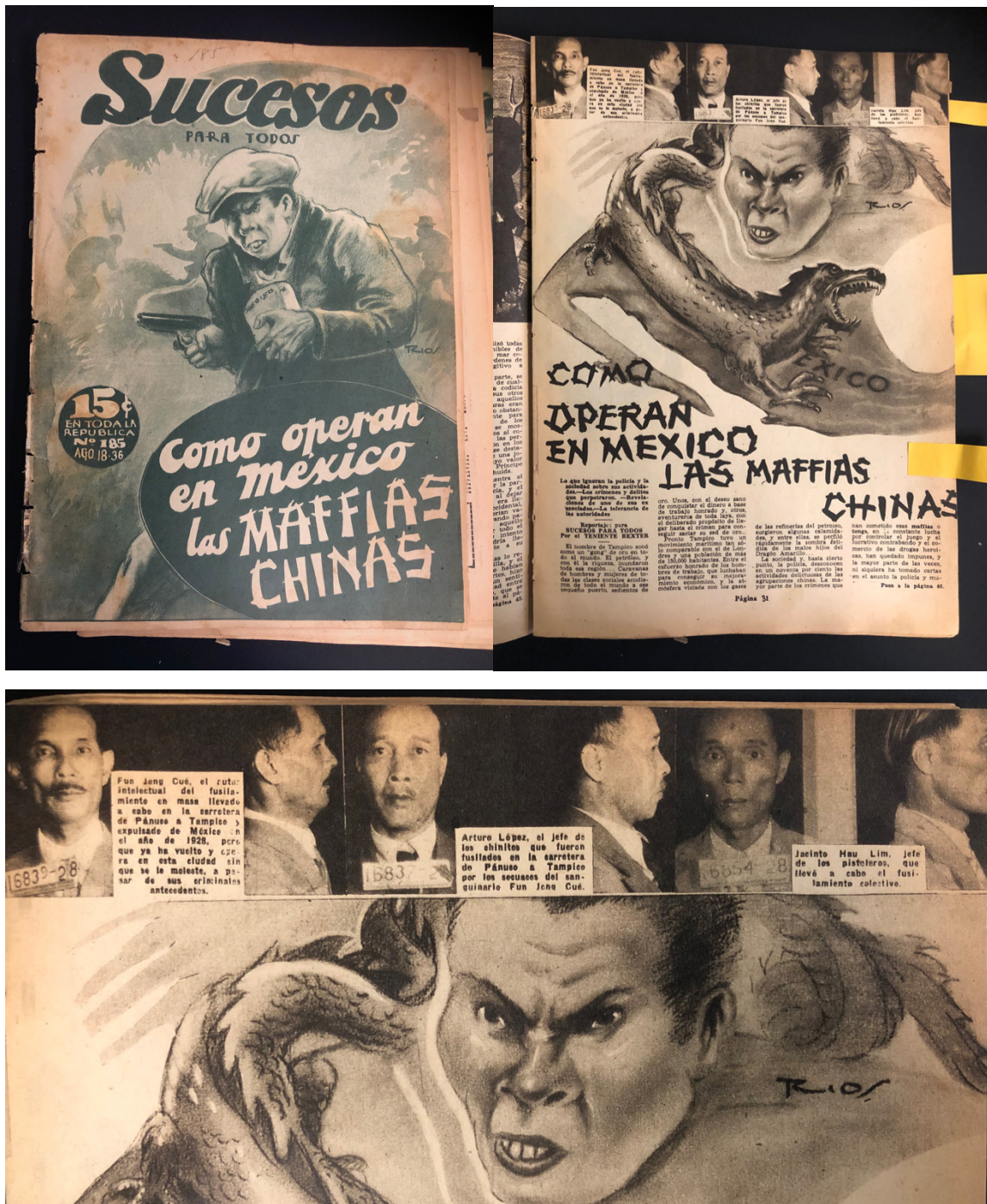


Fig. 11. Cover, main article, and headline of *Sucesos para Todos*, No. 185, July 1936. Drawings by Rios. Text of the article by Teniente Rexter.

The content of illustrated magazines could be supported by periodical sequences in which similar issues resonated. *Sucesos* was mass printed, standardized, and had daily periodicity. These characteristics insisted on a number of fears, cultivated loyalties on a daily basis, and amplified the effect of convergence and coherence with authoritarian values. The formal platform could present a more restricted and restrained representation of the social body.

Anti-Chinese intentions are presented on the cover with an alluring fictionalized reportage on Chinese mafias. They are developed in two *planas* inside with photo sequences, drawings, and text. The central piece of the magazine, announced in its cover, is a headline made of a sequence of lateral and frontal headshots of Chinese man. Then comes an illustration with an oriental head with bad teeth and a sunken skull followed by a poorly made Chinese dragon. The dragon occupies the north of a map of Mexico that accentuates the northern perspective. The illustration of the Mexican territory in danger due to the visually menacing presence of the Chinese is signed by Ríos. Over the illustration, the title is hand-drawn with fake “Chinese” letters, but the body of the text uses standard typefaces of the newspapers of modern reputation. The story told by the text ends with the death of the Chinese portrayed in the headshots.

This 1936 issue of *Sucesos* brings together other exciting layout maneuvers. The eyes navigate from photomontages of Mussolini playing sports, to a poster of Christo Rex and the coverage—in *fotonovela* format—of Hitler's visit to the tomb of a Nazi soldier. As a tonal contrast, there are also Greek tragedies with homoerotic illustrations that display white supremacy and will become a thematic resource in use for decades, educative scientific pieces, and accounts of historical episodes completed the formative offer. The pages that invite the reader to interact with the printed format are alphabet soup and other word games like the ones María Luna loved.

The history of the genocide of her Chinese ancestors is a long-term project. The archival material is abundant, but it is not catalogued. It explicitly documents anti-Chinese ideology with a campaign linking elites and militias, regional and federal police, judges, lawyers and press moguls. Here, I have started to use a strategy of analysis that focuses on graphic violence but also points to translocal scales and extended periods that exceed political regimes. With the intention of understanding and narrating the genocide, there is a need to tie time together again, to rethink traditional durations and political periods. There is a severe deficit of acknowledgement and public debate concerning the presence of Asians in Mexico since colonial times, its entanglement with Indigenous and other minorities, and the scale of the anti-Chinese violence in Mexico. After the psychohistorical collapse of the genocide, a tendency of national memory that leans on fragmented scales and is resigned to violence can continue expanding the social devastation caused by genocide.

We can carefully approach the vast desert with howling Chinese bones. It is not that these exiled ghosts walk alone in a fatal imaginary. There is wide space for their echoes in a territory of disused words, visual sources, domestic memories, printed graphic forms, and accounts of genocidal mortuary practices. I think that, in this territory, ghostly ontologies can be rooted. Almost erased from national memory through large-scale trauma, these ghosts crossed the Great Ocean many generations ago, and have been here for a long time. They left ruins, materials and offspring who can read the sand.

Chapter II

The universe of graphic forms and the format of the comic

1880-1910

The classic book about comics in Mexico, authored by Juan Manuel Aurrecochea and Armando Bartra in the 1980's, perhaps unconsciously and out of sincere admiration, wanted to provide a certain nobility to the comic. Looking for its origins, the experts settled for engravings, literature, and the assumed radical vocation of political satire.¹ Their study put an emphasis on the artistic proficiency of cartoonists, leading to discussions of training or taste, or of the degree in which comics address the political sphere with a critical eye.

In contrast, I propose to place the comic inside the universe of graphic forms, a formal realm where images and text interact, and in which shapes are delimited by the repetition of rotary printed patterns. As industrially created behaviours, these printed patterns were massively abundant, numbered, and circulated as series. These serial characteristics—in the sense that they were coherent through the sequentiality of one issue following another—affected the volume, availability, frequency, extension, layout, integration, and durability of graphic periodicals.

¹ "The graphic and popular literature traditions fertilized the territory in which comics are born, and from them it acquires its national characteristics [...] the journalistic antecedents of our comic must be sought in 19th century press and its powerful satirical graphic." Aurrecochea, Juan Manuel and Armando Bartra. *Puros cuentos. La historia de la historieta en México 1874-1934*, Vol. 1. Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / Museo de Culturas Populares / Grijalbo, Mexico City, 1988, pp. 43 and 45. My translation.

Although both the comic and the satire use caricature, the form of the comic strip served a desire to entertain that more often, commented on social scenarios than on the political figures on which satire focused. Additionally, the comic was boosted in advertising campaigns for high-circulation dailies, and comics were conceived primarily as attractions. This visual prominence as advertising for dailies and their interest on social commentary, made the politics of cartooning within comic strips important tools for enhancing social representations, transmitting, and fixing social stereotypes. One of the most visible social structures reinforced by advertising comics was the dominance of a good looking and stylish clientele, the possible buyers and legitimate audience of periodicals, and the vulgar and rather scandalous dispossessed class that lack the means or the looks to be taken seriously.

Manners, social hierarchies, and stereotypes that were repeated by illustrated mass periodicals became serialized behaviours through which print culture registered and influenced the images of their time. Along with the impact they had at the time of their original publication, pre-industrially serialized behaviours which circulated through this ongoing succession of issues with massive runs, influenced the supply of images available to historians and visitors of archives for looking at the past.

This chapter will discuss the pre-industrial form of the comic strip that could be found in mass circulation newspapers. The comic started to circulate in Mexico in the late 19th century, when it introduced sequenced narration consisting of multiple panels telling short stories with images, often accompanied by text. But the focus of the chapter is not on the moment of emergence of the comic strip, but on the period of consolidation when the comic was pre-industrialized using rotary printing technologies during the first two decades of the 20th century. During this time, comic strips started to circulate, too, as comic booklets, separated for the first time from the newspapers

they were created for. This was done discretely, and only decades later did a separate industrial medium for the comic emerge.

The pre-industrial stage of comic strips in Mexico happens during the first two decades of the 20th century and is based on the increased presence of rotary printing machines that used continuous roles of paper and slowly, but steadily since the 1910s, were able to print in colour. During this pre-industrial stage, the two newspapers of larger circulation in Mexico were *El Imparcial* (1896-1914) and *El País* (1899-1914), and their prestige was linked to owning machines that *could* print up to two hundred thousand sheets per hour. Rotary printing machines represented an acceleration and reduction of cost in the production of print matter in comparison with the incredibly labor-intensive previous stage of printing, that was based on single cylinder printing machines in which separate sheets needed to be layed on manually.² While the first rotaries were bought in 1899, most dailies in Mexico did not owned rotaries until the 1910s.

During this pre-industrial era, comics were printed and distributed regularly inside heavily illustrated newspapers of mass circulation. Specially on Sunday editions, comic strips were carefully placed side-by-side with classy advertising, journalistic photos, and elegant illustrations; across such a plurality of printed formats, comics used the boldest representations, which stood out in the context of the more contained graphic forms around them. At the same time, their entertaining tone and investment in dreams and fantasies, made them less threatening. As a result, the visuals of comics, often charged with the boldest emotions, could embody ideas about danger, scandal, and repugnance, in softened ways.

² Southward, John. *The Principles and Progress of Printing Machinery*. E. Menken, London, 1900, pp. 28-29.

When the comic strip was becoming a pre-industrial commodity in Mexico, in the early 1900s, a significant number of ethnic Chinese were arriving, brought within the economic dynamics of traditional plantations, mines, agro-industrial projects, and rail ports across the nation's territory. The periodical press manufacturing cartooned *chinos* and *mongoles* systematically participated in the negotiation and depiction of tensions and hierarchies which served to divide and structure Mexican society in racial terms. Cartooned depictions of Asians in the Mexican press, as we shall see, started at least as far back as the 1890s and were impacted by the Coolie Trade (1830-1880) which although technically dismantled in the 1880s, continued to operate in Mexico in different ways and with different names until at least 1910.

It is vital to acknowledge that cartoon language in Mexico modelled racially specific markers for Asians in the context of this de facto extension of the Coolie Trade, which means that the principles of graphic construction and differentiation of cartooned Asians were immersed in racism and slavery. Historically, graphic racism, domination, and slavery affected several othered groups in Mexico, more consistently Black folk, whose slavery was legal in Mexico until 1810, but also mixed castes. A Mexican graphic language for periodicals arose only in the last third of the 19th century and had begun its pre-industrial transition by the 1900s. I will focus on this decade of transition when several social groups were dominated, racialized and othered, including Asians, but in which only folks of Asian origins were massacred. Recently immigrated Asians were treated as indentured laborers and slaves, and their mixed castes with rebel Indigenous were being breed as slaves in Mexico.

In terms of structure, this chapter begins with the sections "Liminal and mobile" and "Degradation," where I present a general perspective on Chinese immigration and the extension of the Coolie Trade in Mexico, and the analysis of one anti-Chinese

caricature printed in 1899. This caricature serves as an entry point for a discussion of print culture. The following section, “Hemispheric violence,” provides some brief context about anti-Chinese violence in the American Hemisphere to better understand specific characteristics of Mexican anti-Chinese violence. It is followed by “The construction of Yellow,” a section that tracks the appearance of yellow as a racist and hygienist politically operative concept in Mexico.

The second part of this chapter starts with “Pre-industrial comic,” in which I will discuss the first Mexican comic with mass distribution, which was made for the El Buen Tono cigarette company in the early 1900s. It is followed by the section “Imperceptible / hyper visible,” whose title refers to racial anxiety over the presence of Chinese as this was manifested in the Mexican comic. In the following section, “The yearly album,” I consider the evolution of the format of El Buen Tono advertising strips in 1909. The chapter concludes with the section “The graphic revolution,” which traces the development of a Chinese comic stereotype during a time of accelerated distribution of images in the Mexican press.

Liminal and mobile

The highest numbers of Coolie workers —indentured laborers of East and South Asian origins exploited to replace Black slaves—arrived in plantations, mines, and railroads in the American Hemisphere between 1840 and 1870, and were concentrated in Cuba, the United States and Peru.³ The decade of the 1860s began with “more Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean than in North America.”⁴ Neither Peru nor Spain, that

³ Palma, Patricia and José Ragas, “Enclaves sanitarios: higiene, epidemias y salud en el Barrio chino de Lima, 1880-1910,” in *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, Vol. 45, No 1, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, January-June, 2018, p. 165.

⁴ Yun, Lisa. *The Coolie speaks: Chinese indentured laborers and African slaves in Cuba*. Temple University Press, 2008, p. 21.

still ruled over Cuba at the time, had signed treaties with China, so the high traffic of Coolies to this territories was the result of direct negotiations with Macao.⁵ Most of the Coolie trade for Latin America between 1840 and 1870s came from the Portuguese enclave of Macao (established since 1556), which was less regulated than the other great market of Coolies in Southeast Asia, the British enclave established in 1842 in Hong Kong. By the late 1840s, Macao had several “emigration agents” negotiating around a dozen shipments of Coolies a year to Cuba and Peru.⁶ The British trade from Hong Kong increased drastically after 1862, when “Americans had taken the lead in Chinese coolie shipping, surpassing the British, Spanish, French, and Portuguese in the number of ships and Coolies in the trade.”⁷

Without quoting specifics, Jason Chang traces what seems to be the earliest debates about the Coolie Trade in Mexico to the 1830s, when financial periodicals such the English-language newspapers *Two Republics* and *Mexican Herald*, and *El Economista Mexicano* were in favor of importing Chinese laborers.⁸ At the time of formation of the Coolie Trade, during the mid-19th century, the Mexican peso had remained a strong currency in Asia as a result of the Manila Galleon trade (1565-1815). Despite this advantage, years of internal wars in Mexico, and the increasing rivalry with Spain from the newly independent country, prevented the consolidation of a formal participation in the Coolie Trade. This does not mean that Mexico did not participate in it, as many

⁵ Connelly, Marisela and Romer Cornejo Bustamante. *China-América Latina, Génesis y desarrollo de sus relaciones*. Centro de Estudios de Asia y África- El Colegio de México, Mexico City, 1992, p. 24.

⁶ Asome, John. “The indentured Coolie trade form Macao,”. *Journal of the Royal Society Hong Kong Branch*, Vol. 54, 2014, pp. 158-159.

⁷ Yun, 2008, p. 22.

⁸ Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino, Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico 1880-1940*, University of Illinois Press, 2017, p. 61.

scholars have proposed.⁹ The possibilities of informality, and a large frontier with the United States, supported the first immigrations. By 1857, "the Mexican congress authorized the introduction of Chinese workers to aid the settler enterprises of *colonos blancos* in Colima, Guerrero, Michoacán, and Yucatán."¹⁰

The progressive regulation of the trade of Asian laborers in Mexico started in the 1860s. After decades of observing how massive Coolie migration was successfully capitalized in Cuba, Peru, and California, politicians, journalists, and doctors put forward a few models and scenarios for controlling and exploiting the Chinese population and made these public in the Mexican press. At the time, the landscape of journalism in Mexico was emerging from its position of subordination to "foreign circulation, legal or illegal, not to mention the dependence on supplies (paper, for example) and technology (presses and types)."¹¹ Between 1840-1850, according to Laurence Coudart, the market of Mexican periodicals started to consolidate; while print runs were still modest and the audience for newspapers was still in formation, the number of titles multiplied. At the graphic level, the increasing circulation of caricatures and other images during this artisanal stage of the Mexican press, that slowly started in the 1830s and extended until the 1880s, made newspapers a vibrant space for exchange and for the propagation of "a didactic inventory of a dreamed Nation."¹²

⁹ This has been a dominant opinion, expressed by Conelly and Cornejo among others: "A diferencia de Cuba y Perú, México no participó en el comercio de Coolies. Los migrantes chinos empezaron a llegar a México en 1864 vía Estados Unidos." Connelly and Cornejo, 1992, p. 40. Zhen Kuangmin, p. 496.

¹⁰ Chang, 2017, p. 46.

¹¹ Coudart, Laurence. "El espejo estrellado: La caricatura decimonónica," in Lise Andriez and María Esther Pérez Salas (dirs.). *Impressions du Mexique et de France / Impresiones de Mexico y Francia*. Paris / Mexico: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme / Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. Jose María Luis Mora, 2009, p. 258. My translation.

¹² Coudart, 2009, p. 261. My translation.

Across the Mexican periodicals of the consolidated artisanal stage that I have examined, between the 1850s and 1880s, Asian people were considered an accessible and abundant resource for the emerging Mexican Nation. If not ideal, they were a realistic resource with which to occupy the national territory and invigorate Mexican agriculture and industry. In 1852, the daily *El Monitor Republicano*, printed in Mexico City, after covering congressional debates, concluded:

The colonization of the immense lands of the Republic would produce the greatest advantages to agriculture and would be one of the most effective means of promoting it. [...] Chinese peasants [should be] brought to Mexico [to] teach us how to cultivate and prepare real tea [...] Chinese and Saxon potters to teach us how to produce porcelain [...] Chinese craftsmen to teach us how to make ivory carvings and exquisite works of gold and silver filigree.¹³

As long as colonizing *chinos* were overseen and overpowered by white settlers, most concerns regarding the integration of Chinese within the territory were kept at bay. During Mexico's brief Second Empire (1864-1865), Emperor Maximilian I attempted the first centralization of a modern Pacific trade dynamic and created the *Compañía de Colonización Asiática* (Asian Colonization Company). The company "sought to repurpose Atlantic slave ships" to bring Chinese "workers."¹⁴

Despite the relative disorganization and modesty of the Mexican Coolie Trade, the volume of Chinese transit into Mexico was significant. Without precise records, scholars such as Kennet Cott suggest that by the 1870s, it "had been underway for some time [and] the trickle of immigrants of earlier years had swollen considerably in the 1880s."¹⁵

¹³ *El Monitor Republicano, Diario de política, artes, industria, comercio, modas, literatura, teatros, variedades y anuncios*, Tuesday January 20, 1852, p. 3, Year VIII, No. 2435, Mexico City, Hemeroteca Nacional Digital (HND). My translation.

¹⁴ Chang, 2017, p. 47.

¹⁵ Cott, Kennett, "Mexican Diplomacy and the Chinese Issue, 1876-1910," in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, February 1987, Duke University Press, p. 70.

A sense of consistency in records and official numbers becomes a possibility for the 1890s, when, as Cott is able to point out, about "1,000 Chinese resided in Mexico."¹⁶ What is interesting about the Mexican case is that, in some ways, it functioned as a *defacto* extension in time of the Coolie Trade. By the late 1870's, the documented horrors of the Coolie Trade, a system of provisional slavery with high mortality rate, forced China to intervene and suspend more "contracts" definitely by the 1880's.¹⁷ Greater official numbers of Chinese workers arrived in Mexico only after this trade was technically dismantled to work in conditions that were not significantly different from those capitalized during the Coolie Trade.

By the 1880s, Mexican public opinion no longer discussed how the Chinese were a resource for colonization in inhospitable areas, instead it discussed issues such as how they could be prevented from settling, alleging dangers of racial decline, and expressing remnants of slavist thought. In the more liberal line of thought, which tend to avoid explicit racial reasoning but used the pseudoscientific jargon in current fashion through the Western world, natural characteristics were projected onto the Chinese, such as those which made them suitable for harsh conditions that were unacceptable or inhospitable to "civilized" people: "The excessive heat, the high humidity, the abundance of poisonous vermin and harmful insects drive away civilized people from

¹⁶ Cott, 1987, p. 70.

¹⁷ The suspension was based in part in the testimonies of nearly 3,000 Chinese workers in Cuba. The testimonies were collected as a petition for freedom by a commission directed by Chen Lan Pin. The impressive and decisive "Report of the Commission Sent by China to Ascertain the Condition of Chinese Coolies in Cuba" was produced under coercion and punishment, according to the research of Lisa Yun: "The testimonies reveal that the Coolies considered the punitive consequences of testifying, and evidently, their desire for freedom and the desire to tell trumped any fear of punishment [...] testimonies were taken at a range of sites in several cities and towns in several provinces. The testimonies were given in the Coolies' native tongue before the commission. A team of translators and secretaries accompanied the commission." Yun, 2008, p. 47.

these places [...] Only the Chinese and the Blacks could bear the hardships of those climates.”¹⁸

This liberal line of thought was aligned with the colonial legacy of the racial category of *indios chinos*, that theorized that Asians could be naturally transplanted to Indigenous Nations and exploited in debt peonage and other systems. It also aligned with the memory of the colonial domestic slavery of Asians. The catholic daily *El Tiempo* claimed in 1886 that the assumed diminished mental abilities and uncivilized manners of imagined *chinos* made them ideal for “trades of domestic servitude for which intelligence or good taste are not necessary, nor the cultured manners of the merchant of a commercial warehouse.”¹⁹ The more aggressive anti-Chinese campaign was developed when Chinese visibly arrived to said positions within commercial establishments.

Degradation

The development of the language of the comic strip in Mexico happened concurrently with the official dismantling of the Coolie Trade by China, the emergence of restrictive national regulations concerning non-European immigration to Mexico, and a reconfiguration of Transpacific migration. The Chinese Exclusion Act, established in the United States in 1882, had substantial consequences in the North American region, and northern Mexican states such as Baja California, Coahuila and Sonora, because it increased an unregulated traffic and midterm settlement of Chinese in Mexico, whose ultimate goal was to enter into the U.S. Highlighting the agency of Chinese migrants,

¹⁸ Pérez, Antonio G. “Colonización,” *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, Saturday November 9, 1867, p. 1, Vol. 5, No. 118, Mexico City, HND.

¹⁹ “Los chinos y el pueblo trabajador de México,” *El Tiempo, Diario Católico*, Saturday June 19, 1886, p. 2, Year III, No. 851, Mexico City, HND.

Erika Lee argues that “300,955 Chinese, including first-time entries, returning residents, and U.S. citizens, entered the United States during the exclusion era (1882–1943), compared to only 258,210 before exclusion (1849–82).”²⁰ Helen Chen states that “close to 200,000 Chinese passed through the United States *en route* mostly to Cuba and Mexico from 1894 through 1940.”²¹

As I have mentioned, the legal framework of immigration to Mexico came after decades of irregular practices. The *Tratado de Amistad y Comercio* (Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with China) was in effect between 1899 and 1926. It allowed legal Chinese emigration to Mexico and constituted the less restrictive immigration policy of the North American region at the time. By then it was popularly acknowledged that Chinese had entered Mexican cities and states; as the Mexican daily *La Patria* noted in 1886: “they have arrived in various parts of the country in great number, and to the Capital.”²²

The modern Chinese diaspora in Mexico was notoriously diverse. Runaway Coolies entered the Yucatan peninsula from Belize (which was then known as British Honduras) “integrating with local Mayans,”²³ others entered the Gulf of Mexico from Cuba. Chinese merchants from Panama established prosperous stores in the southern state of Chiapas while contract workers arrived in the state of Oaxaca, also in the south and along the Pacific coast, to work on the railroad.²⁴ In addition to this combination of merchants and railroad workers, there was also a presence of Chinese fieldworkers,

²⁰ Young, Elliott. *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2014, pp. 156-157.

²¹ Young, 2014, p. 159.

²² “Chinos,” *La Patria*, Sunday June 20, 1886, p. 3, Year X, No. 2767, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

²³ Chang, 2017, p. 47.

²⁴ Connelly and Cornejo, 1992, p. 42.

Chinese investors, landowners, and Chinese capital, mostly in the northern Mexican states of Baja California, Sonora and Coahuila:

In 1889 a group of Chinese merchants residing in San Francisco [California] invested \$328,000 dollars in the mines of Baja California [Mexico]. In the mines of Sonora, merchants from Shanghai invested capital. In January 1906, Kang Youwei, promoter of the Chinese reformist movement, traveled to Mexico to investigate the possibilities of investing in this country. In Torreón [Coahuila] he bought land at a low price and then sold it for twice as much. With other Chinese friends, in Torreón he established the Compañía Bancaria México-China (Mexico-China Banking Company,) a subsidiary of the Corporación Comercial (Commercial Corporation). Its function was the purchase and sale of real state and the transfer of capitals to New York and Hong Kong.²⁵

Starting in the 1880s, Mexico began to aggressively re-organize the colonization of its territory through a reform of land-use laws, dispossession of Indigenous lands and the recruitment of, ideally, white peoples to “settle” the land. Through the 1883 Ley de deslinde y colonización de terrenos baldíos (Law of Demarcation and Colonization of Vacant Lands), the government reclaimed lands across the entire national territory.

This was the case of significant portions of lands in the north of Mexico that had been traditionally owned by the Yaqui, Mayo, Comanche, Seri, and Apache peoples. These Indigenous nations, some of which were semi-nomadic, constantly fought against being hunted, expelled, relocated, and they faced genocide. Chinese men were introduced into the ancestral lands that Indigenous nations had been disposed of by the State “as racialized instruments of policy in order to expand and deepen the power of the state through the expansion of infrastructure projects.”²⁶

²⁵ Connelly and Cornejo, 1992, p. 44. My translation.

²⁶ Chang, 2017, p. 32.

After decades of Indigenous resistance, Indigenous land in the border between Mexico and the United States started to be controlled by the State, partially through the introduction of Chinese. Over decades there had been a constant failure to recruit the desired European or American settlers. Areas rich in minerals and agro-industrial opportunities had remained vacant and unproductive, so the industry settled for what they thought of as degraded *chino* workers. Using the mechanical jargon of the time, *El Tiempo* captured how the use of Chinese *blood engines* in Mexico elicited both repugnance and satisfaction:

there are reasons to consider somewhat repugnant the invasion of the Chinese element [...] [Yet,] in sum, the issue in Mexico, is purely mechanical. In the same way that we lack perfected farming instruments, we lack *blood engines*, and if these can only be supplied to us by the Celestial Empire, we must resort to that market, overcoming our antipathies.²⁷

Despite the repugnance, federal immigration policy remained open for almost forty years, allowing a proliferation of diverse groups of Chinese in Mexico. Consequently, several violent practices started to emerge. Exploitation was still a part of everyday life for a large proportion of the diaspora, but the consideration of specific genocidal measures to deal with the Chinese started to be more public in the Mexican press in the 1880's. In this decade, a coherent set of goals and ideas explicitly referred to racial reasoning. This racist line of thought still accepted *cuadrillas de chinos*, as long as they remained in transit and had no contact with the Mexican cities which were then emerging from the process of industrialization. This conviction echoes the notion of the mobile slave that was invented during the Coolie Trade. Racists started to differentiate themselves from the liberals, who were in favor of controlled and

²⁷ "La inmigración china," *El Tiempo. Diario Católico*, Thursday May 27, 1886, p. 2, Year III, No. 832, Mexico City, HND. My translation. The term blood engines was also used in *Minero Mexicano* and other industrialist newspapers printed in Mexico.

concentrated forms of integration. Racialists actively opposed Asian settlement in urban areas and started to campaign to forcefully relocate and concentrate the Chinese population as needed in the late 1880s. The Mexican periodical press at the time constantly published the first proposals for banning property ownership and marriage for Asians as well as penalizing bi-racial miscegenation. These ideas kept Chinese immigrants inside the borders, but at the edge of the Mexican nation, in a state of degradation.

The idea of racial degradation was clearly expressed in Mexican periodicals since at least 1886, when *El Tiempo* stated: "the Chinese are a degraded race, whose customs antagonize morality. [...] Let European immigrants come, especially of the Latin race, or from other republics south of Mexico, and it will be seen that they will be well received and briefly will form a single family with folks of the country."²⁸ This corpus of ideas would come back as genocidal legislation in the following decades.

Mexican periodicals reported about the urban presence of communities of Asian diasporas in Mexico, and their rejection, amidst international motifs of infectious Chinese boarding and descending from ships all over the world as reported by international news agencies. In 1886, in the Pacific port of Mazatlán, hundreds of Chinese arrived from San Francisco and Vancouver. As mutinies onboard the steamship *Sardonyx* suggested, this group of around 300 Chinese were being forcibly relocated.²⁹ The report about the public outrage over the presence of this lively group of *chinos* in

²⁸ "Chinos en Mazatlán," *El Tiempo, Diario Católico*, Friday June 18, 1886, p. 3, Year III, No. 850, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

²⁹ *Monitor Republicano* clarified that these groups of Chinese were being expelled from the U.S. to Mexico, and that the bad conditions of the trip forced them to protest. *Monitor Republicano*, Thursday July 15, 1886, p. 3, Year XXVI, No. 168, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

the Mexican port was multisensorial, and supported the concentration of Chinese outside of the limits of the port as the logic solution:

it is public and notorious that the presence of Chinese on the main street, their frequent quarrels, their bad smell, their infernal music, their obscene demonstrations, their bare legs and other animalistic additions, do not 'beautify' the aforementioned street. [...] In our opinion, those friends with ponytails should build large sheds on the Navería hill or beyond our sentry boxes, and live in the open air, like field soldiers, since they must be ready to march where they are required. With or without a medical certificate [they should live] outside the walls.³⁰

After a long public debate, covered by newspapers across the political spectrum, and the official recommendation made by a physician, the government of Mazatlán implemented what seems to be the first mass expulsion of *chinos* in Mexico. The solution satisfied both liberals and nationalists because it preserved the racial hygiene of the city but kept *chinos* at hand to be sent where their work was needed. Chinese were expelled not only to outside of the city, but to a nearby Mexican Pacific Island: Isla de los Venados.³¹ It took less than one month to implement the expulsion,³² and

³⁰ *El Tiempo. Diario Católico*, Thursday June 24, 1886, p. 3, Year III, No. 855, Mexico City, HND. My translation. This debate proposed specific commercial and hygienic regulations that will also come back decades later in a number of norms and work and commerce laws. The note closed proposing: "1° Cooking on the premises is forbidden. 2° It is forbidden to keep dirty waters for more than 12 hours. 3° Every morning and afternoon the patio, the corridor and the rooms will be scrubbed. 4° It is not possible to accommodate more than six people in a room (dimension to be determined). 5° It is forbidden to sit on the sidewalk, occupy the corners or the Hidalgo Plaza. 6° The next quarrel between the two establishments will be fined with 100 pesos the first time, 200 the second time, and on the third premises should be vacated for disrupting the good order and for exposing to serious disturbances the wealthy houses in the vicinity that continuously need surveillance and police." My translation.

³¹ "By agreement of the Mazatlán City Council, houses occupied by the Chinese have received a medical visit. It is feared that an epidemic may develop in that port caused by the lack of hygiene of the Chinese and the agglomeration in which they live, it is indicated that it is convenient to isolate them, while something else is decided, at the Lazareto of the Venados Island." *El Partido Liberal. Diario de política, Literatura, Comercio y Anuncios*, Thursday June 24, 1886, p. 3, Vol. II, No. 397, Mexico City, HND.

³² It was covered at least by two national newspapers *La Patria*, Friday July 9, 1887, p. 3, Year X, No. 2783, Mexico City, HND and *El Tiempo, Diario Católico*, Saturday July 10, 1886, p. 3, Year IV, No. 867, Mexico City, HND.

this seems to be the first of its kind in the Americas. In the following years, organized violent attacks against Chinese in Mexico escalated and became more generalized.³³

Hemispheric violence

The 1886 concentration and expulsion of Chinese in Mazatlán that ended with their interment in Isla Venados, happened in a context of similar anti-Chinese violence in the American Hemisphere. It is mostly comparable to what happened early that year in Vancouver, Canada. There, anti-Chinese riots in January and February included assaults, arson and demolition of housing and property. The attacks ended with the expulsion of Chinese to the neighboring island of Victoria. In contrast to the openness of the lack of a federal legislation towards Chinese immigration in Mexico —let's remember the Treaty was only signed in 1899— Canadian Anti-Chinese crimes took place a few months after a restrictive *Chinese Immigration Act* was established. The Canadian federal law of 1885 established that every Chinese immigrant entering the country had to pay a fee. It was colloquially called the "Chinese head tax," and only ended in 1923, when Chinese immigration to Canada was banned altogether.³⁴

It could be argued that this anti-Chinese Hemispheric wave started in Peru, in 1881. Key battles of the War of the Pacific between Chile and the allied Peru and Bolivia

³³ For instance, in 1891 were reported hostilities such as insults, whistling and attacks with stones. *La Voz de México. Diario político, religioso, científico y literario de la sociedad católica*, Tuesday May 26, 1891, p. 3, Vol. XXII, No. 117, Mexico City, HND.

³⁴ Vancouver belongs to the province of British Columbia, where during 1884 some projects of immigration laws "prevented Chinese from acquiring Crown land" and require them "to purchase an annual ten-dollar license," the laws were ruled unconstitutional at the time. After a "the virtual destruction of the city by fire on June 13, 1886 [...] three street meetings passed resolution against the Chinese to re-establish themselves." Roy, Patricia, "The preservation of the Peace in Vancouver: the aftermath of the Anti-Chinese Riot of 1887," *BC Studies*, No. 31, Autumn 1976, p. 46, 47.

ended in looting and the massacre of Chinese civilians in Capón, Lima's Chinatown.³⁵ In 1885, Chinese workers in the U.S. were expelled from Tacoma and Seattle and that same year, three brutal anti-Chinese riots took place in the territory of Wyoming. Information about the victims of the massacre in Peru is not available and, considering what has been published, it looks like the most violent anti-Chinese episode of the late 19th century in the Americas happened in September of 1885 in Rock Springs, Wyoming. It was reported that there were as many as 50 Chinese victims: property was destroyed, corpses mutilated, scattered, and burned.³⁶

The cruel treatment of the remains of these Chinese marks not only a moment of escalation of violence, but points to the very ways in which genocidal violence is constituted and can be interpreted by scholars and communities. As Debra Komar proposes: "Differential treatment of deposition of remains reflects the beliefs and attitudes of the agents involved. The concepts of veneration and violation and the systems of space, time, and inhumation analysis [...] provide a valuable framework for interpreting modern examples of mass death."³⁷ Extensive and detailed consideration of violent events like this is necessary to articulate systematic observations about the nature of Anti-Chinese violence in the Americas. At this point, a first clear tendency is that all these violent episodes were justified by the periodical press as acts of defense of the working rights of true nationals. The category of true nationals actively discriminated against the Chinese diaspora working in most countries in the Americas.

³⁵ "The Chinese took refuge in a hacienda that was besieged by Blacks and Cholos, who finally won and caused a great carnage." Zapata, Antonio. "Los chinos de Cuba y del Perú: revisión historiográfica," in *Investigaciones Sociales*, Vol. 22, No. 42, UNMSM/ IIHS, Lima, 2019, p. 142. My translation.

³⁶ "Chinese men were scalped, mutilated, burned, branded, decapitated, dismembered, and hanged from gutter spouts. One Chinese man penis and testicles were cut off and then toasted in a nearby saloon." Courtwright, David T. *Violent land, Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge & London, 2001 [1996], p. 158.

³⁷ Komar, Debra. "Patterns of mortuary practice associated with genocide. Implications for Archeological Research," *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 49, No. 1 (February 2008), University of Chicago Press, p. 123.

A less public, but more violent anti-Chinese discourse came from medical practices. These discourses often interpreted the results of exploitation as the proof of racial degeneration, while expulsion and destruction were defended as public hygiene measures.³⁸

Periodicals started to disperse the idea of the Chinese as intrinsically infectious, as carriers of the plague, leprosy, tuberculosis, and trachoma, to larger and more interconnected audiences. These associations solidified through a combination of international, national and multilocal press coverage. To give a Mexican example, on one of the covers of a Friday edition of *El Imparcial*, with a print run of 79, 800 copies, the introduction and propagation of leprosy was directly attributed to the Chinese community in the Pacific port of Guaymas:

Leprosy does not exist or has ever existed as an endemic disease, and if there have been many cases, they have only been among the Chinese who form a numerous colony in the city, because when they come to the country their organisms already contain the germ of disease.³⁹

Along with ideological elements that were anchored in judicial and medical discourse and protocols, direct tactics of violence were common to multiple countries of the Americas. Among them, organized anti-Chinese meetings and aggressive riots, nationalist press coverage, looting, destruction of property and violent assault were standard. In addition to the wave of violence of the 1880s, a second wave of hemispheric anti-Chinese violence started in 1904. Panama had received more than

³⁸ In Peru, a thesis defended by Dr. Cesar Borja to obtain his medical degree extensively argument against the immigration of Chinese, whom with "filthy uncleanliness cannot stop being dangerous to public health [...] it is necessary to avoid this evil." UNSM, Lima, 1877, p. 32. Quoted by Palma and Ragas, pp. 159-190. My translation.

³⁹ "Importante informe sobre la lepra," *El Imparcial*, Friday January 6, 1899, p. 1, No. 841, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

25,000 Chinese immigrants by 1870, mostly concentrated in the French enterprise of the Panama Canal. After Panama became independent from Colombia in 1903, the U.S. bought the rights of construction of the Canal from the French. That year Panama became a protectorate of the U. S., retaining this status until 1939. In this context, in 1904, Panama proclaimed the *Ley Número 6*, which “prohibited the immigration of Chinese, Turks, Syrians and North Africans.”⁴⁰

In 1907 a second series of anti-Chinese riots took place in U.S and Canada, starting in May in San Francisco, then Bellingham and Vancouver in September. As they had been practiced since 1880’s, these violent tactics were mostly non-lethal assaults upon individuals or small groups. Meanwhile, in Peru, the entry of Chinese was limited by law in March of 1909, and Lima’s Chinatown, the oldest in Latin America, was destroyed.⁴¹ This episode in Lima started with looting, killing, destruction of property and the expulsion of Chinese Peruvians.

As this translocal reconstruction shows, generally, deliberate massacres of Chinese stopped after the first wave of Hemispheric anti-Chinese violence in 1880’s. Only in Mexico did massacres continue. During the 1910s, Mexico saw the coexistence of models of exploitation reminiscent of the Coolie Trade, the growing immigration of urban and middle-class Chinese, and the massacres of Chinese. The scale of Mexican massacres is unique because nowhere else was the number of Chinese victims even close to the more than 300 who were killed in Mexico May of 1911. This massacre will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

⁴⁰ Connelly and Cornejo, 1992, p. 32.

⁴¹ The decree limiting the entry of Chinese to Peru was proclaimed in March of 1909, “It prohibited entry to the country of Chinese who had less than 500 pounds sterling in cash.” Connelly and Cornejo, 1992, p. 7.

The construction of Yellow

The Sino Japanese War over Korea (1895-1896), the Boxer Uprising in China (1898-1901), and the Russo-Japanese War over Manchuria (1904-1905) produced a sustained representation of China's military forces in newspapers, and a significant photographic coverage of Chinese soldiers and corpses. In Mexican periodicals, it fed imaginaries of military aggression and social danger. Along with the cruelty characteristic of war coverage in Asia, the phenomenon that received most international attention in printed Mexican media was the emergence of Chinese communities at the edges of cities, maritime and rail ports. Places of Chinese transit and expanding ghettos, mostly outside of Mexico, fueled enigmatic scenarios infested with disease, degeneration, crime, and opium.

Cartoon language assisted in the construction of these themes everywhere. In the North of Mexico, in the State of Sonora that borders with Arizona and New Mexico, the desire to get Chinese servants for himself and for the State affected the public profile of the governor Ramón Corral Verdugo, who served from 1895 to 1899. In 1899, the illustrated satirical newspaper *El Hijo del Ahuizote* dedicated textual and illustrated pieces to discussing what were seen as forms of dangerous proximity and empathy between Corral and the Chinese. Corral was held responsible for allowing too many *chinos* in, changing the state for the worse, an opinion that was expressed in a catchy rhyme: "el comercio está en la chilla porque la raza amarilla se ha hecho la reina y señora (commerce is miserable because the yellow race has become queen and lady.)"⁴² For personally organizing the entry of this so-called yellow plague, he also became the target of satiric cartoons. In a caricatured portrait of Corral, his intention to

⁴² "La plaga en Sonora," *El Hijo del Ahuizote. Mexico para los mexicanos*, Sunday February 26, 1899, p. 2, Year XIV, Vol. XIV, No. 670, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

traffic Chinese was expressed as a transracial mutation caused by an insect-like infestation crawling over him and turning him into a Chinese person (**fig. 1**). The full body performance of Corral being Asian is the main element of the cartoon and, surrounded by numerous tiny Chinese agents of infection, he looks like a giant. Most of the tiny agents were men and represented a variety of field, urban workers, and empire agents of the Qing Dynasty (1638-1911), but there was also one soldier and one woman. Most of these characters wear traditional clothing and hairstyles, including wooden base sandals, paper umbrellas, hand fans, and conic hats, but a couple of them wear one of several items of blended clothing, including one *ranchero* hat that was the staple item of *norteño* (from the north of Mexico) attire.

According to the cartoon, the contaminated Corral no longer looks like a Mexican and can no longer be saved, but it also identifies two types of characters in dangerous transition. Comfortably sitting over the hand fan that Corral holds on his left hand, a miniature Mexican woman wears many items of Asian apparel such as the Manilla shawl that was popular in Mexico since colonial times. On his right hand, Corral holds a paper umbrella with the legend "El Estado de Sonora" (The State of Sonora) with three sets of Chinese characters on top. The most interesting one, on the top right corner, is made of three characters in familiar proximity. The most prominent among them is a Chinese man who rises his hands in a dictatorial pose, he is placed next to the shorter figure of a woman who maybe used to be Mexican but now wears full Asian attire and, as the composition suggests, carries a Mexican Chinese pregnancy. Under the authority of the Chinese, a young boy sits on the floor and frontally faces the reader. He does not look Chinese, nor do his clothes, but the composition implies that he may be part of the mixed race family and is not to be taken as a legitimate Mexican.



Fig. 1. "Los Chinos encorralados, o Corral Enchinado," *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, Sunday February 26, 1899, p. 2, Year XIV, Vol. XIV, No. 670, Mexico City.

This cartoon of Coolie traffic in Mexico was completed with a humoristic, and hostile, commentary that imagined Sonora as "a little island flooded with famished Chinese who have taken over all feminine chores. If Fray Ramón Corral likes those braided

mummies so much, why doesn't he go to China?"⁴³ The State-directed traffic of Chinese begun by Corral was used to advance the construction of the railroad, but it was also supported by other industrial actors in the region such as the Moctezuma Copper Company and other companies with mixed capital from, mainly the United States, Great Britain and Mexico.⁴⁴ The giant-like performative Chineseness of Corral's caricature was indicative of his relevance inside the presidency of General Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880, 1884-1911), the regime that, after decades of informal trade and failed diplomatic negotiations, could finally profit through officially sanctioned channels from the massive trade of Chinese laborers.

After closing businesses and favouring foreign investment in Sonora, Corral became the Governor of the Federal District (1900-1903) that will become Mexico City. As one of General Díaz's closest collaborators, Corral then simultaneously held of the office of Vice-president and Secretary of government offices (1904-1911). In his cartooned portrait, he was a discretely slanted-eyed character and the most visible racial marker transforming him was the *queue*. The queue hairstyle was worn only partially by Corral as a long braid; the full version included a shaved front and the long-braided back and is worn by miniature Chinese who use Corral's braid to literally climb over the State.

The queue hairstyle was imposed in China in 1644 during the Qing dynasty as a sign of domination over Han people. After initial resistance, it was slowly adopted as tradition. By 1911, after the Wuchang Uprising against the Qing dynasty, the queue was

⁴³ "Los estados a vuelo de cangrejo," *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, 1899, p. 2, Year XIV, Vol. XIV, No. 670, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

⁴⁴ One of the main projects employing "cuadrillas de chinos" was the laying of track of the Nacozari-Agua Prieta Railroad, between 1900-1904. Almada Bay, Ignacio Lorenzo and Carlos Alberto Chacón Flores, "Por la patria y por la raza. Un estudio sobre la exclusión china en Nacozari de García y Pilares de Nacozari, Sonora, 1915-1925," in *Intersticios sociales*, No. 20, September 2020, El Colegio de Jalisco, Zapopan, <http://www.scielo.org.mx/>

transformed into the marker of political transition. Its meaning in China was changed definitively in 1912, when “Sun Yat-sen, the provisional president of the Nanjing government, promulgated a decree requiring people to abandon their queues.”⁴⁵ The queue was progressively abandoned in China after 1912, but not so much in print culture.

Inside the universe of graphic printed forms, the queue braid offered enormous plasticity. During the 19th and early 20th century, the braid could be found all over journalistic reports, caricatures and propaganda within the cinema and live performances. A full catalog of expressive gags ridiculed the braid, but also involved pulling, cutting, scalping, and beheading. Its indisputable Asianness became a resource with which to signal ethnic specific violence, but its preponderance could also be attributed to the way it encapsulated racial and gender constructs around Chinese masculinity.

As a “a material skein of race that did not depend on skin colour but that was also fully imbricated with gender and sexuality,”⁴⁶ the queue marked, with a single sign, the transgressive ambiguity associated with Chinese men. While racist theories circulated about their usurpation of women’s labor, or their pathological asexuality or homosexuality, the queue became the “locus of social and psychological disorder that may require containment and expulsion.”⁴⁷ All these ideas were successfully communicated in the dense cartooned content of **fig. 1**.

⁴⁵ Cheng, Weikun. “Politics of the Queue: Agitation and Resistance in the Beginning and End of Qing China,” in *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, ed. Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. 131.

⁴⁶ Metzger, Sean. *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2014, p. 35.

⁴⁷ Metzger, 2014, *ibidem*.

In the artisanal and pre-industrial modern circuits of the Mexican press, that were more connected with European and U.S. print culture, the cartooned braid was manufactured as a sign to transmit violence. Along with the Coolie hat, it unmistakably signified Asianness in the high contrast, mostly small formats that distributed mass circulation printed images. Other important markers were facial details such the epicanthic fold in the eyelids, or the prominent front teeth, but they could become obscured or unreadable with variations in print scale, or if the detail of the reproduction was poor. Larger signs, like hats and hairstyles, could be recognizable even through blurriness and from a distance. While the hat tended to be restricted to the representation of fieldworkers, the queue had class versatility and could be used by the common man or the highest officials. It also had the advantage of freeing drawing surface for facial expressions.

After metonymic signs of Asianness solidified in the monochrome artisanal press, a modern notion of yellowness was reconfigured by the pre-industrial press. Yellow produced a heightened alarm among readers, and better expressed and condensed the array of Mongolian pathologies that had been constructed since the late 18th century, in Europe and, in more mixed degrees, the American colonies. Modern scientific racialism was propelled in part by the natural system of Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) who authored the notion of a yellow *homo asiaticus*.⁴⁸ In the literary sphere, the first designation of China as the place of origin and dispersion of “yellow terror” was in 1870.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Keevak, Michael. *Becoming Yellow. A short history of Racial Thinking*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁹ Keevak, 2011, p. 125.

The literary yellow wave was assisted by two effective visuals of transatlantic circulation to conquer the market of printed matter. The first one was the 1877 map by Armand Quatrefagues which showed "that the Mongolian *raças jaunes* comprised 44% of the entire world's population."⁵⁰ The second one, widely circulated since 1895, was "an engraving made after an original drawing by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. It is not entirely clear when the title was added, but it soon acquired the label The Yellow Peril, and the phrase quickly became a catchword."⁵¹ This engraving was distributed in the United States by *Harpers Weekly* in 1898, and in many other illustrated periodicals printed in the Americas, yet to be traced.

The notion of *raza amarilla* (yellow race) was present in the Mexican periodical press at least since 1899, and numerous uses of the notion of *amarillos* (yellows) may be found since at least 1900.⁵² At the time, the number of officially registered Chinese immigrants in Mexico "grew to over 2,500 in 1900 and to approximately 13,000 in 1910."⁵³ While this expansive presence was observed and conceptualized mostly by the textual press, the pre-industrial era of the comic that boomed in Mexico in the 1910s became an instance of cultural modeling where visual, metonymic signs of Asianness solidified and became sedimented.

The stasis of industrialized and liminal Chinese forms left a mark in Mexican cities. As framed by William Straw, printed stasis leads to accumulation and storage:

⁵⁰ Keevak, 2011, p. 123.

⁵¹ Keevak, 2011, p. 126.

⁵² Most of them had a local application but others directly referred to the Kaiser's speech: "the Yellow peril glimpsed by Emperor Wilhelm II is not a false mirage, it is a possibility, more or less remote, but possible." *El Correo español, Órgano oficial de la cámara de comercio española en Méjico*, Friday June 29, 1900, p.1, Year XI, No. 3127, Mexico City, HND.

⁵³ Cott, Kennett, 1987, p. 70.

one finds descriptions of urban culture that stress its slowness or immobility, that see the city as a place of dense and almost imperceptible accumulation. In these writings the city is a space in which artifacts and other historical residues are stored and movement is blocked. Here, the city is marked by stasis and the persistence of the past, by the tangible presence of history rather than by its constant erasure.⁵⁴

Although signs of Asianness in artisanally produced and highly dense caricatures of the late 19th century were evident, their full meaning was expressed only after the reader extrapolated complex attributions and spend significant time de-coding visual signs. Among the most popular complex attributions circulated by the Mexican press about the Chinese we find the implicit alliance between *chinos* and foreign forces, the innate moral corruption of the *chino*, his impossibility of being loyal to the nations to which he had migrated, his naturalized status of servitude, his natural tendencies to sickness and vice. By force of artisanal accumulation, sedimentation and juxtaposition, these complex meanings were attached to visually concrete signs that circulated massively during the pre-industrial stage of the comic.

⁵⁴ Straw, William. "Spectacles of Waste" in Boutros, Alexandra and William Straw (eds.), *Circulation and the City: Essays on Urban Culture*. McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal / Kingston / London / Itaca, 2010, p. 195.

Part two

The pre-industrial comic

Between 1904 and 1922, the lithographer Juan Bautista Urrutia directed a branding and advertising campaign for the Mexican cigarette company El Buen Tono. The campaign was centered in the production of around 500 monochrome comic strips.⁵⁵ After initial stages of experimentation, the standard of a grid made of a nine-panel comic emerged.⁵⁶ The forthright pioneer form of the pre-industrially produced Mexican comic was efficiently organized in three vertical columns with visible internal edges and three squared panels of the same size in horizontal alignment. Each panel had a fully justified typographic composition at the base, called *apoyadura*, and a squared and concise cartoon on top.

The production of El Buen Tono's advertising strips involved machines capable of runs of millions of copies and was sustained by the printing technology of "industrial lithography."⁵⁷ Images were printed using stone printing plaques and were produced in a factory context in the Plaza de San Juan, in Mexico City. The lithographic factory

⁵⁵ Bautista Urrutia and his team also produced illustrations for table games and posters and participated in packaging design. Inside the packages of cigarettes single panel where distributed "for free." Aurrecochea, Juan Manuel and Armando Bartra. *Puros cuentos. La historia de la historieta en México 1874-1934*, vol. 1. Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / Museo de Culturas Populares / Grijalbo, Mexico City, 1988, p. 123.

⁵⁶ According to Camacho Morfin the flexibility of the grid was notorious during the first era: "the number of vignettes that each comic has is variable throughout the entire [first] collection; there are comics from only four vignettes to those with twenty-four, not all of the comics have an even number of vignettes of the same size." Camacho Morfín, Thelma. *Las historietas de El Buen Tono (1904-1922). La litografía al servicio de la Industria*. Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México / Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades - Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, Mexico City, 2013, p. 79. My translation. A revision of the strips that were published in newspapers point to a different direction and the preference of using a 9-panel grid seems very solid since 1905.

⁵⁷ "Industrial lithography flourished in the manufacture of packaging, letterheads, labels and advertising in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as a consequence, industrial lithography was no longer linked to cultural enterprises, as was the case with preceding lithography. [...] Printing was carried out by automated machines that produced large print runs." Camacho, 2013, pp. 11-12.

coordinated multiple specialized teams that dealt with all phases from design to assemblage *in situ*. In 1907, this factory started to use the first rotary lithographic printer in Mexico.

The technical prowess of the lithographic rotative evoked multisensorial enthusiasm at the time, since the “eyes prepare the palate to taste and the nose to smell,”⁵⁸ and because of the unmatched speed and beauty of the rotative. The lithographic rotary press and its multiple cylinders promised innovations in sizes, frequency, and polychromatic quality:

A few days ago, the assembly and installation of [the lithographic rotary] was finished, and that set of wheels, screws, disks, eccentric bolts, presses, cylinders, and axels generates admiration in everyone who contemplates it. Lithographic works of the first order and of unbeatable beauty will come from it. The machine can print advertisements in various colours with up to 180 x 20 centimeters of size. Such dimensions have never been achieved in works of this nature and the El Buen Tono, S. A. advertisings currently being made and those to be made from now on, will powerfully attract attention.⁵⁹

Thelma Camacho Morfín explains that there were four main production processes happening in the El Buen Tono factory.⁶⁰ In the first process, an average of four lithographers who were experts in drawing and/or writing with lithographic technique, made the design of the strip. In the second process as many as ten workers made the reverse negative phototype of the design. It started with illustrators drawing reverse versions with lithographic grease pencils. The phototypes were finished by engravers and apprentices and then handed to typographers. During the third process,

⁵⁸ Gil Blas, “Un lema que se cumple,” *El País, Diario católico*, Friday June 28, 1907, p. 2, Year IX, No. 3050, Mexico City, HND.

⁵⁹ Gil Blas, 1907, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Camacho, 2013, pp. 176-179.

phototypes were transferred to the printing limestone, and this again took around ten workers. In the final process, the number of workers could escalate to twenty, including expert specialists of several machines. The inkers, loaders and pickers worked around the press managing the rolls of paper going in and out. Finally, rolls were cut into sheets of paper that were placed in the calendrer, a tall machine where paper was made smooth to the touch. Sheets were cut and the dried glazed paper could eventually be bound.⁶¹ If colour was used, a single sheet would be pressed with multiple stones inked in colour. Oil-based colour applied with one stone was superposed over another on the same sheet of paper and the layering of colours was repeated until the final colour combination was achieved; this process could involve up to twelve inked stones.

The pre-industrial lithographic production of El Buen Tono comics employed huge resources. Until now, there is not much clarity concerning the number of materials that the San Juan Factory employed for each production cycle, not even the bigger one of them that printed, cut, and assembled cigarette packs for several brands handled by El Buen Tono. The same lack of clarity affects our knowledge of the complete scale of the graphic universe generated by the advertising strips made in San Juan but, despite this, it is possible to distinguish three main formats that circulated at different rhythms. In the format of *hojas sueltas* (single leaflets,) the comic strips were printed on colored *papel China* (a type of tissue paper) and handed out individually as one-page comics. Selected individual panels circulated “for free” inside cigarette packs. In this miniature format, strips could be collected as single drawings. The third format was comic strips

⁶¹ Although still following Camacho’s research, my synthesis of the production process is based on Martínez de Sousa, José. *Diccionario de edición, tipografía y artes graficas*. Trea, Gijón, 2001.

for newspapers, which circulated between 1904 and 1914. There was a fourth format that appeared in 1909 that I will discuss later: the yearly albums.

The production of the third format happened mostly outside of the San Juan factory and inside the quarters of mass distribution dailies that assembled *El Buen Tono* advertising inside their layouts. The innovative advertising format of comic strips for newspapers created a unique and instantly recognizable presence for the *El Buen Tono* brand in the context of the Mexican graphic market for periodicals. Among the dozen of dailies printed between 1900-1910 that I have read systematically, there was no other Mexican company using advertising comics. Display advertising for periodicals could only be afforded by larger budget clients such large stores, cigarettes, liqueur, pharmaceutical and technology retailers. Many of these companies were foreign and multinational companies, and in this context, *El Buen Tono* was probably the biggest Mexican client of the first decade of the 20th century.

The massive distribution of the advertising comic is reflected today in it being the only format accessible in public archives. The advertising comics were distributed since 1904 by *El Imparcial* (1896-1914) and *El País* (1899-1914), the two national leaders in terms of print run numbers. The advertising comics were also printed by the very graphic *El Mundo Ilustrado* (1894-1914), and *El Diario del Hogar*, more oriented towards entertainment, and other smaller news dailies. While *El Imparcial* or *El País* were the first Mexican newspapers owning rotary printing machines, most newspapers continued to use combinations of older one-cylinder technologies until the 1910s. This characteristic of being simultaneously printed on rotary presses and one-cylinder presses by newspapers and lithographic technologies of different stages back at the San Juan Factory, very clearly show why the advertising comic was a pre-industrial commodity. Independently of the printing technology they use, each newspaper had

to fit the advertising comic into each of their page compositions. I will only discuss the layout of *El Imparcial* and *El País*.

The El Buen Tono comic strips were first and most regularly printed by *El Imparcial* beginning in May of 1904 and until May of 1914.⁶² Inside *El Imparcial*, the strips of El Buen Tono were printed on the important second sheet of Sunday editions. Page two, the left side of the sheet, was always reserved for the cosmopolitan section of international news entitled “Noticias del Mundo” (News of the World or World News). The strips were always to the right of this sheet, on page three, which had the social news section, short stories, and some other elegantly illustrated advertising. The pages of *El Imparcial* had seven column layouts and, without doubt, this third page was the more attractive and labour intensive because it had to display the richest typographic inventiveness and had the most variation in font sizes and framing effects. This heavily visual page was separated from the strictly entertaining section of the newspaper, where other comics could be found, which gave even more prominence to the El Buen Tono brand. El Buen Tono also used other forms, and different sizes, of display advertising, generally made from the compact composition of illustrations of one of its many products accompanied by elegant ladies, its typographic logo, and other design elements. That was the type of promo that could be found any weekday, but almost every Sunday the preference was for the nine-panel comic strip.⁶³

⁶² The first one appeared in *El Imparcial*, Sunday May 22, 1904, p. 3, No. 2802. The last one was printed in *El Imparcial*, Sunday May 31, 1914, p. 3, No. 6463, Mexico City, HND. Illustrated publicity of El Buen Tono continued to occupied space in page 3 until Sunday August 16, 1914, No. 6540.

⁶³ After checking every advertising comic printed by *El Imparcial* I can conclude that the use of men figures for advertising was extremely rare, and most examples could be found towards the end of the series, during 1914.

Along with the uniqueness of its preferred form, El Buen Tono advertising always used the largest compartment of page three in *El Imparcial* —it oscillated between one quarter and, more rarely, half of page three. The uniqueness of the advertising strip had to fit solid pre-industrial behaviours. Both in *El Imparcial* and *El País*, which used tabloid size sheets, and organized their pages in 7 columns of width and 8 rows of length, the advertising comic was a square of three columns of width and three rows of length (fig.2). The advertising strips for El Buen Tono were the steadiest comic presence in both dailies.

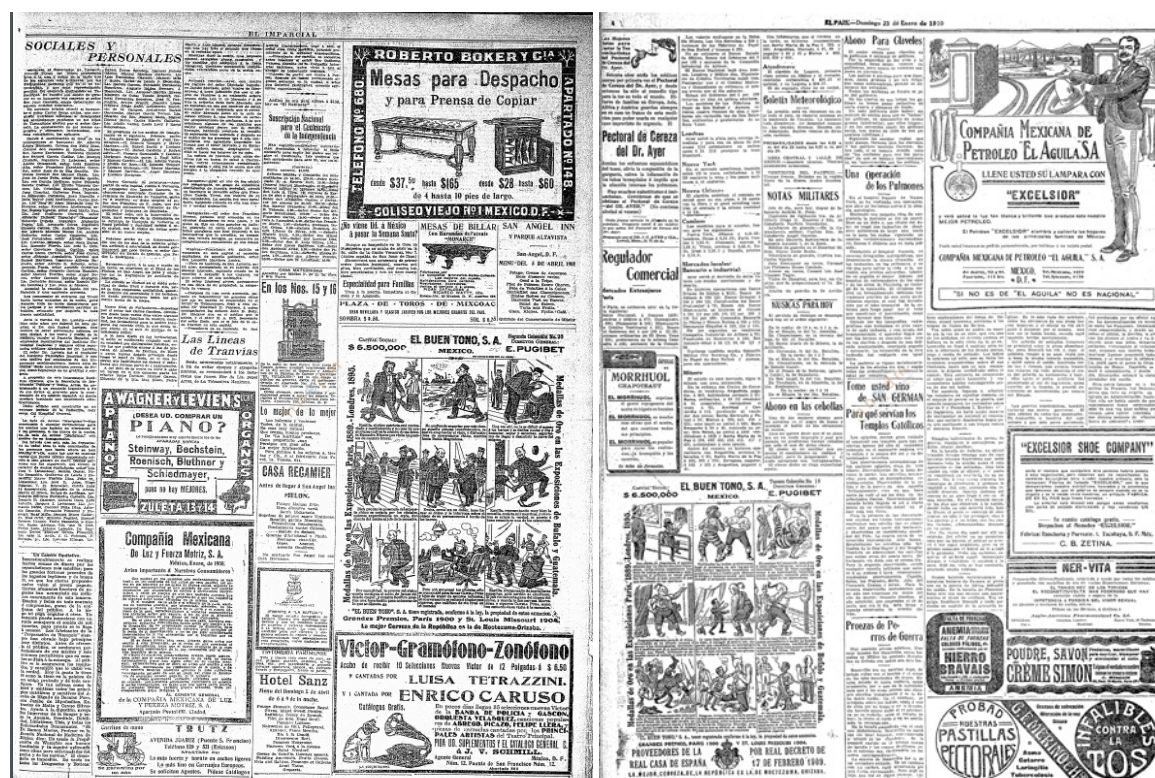


Fig. 2. Layout for tabloid size newspapers of El Buen Tono comic strip. (Left) in *El Imparcial*, Sunday April 5, 1908, No. 4205, Mexico City, p. 3. (Right) in *El País*, Sunday January 23, 1910, p.4.

By 1910, *El Imparcial* also made strips exclusively for its pages. Many of them were one-episode stories that had a lot of local flavour, but others, such as “Caldela el

Argüendero," followed cosmopolitan middle-class gentlemen and were developed across multiple issues leaving a more permanent mark in the public. In 1910 alone *El Imparcial* developed an original Mexican comic language by printing several original titles which include: "Casianito el niño prodigio," "El viaje de la Familia del Hoyo" or "Hollo," "Aventuras de un desertor," "Lo que cuesta una gorra," "Un remedio contra la gordura," "Cuando se plagiaba en México," "Feliz el que nace feo," "Un baile macabro," "Qué culpa tengo de ser hermoso," "Los peligros de la calle," "Salvamento de un hombre," "Cómo se salvo una gallina de las garras de un gavilán," "Un aeroplano que no lo inventó Bleriot" and "Un globo maravilloso," among others. They were sometimes printed in colour.⁶⁴

El País started to print *El Buen Tono* comics in December of 1904, placing them at the end on the last page of the Sunday edition, page four, the page that tended to concentrate advertising. By 1910, *El Buen Tono* comics were moved to page three of the Sunday edition, right after the international news section titled "Noticias Mundiales" (World News) that filled page two. By 1910, *El Imparcial* was printing other comics and the *El Buen Tono* advertising comic, but *El País* printed only the advertising comic until September of 1912. That year the extension of *El País* began, and its classic 2 sheet format was extended to 6 sheets, or 12 pages. In this new format, *El País* anchored its "Suplemento Ilustrado" in its last 4 pages (9-12), which had 1 page for comic strips, in which the daily introduced translated versions of the U.S. family strips created by George McManus, 'The Newlyweds' and "Snookums."

⁶⁴ The main limitation to establish which were printed in color and which were not is that all formats made publicly available in the invaluable Hemeroteca Digital Nacional <http://www.hndm.unam.mx> were scanned in Black and White.

Between the 1890s and the 1910s, advertising was the field of graphic innovation. Display ads for print advertising were mostly made of realistically drawn, and, very rarely, photographed figures, surrounded by logos and typographic design. The French influence on the Mexican visual repertoire of this period was decisive, and it affected its modern sensibility and print culture. The influence went beyond Art Nouveau aesthetics, because French entrepreneurs and capitals participated in projects of modernization that affected Mexican society, such as the representation of the urban landscape, and development of the infrastructures of print capitalism. Political alliances, and a good number of marriages between the Mexican elite and French entrepreneurs, had a “complementarity in the commercial and financial spheres, which created the bases of distribution of a ‘French’ lifestyle, which was articulated to the model of urban culture that prevailed on the main cities of the country and with which elites identified.”⁶⁵ In terms of print capitalism, French capital “controlled a branch of economy [...] the main provider of the print culture industry, information and culture”⁶⁶ through the Fábrica de papel San Rafael and the railway Atlixco-San Rafael. San Rafael had a monopoly on the production of paper in Mexico. As a source of the time describes it, the paper monopoly of San Rafael had “in a whopping scale the five most important industrial elements, namely: land and buildings, communication routes, production of materials, motors and machinery.”⁶⁷

The company of El Buen Tono was founded by Guadalupe Portilla and her French husband Ernest Pugibet in 1875. By the early 1900, the company satisfied 50% of the national market of cigarettes, and had, in addition to the San Juan factory, a second

⁶⁵ Pérez Siller, Javier. “Inversiones francesas,” in Cramaussel, Chantal and Javier Pérez Siller (coords.). *México Francia: Memoria de una sensibilidad común: siglos XIX-XX, Vol. II*. Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla / Colegio Michoacán, Mexico City, 2004, p. 124.

⁶⁶ Pérez Siller, 2004, p. 108.

⁶⁷ Trentini, F. *El florecimiento de México*. Boulogny & Schmidt, Mexico City 1906, p. 162.

factory in New York. It attributed its success to its capacity to export to the “190 French machines for the fabrication of cigarettes without glue.”⁶⁸ El Buen Tono bought permanent space in several newspapers of national and regional circulation, both on weekends and the cheaper weekdays editions, and also printed large full colour advertising posters that were placed outside of the bigger retailers and were illuminated at night.

El Buen Tono, but many other companies as well, used *belle epoque* visual vocabulary that was everywhere in the many graphic standards being created in Mexico in the beginning of the 20th century, mostly in the figurative representations of merchandise or beautiful drawn women posing with products or promoting stores. Mexican print capitalism depended on the many financial and technological alliances between politicians, entrepreneurs, monopolies, infrastructures, and newspaper owners. One of the key actors of the Mexican press was Rafael Reyes Spíndola, was the founder of the weekly and initially tabloid size *El Mundo Ilustrado*, as well as the heavily illustrated and modernistically designed *El Imparcial* and other smaller newspapers. *El Mundo Ilustrado* had the most serious graphic intentions, preferring elaborate illustrations. In contrast, *El Imparcial* was more agile, in terms of style and layout and it dominated in the market of newspapers because it received government subsidies and was able to beat market prices. Using linotype and rotative technologies, it had one of the biggest press runs in Mexico at the time: 75,000 copies daily in 1905, more than 100,000 in 1907 and around 120,000 by 1914.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Le Mexique, TX, No. 1, January 5, 1907. Quoted by Pérez Siller, 2004, P. 106. My translation.

⁶⁹ The number of 75, 000 copies daily by 1905 was reported by Ruiz Castañeda in the 1970s and seems undisputed. Ruiz Castañeda, María del Carmen, et al. *El periodismo en Mexico. 450 años de historia*. Mexico. Editorial Porrúa, 1974, p. 232. Rodríguez Kuri sets for 100 000 and considers that the 125,000 suggested by Toussaint Alcaraz (1989, p. 32) “seem exaggerated.” Rodríguez Kuri, Ariel. “El Discurso del Miedo: El Imparcial y Francisco I. Madero,” *Historia Mexicana*, XL: 4, 1991, p. 702. My translation.

In the graphic universe that El Buen Tono created through almost 20 years of pre-industrial advertising, and even though various brands of cigarettes were the main product of the comic campaign, a single comic often managed to advertise two or three pieces of merchandise, mostly cigars, beer, or bed frames. As promotional strategies, both a direct celebration of the superiority of El Buen Tono merchandise or the disparagement of cheaper competition were used. For example, the classy beer Cervecería Moctezuma and its real and fantastic properties were advertised while *pulque*, the most popular fermented beverage in Mexico, was mocked, associated with visibly dirtier and uglier lower classes modelled within the comics.

Another class-based duality of this graphic universe was used to advertise the fancy and hygienic beds of Camas Vulcano by contrasting them with barbaric, promiscuous, yet alluring, nighttime disorders associated with what were obviously the lower classes, obscure both in terms of their anonymity and lack of personality as characters and in terms of the shadowy and vicious shades with which they were incarnated or surrounded. For instance, lower classes who could not afford beds were frequently depicted in altered states in noisy and overcrowded parties and on chaotic sleeping surfaces. The insistent promotion of this class-based duality, directly invoked by the brand's name, was one of the main means of social signification of the advertising comic strips.

Despite employing different cartoonists, El Buen Tono strips achieved significant cohesion and, as we shall see, they also contrasted with other forms of El Buen Tono advertising. Even when the company had many French businessmen in its board and used a number of French technologies, and even when its ornamented and beautiful imaginaries were so influenced by the *belle époque* and French fashion, it offered a more irreverent and daring repertoire. In comparison with other strips circulated in

newspapers between the late 1900s and 1910 in Mexico, the graphic universe created by the team directed by Juan Bautista Urrutia was more grotesque.

As we shall see, the character of the *chino* manufactured by these strips was one that contrasted the most with the *belle époque* repertoire dominant in the Mexican graphic universe. The cartooned Chinese was partially aligned with the logics of aversion towards popular classes. A Chinese type drawn in ink tended to be disenfranchised and was usually depicted as poor. After 1910, representations of Chinese types in the advertising comic were more frequent and became marked by associations with the consumption of cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, and the display of exotic ethnic practices. All these visual signs echoed textual printed forms of violence and continued to be part of a massively circulated depiction of lack of social status, unacceptable behaviour and racial contamination.

Imperceptible / hyper visible

By the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese were in a precarious and contradictory situation in the United States, Mexico, and along their shared border. Neither country wanted to grant social legitimacy nor rights to their Chinese populations, while they kept profiting from Chinese workers. As mentioned before, in the U.S. the immigration of more workers was banned. With the active commitment of —and negotiation with— Mexican authorities, companies with U.S. capital and boards established themselves in border towns on the Mexican side and employed large numbers of Chinese workers. Despite this continuous use of Chinese labor, the periodical press of both countries campaigned viciously against the social integration of the Chinese diaspora.

This dynamic established a double standard shared by the US and Mexico; on the one hand, US and Mexican capital kept benefiting from the policy of continuous arrival of

Chinese workers. On the other, both countries deployed a discourse of racial anxiety and racism to create a cultural climate that made it impossible for Chinese to be welcomed into public life. It is important to note that even when the government and capital forces of the two countries often worked in unison, their respective periodical presses continuously blamed each other for the, in their view, distasteful presence of Chinese in the borderlands and inner territories.

One of the regular characters of the *El Buen Tono* strips was the male detective Ranilla. His fame as a character grew and eventually generated its own collection of comics, titled *Las Aventuras Maravillosas de Ranilla (The Marvelous Adventures of Froggy)*, with a daily print run of 15,000 copies.⁷⁰ Ranilla comics were eventually collected and bound in a lightweight monochrome booklet with an orange cover, a definitive format innovation of the early 20th century.⁷¹ Their frequency is unknown. In the episode of *El Buen Tono* strips printed by *El Imparcial* in April of 1908, Ranilla disguised himself as a *chino*. The mature detective was investigating a mysterious, out-of-place ship. While the episode was inspired by patriotic sentiment, it did not focus on Ranilla, but, rather, on the depiction of the liminal Chinese type/identity that, even if presented as a costume —through decades of pre-industrial repetition— was fully recognizable.⁷²

⁷⁰ Camacho, 2013, p. 100.

⁷¹ Armando Bartra says the magazine was published since 1923. Bartra, Armando. "Piel de papel. Los pepines en la educación sentimental del mexicano. Debut beneficio y despedida de una narrativa tumultuaria," in *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre la historieta*, vol. 1. No. 2, June 2001, La Habana. http://rlesh.mogno.com/02/02_bartra.html

⁷² The association between Mexican patriotic sentiments and anti-Chinese speech can be documented as early as 1864, "In no way can such settlers be convenient for Mexico because the Chinese are a lazy, filthy and stinky race, debilitated by misery and repugnant vices, endowed with a rare patience and astonishing dexterity [...] coldly cruel, driven to gambling, ignominy, suicide and robbery; a depraved race in the end, which has fallen into contempt by humankind." *La Razón de México, Periódico Político y Literario*, Thursday November 17, 1864, p. 2, Vol. I, No. 28, Mexico City, HND.

Detective Ranilla performed being Chinese to sneak his way onto a military U.S. ship of La Guardia Blanca, the Great White Fleet.

The trickery involved wearing all the props of the industrially printed Chinese type. He wore the queue braid, the robe, and the cloth shoes, and had personality characteristics that enabled his tricks. The Chinese disguise transferred to the non-Chinese character the ability to be less detectable while possessing unavoidable visibility. He was found by one of the ship's officials, who obviously read him as a spy, imprisoned him, and kept him close to the captain's cabin. From this position, through surreptitious listening, he tried to obtain sensitive information. The information turned out to be ridiculous but provided opportunities to fraternize with the crew (**fig. 3**).

The close relationship between fantasies and journalistic reporting during this constitutive era of comics meant that strips often referred to real events that were receiving media coverage in the same news cycle in which they were being published. In the case of the adventure of Ranilla, the White fleet was indeed in Mexico, as it was mentioned in the *apoyadura*, the block of justified text at the bottom of each vignette. At the end of 1907, sixteen U.S. battleships started sailing the Atlantic towards the south and crossed towards the Pacific via the Straits of Magellan. The long stop in the Magdalena Bay of the northern Mexican state of Baja California marked the conclusion of the first part of a global circling voyage in which the fleet coasted South America.

CAPITAL SOCIAL: **\$ 6.500,000**

EL BUEN TONO, S. A.
MEXICO.

Segunda Colección No. 26
DIRECTOR GENERAL: **E. PUGIBET**

Medallas de Oro en las Exposiciones París, 1889.-Londres, 1895.

No pudiendo soportar por más tiempo aquella penosa incertidumbre, resuelve emprender el viaje, y disfrazándose de comerciante chino, marcha hacia Bahía Magdalena.

Una vez ahí, no le es difícil el acceso a los barcos y se dedica noche y día a husmear, espiar y escuchar, seguro de llegar a descubrir la clave del enigma.

Bien pronto la presencia del supuesto chino es notada por los oficiales, quienes suponiéndole un espía, dan cuenta del hecho al jefe de la escuadra.

Evana, como era su deber, hace llamar al chino y le interroga sobre el objeto de su permanencia a bordo de los barcos.

Ranilla, representando muy bien la comedia, ensarta mil mentiras, y mientras se aclara la verdad, es puesto a buen recaudo en uno de los camarotes.

Por casualidad, la prisión del chino queda contigua al salón de juntas del estado mayor, y nuestro hombre practica una hornadación para enterarse de lo que se discute.

Pero ¡oh sorpresa! los oficiales sólo se reúnen ahí para fumar CAMELA PURA y lejos de tratar de asuntos belicosos, en conversación se reduce a elogiar esos cigarrillos, que califican de sin rival en el mundo!

Ranilla, avergonzado de sus injustas sospechas, pide perdón al almirante. El jefe ríe de buena gana del chasco del chino, y manda le den cerveza MOCTEZUMA y cigarrillos CAMELA PURA, como un recuerdo de su visita a la escuadra.

"EL BUEN TONO". S. A. tiene registrada, conforme a la ley, la propiedad de estos anuncios.
Grandes Premios, París 1900 y St. Louis Missouri 1904.
La mejor Cerveza de la República es la de Moctezuma-Orizaba.

Fig. 3. Juan Bautista Urrutia, *El Buen Tono* comic strip, second collection, No. 26, published by *El Imparcial*, Sunday April 5, 1908, No. 4205, Mexico City.

The second part of the trip sailed along Asian coasts. The U.S. had a permanent position in the Philippines since it had become its dominion in 1898 and thanks to this tactical position, the fleet took its time navigating the Chinese Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian and the Red Sea. It crossed the Mediterranean, and, from Gibraltar,

reached the Atlantic and the coast of Virginia in 1909. Through this action, the U.S. navy transitioned “from its traditional emphasis on coastal defense, [and] commerce warfare [...] to new requirements concerning power projection and the engagement of enemy fleets thousands of miles from North America.”⁷³

While the U. S. continued to gain geopolitical terrain at the beginning of the 20th century, its southern border with Mexico was a space of business, social porousness, constant transgressions, and the source of endless anxieties. In 1905, the very popular monthly magazine *Harper's Weekly* (1857-1916), printed in the U.S., circulated a large, touched-up portrait of a *chino* boy dressed up like Mexican (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. “The Stranger within Our Gate,” *Harper's Weekly*, A Journal of Civilization, Saturday August 5, 1905, Harper & Brothers, New York.

⁷³ Bradford, James. *America, Sea Power, and the world*. Wiley, 2016, p. 148.

As had happened in the New Spain during colonial times, and as has been explained in chapter one, it was difficult to tell Chinese from Mexicans. The anxiety about growing populations that resisted racial classification across national borders was embodied by this photo and appeared in other reports and cartoons circulated by multiple periodicals in the U.S. Similar racial anxieties were expressed in print by the Mexican periodical press that was publicly uncomfortable with the presence of *chinos* while bringing as many Chinese as possible to the territory.

Mexican comic strips were often the arena of symbolic international retaliation in which figures of ethnic Chinese personified an alien who remained outside, despite having crossed national borders. As bureaucracies and laws “formed and strengthened [...] Chinese were produced as aliens, politically, socially, and sexually. [...] Aliens are literally those who are not part of a nation while at the same time being inside of it. They are included as an excluded class.”⁷⁴

Racial anxiety was not just an uncomfortable feeling. It was rationalized in the reports of U.S. government Inspector Marcus Braun, who investigated the smuggling of Chinese to the United States. He documented the northern Mexican borderlands: “carriage roads, pathways, highways, [and] mountain trails [across the] broad expanse of land with an imaginary line, all passable, all being used.”⁷⁵ There he observed Chinese men, wearing “the most picturesque Mexican dress [...] [who] learn[ed] to be able to say *Yo soy Mexicano*, I am Mexican, in case they were stopped.”⁷⁶ In his report, Braun included a series of portraits of Chinese men in Mexico to prove “how

⁷⁴ Young, 2014, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁵ Braun, Marcus, Immigrant Inspector to Frank P. Sargent, Commissioner General, Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, 12 February 1907, NARA, RG 85, entry 9. Quoted by Young, 2014, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Braun, Marcus in Young, 2014, p. 164.

exceedingly difficult it [was] to positively state whether these are pictures of Chinamen or Mexicans."⁷⁷

Inspector Braun travelled Mexico and found the most structured system for processing Chinese immigrants in the Pacific port of Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, which had been receiving *chinos* since the 1880s. In 1907, the steamship Alabama trafficked 450 Chinese men from Hong Kong to Salina Cruz. Only those who showed health certificates to inspectors could leave the ship: "Those allowed to disembark were housed in barracks belonging to the steamship companies, where they and their possessions were disinfected, and they were quarantined for ten days."⁷⁸

Private companies oversaw specific steamships trafficking human cargo to Salina Cruz and other ports in Baja California and Sonora. They involved the coordination of multinational networks of companies and individual contacts in Mexico, China and the United States. Similar networks operated in the Atlantic; they landed human cargo mostly from Cuba in the states of Veracruz, Yucatán, and Tamaulipas. In 1908 alone, "the Mexican legation in China reported that 60,000 Chinese had entered Mexico, but it estimated that almost 48,000 of them had crossed into the United States illegally."⁷⁹

Considering this context of irregular transit and migration, the appearance of a stowaway Chinese in an industrially circulated comic story that takes place in a port in Mexico is charged with social meaning. In **fig 3.**, this stowaway Chinese was only a costume for Ranilla, the fictional detective whose morality remained un-questioned because although he looked like a Chinese, this was only the humorous occasion for

⁷⁷ Braun, Marcus, in Young, 2014, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Cott, 1987, p. 81.

⁷⁹ Cott, 1987, p. 72.

making fun of their immorality. In this occasion, performative Chineseness did not affect the anatomy of the cartoon character. In contrast, **fig. 1** presented a high class and notable character, Sonora governor Corral, who performed being a *chino* to signify that he had taken a questionable moral stance. His lack of judgement had an impact on how the morphology of his body was drawn; it had mildly affected the shape and size of his eyes, and his hairstyle.

Returning to the comic strip with the Chinese costume of **fig. 3**, it is important to observe the cruelty with which the conclusion of the story provides redemption. To deserve redemption, the false *chino* performed by Ranilla had to kneel, show remorse and shame. As a reward for his repentance, he could partake in the drinking and smoking that were offered to him. El Buen Tono used the resource of performing Asianness on other occasions,⁸⁰ and this and other cartoons of the industrial press contributed to the consolidation and diffusion of *chino* stereotypes made in Mexico. Being regularly exposed to these stereotypes, audiences were trained to ignore the real Chinese, deeming them imperceptible. At the same time, *chino* stereotypes were becoming hyper visible. Bouncing between these two forms of misrepresentation, Chinese became the never-belonging scapegoat within the borders.

As Chinese became hyper visible and prosper, anti-Chinese graphic violence started to escalate. One advertising strip distributed by *El País* in 1910 condensed the racial tension in the form of a wrestling tournament with an unexpected twist. A Chinese muscular giant wins over every Mexican he fights with and becomes the champion. When he starts to celebrate and receive popular applause, now full of vanity he

⁸⁰ Besides Ranilla, a non-Chinese Mexican worn a coolie hat to receive free cigarettes in *El Imparcial*, Sunday March 5, 1911, p. 3, No. 6131, Mexico City, HND. It would be necessary to check each Sunday edition to determine how many more were.

challenges anybody willing to participate in an *impromptu* fight. A very short and nonathletic Mexican insists on fighting with him and the audience, seduced by the physical superiority of the Chinese, bets against the Mexican. He is smoking Reina Victoria cigarettes and crushes the Chinese "like a fly" slamming him against the wall so hard that the voluminous giant becomes flat (fig. 5).

CAPITAL SOCIAL: \$ 6.500,000

EL BUEN TONO, S. A. Tercera Colección No. 15
DIRECTOR GENERAL: E. PUGIBET

MEXICO.

Medallas de Oro en las Exposiciones París, 1889.-Londres, 1895.

Con objeto de disputarse el premio ofrecido por La Revue des Jeux Olympiques, varios atletas organizaron una serie de luchas greco-romanas y naturalmente el primero en tomar palcos fue Mr. Piruli, el más pequeño al par que entusiasta de los sportmen.

Verificadas las luchas preliminares, llegó el momento en que los que en ellas habían resultado vencedores se pusieron frente a frente para efectuar el último y decisivo round que debía otorgar el anhelado campeonato.

El combate fué tremendo, pero el fin el atleta chino Chi-po-te, merced á un formidable «tour de bras» consiguió vencer á su contrincante hotentote, siendo aclamado campeón entre los hurras y hipo de los espectadores.

Desgraciadamente para él, el chino, avanzando en su triunfo empezó á apocar á los circunstantes, invitándolos á medirse con él, y poniéndose tan proco, que Piruli, olvidando su pequeño tamaño subió al tablado á retar al vencedor.

Al verse desafiado por tan minúsculo titán, el mongol se echó á reír, alegando que necesitaba un microscopio para efectuar la lucha, no consiguiendo con tales chocarrerías más que acobar de volar al sportmen.

Siendo inevitable el encuentro, los jueces procedieron á medir las fuerzas de los contrincantes, resultando que mientras el chino hizo marcar al dinamómetro 500 libras, Piruli apenas si alcanzó las cuatro onzas.

Al ver aquello, los jueces no querían dar crédito á sus ojos, pero cuando alguien hizo notar que Piruli estaba fumando Reina Victoria, entonces se explicaron el prodigio y al unísono lanzaron un viva en loor de tan incomparables cigarros.

Después, arrojándolo contra la pared, lo dejó estampando en ella y muy quitado de la pena, pidió le fuera impuesta la banda de Campeón Mundial, ceremonia que se efectuó en medio de las más estruendosas de las ovaciones.

Después, arrojándolo contra la pared, lo dejó estampando en ella y muy quitado de la pena, pidió le fuera impuesta la banda de Campeón Mundial, ceremonia que se efectuó en medio de las más estruendosas de las ovaciones.

Esta aparente desproporción hizo que todo el mundo apostara por el chino; pero Piruli, sin hacer caso de ello, tomó al campeón por el cogote y le echó por tierra aplastándolo con la misma facilidad que si se hubiera tratado de una mosca.

Después, arrojándolo contra la pared, lo dejó estampando en ella y muy quitado de la pena, pidió le fuera impuesta la banda de Campeón Mundial, ceremonia que se efectuó en medio de las más estruendosas de las ovaciones.

Medallas de Oro en las Exposiciones de Bufalo y Guatemala.

"EL BUEN TONO," S. A., tiene registrada conforme á la ley, la propiedad de estos anuncios.

GRANDES PREMIOS, PARIS 1900 Y ST. LOUIS MISSOURI 1904.

PROVEEDORES DE LA REAL CASA DE ESPAÑA

POR REAL DECRETO DE 17 DE FEBRERO 1909.

LA MEJOR CERVEZA DE LA REPUBLICA ES LA DE MOCTEZUMA, ORIZABA.

Fig. 5. *El País*, January 23, 1910, p. 4.

The yearly album

Cartoons of *chinos* were not in each strip of *El Buen Tono*, but their presence was unavoidable once the yearly album strips were compiled. The yearly albums were published at least between 1909 and 1914. They were lightweight and lengthy booklets with colour covers and monochrome inner pages. This booklet format allowed for the immersion in a graphic universe where each page corresponded to one story with its own characters. Some of these characters, like *Ranilla*, were present in more than one page/story, and there were also repetitions across the appearance and recurrence of certain stereotypes. The compilation of single-page stories allowed for a degree of graphic integration previously unknown in the Mexican comic language.

The full colour cover of the album showed, in satirical fashion, a band of characters of the city, marching one after the other (**fig. 6**). An aspiring gentleman with oversized clothes led the line, but the very center of the composition was taken-up by what looks like a rich dame in red fashionable attire and an abnormally large hat. In front of this disproportion, a shady Chinese type, that of an imperial government official, smoked his cigar and promised intrigue. A second look at the hidden facial details of the lady with the hat, revealed a dark-skinned chin and grotesquely cartooned thick red lips.

In 1909, the periodical press constantly expressed the reactionary lament that nothing was as it used to be. The industrial cartoon emerged as a conservative graphic language that rewarded attentive readers with the consistent deformity of racialized cartoons. Their scandalized imagination could hold printed materials such as these covers and illustrations in their hands to find refuge and relief.

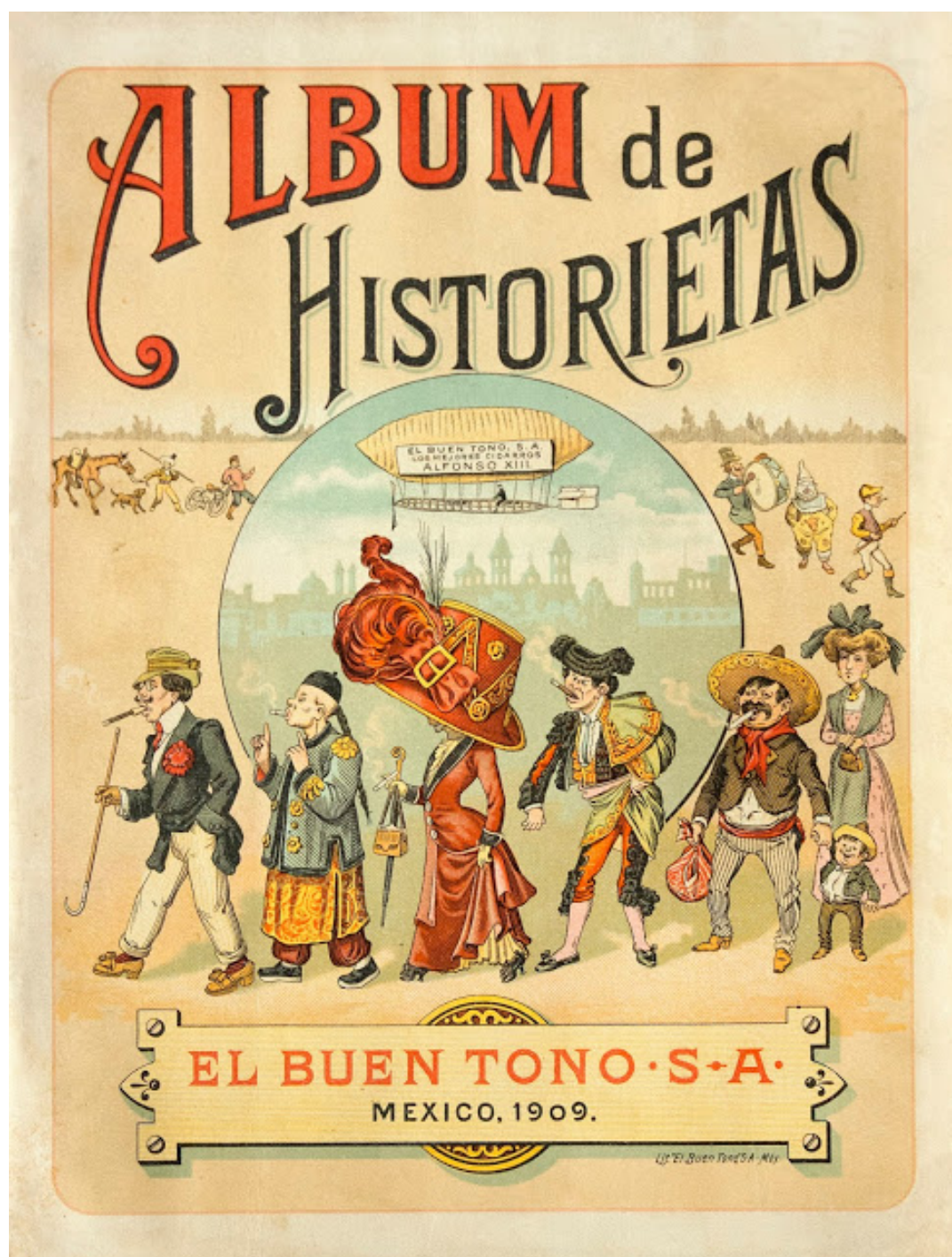


Fig. 6. Cover of *Album de Historietas El Buen Tono*, 1909, Mexico City.

In the line of characters on the cover of *Album de Historietas El Buen Tono*, after the two cartooned outsider types, came a gallant torero whose stylized posture was diminished by his crossed-eye gaze. After him, a coarse immigrant from the countryside holds a kid who, like the adult, is chubby and wears an unrefined big sombrero and cowboy boots. After these ridiculous city characters of dubious taste and constitution comes a character who belongs to another category. A woman with soft facial features is not a grotesque or a ridiculous caricature, but rather a realistic drawing. She has light skin and blonde hair that harmoniously match her pink dress and blue accessories. Her soft lines contrast with the characters around her.

In the background of the cover, the new technology of the hot air balloon displayed the spectacular El Buen Tono publicity flying over the skyline of Mexico City's historic downtown. This distinctive palatial architecture in a washed tone of blue anchored the characters in an atemporal Mexico City. Its heavy, palatial, and soberly delimited structures made from stone are opposed to the twirling, exaggerated, and dynamic social figures.

The fancy booklets were not for sale, and they had to be exchanged at tobacco stores for a sheet proving 100 purchases of participating products. In an advertisement for the booklets printed by *El Imparcial*, the album was described as a "luxurious book [...] with a handpicked selection of fifty of the funniest and most entertaining comics [...] printed in colours and on magnificent couché paper."⁸¹ A miniature monochromatic application of the cover was used for this and other pieces of advertising that circulated inside newspapers.

⁸¹ *El Imparcial*, Saturday January 1, 1910, p. 3, No. 4853, Mexico City, HND.

The advertising reproduced below, in **fig. 7**, was published inside of the Catholic newspaper *El País* (1899-1914). This daily was founded by Trinidad Sánchez Santos, who participated in the creation of the Partido Nacional Católico in 1911, and directed the newspapers *El Nacional*, and *El Heraldo* which drew inspiration from the *New York Herald* in the United States.

Los Nuevos Albums de Historietas de El Buen Tono, S. A.

A solicitud de numerosos de nuestros favorecedores, acabamos de publicar los nuevos álbums con la segunda colección de historietas ilustradas del Buen Tono, S. A.

No omitimos, por lo tanto, gasto alguno para complacer a nuestra constante clientela y con gusto seguiremos publicando cada año las nuevas colecciones.

Como de costumbre, y para que dichos álbums estén al alcance de todos nuestros consumidores, se distribuyen a cambio de una planilla con elen registros número 12, de cualesquiera de las marcas del Buen Tono, S. A.

El canje se hace en el expendio de cigarros que tenemos establecido en la Avenida del Cinco de Mayo número 10.

Recomendamos a los adictos consumidores de nuestros inmejorables cigarros no dejen de adquirir tan interesante colección de cuentos, los cuales son muy divertidos, no sólo para los niños, sino también para las personas grandes, pues están llenos con verdadero espíritu y muchos de los asuntos de que tratan son de actualidad y sobre costumbres del país.

Estos artísticos Álbums han salido de los talleres litográficos del Buen Tono, S. A., que son sin disputa, unos de los mejores del mundo.

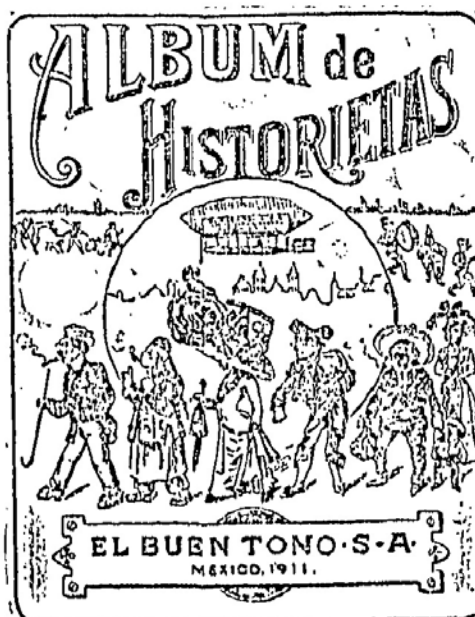


Fig. 7. Advertising for *Historietas El Buen Tono* in *El País*, *Diario católico*, Friday April 7, 1911, p. 3., No. 3698, Mexico City, HND.

The graphic revolution

During the second half of the 19th century, Mexico experienced a journalistic revolution which consolidated a national newspaper market and caused a boom in the number of newspaper titles printed regionally. Behind this explosion of periodicals were the years of relative stability and development of communication and transportation infrastructure achieved by the regime of General Porfirio Díaz, which started in the 1870s and ended only in 1911.

Under Díaz's regime of *orden y progreso* (order and progress) "caricature became a pervasive genre [...] which, when it invaded the columns of the big journalistic press, often subsidized by the government, became more recreational than political."⁸²

By the 1890s, caricature participated in the shift in which "the definition of the types and social archetypes were manufactured by the political press as well as the industrial press, commercial and journalistic."⁸³ These products manufactured by newspapers, generated serialized and standardized printed behaviours that exposed the way in which social actors were situated within the visuals of the Nation, and the mesmerizing type of the Chinese was no exemption.

The Chinese cartooned type was simultaneously made locally and all over the world: on the edges, inside and everywhere. Its introduction and industrial reproduction as a resource for production and colonization rendered it hyper visible, depraved and entertaining, while obscuring the presence and struggles of Chinese diasporas. Cartoons and comics of Chinese materialized the intense levels of social exclusion faced by the community. According to Marta Banta, cartoon techniques express the

⁸² Coudart, 2009, p. 266. My translation.

⁸³ Coudart, 2009, p. 273. My translation.

tensions and negotiations of social exclusion with peculiar aliveness: “the means by which [they] sanctified or defrocked social illusions, and the arts by which [they] used visualizations to seam together relations between the fantastic and the real,”⁸⁴ are memorable and foundational. Their excessive tone kept under control the excluded types of society but “act as the recorder of injustice, as the tool of injustice, and as the potential annihilator of injustice.”⁸⁵

Rotary lithographic technologies like the ones used at the workshops of El Buen Tono and the ones used by big dailies like *El Imparcial*, accelerated the speed of circulation of illustrated printed matter and opened the gates for an industrial scale in the circulation of images. Cartoons of this industrial era were in consonance with the news cycle and were often echoing journalistic reports.

The industrial comic displayed a narration made from several panels of cartoons and text. Initially, text in comics was typed, but by the end of the 1910s, it tended to be handwritten. After the sequencing, the most important pattern established by the industrial comic was the explicit visual delimitation between its components. El Buen Tono used thick ink to contour the limits between each vignette. These contoured frames formed squared units of content that continued to circulate as single cartoons. The third pattern that constitutes the form of the comic emerges from these contours. The gutter or gap simplified the composition labour of industrially produced storytelling, where steady and equidistant blank space between panels became the standard layout. This skeleton of frames and blank spaces offered rich narrative plasticity where pauses, silences and rhythm became part of the graphic pulse of the

⁸⁴ Banta, Martha. *Caricature and the Culture of Conduct, 1841-1936*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2003, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Banta, 2003, p. 17.

format of the comic. It trafficked bolder sensations of comfort and repugnance in entertaining ways, while exposing the ongoing rationalisation of social and racial difference.

Along with more solemn illustrations and photographs, progressively irreverent comics punctuated and gave rhythm to industrially printed pages that, until the beginning of the 20th century, were still mostly textual. The standard printed form of the comic in Mexico clearly standardized multiple cartoons in sequences and produced a new way of organizing the terrain of visual narratives. Clear sequences allowed blunt left to right directionality. With a clear track, the speed in the operation of moving from one component to the other was accelerated, while a sense of succession of elements remained orderly.

When the Mexican Revolution hit in 1910, the serialized printed graphic representation of behaviours and types that had been massively allowed to sediment by the rotary industrial press, started to align different political groups around anti-Chinese values. Grotesque styles of cartooning Chinese people deepened the labour of producing repugnance and public dehumanization.

Chapter III

Comic strips and genocidal ideologies

1911-1920

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) accelerated the periodical printed sphere with proliferating political groups and larger volumes of printed matter looking to gain their space in the public arena. A more generalized use of rotary printing techniques detonated a denser distribution of images and colour in periodical communication. Images circulated in media with bigger print runs and more variety of formats. The increased availability of images and colour strengthened a denser market of newspapers and massive graphic communication. Competing to be attractive, these periodicals created original comic strips that contributed to a defining of social archetypes often based on racial violence in a social context of civil war.

While social violence was generalized in Mexico between 1910 and 1920, this was a key period of articulation of anti-Chinese violence, that I propose to categorize as the first wave of the anti-Chinese campaign. Mexican periodicals at the beginning of the 1910s circulated numerous cartooned Anti-Chinese types, that were not new, but achieved greater aesthetic cohesion than in previous formative years. At this point of comic history, Mexican strips were richer in drawing details, and to depict Chinese types, they systematically used a grotesque style. Some of these anti-Chinese cartoons were still anonymous, like the ones produced by the graphic team of Juan Bautista for the strips of *El Buen Tono*, which continued to publish comics until 1914.

Simultaneously, in the first half of the 1910s, a different category of anti-Chinese cartoons started to circulate. They were the creations of young and classically trained graphic artists like Ernesto García Cabral and Rafael Lillo, who authored comic strips marked by dynamism and clarity of line. These cartoon creations circulated in a context of abundant anti-Chinese textual pieces and escalating anti-Chinese violence.

In the first part of this chapter, called "Presence and illusions," I present a sequence of anti-Chinese comic strips and texts published in 1911 that have never been studied before. This analytical sequence shows how daily news and standard visual forms of racially based violence were formed together on the pages of newspapers. While violent comic strips became more detailed and circulated in abundance, cruel crimes against *chinos* in Mexico multiplied across regions. This section closes introducing the notion of Flat trauma, which proposes a different way to look at cartooned violence. Although applicable to the whole corpus of comics discussed in this dissertation, I will anchor it in the drawing that references the 1911 Massacre of Chinese in the frontier city of Torreón, massively circulated as an advertising comic for El Buen Tono.

The second part of the chapter, called "Genocidal ideologies," provides a panoramic vision of anti-Chinese crimes in Mexico. A full account of these crimes is still pending, and their narration requires a coordination of research efforts that largely exceeds this work. To give an indication, between 1911 and 1919 "at least 814 Chinese were killed in various states throughout Mexico."¹ Here, rather than an exhaustive inquiry into every one of these hate crimes, I focus on presenting a different interpretation of this

¹ Chao Romero, Robert. *Chinese In Mexico*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2010, p. 147. These data could be compared with the work of José Gómez Izquierdo, who did not count anti-Chinese crimes in Mexico year by year, but certainly reunited many of them between 1871 and 1934. Gómez Izquierdo, José Jorge. *El movimiento antichino en México, 1871-1934*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. Mexico City, 1991.

violence, in terms of its scale, its historical continuity, the extensive involvement of revolutionary militias and the Postrevolutionary State, and its genocidal ideologies. It is indisputable that the Massacre of Torreón, in the state of Coahuila, in May of 1911, when at least 303 Chinese and 4 Japanese were murdered, was the single episode of violence with the most Chinese victims in Mexico and the Americas. It was perpetrated by followers of the revolutionary leader Francisco I. Madero, the *maderistas*. Originally from Coahuila, Francisco I. Madero was a wealthy landowner who was elected President of Mexico in October of 1911 and governed until February of 1913, when he was overthrown by a military coup, forced to resign, and then assassinated. The Torreón Massacre, as shown by my research with primary and secondary sources, was just the catalyst for subsequent attacks and was linked to Madero as a revolutionary and President. After this massacre, anti-Chinese violence escalated via the continuation of group killings, the organization of publicly anti-Chinese groups, and the proliferation of explicitly anti-Chinese laws and periodical press content, more coherent after 1916.

By then, the dominant revolutionary faction was called *constitucionalista* and recognised as *Primer Jefe* Venustiano Carranza who was, like Madero, a rich rancher born in Coahuila with anti-Chinese values. A momentary coalition between revolutionary factions supported a new constitution that was proclaimed in February of 1917 and in May of 1917, Carranza became President of Mexico. The constitutional alliances did not last long, and Carranza constantly fought armed resistances. He was a Germanophile, and full of deep anti-United States sentiment, he maintained Mexican Neutrality during World War I (1914-1918) and supported German and British interests in Mexico, as well as several business connections between the German press and Mexican press.

The public articulation of violence at the higher spheres of power set in motion a transregional anti-Chinese network across Mexico that included newspaper owners, journalists and cartoonists, governors, congressmen, municipal authorities, diplomats, and presidents. This network will be covered in the sections “The Frontier, the port and the nation” and “The revolutionary press.” In the turbulent second half of the 1910s, anti-Chinese violence in Mexico was increasingly organized by this convergence of media and political actors in a top-down dynamic which harvested the fruits of a multimedia public campaign that covered a broad political spectrum. I will address three ideological niches of the Mexican Revolution within the Anti-Chinese spectrum: anarchism, aggressive nationalism, and the more cultivated mystical eugenics. The respective actors of these three groups link factions of the Mexican Revolution that permanently transformed the landscape of the Chinese diaspora in Mexico.

In the last section of this chapter, called “Dark alleys,” I discuss the first Mexican comic with a Chinese type as protagonist. It was created by the respected cartoonist Andrés Audiffred, in 1919, for the daily newspaper *El Heraldo de México*. In 1919, starting with the daily *Excélsior*, colour stopped being a resource employed almost exclusively in covers. This year also marked the promotion of the *sonorense* group of military men with anti-Chinese attitudes that started as *maderistas* in the State of Sonora. Later, most of this group became *constitucionalista* and received their first post-revolutionary national government positions. In 1920, former *constitucionalistas* and allies of President Carranza from Sonora, General Álvaro Obregón and General Plutarco Elías Calles organized a military coup against him and re-grouped around the Plan de Agua Prieta. They chased President Carranza out of Mexico City. His presidency ended with a suspicious death in May of 1920 and a take-over by the also anti-Chinese *sonorenses*.

Presence and illusions

Industrially printed colour had been a strategic part of periodical print culture since the late 1900s. Its effect of enchantment was, initially, a limited and expensive resource that few media could afford. In an opportune observation, Walter Benjamin found, in the field of expanding printed palettes around him, the foundation of an increasingly visual era. This imaginative and “dictatorially vertical” era used a phantasmal palette that “is moist, blurs things in the colour of its contour, a medium, pure property of no substance, colourful but also monochromatic, a chromatic filling out of an infinity through phantasy.”²

Comic strips substantially exploited the polychromic possibilities of periodical fantasies, textures, sensations, and political alignments in this increasingly mediatized context. The rotary newspaper printed in Mexico City, *El Imparcial*, started to print colour in 1903, and its rival *El País* in 1907. By 1910, thanks to their new rotative printing machines, a Walter Scott and a Goss, respectively, both dailies had overcome most difficulties to deliver regularly coloured Sunday supplements with comic strips and other illustrations.

During the rest of the 1910s, other powerful industrial periodicals in Mexico would reach for the expanded colourful palette, to lure in and keep their clienteles. While colour display became the proud marker of compositional elegance and flawless *belle époque* execution, orientalism was still an important anchor of the visual repertoire of good taste and graphic illusions. For example, orientalism is a central part of the vocabulary of a 1910 episode of the Mexican comic strip “Caldela el Argüendero,” an original creation widely distributed by *El Imparcial* (fig. 1).

² Benjamin, Walter. *The Rainbow: A Dialogue on Phantasy*, 1915, p. 25.

CALDELA EL ARGÜENDERO



Fig. 1. Godoy, "Caldela El Argüendero," *El Imparcial*, *Diario Ilustrado de la mañana*, Sunday June 19, 1910, p. 16, Vol. XXVIII, No. 5022, Mexico City.

"Caldela" was a full-page strip comic series printed in full colour which presented a combination of handwritten and typed text. It was published during 1910, and, perhaps, for a few months in 1911.³ This comic strip was well situated within the transition between comics still linked to a stylistic repertoire characteristic of the *belle époque* and the influence of French caricature on Mexican illustrations, on the one hand and, on the other, the increasing influence of strips made in the U.S. The episode of "Caldela" considered here employs the chronotope of a sensual dream. A chronotope, according to Mikhail Bakhtin,⁴ is a narratively predictable configuration of space and time. In this comic strip, a group of gentlemen, pleasantly flying in the sky, land in a panel framed by thick vegetation and the symbol of the serpent announcing the rupture with paradise. In the next panel, the gentlemen enter a dreamy world of oriental temptations with minarets, domes, and horseshoe arches, the smoke of a hookah, the music of a harp and a sensual dancer.

This chronotope presents Oriental signs of atemporal provenance, which are based on ancient decorative elements taken from architecture and other arts but are engrained with imagined landscapes, modern sensitivities, and imperialisms. Signs like these formed the classic, stylish, and archaic imaginary of the atemporal chronotope, which eroticized transgressions against Asians from an occidental and, usually, masculine point of view. The story of this "Caldela" comic displays the atemporal chronotope and

³ The main obstacle to establish this fact is that the Hemeroteca Nacional Digital (HND) stopped digitizing the Sunday supplements of *El Imparcial* in 1911, the section where strips could be found.

⁴ This classic notion was coined by Mikhail Bakhtin and derives from the narrative correlation of time and space "it makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins [...] It serves as the primary point from which 'scenes' in a novel unfold [...] Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel." Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1988, pp. 250-252.

unfolds according to forms of Christian temptation. After the Biblical serpent, a group of Mexican gentlemen encounter a somatope in the gendered flesh of the Asian dancer. Like chronotopes, somatopes are predictable and recognizable narrative units that instead of being based in time-space, are based in the body. In the words of Ramona Fernández, a somatope “carries the weight of the obsessions of its narrative. The somatope encodes a host of meanings penetrating and surrounding the image of the body [...] its feverish references bind all the seemingly unrelated phenomena.”⁵

As the seductive symbols would allow us to anticipate, in the second half of this exotic comic sequence, the dreamy Oriental paradise is transformed into hell. The Mexican gentlemen encounter unclassified atheists and Middle Eastern usurers in flames. Eventually, the gentlemen meet with Satan himself. The discursive space of the strip uses predictable functions to create the “semiotic activation” of an “subconscious set of signs, which automatically concatenate into an identifiable scene and predict a plot sequence.”⁶ In the imaginary space of the dream and the harem, Mexican upper-class men fulfill their fantasies of looking at sexualized Asian women and the punishment of Asian men. As can be predicted by the reader, the guilt and penitence of their sensual and oneiric transgressions is transferred to racialized non-Christians who burn in hell. For the closing panel, the gentlemen sell their souls to Satan to return to earth “almost exhausted of illusions.”⁷

Orientalist imaginaries in the Mexican public sphere were strongly modified beginning in 1911. Their enchanting chronotopes, such as the oasis, the garden, the public bath

⁵ Fernández, Ramona. “The Somatope: from Bakhtin’s Chronotope to Haraway’s Cyborg via James Cameron’s *Dark Angel* and *Avatar*,” *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 47, No. 6, 2014, p. 1124.

⁶ Fernández, 2014, p. 1123.

⁷ *El Imparcial*, *Diario ilustrado de la mañana*, Sunday June 19, 1910, p. 16, Vol. XXVIII, No. 5022, Mexico City, Hemeroteca Nacional Digital (HND). My translation.

or the fountain, continued to circulate, but mostly through short stories and non-sequential, elaborate and elegant illustrations. The presence of somatopes of sensualized Asian women also continued and were prominently displayed as the central elements of advertising illustrations. In the terrain of the comic strips, while some graphic tendencies were unchanged between 1910 and 1911, I have been able to identify a noticeable shift in the increased and ubiquitous presence of disgusting somatopes of Chinese men.

As somatopes, the styles and tones in which the bodies of Chinese men were drawn incarnated a repulsive form of enchantment, in opposition to the beautified sexually available bodies of Asian women, vaguely from the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, China or Japan. The enchantment of Chinese or Yellow men on the contrary—who were, in general, never Japanese until the late 1930s—was based as well on strong embodied sensations and the erotization of violence. Although this sensorial enchantment could be complemented with plots, it was condensed very efficiently at the level of the cartooned body. To create the effective visceral effect of enchantment, the drawn form of cartooned *chinos* combined visibly infectious states, anatomical deformations, exaggerated mental disabilities, animal features, and humorized violent transgressions of blunt force trauma and racially specific genocidal patterns expressing ideas of racial degradation and post-mortem violence. This new set of symbols was not about a faraway Orient, but about the presence of Asian diasporas within Mexico.

Like other graphic traditions, while modelling racially specific types, Mexican comics expressed larger ideas about society and national imagination. Cartoon language addressed the postcolonial decay of racial forms and manners, and explicitly channeled alarm and disgust towards it. Cartooning reacted to the perceived rupture of classically

delimited racial interactions by, initially, paternalized lower classes and perverted Mexican women. After the Mexican Revolution, cartoon language continued representing scandalous racial transgressions of the victimized “people” and “Mexican women,” but also manufactured a visual rupture with the pro-Chinese *ancien régime* elites and middle classes, now anti-revolutionary, presenting a collection of liminal, quotidian, and popular social circumstances. For Martha Banta, this animated reactivity shaped cartooned language as a “zone of danger,” and a “language of attack” at the service of national ruling classes.⁸ Cartoons exposed social disturbance showing the repulsive and unpleasant when “the ugly of the earth take over the realms of delight.”⁹

In March of 1911, *El Imparcial* presented a nine-panel strip that followed a low-class *chino* ironer. The author of this strip used cartooned anatomical deformations to mock, vilify, and trigger repugnance, attaching bold sensations and feelings to the visually efficient working class type wearing overalls. The *chino*’s eyes were empty, signifying a clouded intelligence. A visceral degree of ambivalence was achieved combining these repugnant aspects with soft facial proportions, seductive and stylized thick lips framing a missing tooth and the interference of a cadaver-like jaw shadow (**fig. 2**).

⁸ Banta, Martha. *Caricature and the Culture of Conduct, 1841-1936*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2003, p. 13.

⁹ Banta, 2003, p. 77.



Po-po-te obscuro planchador de una laundry de barrio fué de los que se enamoraron de la copa de cerveza y mientras machucaba cuellos y puños, se machacaba el cacúmen buscando la manera de tomar parte en el dichoso concurso.

Fig. 2. Fourth panel of El Buen Tono Strip, second era, third collection, No. 56. Published by *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday March 12, 1911, p. 3, No. 6138, Mexico City.

The cartooned type had a fake Chinese name, Po Po Te, that was composed with the Mexican slang for feces (*popó*) and the noun for designating a straw (*popote*).

Scatological associations with Chinese were an old resource in the artisanal stage of the Mexican press for generating repugnant alarm.¹⁰ Returning to the cartoon, this skinny, soft, and ugly *chino* boy is modeled as a failed worker. He is wearing the working-class attire *par excellence*, but has a delicate skeleton, weak limbs, and stylized fists, marking his perversion of the visual ideal of the hypermasculine and muscular working-class type. The Mexican Chinese type is placed in a particular social situation. The nature of the interaction is that of providing a service, and although there is no skin contact between him and his male client, a tense meowing cat between the two increases the tension of their proximity.

This portrait-like composition of a Chinese working type and his middle-class urban client was part of a nine-panel comic strip that reinforced digestive, gender, and sexual taboos associated with Asian masculinity (fig. 3). The text written across the comic, using catchy alliterations and rhymes, describes the job of the *chino* as repetitive scraping, crushing, pressing of cavities, and use of fists—hiding signs of homosexual transgression in plain sight—which the text then connects with his vicious love of for beer and games of lust. This word game suggests, in an insistent but never explicit way, that the character was sexually and morally deviant. The text in the *apoyadura*, the textual block typed at the bottom of each panel, reinforces that this character has the

¹⁰ For example, the daily *El Tiempo* used the resource in 1886 equating the moment when low class Chinese workers became more common in Mexico to “when dregs of people flood strange lands.” cuando la hez de un pueblo inunda tierras extrañas *El Tiempo*. *Diario católico*, Thursday July 1, 1886, p. 2, Year III, No. 859, Mexico City, HND. My translation. In 1905, the weekly *El Centinela* published “immigrants are nothing but dregs, the residue of those remote villages, and nothing comes to Mexico other than the underworld of the Chinese court of miracles”. *El Centinela*, Saturday September 9, 1905, p. 1, Vol. V, No. 249, Hermosillo, HND.

twisted nature of the Chinese: "they say there is no brain more fertile than that of a thirsty Mongol, and it must be true."¹¹

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CAPITAL SOCIAL: **EL BUEN TONO, S. A.** Tercera Colección No: 56
\$ 6.500,000 MEXICO. DIRECTOR GENERAL
E. PUGIBET

Medallas de Oro en las Exposiciones París, 1889.-Londres, 1895.



Después de acalorada discusión, los miembros del Aero-Club de Tezmalhuacán el año anterior celebraron una reunión en el aeródromo de aquel pueblo a importante centro deportivo.



Po-pa- obacuro planchador de una laundry de barrio fue de los que se enamoraron de la copa de cerveza y mientras machucaba cuellos y p-fhos, se machucaba el carácter hucal lo la manera de tomar parte en el di-boso concurso.



El cigarrillo, desarrollando un potencia sccasional increíble ren-jud a tal altura que se hizo invisible aun para los mejores catalejos, bastó, que al fin, después de algunas horas, desapareció efectuando los más sure-ridos vol-planes.

Medallas de Oro en las Exposiciones de Buffalo y Guatemala.



Y para despertar mayor interés en los aviadores concursantes se acordó que el que mayores bazas realizara, recibiría como premio la acostumbrada copa, pero con la innovación de que esta vez se otorgaría rebotante de la famosa cerveza MOCTEZUMA.



Dicen que no hay cerebro más fecundo que el de un mongol sediento y de ser cierto, puesto que Po con un par de petates y un burrito de madera confeccionó un «Demolaville» con altísimo tiro, rímón de profundidad y demás chismes propios de tal máquina.



Al hacer su aterrizaje, el mongol muy ufano mostró un documento firmado por el bol, certificando que se había elevado hasta las cercanías del astro rey, mientras los espectadores vitoreaban los cigarrillos Reina Victoria, señores de tan insólita bazada.

Todo Tezmalhuacán desfiló ante el escaparate donde se exhibía el trofeo lleno del precioso líquido y Moibant y sus internacionales fueron los primeros en acudir con todo un cargamento de munos, bi, tri, y demás planes.



Quando el chale se presentó en la plaza, el público se hacía copes de como haría para volar en aquel armatoste; Po, muy sin pena, encendió un cigarrillo Reina Victoria, lo echó en la punta de su pipa y se lanzó al espacio.



Moibant, Garro y compañía fueron los primeros en pedir se concediera el campeonato al atrevido secretario de Confucio, y mientras éste apuraba el contenido de su copa, los aviadores se hacían el propósito de utilizar en sus futuros vuelos los alambres cigarrillos del Buen Tono, S. A.



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GRANDES PREMIOS, PARIS 1900 Y ST. LOUIS MISSOURI 1904.
PROVEEDORES DE LA REAL CASA DE ESPAÑA

POR REAL DECRETO DE 17 DE FEBRERO 1909.
LA MEJOR CERVEZA DE LA REPUBLICA ES LA DE MOCTEZUMA ORIZABA

Fig. 3. El Buen Tono strip, second era, third collection, No. 56, published on *El Imparcial, Diario matutino ilustrado*, Sunday March 12, 1911, p. 3, No. 6138, Mexico City.

¹¹ *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday March 12, 1911, p. 3, No. 6138, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

The plot reinforces the twisted ingenuity of this Chinese type. When the *chino* learned that the prize from a flying contest was a giant cup of beer, his vicious motivation made him invent a flying machine. Without the means to build a proper machine, he improvised one with cheap materials and tricks. He lights a Reina Victoria brand cigarette, places it on the tip of his queue and uses it as “ascensional force.”¹² When landing, he proudly presents a certificate from the sun itself, proving he had flown so high that he was close to it. With this combination of motivation and twisted ingenuity, he wins the contest. In the last frame, the shoeless *chino*, with immoral thirst and unrefined manners, drinks his Moctezuma beer.

From character design to plot, nothing in this Chinese type lacks cruelty, but within a few months of its publication, anti-Chinese violence escalated in the Mexican press to the point that, in comparison, this quotidian level of graphic violence became soft. After the Torreón massacre in May of 1911, there was increased reporting against the Chinese in every journalistic and fictional genre. Indolent reports with gory details of the episode were made public by the periodical press beginning in April; by June, the event flooded the Mexican press. In these same months, the diplomatic tensions and negotiations demanding compensation, and protection of the rights of Chinese in Mexico, received much humoristic attention devoted to ridiculing them.

¹² *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday March 12, 1911, p. 3, No. 6138, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

Cartooning Chinese

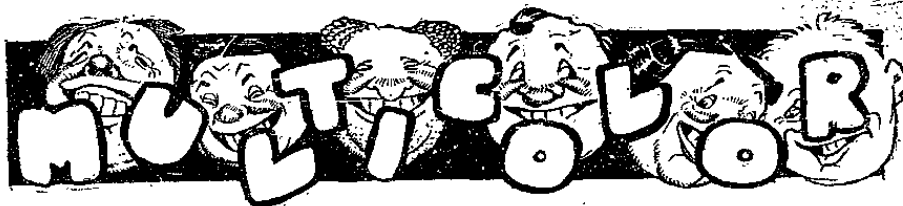
One of the humoristic media that created original anti-Chinese content was the artistically ambitious weekly *Multicolor* (1911-1914) created in May of 1911. It was published on Thursdays with a richly coloured cover, had around 20 pages and a convenient size of 27 x 18.5 cm that provided a large board for detailed full-page drawings. Unlike daily newspapers, the pages of this satirical periodical displayed mostly images.

The content of *Multicolor* consisted of cartoons of emergent political leaders, social cartoons of archetypical figures that included repugnant Chinese types, and a few written jokes offering humoristic and scandalized observations of the city. As well, the weekly had comics of two to four panels commenting on the news or social situations. Its program, according to its director, Mario Vitoria, was "limited to providing its readers a little moment of solace, humorously exploiting everything that can be exploitable [...] with the most notable cartoonist."¹³

The leading caricaturist of *Multicolor* was Ernesto García Cabral (1890-1968) and his career took off with this periodical of "great political influence."¹⁴ He was formally educated as a painter and illustrator in the Academia de San Carlos, and, later in his career, his fluent technique and versatility would be recognized with awards and honors. His first anti-Chinese illustration for *Multicolor* was printed on the first page of the second issue. The elaborate one-panel cartoon revolved around a disfigured, dishonest, and inept Chinese clothes washer and presser (**fig. 4**).

¹³ Vitoria, Mario. "Me repito de ustedes," *Multicolor*, Thursday May 18, 1911, p. 1, No. 1, Mexico City, HND. M translation.

¹⁴ Only one hundred and fifty copies were printed of this biography "for the amusement of friends who will admire the genius of the famous Mexican cartoonist," Conway, George Robert Graham, *Ernesto Garcia Cabral: A Mexican cartoonist*, 1923, p. 9.



Caricaturista,
Ernesto García Cabral

Director,
MARIO VITORIA

Caricaturista,
Santiago R. de la Vega

Año I

México, mayo 25 de 1911

Núm. 2

Muchísimas Gracias HEMEROTECA NACIONAL MEXICO

No precisamente con las lágrimas en los ojos, porque no sienta bien el lloriqueo á quien presume de tratarlo todo en guasa; pero sí con una miaja de emoción, damos las gracias más expresivas al público, por la cariñosa acogida que se ha servido dar á «Multicolor».

Podríamos demostrar que nuestra tirada fué cuatro veces mayor que la que en su primer número hicieron otros periódicos del mismo género; pero como no tratamos de competir con nadie, nos limitaremos á decir que los números que lanzamos á la venta se agotaron con tal rapidez, que han sido muchas las personas que se han dirigido á nosotros en demanda de ejemplares que no les fué posible conseguir con los papeleros.

Los papeleros, ellos son precisamente quienes nos han dado la mayor seguridad del éxito al felicitar á nuestro director á los pocos días de publicado el primer número. Esta felicitación, y perdonen las demás personas que verbalmente ó por escrito nos han felicitado, es la que más agradecemos.

Damos también las gracias á los periódicos «El Diario», «El Nacional», «El Heraldo Mexicano», «Gil Blas», «El Sufragio Libre», «México Festivo» y otros que han tenido para «Multicolor» frases de cariño y aliento que obligan nuestra gratitud.

Enviamos de nuevo nuestro saludo á toda la prensa y repetimos que no venimos á competir con nadie; y si bien haremos lo posible porque el ya grande éxito de «Multicolor» vaya en aumento, no por eso deseamos que otros periódicos se perjudiquen, sino por el contrario, veríamos con gusto que todos disfrutaran de larga y próspera vida.

LA REDACCIÓN.

EL LAVANDERO



- ¡Cómo así! Llevaste seis camisas y no traes más que cinco.
- Perdí una.
- Y, sin embargo, me cobras el planchado de las seis.
- Es que cuando la perdí ya estaba lavada.

Fig. 4. García Cabral, Ernesto. "El Lavandero," *Multicolor*, Semanario Humorístico Ilustrado, Thursday 25 May, 1911, No. 2, Mexico City, p.1.

The scene of the cartoon comments again on the transgressive and scandalous contact between a Mexican client and a Chinese worker. This single-panel cartoon is set in the intimate space of the bedroom, where the bald client receives a Chinese man with thick black hair. The delivery service takes the Mexican by surprise. Firstly, one of the shirts he hired the *chino* to iron is missing. When asked why he wants to charge for it as well, the repugnant Chinese answers that the shirt went missing only after he already ironed it. Detail by detail, the racialization of the type models a horrendous facial shape and two classic metonymic signs of Asianness: a pair of long frontal teeth and minuscule eyes. Through these details, we can recognize that this is a *chino* type although neither his clothes, nor hairstyle or accent are ethnic specific.

By June of 1911, testimonies by victims of the massacre in Torreón started to circulate in the periodical press. *Multicolor* offered its own humorous version of testimony in its seventh issue. This was a full-page fictional interview with a Chinese witness to the massacre. The initial gags involve his fake Chinese name, Chin Chun Chan, which has no meaning in Spanish or Cantonese, and his fake Chinese accent that affects how typed words are spelt. The humorist's interview addresses the lack of hygiene of Chinese people and the food they prepared through one of the common international tropes of the era —that in which Chinese cooked taboo food, including rats.

This trope was extensively used in Mexico in the mid 1900s by the periodical press linked to Francisco I. Madero.¹⁵ Years later, in 1916, *Multicolor* used a fictional

¹⁵ A regular flaneur column printed by the daily *El Demócrata*, printed in Mexico City, Tabasco, Nuevo León, Texas, Arizona and Puebla, once narrated a visit to a Chinese *fonda*, a Mexican popular restaurant, where "concern makes one distrust the steaks and mincemeats that may well have been made with the meat of naught rodents, of which plebes say that the citizens of the Celestial republic are very fond." "Las cosas como las veo," *El Demócrata. Diario constitucionalista*, Saturday August 21, 1915, p. 3, Vol. 1, No. 267, second edition, HND. My translation.

interview for a cruel original twist of this trope. The Chinese character introduced the joke saying that during the massacre in Torreón, *chinos* were killed like rats. The interviewer then rejects the shock of the Chinese, arguing it should not be surprising, considering that this is how Chinese kill the rats they serve in their restaurants. As was a regular practice, the voice given to the Chinese character changed the “r” for “l” to sound Chinese, making *maderistas*, the followers of Francisco I. Madero, *malelistas*; and rats, lats. The syntax of the voice of the Chinese was also made incorrect and, ultimately, the victims were blamed for the massacre. All these elements were condensed in 4 lines:

- Malelistas killed all the Chinese like lats... Vely bad malelistas!
- But the rats that you give us in restaurants battered in egg are killed with a rifle!
- Alright, but what was that reason for the Maderistas to attack you?
- Just because Chinese shot bullets at malelistas.¹⁶

This hurtful mocking of trauma referred to real aspects of the massacre but also contributed to propagating false allegations as rumours. The interview identified the perpetrators of the violence —the *maderistas*, or followers of Madero— but extended the rumour that the Chinese shot at them first, which was used to justify the massacre. With peculiar sadism, the interview also makes fun of the dismemberment of corpses by a horse, something that happened during the massacre.

At least four different original sources, all printed or typed in 1911, agree on the use of horses to dismember Asian corpses during the Torreón massacre.¹⁷ These sources were

¹⁶ Karkabel, “Entrevista con un Chin-Chun-Chan,” *Multicolor*, Thursday June 29, 1911, p. 12, No 7, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

¹⁷ The sources are: *Report of Messers Owyang King and Arthur Basset...*, Mexico, American Book and Printing Co., 1911, 28 pp; Wilfley, L. R. and A. Basset, *Memorandum on the law and the facts in the matter of the claim of China against Mexico for losses of life and property suffered by Chinese subjects at Torreon on May 13, 14 and 15, 1911*, Mexico City, July 13, 1911, 28 pp; “Declaración espontánea del Dr. Lim” and “Testimonio de Samuel Graham” in Ramos Pedrueza, *Informe*, Mexico, November 13,

produced mainly by the lawyers hired to investigate the massacre by Chinese Minister Chang Yin Tang and Francisco L. de la Barra (Interim President of Mexico between May 25 and November 6 of 1911). In the sadistic humorist twist of the fictional version, the horses did not dismember limbs, but, rather, the heads of Chinese. The perpetrators did not use rope, but, rather, the queue of the Chinese to tie them to the horses, all these in incorrect syntax: “—And how were your poor *paisanos* killed, chinito? —Tied blaid (braid) head. Dlagged holse and then... poom!”¹⁸

Mexican newspapers also found indirect ways to join this violent campaign. For example, one of the provocations of *El Imparcial* was based on the layout of one of its pages. The testimony concerning the massacre offered by Shung Ai-Sune, Chinese Charge d’Affaires in Mexico, was placed next to a large advertisement for medicine for syphilis.¹⁹ It was not the last time that this insulting strategy, based on the composition of a page, would be seen in printed media. Shung Ai-Sune informed the Chinese media of what had happened in Tsai Yuen, the name that the Chinese community gave to Torreón.²⁰ Ai Sune was one of the first to report on the incident, using the telegraph. After the massacre, he invested months in putting together his report. Portions of it were widely circulated in the press. Its informative and caring tone concerning the postmortem treatment of the corpses of those massacred was exceptional in the generally insulting context. He also protested the destruction and looting of a variety of Chinese businesses during the massacre, giving a sense of the urban scale of the violence and the integration of Chinese within the life of the city:

1911, 13 pages and several files. Puig, Juan. *Entre el Río Perla y el Nazas. La China decimonónica y sus braceros emigrantes, la colonia china de Torreón y la matanza de 1911*. Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992, Mexico City, p. 189.

¹⁸ Karkabel, 1911, p. 12. My translation.

¹⁹ *El Imparcial, Diario matutino ilustrado*, Saturday June 10, 1911, p. 1, No. 62778, Mexico City, HND.

²⁰ According to Puig, his version of the massacre was printed by *Pekin Daily News*, *Shun Tien Shi Pao*, *Le Journal de Pekin* and *The Weekly China Tribune* among others. Puig, 1992, p. 203.

There were many cases, the majority of them, in which the Chinese were given an extremely cruel death, with bullets and stab wounds, then chopping their corpses with machetes. With machete blows, their heads, arms and legs were detached. I have verified all this [...] there are already three commissioners I have sent to Torreón and all of them agree about their information. [...] it is known that the looted establishments were the following: a bank, the Reforma Club, forty grocery stores, seven haberdashers, four laundries, five restaurants, ten vegetable stalls and twenty-three grocery stalls at the market. In addition, the orchards that the Chinese themselves grew in the vicinity of the metallurgical company were devastated.²¹

During the month of June, as a result of negotiations between the governments of Mexico and China, it was established that Mexico would pay monetary reparations for the massacre and the material destruction that the revolutionaries had carried out. Most of the Mexican periodical press considered the payment unfair. The disapproval was logical among the supporters of the *maderista* revolutionaries, but I would like to point to two examples of media that consistently disqualified—and protested against—the Mexican Revolution to show how the disapproval of the reparations was a unifying factor. The Catholic newspaper *El País*, categorically expressed the view that “there is no place for such retribution, because if those Chinese were killed, it was their fault and not the troops.”²²

In the graphic terrain, a cartoonist who systematically mocked the revolutionaries joined the unifying public display of anger. The twenty-one-year-old cartoonist Ernesto García Cabral used a comic to vilify the character of the victims for *Multicolor*. García Cabral produced a full-page comic strip cleanly organized in six numerated panels (fig. 5).

²¹ “La matanza de chinos en Torreón,” *El Imparcial, Diario matutino ilustrado*, Saturday June 10, 1911, p. 1, No. 62778, Mexico City, HND.

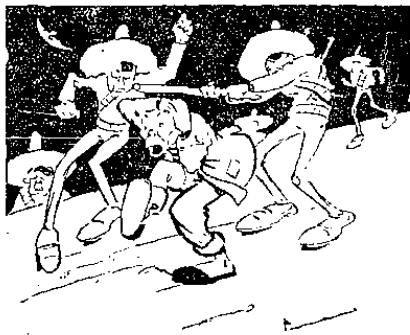
²² “Los chinos de Torreón iban sobre Triana. Por eso los atacaron los revolucionarios,” *El País. Diario católico*, Wednesday June 14, 1911, cover, Year XIII, No. 3586, Mexico City, HND.

EL DON DE ERRAR

DESVENTURAS DE UN CHINO EN LOS ALREDEDORES DE MAZATLAN



1. Los del grupo. —¡Quién vive!
El chino (creyéndolos federales). —¡Politi-
lio, Díaz!



2.—Me equivoqué.



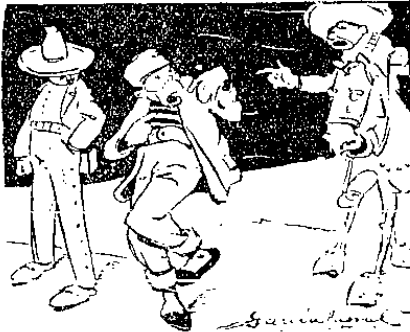
3.—¡Quién vive!
(Para su colete). —Ahora sí no me equivo-
calé. (Gritando): ¡Madeloooo!



4.—Me volví á equivocal.



5.—¡ ! ! ! ! ! !



6.—¡Quién vive!
..... Tá dice plimelo.

Fig. 5. García Cabral, Ernesto. "El don de errar. Desventuras de un chino en los alrededores de Mazatlán," *Multicolor. Semanario Humorístico Ilustrado*, Thursday June 8, 1911, p. 3, No. 4, Mexico City.

Although it portrayed the revolutionaries in an unflattering manner, the way his strokes vilified the Chinese provides a visual which is arresting in its inhumanity. The strip shows a Chinese being physically punished, which constituted a motif in the formalist sense of narrative units that “move in their entirety from one plot to another” and “have remained intact historically.”²³ Like many motifs, physical punishment was associated with a taboo. In his cartoon, García Cabral punishes the political indecision of a monstrous chino who cannot commit to one revolutionary group.²⁴ The taboo was in this logic, the lack of political honorability specific to the Chinese, expressed by other artists as the taboo of being antirevolutionary. The motif justified the perpetration of physical violence as a means of instruction and restoration of the revolutionary order demanded by the taboo. In the comic, the interaction between a Chinese and a group of revolutionaries that punish him happens in the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere. Inside this dark vacuum, the contrast between the anatomy of Mexican bodies and the Chinese type is rendered in nightmarish fashion.

Although the young artist García Cabral despised rustic revolutionary rebels, the racial degeneration of Chinese aliens received especially severe cruelty from him. The anonymous *chino* of his imagination was bloated, but at the same time famished; his jawline was shaped like a walking corpse. The conductive plot of the comic was to subject the monstrous *chino* to a disciplinary drill: he is asked who rules, answers wrongly, gets hit with a stick, accepts the punishment, and insists it is all his fault. After a round of repetitions, the Chinese is disciplined. He understands that he should ask first to the revolutionaries, and then obey them. During the comic sequence, another

²³ Tomashevsky, Boris. “Story, Plot, Motivation,” in Brian Richardson (ed.), *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*, The Ohio State University Press, 2002. p. 165.

²⁴ This motif will return many times, and it will be fully functional in the cartoons published in *El Ejemplo de Sonora* twenty years after. As a text-based joke, it was everywhere in periodical press, and not only in fictional pieces.

humorous treatment is the transformation of the body language of the Chinese; it changes from a carefree walking motion to that of a contracted and apologetic swirling figure, barely balancing on one foot.

To help the reader navigate the comic in proper sequence, García Cabral numbered his panels, from left to right and top down. The grid of six panels used high contrast, simple lines, and thick volumes. Again, the text inside the panels was phonetically typed to emulate the sound of a Chinese accent. Nothing inside the comic was site specific, but the subtitle of the comic placed its location in the natural port of Mazatlán, in the northern state of Sinaloa which faces the Pacific. This port had a colonial Asian heritage and an early tradition of Anti-Chinese sentiment.

The splendor of Mazatlán began when the Manilla Galleon route started in 1565. During the 19th century, it received many shipments of Chinese laborers. In 1886, after the “continuous scandal”²⁵ that the city port saw during the first mass expulsion of Chinese in Mexico, and the first episode of internment, the tradition continued. In 1913, 50 *chinos* were sent from Mazatlán to an unknown island because of their “contagious leg swelling.”²⁶ Nothing is known about that episode at the level of national historiography, and I suggest that scholars continue to document this obscured recurrent practice.

Ernesto García Cabral collaborated with Mario Vitoria before they founded *Multicolor*. They had met working for the satirical periodical *La Risa* (1910-1911,) printed every Thursday since July of 1910, with colour covers and the occasional anti-Chinese

²⁵ This was the language employed by *La Patria*. *Diario de México*, Saturday June 19, 1886, p. 2, Year X, No. 2766, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

²⁶ Gómez Izquierdo, 1991, p. 95. My translation.

cartoon. *La Risa* brought together a skilful group of cartoonists with academic training and was, in comparison with *Multicolor*, full of advertisements. Although it made room for laboriously drawn pieces, its graphic elements were also marked by faster, less polished strokes. The career of the cartoonist Rafael Lillo took off in *La Risa*. This Catalan artist who resided in Mexico polished his craft in the San Carlos Fine Arts Academy, like García Cabral, and worked for many titles of the Mexican illustrated printed press, such as *El Ahuizote* and *Multicolor* until 1940. His work was also published in the U.S. magazines *Puck* and *Harper's Weekly*.

Lillo continued to play an important role in the history of Mexican comics as one of the creators of the comic strip "Las Aventuras de Adonis" an original creation for the newspaper *El Mundo Ilustrado*. This newspaper had published comic strips imported from the United States since 1890 but, especially in the 20th century, supported the creation of its own strips. Among those, "Las Aventuras de Adonis" became the longest-lasting Mexican strip at the time, with six months of uninterrupted circulation in 1908. Its longevity appears to have been exceeded by that of "Caldela el Argüendero," which lasted for about 12 months between May of 1910 and 1911.

During 1911, Lillo often provided the coloured covers for *La Risa* and at least a couple of line drawings per issue were signed by him. Many of the several comics of two to four panels published inside *La Risa* were anonymous, like the simple and quickly drawn two-panel in the issue 51 that repurposed the queue of a *chino* as a bell chord.²⁷ In that same issue, *La Risa* published a prominent full-page comic signed by Lillo (fig. 6).

²⁷ Unsigned cartoon. "Todo sirve," *La Risa*, Thursday June 17, 1911, p. 7, No. 51, Mexico City, HND.

EL CELESTE IMPERIO



El sueño de los hijos

Fig. 6. Lillo, Rafael. "El Celeste Imperio. El sueño de los hijos," *La Risa*, Saturday June 17, 1911, No. 51, Mexico City, p. 12.

Lillo's comic contained multiple groups of detailed and fluently drawn cartoons representing an unpleasant dream. It was meant to be read left to right and from the top down. It was clearly organized in four horizontal sections without a gutter. Unlike the pieces by García Cabral with typed text, seen earlier, this anti-Chinese piece had hand-drawn text. The comic begins with a caricature with a prominent head, scraggly and unkept moustache and a long queue, pleasantly dreaming in his bed. While these visual signs identify the dreamer as a Chinese, a statue of him specifies the type of creature he is constructed to be. Looking like the statue of a king, his name is Pon Chin, a variation of the diminutive of Alfonso, Poncho, that is only used to designate children. In the statue, the usual written form of Ponchín is altered. The accent is dropped, and the word is separated into two syllables to form a Mexican name that sounds Chinese and infantilizes an adult *chino*. The comic tells the story of how his dreams of ruling Mexico evolve into a nightmare.

The plot starts with the cartooned Chinese dreaming about the monetary reparation Mexico had agreed upon with China. The logic that matters for the cartoon is that dreaming about the payment leads to Chinese dreams about conquering Mexico. Neither the payment of reparations nor a Chinese conquest of Mexico ever happened, but this cartoon cast the rumours as vivid nightmares. The top of the strip is framed with Chinese warships. In the dream, one thing leads to another, and the ships bring about a battle between a dragon and an eagle which, respectively, represented China and Mexico.

Newspapers and humorist periodicals referred to the rumours of Chinese warships approaching the coasts of Mexico as a Chinese invasion to complement their less event-driven anti-Chinese tendencies. *Frivolidades*, for example, frequently published generic short jokes about the lack of hygiene of the Chinese but made a special effort

with a lengthy fictionalized interview with a Chinese *lavador* (laundryman) while the reparations and a Chinese invasion were being discussed. That of *lavador* was one of the most common jobs that *chinos* had in Mexico in the early 20th century, and it had also been one of the jobs that the Asian diaspora held during colonial times in New Spain. Although this interview was not illustrated, the text surely relied on the visual signs of Chineseness, the “diagonal eyes of an Asian laundry man.”²⁸

In the opinion of the nationalist interviewer, the Chinese reparation should be reversed so Mexican employers could better profit from the *chinos* they were hiring. This joke acknowledged how President Madero had become a terror for the Chinese and equates him with the popular horror folktale character *el coco* (similar to the boogiemán). Finally, the joke uses the slang name for Chinese in Mexico, *chales*:

[The rumour is] that the most reverend, that the most excellent Emperor of the *chales* was going to send to Mexican coastlines three powerful battleships to support the claim of the hundred Chinese who were slaughtered in the *maderista* factories of Torreón. [...] they want one hundred thousand pesos for one Chinese, when it should be one hundred thousand Chinese for one peso. [...] The *coco* of the *chales* is Madero.²⁹

Before I continue discussing the insulting humoristic treatment of this diplomatic conflict, I would like to make it clear that two payment protocols of the reparation were signed in 1912, neither of which were ever paid.³⁰ Returning to how the humorist press distorted the massacre, despite what the joke claimed, most victims of the massacre did not work in factories. Only 250 victims out of 303 were identified by occupation at

²⁸ Maravelo, “Entrevista sensacional. Un hijo de la China... y no Hilario,” *Frivolidades*, Wednesday July 2, 1911, p. 16, Year II, No. 79, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

²⁹ Maravelo, 1911, p. 16. My translation.

³⁰ Connelly, Marisela and Romer Cornejo Bustamante. *China-América Latina, Génesis y desarrollo de sus relaciones*. Centro de Estudios de Asia y África-El Colegio de México, Mexico City, 1992, p. 43.

the time and among them, the majority were merchants and fieldworkers. Only one operated machinery:

110 are gardeners, 115 if you include four field workers and a day labourer; 57 merchants; 23 store personnel or workers; 20 cooks; 7 waiters; 4 shop or restaurant owners, 5 business partners, 3 ironers, 3 market vendors, 5 business travelers, and one of each of the following classes: craftsman, manager, secretary, cashier, fruit importer, and machinist.³¹

On the second horizontal section of the strip in Lillo's dream cartoon, figures with fake Chinese names take the place of the monumental historical statues found in downtown Mexico City. The people of the popular classes, around them, look amazed, resentful, and helpless at the usurpation. The statues were the equestrian bronze sculpture of the Spanish (and by extension New Spanish) King Carlos IV (1788-1808,) whose ruling was terminated by Napoleon Bonaparte,³² and the President Porfirio Díaz-era's monument to Cuauhtémoc, the last Mexica ruler in Tenochtitlan, defeated by Hernán Cortés in 1521.³³ These monuments place the dream in the center of Mexico City, but also refer to defeated rulers at historical turning points which marked the end of entire eras. This fed the end-of-times spirit of the composition.

The third section of the strip refers to the Chinese Conquest of Mexico with a nightmarish resource. In the era of Chinese rule, Mexicans are tortured through five

³¹ *Lista de los súbditos chinos que fueron muertos por las fuerzas maderistas, en los días 13, 14 y 15 de mayo de 1911, ascendiendo a la suma de trescientas tres personas, como sigue, Torreón, June 20, 1911, 61 pp.* In Puig, 1992, p. 210. My Translation.

³² This statue was inaugurated in 1803 and by 1911 was placed in Paseo de la Reforma. In multiple moments of crisis, the king statue was a place of reunion and a symbol of protection for popular classes or a symbol that needed to be destroyed because it represented power. By the 1940's it became part of a monumental display that included the new Monument to the Revolution.

³³ This monument was inaugurated in 1887 and had an octagonal pedestal with bas-reliefs and friezes inspired in Indigenous decorations. In 1947 it was moved to Paseo de la Reforma and in 2004 was moved again and restoration project.

different methods identified in the strip. In its fourth and final section, the nightmare changes its course. The eagle teams up with a serpent, completing the iconography of the Mexican coat of arms featured on the national flag, and the dragon is defeated right in front of the Chinese dreamer, who wakes up in shock. A *lépero*, the dirty and shoeless social archetype of popular classes, is laughing at him.

While more anti-Chinese-themed cartoons and comics continued to accumulate in newspapers, or in the pages of humoristic periodicals, one-off Chinese types like the ones I have discussed in figures 2-6, were the most abundant. Anti-Chinese characters were mostly laundrymen, shop, and restaurant owners with insulting names, if any. In this archetypal anonymity, they became very regular secondary characters whose repugnant appearance and cruel treatment were intended to produce laughs in the audience. I would like to discuss a final Chinese type that fits into this category, a coolie worker explicitly identified as a victim of the Torreón massacre.

Flat trauma

While a very tendentious public narration of the Massacre of Torreón was produced in Mexican periodicals, other violent acts against *chinos*, such as beatings, lynching, pelting and the destruction of property, were present every month of 1911 in journalistic or opinion reports. By then, the word *chino* was still understood in Mexico as a colloquial and not necessarily nationally specific term to designate Asians. By the same token, it is important to precise that *antichino* attacks were most numerous against those with Chinese origins, at least between 1910 and 1920.

The only comic explicitly offering a cartoon version of a victim of the Massacre of Torreón that I have found was published as an advertising comic in September of 1911. Among all the comics that circulated in this era, the strips promoting El Buen Tono had

the most massive circulation because of the way in which the cigarette company structured its graphic campaign, involving multiple printed formats and several periodicals, as explained in Chapter Two. I will now address the version of this advertisement strip printed in *El Imparcial* (fig. 7).



Fig 7. The comic strip of a Coolie survivor of the Massacre of Torreón. Published by *El Imparcial*, *Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday September 10, 1911, No. 6370, Mexico City, p. 3.

Just one month before this strip circulated, in August of 1911, the story of 3,000 Chinese field laborers being allocated to the southern state of Yucatán flooded the press. Reports were firmly against the immigration of this and other smaller groups of Asian laborers who continued arriving. In September, the Federal government published its report about the Massacre of Torreón, and newspapers increased their anti-Chinese content. One of the *El Buen Tono* strips for September directly referred to the massacre, minimizing it and insulting the victims.

In its first panel, the repulsive cartoon of a Coolie with his characteristic conic hat and cloth shoes is at work cultivating vegetables in Torreón. In the typed text at the bottom of the panels, he is addressed with the fake Chinese name Chin Gui Ña, a cluster of words that emulates the Spanish noun designating the discharge of sleepy eyes (*chinguíña*). He also has a large tooth in the middle of his mouth. When the “revolutionary blast”³⁴ chases him out of his den, he loses his hat, his land, and his queue. As a sign to be targeted by violence, the queue could be found both in sadistic comedies and as an active target of crimes perpetrated against Chinese diasporas in different countries. At the edge of fantasies and violent facts, it evolved as a racial trophy.³⁵

³⁴ *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday September 10, 1911, p. 3. No. 6370, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

³⁵ The acts of violence and ‘trophyism’; could happen also after death and were a worldwide practice. In South Africa “staff and prisoners were scalping Chinese men in the morgue on demand since at least 1906 and selling them to colonial officials.” Bright, Rachel. “Migration, Masculinity, and Mastering the ‘Queue’: a case of Chinese scalping,” in *Journal of World History*, Vol 28, December 2017, p. 1.

Exhausted from running all night, the fieldworker *chino* falls into a ditch at night and, from there, hears a bull. Since “Chinese generally understand the language of bovines,”³⁶ the strip clarifies, the *chino* finds his new profession after tricking this bull with a cigar. In exchange for the cigar, the bull teaches the wild Chinese how to be a *torero* (bull fighter). A cleaned up but still facially monstrous *chino* has his debut in the *plaza de toros* (bull-fighting ring) in Mexico City but, after his victory, the bull takes credit by explaining to the audience how he taught the Chinese everything he knows, thanks to El Buen Tono cigarettes.

In the pages of *El Imparcial*, other real and fantastic bullfights during the year of 1911 were the scenarios for specific anti-Chinese attacks.³⁷ During the month of August, a real Chinese bullfighter received some coverage. In the humoristic reporting, he was called a “Yellow Frascuelo” who intended to encroach on the Hispanic tradition of bullfighting. Frascuelo was the name of a top Spaniard bullfighter, and this Yellow version had a long queue. The report by the press was disorganized and mainly intended to make jokes; it started referring to how this Chinese bullfighter had a ponytail so long that it could not be cut, a gesture which means to retire from the sport of bullfighting, but also becomes an excuse to make yet another joke about diplomatic reclamations:

³⁶ *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday September 10, 1911, p. 3. No. 6370, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

³⁷ In November, multitudes throw stones at a Chinese house in Mexico City after a bullfight. “The audience enraged gradually, threw cushions, chairs and everything at hand to the bullring, leaving the arena strewn with all kinds of objects. [...] There were some disorders, because a tram was stoned, as well as a Chinese house. The police and guards limited themselves to spectators.” “Registróse un magno escándalo en corrida de toros,” *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Tuesday November 21, 1911, p. 4, No. 6442, HND. My translation.

the most remarkable thing about this matador is that, instead of removing his ponytail, he can just trim it, because it is tremendously long [...] if [having Chinese matadors] catches and starts a race of Celestial bullfighters no one will be able to put up with the more or less identical Chinese. The last thing we need is that some piece of the intrepid Chinese ends in China itself, and then they come with some bullfighting-diplomatic claim.³⁸

Returning to the El Buen Tono comic strip of **figure 7**, it should be noted that while the plot used the Massacre of Torreón as a starting point, the moral was that the *chino* was “lucky to have saved his skin.”³⁹ The skin of this drawn victim of flat trauma was marked completely by graphic violence. His facial details were deformed, the outline of his skull was exaggerated in a macabre way, and there is a cartooned expression of horror in his eyes as he rushes to exit the frame, running for his life (**fig. 8**).

The way in which this Chinese type was modelled insisted on its undeniable difference and attacked its racial particularities, making them signs of monstrous Asianness. The freeze-frame shot of **fig. 8** shows a freshly cut queue and it is loaded with multiple anti-Chinese messages. It was a graphic trophy of anti-Chinese violence that took pleasure in the three acts: the act of cutting a queue, the act of stripping a Chinese of his land and housing, and the act of chasing and expelling him out of a territory. It constituted an act of ridiculing the victim and his pain. It also showed and fulfilled the goal of the violence, that of forcing the Chinese from Mexico.

³⁸ “La China, torera,” *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Thursday August 17, p. 7, No. 6346, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

³⁹ *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday September 10, 1911, p. 3, No. 6370, Mexico City, HND. My translation.



A poco sobrevinieron los acontecimientos políticos, y la racha revolucionaria puso un hasta aquí en los trabajos del celestial, que de santos se dió con haber salvado la pelleja.

Fig. 8. Second panel in El Buen Tono strip. No. 69. Published by *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Sunday September 10, 1911, p. 3.

The recurrent fantasy of expulsing Chinese from Mexico was fulfilled again in 1911, when 250 Chinese were expelled from the Naco region of Sonora, on the very border

with Arizona. More research is required to be able to observe how this episode was represented in the Mexican periodical press, but as Ignacio Almada Bay and Carlos Alberto Chacón have recently noted, this episode was covered in papers printed in the U.S. since it formed part of an official report sent to the Chinese Minister in Washington.⁴⁰ The report, by Liang Luen Fang and Kin Yuen, addressed the Minister Chang Yin Tang at a time when there was not a Chinese ambassador nor a Chinese Consulate in Mexico and Chang's office in Washington carried out Chinese diplomatic representation in the U.S. and Mexico.

After the reparations had not been paid in 1911, two payment protocols were negotiated and signed by Mexico and China. In the first one, in November of 1912: "Mexico promised to pay to China 3,1000 000 pesos in total. A second payment protocol signed on December 13, 1912, extended the due date to February 15, 1913."⁴¹ As we have mentioned, these commitments were not fulfilled. The press continued to made fun of the facts in 1913. The satirical *El Hijo del Ahuizote* erased all responsibility from the *maderistas* perpetrators of the massacre, Benjamin Argumedo, Sixto Ugalde, Orestes Pereyra and Agustín Castro, who by then were protected by the revolutionary status of the rebellion. In the humorous version of the events, the Chinese spontaneously "rotted in Torreón when the *maderista* Revolution [happened]."⁴²

⁴⁰ Almada Bay, Ignacio Lorenzo and Carlos Alberto Chacón Flores, "Por la patria y por la raza. Un estudio sobre la exclusión china en Nacozari de García y Pilares de Nacozari, Sonora, 1915-1925," in *Intersticios sociales*, No. 20, September 2020, El Colegio de Jalisco, Zapopan, p. 237.

⁴¹ Connelly, 1992, p. 43. My translation.

⁴² "Rasgones," *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, June 14, 1913, p. 13, Mexico City, HND. My translation. The note closed with an insulting friendly tone about the reparation, "If it does not get cheaper, *compadres*, we won't do business."

Looking closely at this massively high level of trauma, I would like to present the notion of flat trauma to describe the way violence is modelled inside the flat world of the comic. In its "abstraction, forceful outlines, geometric forms and flatness,"⁴³ in the words of Esther Leslie, cartoons successfully play the ideological trick of rendering "domination without antagonism."⁴⁴ Flat trauma is wrapped up in the premise that audiences have fun with self-imposed domination, in the blatant trivialization and softening of violence. When flat trauma circulates dehumanization in caricature, it subjugates repugnant archetypes, but it also aspires to subjugate audiences across political regimes:

Misanthropic, spiteful creatures, who secretly know themselves as such, like to be taken for the pure, childish souls who applaud with innocent approval when Donald Duck gets a cuffing. [...] Clowning around has been marshalled for a sinister purpose. The cartoons do not just promote the butchery of others; they make audiences accede to their own persecution, be it in a democracy or in a fascist state. [...] as some characters were allowed to develop into fully rounded human types, others were essentially dehumanized.⁴⁵

Modelling monstrous and animal-like repugnant creatures, flat trauma satisfies the totalitarian ideological appetite to imagine and fantasize, to "make the world consistent."⁴⁶ Inside the flat lands of the cartoon, these fantasies negotiate real and imagined violence. They can be fed with rumours, jokes, and cartooned nightmares. They display contact, proximity, entanglement, and juxtaposition of different human groups purposely modeling totalitarian ideas.

⁴³ Leslie, Esther. *Hollywood Flatlands. Animation, critical theory and the avant-garde*. Verso, London / New York, 2004, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Leslie, 2004, p. 165.

⁴⁵ Leslie, 2004, pp. 170-171.

⁴⁶ Arendt, Hannah. "Totalitarianism," in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1951, p. 432.

In a world modelled by flat trauma, forms are regulated, intervened, erased, and controlled to an enviable degree. They produce visuals of otherwise abstract or inexistent models of racial descent and trophies of different states of genocidal violence. In the cartooned field, totalitarian ideologies could produce a body so unclean that it justifies its extermination in the rules of its constitution as form. Flat trauma, as distributed by comics, accompanies genocidal episodes but often distributes leading roles to imagined versions of real perpetrators of violence. In this reenactment of trauma, the “psychohistorical dislocation”⁴⁷ favors the perpetrator, who is credited with the unparalleled authority of the monopoly over what is human.

As I have pointed out in the above selection of periodical sources, the strategies to circulate anti-Chinese content used by the periodical press involved fictionalized and real facts. Many newspapers became part of the media echo chamber that mobilized content different days of the week, using different formats. In this period of escalation of anti-Chinese violence in Mexico, comic artists, who were previously anonymous, were just beginning to take credit for their work.

Among the cartoonists who executed anti-Chinese types, Ernesto García Cabral would develop the highest artistic stature. He left *Multicolor* at the beginning of 1912, when he was sent to Paris with a scholarship. There he drew for *Le Rire* and *Bayonnette*. In 1918, during the presidency of Venustiano Carranza (1917-1920,) he became the *attaché* of the Mexican delegation, and travelled to Madrid and Buenos Aires: “there, in the interest of a Mexican national propaganda, Cabral contributed his cartoons to

⁴⁷ Lifton, Robert Jay. “Whose Psychohistory,” in Peter Brooks y Alex Woloch (eds.), *Whose Freud? The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p. 227.

the principal newspapers and reviews."⁴⁸ García Cabral returned to Mexico in 1919. He continued depicting monstrous *chinos* and his role in articulating the visual language of the periodical anti-Chinese campaign should be further highlighted because he showed his full commitment early on, at least since 1911, and maintained it over decades. He died in 1968 and during the last decade of his life, was still drawing sick and deviant *chinos* for the periodical *Gacetilla Bayer*.

Part two

Genocidal ideologies

Violence spread like electricity through the 1910s. The network of postal, telegraphic and cable circuits of communication of the Mexican press kept its focus on the expedite coverage of local armed rebels who placed themselves in opposition to *ancient régime* gentlemen with orientalist fascinations. As a result of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) the highest ranks of the Porfirian Regime (1876-1911) were taken over by peripheral doctors, lawyers, teachers, and landowners. These notable men began to gather in liberal Clubes Democráticos (Democratic Clubs) that proliferated first in the north of Mexico between 1909-1910.

Many revolutionary factions were formed over the years of violence, but the numerous figures that emerged from the Democratic Clubs would have strong presence in the press since the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. The more intellectual and left-wing faction of the revolutionary opposition was led by Ricardo Flores Magón, who is still considered a treasured intellectual within American anarchism. Unlike that of other periodical writers at the time, the importance of his opinions has not declined over the years, and his ideas are used to characterize the political thought and

⁴⁸ Conway, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

ideology of the Mexican Revolution. Flores Magón was also the author of the earliest anti-Chinese rationales in Mexico.

Trained as a lawyer, Ricardo Flores Magón began his career writing for the dailies *El Demócrata* and *El Universal* during the first third of the 1890s. At the beginning of the 20th century, he assumed a clearer political opposition to the Porfirian regime. He also wrote for smaller formats such *La República Mexicana*, the satirical and richly illustrated *El Hijo del Ahuizote*—he was on its editorial board since 1902—and the short-lived weeklies *Revolución* and *El colmillo público*.⁴⁹ Later in his career he wrote for the main newspaper emerging from the Mexican Revolution, *Excelsior*, which printed its initial edition in 1917, and had massive print runs and a size larger than that of tabloids. After these prolific written contributions to the opposition, he eventually joined the armed resistance. As a result, Flores Magón spent the decade of the 1910s in and out of prison and spent years in exile in the United States. His early death in jail in 1922 happened under suspicious conditions, leaving his prestige as an intellectual intact.

Flores Magón's role in the Mexican journalistic scene of the early 20th century became more prominent because, with his brother Jesús, he co-founded the newspaper *Regeneración*, an anarchist periodical published, with some interruptions, between 1900 and 1918 in the United States and Mexico. This weekly lightweight publication became a heroic reference for the history of the Mexican Revolution. Flores Magón was key in defining its editorial line; he took up the role of director in 1905. At the same time, he began his presidency of the Organizing Board of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party) to which he had belonged since its formation.

⁴⁹ His periodical legacy and correspondence have been made accessible digitally through Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón, archivomagon.net.

From his position of leadership in the newspaper and the Partido Liberal, Flores Magón defended and provoked the political articulation of anti-Chinese values more than once. After a little more than a year of debates, in April of 1906, *Regeneración* published proposals for reforming the Mexican constitution. Among the almost fifty points of reforms, which claimed to be “the condensation of the main aspirations of the people and respond to the most serious and urgent needs of the country,” the proposal to “Ban Chinese immigration,” occupied number 17.⁵⁰ According to the Partido Liberal there were international, economic, and moral reasons to justify immigration controls against the Chinese:

The ban on Chinese immigration is, above all, a measure of protection for workers of other nationalities, mainly for Mexicans. The Chinese, generally willing to work for the lowest salary, submissive, petty in aspirations, are a great obstacle to the prosperity of other workers.⁵¹

After the circulation of the Liberal program, Ricardo Flores Magón continued to write, on a personal basis, about the Yellow race’s invasion of Mexico. Writing under the pseudonym Anakreon for the periodical *El colmillo público*, he broke down why *antichinismo* was an ideal of national defense. In this piece, printed in June of 1906, Flores Magón offered bitter observations about the “boundless invasion of yellow men who come to contend with the Mexican for the meager food ration that a greedy plutocracy grants them.”⁵²

⁵⁰ “Programa del Partido Liberal,” *Regeneración. Periódico independiente de combate*, April 15, 1906, p.1, Year I, Vol. IV, No. 6, City, ARFM. Signed in St. Louis, Mo., April 12, 1906, by President Ricardo Flores Magón, Vicepresident Juan Sarabia, Secretary Antonio I. Villareal and Treasurer Enrique Flores Magón. My translation.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² “Competencia China,” *El Colmillo Público*, June 3, 1906, No. 143, pp. 334, 335, Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón (ARFM). My translation.

The short piece integrated the economic reasoning —raised in the constitutional reforms proposed by the Partido Liberal Mexicano, and by the Labor movement in the United States— with openly racist reasoning. By racist I refer to a set of coherent ideas which rested, at their core, on a hierarchically organized system of race. Flores Magón typified the *raza amarilla* as cattle for slavery and as contaminating flesh and blood:

Businesses in the republic need arms, but the arms of slaves that work up to sixteen hours a day and that are satisfied with a ration of food as if it was for a bird, and arms of this kind are difficult to find even in our unfortunate race, so sober, so loyal. [...] Perhaps the government advises the importation of yellow cattle, because the independent press has been saying in recent months that both Porfirio Díaz and Ramón Corral instruct business owners to not pay good wages to the workers. [...] facing the uninterrupted exodus of Mexicans, and the continuous arrival of men of the yellow race, very soon Mexican society will have to repent [...] we will see our land invaded by yellow blood.⁵³

In this piece, Flores Magón was addressing President Porfirio Díaz by name, and Ramón Corral, Díaz's Vicepresident and Secretary of Interior, who started his career in Sonora promoting the contracts of Chinese laborers and was Díaz's favourite successor for the presidency. The ideas of Flores Magón challenged the program of modern exploitation of Chinese formally established in Mexico in the late 19th century to prevent the "invasion of the yellow blood."⁵⁴ In 1911, the teacher and merchant Plutarco Elías Calles, with similar patriotic values, became secretary of the Club Democrático Sonorense. This club took a public stance against Chinese immigration to

⁵³ "Competencia China," 1906, No. 143, pp. 334-335, ARFM. My translation.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

the state of Sonora.⁵⁵ Members of these clubs supported the candidacy of Francisco I. Madero, particularly strong on the border with the United States. The *maderistas* slowly started to replace the Porfirian political class and renovated the information landscape of the 20th century in Mexico.

The frontier, the port, and the nation

Military members of the loose group that pledged alliance to the charismatic leadership of Madero, the *maderistas*, were the perpetrators of “La Matanza de Torreón”, or the “Matanza de Chinos” (The Massacre of Torreón, or the Slaughter of Chinese) that unfolded during the 13th, 14th, and 15th of May of 1911. In several historical and more recent publications, the anti-Chinese violence of the massacre has been deemed secondary to or as the collateral damage of “la Toma de Torreón” (The Siege of Torreón).⁵⁶ The Siege was part of the closing campaign of the insurgent wave that propelled Francisco I. Madero from a peripheral rebellion in the state of Coahuila to being the first revolutionary President (1911-1913). In this way, the Siege of Torreón marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution for the maderista faction because after thirty-one years in power, and a few days after the Torreón massacre, President Porfirio Díaz resigned from office, on May 25, 1911. This temporal proximity has been exploited by revolutionary teleology, increasing the importance of the episode for its mythology and for the ways in which it is seen to legitimize its violence.

⁵⁵ This fact was established in early biographies, but not much recent research has been made. González Navarro, Moisés. *Población y Sociedad en México (1900-1970)*, Tomo II, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1974, No. 42, p. 61.

⁵⁶ For example, Machuca Macías, Pablo. *Mil Novecientos Diez. La Revolución en una Ciudad del Norte*. B. Costa Amic Editor, Mexico City, 1978.

On the discursive level of the *maderista* revolutionary teleology, the siege, as part of a revolt that eventually gave Madero the presidency, has been often disconnected from the massacre. One strategy for achieving this rhetorical separation was concealing the connections between the military leaders of the episode and the figure of President Madero. This *maderista* leaders were Benjamín Argumedo, Sixto Ugalde, Orestes Pereyra and Agustín Castro. Following their traces across the frontier region, Marco Antonio Pérez Jiménez points to numerous connections between them before and after the massacre.⁵⁷ These connections reveal a social network that started with private political clubs, and through conventions of *liberales*, *democráticos* and *antirreeleccionistas* who supported Madero's presidential campaign, shaped its program of government, sustained allied newspapers and the armed rebellion.

The *maderista* rebellion started in November of 1910, and Pérez Jiménez situates Argumedo, Ugalde, Pereyra and Castro in the political sociability, military campaigns, and state ceremonies of the group that marked the timeline of the Mexican Revolution in various ways. When Madero was elected President in November of 1911, the military leaders were accused but not prosecuted for the crimes committed during the massacre. They took part in the Municipal Government of Torreón in the state of Coahuila and became members of the *lista de honor de revolucionarios*.⁵⁸ After the massacre, Madero handed the interim government of Coahuila to the prominent *maderista* Venustiano Carranza.

⁵⁷ Pérez Jiménez, Marco Antonio. "Raza nación y revolución: La matanza de chinos en Torreón, Coahuila, mayo de 1911," Bachelor's in History Thesis, Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, 2006.

⁵⁸ Pérez Jiménez, 2006, pp. 9-12.

In January of 1911, Venustiano Carranza became a member of the Junta Revolucionaria Mexicana.⁵⁹ He was the Provisional Governor of Coahuila on several occasions between 1909 and May of 1911, when he was designated Secretary of War by Madero. In that position, he oversaw railroads and telegraphic infrastructure and the rotary daily *El Imparcial* favourably reported on how he planned to repair the continuous material damages that the war inflicted over communications and transport systems in Mexico.⁶⁰ Shortly after the massacre of Chinese, on May 29, 1911, Carranza held his last brief period as provisional governor, a position he left to start his campaign as constitutional governor between August and September of 1911. The campaign received coverage by the national network for the distribution of information by postal mail, telegraph, and cable.

In September of 1911, the same news pages that granted popularity to the candidacy of Carranza in Coahuila, circulated sensationalist reports about, for example, "The vicious Chinese Cingo Fo, José Lee and Juan Cinco,"⁶¹ who were arrested for smoking opium. Carranza became the Governor of Coahuila between November of 1911 and 1913. During this period Governor Carranza legislated against *panaderías* (bakeries) and opium houses owned by the Chinese.⁶² By then, a myriad of newspapers of the revolutionary press, which started to proliferate after 1906, formed a network of periodicals that supported the rebellion led by Madero, and later by Carranza and others. More research is needed to calculate the extension of this network and

⁵⁹ Breceda, Alfredo. *Don Venustiano Carranza. Rasgos biográficos escritos en 1912*. Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, Mexico City, 2021, p. 27.

⁶⁰ "Se establece el llamado gobierno provisional," *El Imparcial, Diario matutino Ilustrado*, Friday May 12, 1911, p.2, Vol. XXX, No. 6249, Mexico City, HND.

⁶¹ *El Diario, Periódico Nacional Independiente*, Monday September 11, 1911, p. 6, Vol. 1, No. 1272, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

⁶² Richmond, Douglas W. *La lucha nacionalista de Venustiano Carranza, 1893-1920*. Fondo de Cultura económica, Mexico City, 1986, p. 58.

characterize its dynamics, but as is apparent in the covers of newspapers I have studied, the revolutionary press started to secure its transregional presence via subscription sales in multiple cities.

By 1911, the revolutionary periodicals, mainly of the *maderista* faction, were still relatively fleeting. Their publication was not necessarily continuous or might have been interrupted after a couple of years. Despite being short-lived, revolutionary periodicals still benefited from their ability to speedily react to the news cycle of the rebellion, thanks to the direct telegraphic lines linking them to the elite figures of the Revolution. These solid channels gave synergy and cohesion to certain figures and subjects sustained in several newspaper titles based in the north, but progressively stronger in other regions. As a corpus, the revolutionary press created a significant presence. While initially its network of periodicals was regional and its individual titles did not circulate in massive numbers, things started to change when a few of these titles established offices in Mexico City, around 1912.

A second moment of transformation of the Mexican periodical landscape came when *El Imparcial* and *El País* closed operations in 1914. These big dailies had the biggest runs in Mexico for years and used to be the ones with the budget to sustain contracts with transcontinental information agencies. Other titles took over this level of interoceanic and transcontinental circulation of information, aided by the rotary presses and the broad niche market of the first-class periodicals: *Excélsior* (1917), *El Universal* (1917), and a new version of *El Heraldo de México* (1919). After them came periodicals of strong regional circulation like *El Demócrata* (1914), *El Siglo* (1922) that will later become *El Siglo de Torreón* (1924) and *El Informador* (1924). All of these newspapers continue to circulate today.

When Madero became president, Plutarco Elías Calles's uncle through marriage, José María Maytorena, became Governor of Sonora (1911-1915). Under his administration, two important acts of organized anti-Chinese violence took place: the expulsion of 300 Chinese of the region of Naco, and the armed attack on Jim Wong and Company, Kim Sing, Louie Lung, Louis Quintero and Mee Lee, merchants in Nacozari, Sonora.⁶³ The attack included the destruction and looting of property, as well as racially specific humiliation. The Chinese merchants were robbed and beaten. Once stripped of their clothes; their queues were cut, and they were forced to walk in public while a multitude insulted them.⁶⁴

Elías Calles entered political life under the protection of his uncle and became one of the key figures for understanding the Mexican Revolution and the institutions that came after it.⁶⁵ Elías Calles, younger than Carranza, lived until 1945, and would become the most successful leader to emerge from the Democratic clubs and forceful anti-Chinese movements around Madero. His political trajectory was synchronized with the acceleration and territorial consolidation of the Postrevolutionary Mexican circuit of printed matter, and with the creation of a revolutionary mythology connecting the *maderistas* with the *sonorenses*, another political group from the border with the United States.

⁶³ Almada, 2020, p. 236.

⁶⁴ Reñique, Gerardo, "Región, raza y el antichinismo sonoreño. Cultura regional y mestizaje en el México revolucionario," in Aaron Grageda Bustamante (coord.), *Seis expulsiones y un adiós: despojos y exclusiones en Sonora*, Universidad de Sonora, Mexico, 2003, p. 249.

⁶⁵ Most academic literature about the period agree with this observation, including the classic body of work written by Arnaldo Córdova, for example. It was also flagged by intellectuals and press at the time. Antonio Caso considered that "Obregón and [Elías] Calles were, without doubt, the two great figures of Mexican contemporary history." Chaverri Matamoros, Amado. *El verdadero Calles*. Ed. Patria Grande, Mexico, 1933, p. 341. My translation.

In February of 1913 Madero was assassinated, and in March, the Frontier Division of the Constitutionalist Army in Sonora released the *Plan de Nacozari*, signed by Elías Calles and other military men; as was customary, it was circulated by the periodical press. The main objective of the plan was a call to arms against President Victoriano Huerta (1913-1914) who organized the coup in which Madero was killed. The Plan de Nacozari also expressed Elías Calles' aggressive mystical nationalism. The promise of a land cleaned of traitors could be found amidst rage, irradiating sun rays, theocratic temples, and sacrificial blood:

wiping away the tears of those who suffer when they see the radiant sun go down [...] we serve justice for ourselves, on behalf of the entire Mexican people, and to lay the second stone of the Temple of Themis [...] to contribute our quota of blood to the cause of the people, to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of public liberties; to cleanse the country of traitors.⁶⁶

After the publication of the Plan de Nacozari, the military career of Elías Calles continued to prosper, and his political influence began to consolidate. By 1914, revolutionary periodicals strengthened their channels of distribution, extended their durability, and started to finance their own transoceanic cable services with the support of politicians and military men. This was the case of *El Demócrata* which, like other periodicals of the mid 1910s, circulated anti-Chinese messages and demands for stronger controls and expulsions of Chinese in Mexico.

The daily *El Demócrata* was directed by Rafael Martínez and started to circulate in September of 1914 in Mexico City, Puebla, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, and Coahuila. Its motto *Pro Patria Semper* was displayed on both top corners of its cover and was

⁶⁶ *Plan de Nacozari de García*, March 1913, Sonora. My translation.

later repeated by numerous periodicals.⁶⁷ On the top of the cover, *El Demócrata* also reclaimed a *maderista* ancestry, linking its history with a homonymous periodical founded by Francisco I. Madero, in 1905, where the *anti-Chinista* ideologist Ricardo Flores Magón also published his contributions.

El Demócrata quickly became the most important revolutionary newspaper and received subsidies to pay salaries and paper from the Jefe Supremo of the Junta Revolucionaria, Venustiano Carranza. The system of subsidizing revolutionary periodicals was supervised by Félix Fulgencio Palavicini and benefitted periodicals and magazines printed in Mexico City, Veracruz, and the border with the United States.⁶⁸ Like Rafael Martínez, Palavicini was faithful to Carranza but had a *maderista* genealogy. In 1909, Martínez was secretary of the Club Antireeleccionista in Chihuahua, and in 1910 he was the last director of the newspaper *El Antirreleccionista*, before it was taken out of circulation. This newspaper, important for the history of the revolutionary press, started to circulate in August 1909 as a weekly directed by the intellectual José Vasconcelos and in June of 1909, when it became a daily, it was directed by Félix Palavicini.⁶⁹ Its publication was irregular. After starting his career as journalist, Rafael Martínez became senator during the Francisco I. Madero presidency (1911-1913). During this period, Martínez contributed to a handful of periodicals affiliated with the

⁶⁷ The first number of *El Demócrata* was printed on September 14 of 1914 but I have not been able to find it. The motto is present since the first issue available in the Hemeroteca Nacional Digital, from September 17. *El Demócrata. Diario Constitucionalista*, Friday September 17, 1914, p. 1, Vol. I, No. 3, Mexico City, HND.

⁶⁸ Méndez Lara, Francisco Iván. "El cuarto poder y la sucesión presidencial de 1920. El Herald de Mexico y El Monitor Republicano." Master's in History Thesis, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras- Universidad Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 2016, p. 40.

⁶⁹ Rivera Cruz, Yazmín. "La prensa Industrializada en el periodo presidencial de Venustiano Carranza. El Universal: Diario Político de la Mañana." Master's in Bibliotecology and Information Studies Thesis, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 2012, pp. 35-36.

Prensa Asociada de los Estados, an understudied organization that fought “against social vices.”⁷⁰

A key fact for the revolutionary consolidation, in terms of politics and media, was that by 1914, the port of Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico, became the capital of the *constitutionalista* revolutionaries who orbited around Venustiano Carranza. Like Madero, Carranza was a rich rancher from the state of Coahuila, and he understood the need to set up a steady information infrastructure with the United States which ran through Texas and Arizona. When Carranza settled in the port of Veracruz, he reinforced the insertion of his revolutionary group in the periodical circuits of the Caribbean and the Atlantic. Uniting the northern frontier with the port, a solid platform of expansion and regular distribution of revolutionary information and, of course, materials and capitals, allowed for more integrated communications. In this context of integration, in 1914, the traditionally *hispanista* port of Veracruz strongly believed in the separation of the Chinese from the Mexican Nation.

The daily Veracruz recognized a shift in manners of the Chinese in Mexico, who by 1914, had dropped their traditional clothing and wanted to assimilate. Aware of the North American tendency, the newspaper defended the need to emulate the example of the United States:

⁷⁰ Méndez Lara, 2016, p. 30. My translation.

Since they have abandoned the skirts and the braid that they brought from their lands and wear pants, jacket, and hat, and they shave and comb their hair with pomade, not even the devil can stand them. [...] although they have adopted our costumes, they will never own our language, or our religion, or our way of being. [...] In Mexico it is becoming necessary to use the system of the unfortunate *gringos*; admit only whoever brings money [...] The day we do it, we will be well disinfected, because we will throw out a lot of filth. Enough altruism, Mexico for the Mexicans.⁷¹

The slogan “México para los Mexicanos” (Mexico for the Mexicans) was largely circulated by the Mexican press at the end of the 19th century, when it became the motto of the illustrated satirical *El Hijo del Ahuizote*. In the 1910s, this nationalist slogan reappeared and while it was still applied to the defense of industry and resources against foreign trusts,⁷² newspapers like *Veracruz* gave it a deeper anti-Chinese and hygienist connotation.

The periodical synergy of the first wave of the anti-Chinese campaign was supported by an explosion of titles sparked by the Mexican Revolution. Due to the material destruction caused by the armed conflicts, periodical infrastructure found itself fighting to repair the systems of information and transports started by President Porfirio Díaz. In the 1910s, in some ways, Mexico was back to where it was in the 1890s. According to Lila Caimari, the last third of the 19th century in Latin America was the period of “accelerated densification of traffic” (*acelerada densificación de tráfico*).⁷³ This process allowed for the emergence of a new information system: “Extended and regular as

⁷¹ “Se ponen pesados los chinos,” *Veracruz. Diario Independiente*, Friday June 12, 1914, p. 2, Vol. I, No. 10, Veracruz, HND. My translation.

⁷² “México para los Mexicanos,” *El Diario, Periódico Nacional Independiente*, Tuesday July 30, 1912, p. 2, Vol. 1, No. 1594, Mexico City, HND.

⁷³ Caimari, Lila. “Derrotar la distancia. Articulación del mundo y políticas de la conexión en la Argentina, 1870-1910,” in *Estudios Sociales del Estado*. Vol. 5, No. 10, 2019, p. 133. My translation

never before, the circuit of transportation of texts was constituted in the vehicle of a process of world mediatization, a foundational structure of cultural propagation."⁷⁴

General Elías Calles entered this context of globalization, and in many ways re-globalization and national re-integration, as one of the highly covered military men in revolutionary periodicals. His importance grew in 1915, when el *Jefe Supremo* Venustiano Carranza designated him to replace his uncle José Maytorena in the government of the state of Sonora. From this position, Elías Calles ferociously prosecuted, killed and expelled his numerous enemies. Governor Elías Calles started lynching and expelling rebel Catholics and priests from Sonora. Beginning in 1916 and until 1918, he led a campaign looking for "the complete extermination"⁷⁵ of the Yaqui Nation. This violent campaign consolidated the prominent profile of General Elías Calles in newspapers like *La Defensa*, *La Información*, *El Pueblo* and *El Demócrata*. The campaign also supported his military charisma as the base of the spoils system, "the practice of parceling out the land of the enemies,"⁷⁶ that created a faithful military clientele of his own "supported by the new rural credit banks and a favorable tax structure."⁷⁷

According to his biographer Jürgen Buchenau, as governor of Sonora, General Elías Calles "displayed an ambivalent attitude toward the large Chinese population of his state."⁷⁸ This is a benign and particularly incorrect interpretation of his second mandate

⁷⁴ Caimari, 2019, p. 140. My translation, I appreciate the geographical input of Carina Guzmán.

⁷⁵ National Archives, Washington, D.C., RG 165, Military Intelligence Division, quoted by Buchenau, 2009, p. 69.

⁷⁶ Buchenau, Jürgen. "Plutarco Elías Calles of Sonora. A Mexican Jacobin," *State Governors in the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1952: Portraits in Conflict, Courage, and Corruption*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, 2009, p. 67.

⁷⁷ Buchenau, 2009, p. 65.

⁷⁸ Buchenau, 2009, p. 69.

as governor (1917-1919). As I have presented, anti-Chinese violence in Sonora precedes the Elías Calles government but, in 1915, when he was installed as Provisional Governor and Military commander of the state for the first time, anti-Chinese crimes continued, and ideas flourished within a more organized ideology linked to government officials directly under the authority of Elías Calles.

Complementarily, General Elías Calles based his government on an anti-vice agenda that was a fertile terrain for targeting the Chinese, publicly characterized by the press as vicious. A number of ordinances emitted in 1915 made it illegal to import, sell or produce alcoholic beverages in Sonora. Participating in any of these activities, as well as drunkenness itself, became a crime.⁷⁹ While this Prohibitionist agenda advanced south of the United States, Elías Calles pushed his hygienic aspirations for Sonora, and he strategically proposed that yellow flags were used to mark houses infected with smallpox.⁸⁰ Along with this public use of yellow, the colour associated with the alleged infectious and epidemic nature of the Chinese, Elías Calles prohibited gambling and asked for the eradication of casinos and saloons often owned by Chinese.⁸¹

In a rhetorical model that had been barely modified since 1911, in 1915, the newspaper *El Pueblo*, reported on the same page about "Chinese that smoked evil grass,"⁸² and Elías Calles' legal initiatives considered to represent the "administrative

⁷⁹ "Decreto No. 1," August 8, 1915. *Decretos, circulares y demás disposiciones dictadas por el c. Gobernador y Comandante Militar del Estado de Sonora General Plutarco Elías Calles durante el año de 1915 y algunas otras del gobierno general, relacionadas con aquellas*, Vol. 1. Hermosillo, Imprenta del Gobierno, 1915, pp. 13-14 and "Circular No. 11," December 1, 1915, p. 82. Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca, University of New Mexico (FAPEC).

⁸⁰ "Circular No. 13," Art 1, Section IV, December 24, 1915. *Decretos*, 1915, p. 83 and "Circular No. 13," December 24, 1915 p. 83, FAPAEC.

⁸¹ "Decreto No. 4 Reglamento de Juegos en el Estado," August 29, 1915. *Decretos*, 1915, pp. 15-17, FAPAEC.

⁸² "Fue descubierto un fumadero de opio y otro de marihuana," *El Pueblo. Diario de la mañana*, Friday May 26, 1916, p. 2, Year III, Vol. I, No. 568, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

attitude of the Revolution."⁸³ *El Demócrata*, dedicated eight reports to condemning the Chinese in 1915, called "the stinky sons of Confucius,"⁸⁴ to give one example, while building up Elías Calles' relentless reputation.⁸⁵

In 1916, Governor Elías Calles directly prohibited immigration of Chinese to Sonora,⁸⁶ while allowing multiple municipalities to pass ordinances targeting the remaining legal sources of income for the Chinese. These ordinances prohibited Chinese from renting land, cultivating land and selling produce; they ordered the closing of laundries and created specific taxes for Chinese shops.⁸⁷ The most insulting of these municipal regulations was approved in Magdalena by Mayor José María Arana, who demanded that Chinese take public baths in front of municipal officers.⁸⁸ During the same year, Governor Elías Calles ordered an exact census of the Yaqui Indigenous Nation, and the creation of a passport to be carried by Yaquis at all times. If a Yaqui failed to present this document while working or in transit, authorities would consider them in rebellion, and they would be imprisoned,⁸⁹ and de facto enslaved. This policy would soon be applied to the Chinese.

⁸³ "La actitud administrativa de la Revolución," *El Pueblo. Diario de la mañana*, Friday May 26, 1916, p. 2, Year III, Vol. I, No. 568, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

⁸⁴ "Esos chinos," *El Demócrata, Diario constitucionalista*, Wednesday August 25, 1915, p.3, Vol. 1. No. 270, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

⁸⁵ "Las fuerzas del Sr. Gral. Calles derrotaron a los Rebeldes en el rancho de 'El Durazno', Son," *El Demócrata. Diario Constitucionalista*, Saturday August 21, 1915, cover, Vol. 1, No. 167, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

⁸⁶ Gómez Izquierdo, 1991, p. 101.

⁸⁷ De la Rosa, Elsa. "Discriminación de los inmigrantes chinos en Sonora. Un estudio sobre ideas, políticas públicas y leyes migratorias en el contexto transfronterizo y estatal 1920-19340." Master's in International History Thesis, CIDE, Mexico City, 2016, pp. 94-96; Hu de Hart, Evelyn. "Immigrants to a developing society. The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932," in *The Journal of Arizona History*, Autumn, 1980,

⁸⁸ Hu De-Hart, Evelyn. "La comunidad china en el desarrollo de Sonora," *Historia General de Sonora*, t.4, Hermosillo, Gobierno del estado de Sonora, 1985, p. 207

⁸⁹ *La Defensa. Diario Reformista*, Monday September 11, 1916, p. 3, Vol. 1, no. 78, Mexico City, HND.

In 1916, in public speeches and correspondence to organize political clubs, the Mayor of Magdalena José María Arana expressed the need to create a national anti-Chinese movement that sought “the extinction of the Asian problem,”⁹⁰ which was based on the social hygienist idea that the Asian problem was “deeply rooted in the arteries of [Mexico’s] social organism.”⁹¹ The campaign started to be amplified by periodicals in Sonora while General Elías Calles continued to accumulate power. At this time, the weekly newspaper *Pro Patria* printed its debut number in July of 1917. Its motto was “México para los Mexicanos y China para los Chinos” (Mexico for the Mexicans and China for the Chinese.)⁹² The belligerent weekly was invested in forming an anti-Chinese public opinion that was largely sustained by the speeches of José María Arana, who was the director of the newspaper and close friend of Elías Calles.⁹³ *Pro Patria* was printed in Magdalena, Sonora, but arranged to have letters sent from supporters of the anti-Chinese campaigns in other multiple towns and municipalities where it was read.⁹⁴

During 1917, anti-Chinese values were a substantial part of the editorial line of a multiplicity of relatively short-lived periodicals, such as *Orientación*, *La Palabra*, *El Malkriado*, *Nuevos Horizontes*, *La Pulga*, *El Nacionalista*, *El Intruso* and others that attacked the Chinese diaspora.⁹⁵ Printed in the north of Mexico, some of these newspapers included the motto *Pro Patria* on their covers; it is essential to note that this motto did not originate in Sonoran periodicals but in the powerful daily *El Demócrata* that had circulated since 1914 and expanded its reach in 1916. By then, a

⁹⁰ Arana, José María and Serapio Dávila, February 5, 1916, Sonora, in Jose Maria Arana’s Archive. Library of the University of Arizona, Tucson, quoted by Reñique, 2003, p. 251. My translation.

⁹¹ Arana, José María, “Discurso en Cananea,” Saturday April 29, 1916, Archivo General del Estado de Sonora, Vol. 3083, quoted by Reñique, 2003, p. 252. My translation.

⁹² *Pro Patria*, Wednesday July 25, 1917, p. 1, Magdalena.

⁹³ De la Rosa, 2016, p. 95.

⁹⁴ De la Rosa, 2016, p. 63.

⁹⁵ De la Rosa, 2016, p. 99.

number of politicians, writers and journalist who had started their careers with the peripheral revolutionary press, were in the position to fund newspapers of national distribution. Both regional and national periodicals claimed revolutionary agendas and echoed anti-Chinese messages, making 1917 the year when the anti-Chinese press became a robust national phenomenon with associated weeklies and dailies.

The revolutionary press

After six years of civil war, in December of 1916 a Constituent Congress took place in the city of Queretaro. To give coverage to the Convention, which was tasked with creating a new national constitution, the newspaper *El Universal. Diario político de la mañana* was created. Its first number was published in October of 1916, had 8 pages and printed 70 0000 copies on the same rotative Goss,⁹⁶ that used to be owned by *El Imparcial*. The new revolutionary newspaper was directed by Felix Fulgencio Palavicini, who developed personal contacts with newspaper owners and politicians while overseeing a centralized system of subsidies for the revolutionary press. He pooled investments with other former *maderistas*, sold stocks and established a portfolio of multinational advertisers in order to amass the initial capital of *El Universal*.

The new constitution was issued in February 1917 and its Article 7 started to regulate the periodical press, establishing that “respect for private life, morality and public peace” were the limits of freedom to print.⁹⁷ This logic was never used to defend Chinese Mexicans constantly attacked by the press. Article 7 was followed by the *Ley sobre delitos de Imprenta* that “consolidated control methods,”⁹⁸ over newspaper

⁹⁶ Rivera Cruz, 2012, p. 58.

⁹⁷ Ley de Imprenta, April 12, 1917, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*. My translation.

⁹⁸ Méndez Lara, 2016, p. 47.

owners, journalist, illustrators, printers, and distributors not contemplated in the Constitution:

The Printing Law is devoted in its entirety to define all those expressions that constitute attacks on private life (damages to the honor or public esteem of individuals,) to morality (propagation of vices and insults to modesty,) to public peace or public order (ridicule of the country's fundamental institutions and insults to the Mexican Nation, incitement to anarchy) and the penalties that correspond to those that disobey these clauses.⁹⁹

While the *Ley de Imprenta* made declarations against moral vices, the national and local press insisted on modelling vicious Chinese. In January 1917 General Elías Calles announced his candidacy for governor based in an anti-vice agenda, and in June he would become the first elected constitutional governor of Sonora. This second mandate was characterized by a more aggressive approach against the Yaquis and made complementary legal moves against the Chinese. General Elías Calles' left the governor's office briefly to attend to military business. He returned between July 1918 and May 1919.¹⁰⁰ During this period as governor he modified laws and continued terrorizing Yaquis and Chinese.

By 1917 the Revolution had become consolidated in the government of President Venustiano Carranza (1917-1920) and his army of functionaries, a mostly military political class that continued to use violent power while also creating a new Constitution, legal reforms, and institutions. While this political class advanced, some periodicals consolidated but were affected by the growing State power. Unlike its predecessor of 1905 that remained regional and relatively ephemeral, *El Demócrata* became a daily of large circulation between 1914 and 1918. Since 1915, after a year of

⁹⁹ Ley de Imprenta, April 12, 1917, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*. My translation.

¹⁰⁰ *Diccionario de Generales de la Revolución*, 2014, p. 316.

being an itinerant newspaper that followed the military group around Carranza to Veracruz, *El Demócrata* was established in Mexico City. From there, it coordinated distributors in Puebla, Tabasco, Yucatán, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Texas, and Arizona. The periodical grew when Carranza became president, and although he maintained Mexico's neutrality during the Great War, he considered a potential alliance with the Kaiser, which was reflected in the consistently pro-German line of *El Demócrata*, accused of receiving subsidies from the German embassy.¹⁰¹

In March of 1917, a rotary daily with more industrial capacity emerged: *Excélsior*, which relied on a close alliance with the constitutionalist military elite of the "revolutionary order" lead at the moment by President Carranza. *Excélsior* printed with *rotograbado*. It was assembled in chain, or *en cadena de montaje* which meant its production required the coordination of specific workers dealing with a succession of series of processes that were started, completed, and restarted day to day.¹⁰² Its size was, proudly, larger than that of tabloids. It had a sectional organization and reclaimed an informative vocation that was imagined to be opposed to the editorial and opinion-based press.¹⁰³ It had correspondents, and agreements with news agencies for its international news, which was published in English. It also printed comic pages in colour. It started using a rotary Scott,¹⁰⁴ previously owned by *El Imparcial*, that had

¹⁰¹ Durán, Esperanza. *Guerra y revolución, las grandes potencias y México, 1914-1918*. El Colegio de México, Mexico City, 1985, p. 258; De la Parra, Yolanda. "La Primera Guerra Mundial y la prensa mexicana," in *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea*, Vol. 10, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 1986, pp. 155-176.

¹⁰² The expression assembled in chain "en cadena de montaje" is recovered from *Excélsior* sources by Arno Burkholder de la Rosa. The author only describes the textual succession of process, from Jefe de información to Reporteros and Jefe de Redacción. Burkholder de la Rosa, Arno. "El periódico que llegó a la vida nacional. Los primeros años del diario *Excélsior* (1916-1932)," in *Historia Mexicana*, LVIII: 4, 2009, pp. 1374-1375. He does not describe graphic or printing processes.

¹⁰³ Burkholder, 2009, p. 1372.

¹⁰⁴ Méndez Lara, 2016, p. 59.

printed its last number in June of 1914. The offices and a good part of the staff and machineries of *El Imparcial* were repurposed by *El Liberal*, a newspaper that started to be printed In August of 1914 in support of Carranza.¹⁰⁵

By 1917, *El Universal* also had its own telegraphic service, cable communication with Spain and multiple news agencies in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It had reporters all over Mexico and started to print its own comic strips in colour. In April of 1919 a third rotary daily called *El Heraldo de México* started to be published. It was financed by General Salvador Alvarado Rubio, born in Sinaloa and raised in Sonora, who had participated in the anti-Chinese campaign since its public appearance. This year, as the research of the historian Francisco Méndez Lara has shown, *Excélsior* acquired a Goss rotary that printed colour, previously owned by *El País*, which printed 20 000 copies per hour.¹⁰⁶ In 1920, "*Excélsior* bought a second [printing] machine to the Goss Printing Press Company that reproduced 36 000 newspapers of 12 pages per hour. It had seven linotypes, one of them only printed headlines. For display advertising was imported a special machine known as Ludlow Typographer from the United States."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ "On August 18, the first issue of *El Liberal* appeared with a clear *carrancista* tendency; it was focused on the activities of the Primer Jefe de la Revolución [Carranza, First Chief of the Revolution] and included large photographs of him with red letters to highlight his appointment as leader of the Executive Branch." Méndez, Francisco. "¿Una querella silenciosa? La guerra de papel en el inicio de la lucha de facciones," in *Letras Históricas*, No. 10, Spring-Summer 2014, p. 118. My translation.

¹⁰⁶ Méndez Lara, 2016, p. 59.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem.

Dark alleys

During his second mandate, Governor Plutarco Elías Calles modified two articles of the *Ley Orgánica del Gobierno y Administración Interior del Estado de Sonora*. Article 50 established the creation of *barrios chinos* “for reasons of hygiene and public health.”¹⁰⁸ Article 106 made it mandatory for “all business, workshops and industrial establishments to use 80% of Mexicans.”¹⁰⁹ These measures were included in the Sonoran *Ley de Trabajo* in the years to follow, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Although article 106 was not ethnically specific, it was applied mostly against Chinese.

General Elías Calles’s objective of “racial depuration” through revolutionary laws and the creation of a passport to control and incarcerate Chinese received national coverage by *El Heraldo de México*, which characterized the new law as a whip: “we aspire to purify the race, sanitizing it, by giving characteristic passports to the Chinese [...] the lashing whip has been the *Ley del Trabajo* (Labour Law).”¹¹⁰ The newspaper *El Porvenir* celebrated when General Elías Calles re-issued the prohibition of gambling in Sonora: “As a consequence of this agreement, all Americans and Chinese who served in gambling dens [were] without occupation.”¹¹¹

Elsa de la Rosa traces the *amparos*, legal resources that are used to defend against violations of the rights of individuals granted by the Mexican Constitution, that nineteen Chinese in the municipality of Cananea presented against the Mayor when their shops were closed, their owners fined and imprisoned. Initially, in response to the

¹⁰⁸ De la Rosa, 2016, p 96. My translation.

¹⁰⁹ De la Rosa, 2016, p. 97. My translation.

¹¹⁰ “Los chinos en peligro,” *El Heraldo de México. Diario Independiente*, Saturday October 18, 1919, p. 6, Year I, No. 173, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

¹¹¹ “Clausura de las casas de juego en agua Prieta,” *El Porvenir. El periódico de la frontera*, Friday April 30, 1920, p. 1, No. 1444, Monterrey, HND. My translation.

amparos against the Cananea Mayor, a local judge annulled the fines and gave the Chinese shops permissions to reopen, agreeing that these actions were unconstitutional. The Mayor appealed to the Mexican Supreme Court, which confirmed the closure of the shops but ordered the release of the Chinese and cancelled the fine. For Elsa de la Rosa, in this and other similar instances, the Supreme Court failed to represent the Constitution and tacitly participated in the expansion of anti-Chinese practices in northern states. The Supreme Court failed “to indicate the limits to which it was subjected under the Constitution, or [by failing to] emphasize that [the actions of the Majors] should be part of the Mexican legal order.”¹¹²

From his ruling position in Sonora, General Elías Calles moved to the Federal Cabinet as Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labor in 1919. He resigned in February of 1920 to join the leadership of the Agua Prieta revolt, an armed resistance organized in Sonora against the government of President Carranza. From the revolt, General Elías Calles emerged as Secretary of War (1920) and Secretary of the Interior (1920-1923,) a position he left to run for the Presidency.

The Agua Prieta Revolt also represented benefits for the writer José Vasconcelos, who finally return to Mexico after his exile in the States. In 1909, he was invited by Francisco I. Madero himself to join the Club Antireeleccionista and became one of his secretaries. He was the first director of the newspaper *El Antireeleccionista* in 1909. He also represented the party abroad, from Washington. Vasconcelos was a cosmopolitan *hombre de letras*. He founded the literary society El Ateneo de México, and he cultivated his mind in the best libraries of the Americas. Alternating diplomatic and writing tasks, he attained the highest cultural ranks of the revolutionary regimes. Like

¹¹² De la Rosa, 2016, p. 97.

General Elías Calles, Vasconcelos supported Carranza initially. He went to the United States to put together his book *Estudios Indostánicos*, an orientalist hygienist corpus printed for the first time in 1920. After the Agua Prieta coup, Vasconcelos started to support General Alvaro Obregón in the newspapers *La Patria* and *El Monitor Republicano*. When General Obregón became president (1920-1924,) Vasconcelos was designated Secretary of Education. We will return to Vasconcelos in the next chapter.

During the first wave of the anti-Chinese campaign (1911-1920) among the claims made by the Chinese Legation for crimes committed against Chinese in Mexico, there was a consensus recognition that these episodes involved authorities or revolutionary militias as perpetrators.¹¹³ This is the basis of my argument that the Chinese diaspora in Mexico was the target of genocidal violence. This interpretative frame can be applied to the Massacre of Torreón but also to other episodes of genocidal violence that resulted as mass killings. As I have mentioned before, at least 303 Chinese were killed in the state of Coahuila in 1911. By Chao Romero's count, between 1911 and 1919, 373 Chinese were killed in the frontier city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, 129 in Mexico City, 48 in the state Chihuahua, 9 in Mazatlán, Sinaloa and at least 1 more in Monterrey, Nuevo León.¹¹⁴ According to Evelyn Hu-De-Hart, between 1910 and 1916 more than 100 Chinese were killed in the state of Sonora.¹¹⁵

El Heraldo de México dedicated many reports to the anti-Chinese campaign across the Mexican territory, but the main contribution of the daily to the campaign was the creation of the first and only Mexican comic with a Mexican Chinese protagonist. It was created by the respected cartoonist Andrés Audiffred, who had established himself as

¹¹³ Gómez Izquierdo, 1991, p. 93.

¹¹⁴ Chao Romero, 2010, p. 147

¹¹⁵ Hu De-Hart, 1985, p. 203.

a comic artist for the newspapers *El Universal*, *El Universal Gráfico*, and many magazines. His strip for *El Herald de México* was called "Lipe," a diminutive of Felipe with a Chinese ring. The strip was published between September and December of 1919,¹¹⁶ and it was published in the illustrated supplement of the Sunday edition.

In **fig. 12** we see a full-page strip where the starring *chino* is wandering the streets. He finds an advertisement looking for a young servant. He gets the job, but quickly becomes unhappy and bored with the repetitive cleaning. Without extra pay, he accepts to participate in an experiment that he does not understand. The doctor in charge of the experiment explains to a *catrín* (Mexican slang for rich man) and two doctor colleagues, that he is feeding the Chinese pills that were the equivalent of eleven meals. The rich man considers the business advantage of saving so much money feeding workers.

The pill is administered to the *chino*, and he starts to have convulsions. The doctor suspects he may have given him rat poison by mistake. The body of the Lipe collapses, and his muscles and face are deformed by spasms, which confirm poisoning. None of the witnesses of the experiment are affected by this result, but their scientific curiosities are sparked when the agonizing man mumbles random Chinese references and broken syllables. The doctor, with a thick beard, concludes he was delirious.

¹¹⁶ These are the dates considered by Aurrecochea Juan Manuel and Armando Bartra, *Puros cuentos. La historia de la historieta en México 1874-1934*, vol. 1, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / Museo de Culturas Populares / Grijalbo, Mexico, 1988, p. 222.



Fig. 12. Audiffred Andrés. "Lipe, Víctima de un sabio," *El Heraldillo Ilustrado*, 1919. Page length comic strip published inside the newspaper.

Such a traumatic storyline contradicts the published observation of two comic experts about the intentions that the cartoonist Andrés Audiffred had vis-à-vis the Chinese. In the words of Bartra and Aurrecochea, Audiffred's sympathetic portrayal of Lipe was laudable:

The story narrates the misadventures of "Lipe," an Oriental who tries to adapt to our country and given that in those years Mexico fell prey to violent anti-Chinese racism, the effort to make a representative of this nationality sympathetic is laudable.¹¹⁷

In my opinion, Audiffred disparages the Chinese through his storylines and character design. He used the facial monstrosity that García Cabral, Rafael Lillo, and other Mexican artists had standardized drawing anonymous *chinos* for mass distribution. Facial monstrosity became specific to the design of anti-Chinese propaganda. What was innovative in the comics made by Audiffred was the focus on a *chino* lead character. This was exceptional because most *chinos* who appeared in *historietas*, the popular term in Mexico for comics, were one-off, secondary characters.

The most visually gripping and elaborated Chinese types appeared in comic strips of one page or a half page made in Mexico for the Sunday editions of newspapers. There, Chinese types were competing with, and complementing, strips imported from the United States, whose text, if translated to Spanish, was typed. Like Lipe, most Mexican strips had used handwritten text since the 1910's.

¹¹⁷ Aurrecochea and Bartra, 1988, p. 212.

The industrial rotary press continued to report about anti-Chinese violence with an ambivalence that fed morbid interest and a concern for providing orderly and tasteful information. In 1919 *Excélsior* made a technical innovation that secured its leading position among newspapers in colour:

Nothing more artistic, nothing more elegant, nothing more flamboyant than information [printed] in rotogravure. It gathers attractive presentation with irreproachable execution. It is faithfully reproduced in the most beautiful colour tones [...]. EXCÉLSIOR will be the only newspaper in Latin America that can present this marvel. Our first supplement in rotogravure will be available to the public on June 1st.¹¹⁸

The technology of the *rotograbado* facilitated having more pages in colour at a low cost, a resource that was eventually used by anti-Chinese comics in the 1920's. During the rest of the 1910s, El Buen Tono was the only company that explored and modelled the multiple forms and types of the lower classes, in a bound album format featuring sequences of comics. The relatively long length comic booklet was a yearly album and constituted a rhythm of circulation separate from that of the newspaper, but still sometimes inspired by journalistic facts.

The anti-Chinese comic proliferated at a time of abundant crimes against the Chinese and the articulation of genocidal ideologies. The comic emerged as a medium where any cruelty would fly, where sadism was codified as humour, and in which deathly aggressions were inconsequential and trivial. The comic functioned as a public space in which to relax and have some fun with domination. Inside the edges of the comic, bodies were bent to embody violent fantasies and cartoon dynamics became consistent with genocide. Although comics were not the main perpetrator of violence,

¹¹⁸ *Excélsior*, Monday May 24, 1919, p. 1.

they put together narratives that fulfilled genocidal expectations in particular ways and turned them into child play.

The spectre of anti-Chinese ideologies in Mexico expanded after the Revolution through an authoritarian and sometimes openly fascist military bureaucracy that operated in conjunction with eugenics. Much of the military men, press entrepreneurs, cartoonist, and writers we have mentioned so far will continue to appear on the political scene operating in the 1920's and 1930's. In an irresponsible gesture, comic strips are frequently identified by scholars as a place where solace and benign forms can be found. Since the artisanal foundation, pre-industrialization, and proliferation of the format, this was never the case.

Chapter IV

The comic magazine and the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico 1921-1938

Marking the beginning of a new era for printed matter, the comic magazine printed in Mexico emerged, proliferated, and was consolidated as a format in the 1930s. Its closest ancestors were the *Albums de Historietas El Buen Tono* (1909-1914) and a cheaper format that carried on with characters developed in these albums, the booklet *Las Aventuras Maravillosas de Ranilla*, which began being printed in 1923.

For Juan Manuel Aurrecochea and Armando Bartha, "the first Mexican publication dedicated exclusively to comics, that was also the first *revista de monitos* edited by its own author,"¹ is *Adelaido el conquistador*, launched in 1932. *Revista de monitos* is the most affective of the popular designations for comic magazines in Mexico and can be translated to "cartoons magazine" since in Spanish "monos" is the informal way to say cartoons, and *monitos* is its diminutive form, hence the affection. The comic was created in 1928 for daily circulation as a strip inside *El Universal Gráfico*.² During the 1930s many comic magazines would follow, notably *Paquín* (1934-1947,) *Pepín* (1936-1954,) and *Chamaco* (1936-1956).³ These comic magazines combined translations of strips written and drawn for newspapers in the U.S. with original comic stories made in Mexico. After almost fifty years of circulation in Mexico, beginning in the 1880s, the successful multipanel printed specie of the comic had conquered newspapers,

¹ Aurrecochea, Juan Manuel and Armando Bartha, *Puros cuentos. La historia de la historieta en México 1874-1934*, vol. 1, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / Museo de Culturas Populares / Grijalbo, Mexico, 1988, pp. 256-257. My translation.

² Aurrecochea and Bartha, 1988, p. 256.

³ Others were *Paquita*, published since 1936, and *Paquito* since 1935.

illustrated books, illustrated magazines, special edition booklets and single folios, and started to build a format of its own in the comic magazine.

The emerging printed format of the comic magazine satisfied previously articulated demands and desires, but its success depended on representing what was being craved in a format that could be distributed widely, at profitable production costs. Since their formative stage as strips inside newspapers, comics were shielded by an allure of naiveté. This gave banality to their “grotesque silliness,”⁴ deeming their cruelty harmless, and softening their brutal acts of violence. When the format of the comic magazine emerged, the presumption of innocence supported a language of graphic social discipline that expanded over multiple pages, developed characters and plots more deeply, and started to circulate as a multinational commodity.

The graphic language of the comics modelled cartoons and text together and the structural expansion provided by the industrial comic magazine of the 1930s relied on the emergence of a distended standard of multipage and multipanel layout.

Caricatures delivered single page graphic punches made from relatively dispersed multiple elements. Playing with a different rhythm, comic strips for newspapers depended on the standard of an orderly layout of multiple frames, but still operated within the limits of the section of a page, or a full single page. Comic albums, as discussed in the previous chapter, compiled single page comic strips, one after the other. The comic magazine, on the other hand, evolved differently.

This chapter has two parts dedicated to the analysis of the emergence, evolution, and consolidation of the comic magazine. The first part of the chapter has three sections

⁴ Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Books, New York, 2006, p. 252 [Viking Press, New York, 1963].

and mostly covers the 1920s. The first section discusses the rotary printed colour and Yellow characters of Mexican comic strips. The second section reviews the second wave of the Anti-Chinese campaign. The third and last section discusses formal particularities of the comic magazine and its industrial assemblage.

The second part of this chapter has three sections and mostly covers the 1930s. Its first section discusses legislative and media-related aspects of the third wave of the anti-Chinese campaign (1921-1938). The development of a comic magazine of Pan-American circulation is traced in the second section; this development helped to produce the first golden era of the industrial comic printed in Mexico. The chapter closes with a section called *Amarillo Mexicano* (Mexican Yellow) that presents continuities and contradictions characteristic of two contiguous-but-distinct political eras dominated by military leaders who professed anti-Chinese values. The first one is known as *El Maximato* (1928-1936) because political control was held by General Plutarco Elías Calles, referred to as *Jefe Máximo* (Supreme Chief) at the time. The second one is framed by the presidency of General Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). Although General Cárdenas was initially under the protection and influence of the *Jefe Máximo*, like other presidents of this period, he managed to secure his own political clienteles and exiled General Elías Calles in 1936. General Cárdenas continued to hold political influence after his presidency, as Secretary of National Defense (1942-1945) during World War II.

Conquering colour

The format of the comic magazine capitalized on the rich variation of saturation, light, and darkness manufactured by the four-colour technique, or CMYK, that created colour superposing tonal layers of cyan, magenta, yellow, and key or black. In the imagination of the pre-industrial newspapers that perfected the four-colour technique during the 1910s in Mexico, the display of colour was a mark of beauty and elegance as well as of technical prowess. The ability to print tens of thousands of coloured pages per hour with rotary presses of their own separated spreadsheet newspapers with bigger runs and circulation from niche periodicals.⁵

In 1921, the daily *Excélsior* bought its first printing plant from the United States and hired engineers to train its workers in the newest printing techniques.⁶ The work of printing could not be contained in factories anymore and production shifted to plants requiring the coordination of specialized industrial districts. Cooperation and interdependence formed new structures around bigger rotary machines, in comparison to the first rotary machines that arrived in the 1900s, early on the pre-industrial era, which were set up by newspapers with a "localized production system -a territorially rooted set of firms, industries, and institutions that form around a metropolitan area's industrial division of labour, inter-firm dependencies, external economies, and the flow of goods, capital, labour, and professional personnel."⁷

⁵ The following newspapers announced their own rotary presses in 1919: *Excélsior*, *Diario de la vida nacional*, Saturday, May 24, 1919, p.1; *El Heraldo de México. Diario Independiente*, Wednesday September 10, 1919, p. 12, Year I, No. 135, Mexico City, Hemeroteca Nacional–Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (HN-UNAM).

⁶ *Excélsior*, *Diario de la vida nacional*, Wednesday March 18, 1942, p. 4, No. 9071. Mexico City, HN-UNAM.

⁷ Lewis, Robert. "Industrial districts and manufacturing linkages: Chicago's printing industry, 1880-1950," in *The Economic History Review*, No. 62, 2, 2009, p. 369.

Along with the industrial development of “visual print capitalism,”⁸ rotary techniques for printing in colour affected the representation of human forms in cartoons. This became the distinctive spark for the covers of industrial comic magazines that started to be produced in the 1930s in Mexico. Esther Leslie emphasizes the role of the viewer’s perception in the emergence of the sensorial experience of seeing colour: “Aesthetic response to colour and colour combinations is secured as the eye learns how to see. Seeing belongs to the eye as an organ. The eye is not a mirroring surface.”⁹

The cultural configuration of the perception of the racialized colour Yellow in Mexico was a long durational process. It can be mapped through printed periodical campaigns and the declarations of politicians and intellectuals about the Yellow race since the 1890s. The perception of Yellow was affected by abundant monochrome comic strips that insisted on repugnant and monstrous Chinese types during the 1910s. In the 1920s, when colour could be found in most illustrated sections of newspapers, four-colour shades of Yellow characters in comic strips were meant to pop out.

This symbolic system around colour relied on two dense bilateral exchanges of printed matter: one between the United States and Mexico and another between Mexico and Spain. Via this convergence of imported and local materials, the Mexican print sphere produced and advertised a complete range of Yellow, Black, Brown, and Pink. Yellow was used to produce different levels of alarm; Mexican tonic variations of it went from the Pink Yellow, that was dangerously close to Latin Whiteness, to the more classic

⁸ Jain, Kajri. *Gods in the bazaar. The economies of Indian Calendar Art*. Duke University Press, Durham, 2007, p. 144.

⁹ Leslie, Esther. *Hollywood Flatlands. Animation, critical theory and the avant-garde*. Verso, London / New York, 2004, p. 257.

Yellow grotesque. Higher alarm was produced by tones of Yellow that were manufactured as a visual material of racial contamination and the eugenic ideas of degenerative and uncleanable miscegenation of Brown and Yellow, Black and Yellow, or the more genocidal purple and green tones of Yellow used for the decomposing flesh of semi-human beings. In the 1920's and 1930's this violent range of Yellow filled abundant but generally anonymous line characters of Chinese ethnicity. Sporadic but constant, Yellow characters popped out because of their arresting degree of cartooning, a condition shared with Black characters, and the enticing repugnancy they transmitted. By degree of cartooning, I am pointing to the measurable amount of facial monstrosity and anatomical deformations to convey racial degeneration.

First, Yellow characters popped out in strips that began to have a continuous presence over many years. This was the case of the schematic Chinese presented in the strip "Don Catarino y su apreciable familia" (**fig. 1**), created in 1921 with text by Hipólito Zendejas and drawings by Salvador Pruneda. "Don Catarino y su apreciable familia" followed the story of a rural family that emigrated to Mexico City. It was originally created as a full colour strip for the Sunday editions of *El Herald de México*, but later was published by *El Demócrata* and *El Nacional*.¹⁰ The distribution of *Don Catarino* by *El Demócrata* meant that the strip had the support of the Compañía Periodística Nacional, S. A., "a conglomerate that gave great support to the creation of *historietas* [comics] and included Mexican creations in almost all of its publications."¹¹

¹⁰ Don Catarino became a humorist weekly column "Don Catarino dice que," and since 1922, "Las Memorias de Don Catarino" was published daily.

¹¹ Hernández Pirod, Jorge Alberto. "*Pepín*, El chico más famoso del mundo. Una revista de historietas de México (1936-1940)." Master's in History Thesis, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, Cuernavaca, 2011, p. 43. My translation.

MEXICO, DOMINGO 16 DE ABRIL DE 1922

DON CATARINO Y SU APRECIABLE FAMILIA



HISTORIETAS IDEADAS Y REDACTADAS POR HIPOLITO ZENDEJAS - DIBUJOS D. S. PRUNEDA-DERECHOS RESERVADOS



Fig. 1. Hipólito Zendejas and Salvador Pruneda, "Don Catarino y su apreciable familia," *El Herald de México*, Sunday April 16, 1922.

Since its conception, colour was a resource for character design and the racial dynamics of the comic strip. The story of “Don Catarino” focuses on developing the light Brown characters of a Mexican family. Their encounters with inhuman and always superficial Yellow and Black characters were frequent; the animosity and cartooned physical violence between them and the “Mexican” characters often carried the plot. Catarino’s family was made up of light Brown characters that highlighted the authentic and popular provenance of the Mexicanity of the family, but this seems to be an exception among comic strips printed in Mexico between 1910s and 1920s. It is a significant exception, because it continued to be printed until the 1950’s, which meant it was printed without interruption for over 30 years until the strips began to be compiled in their own magazine.¹²

The preferred four colour tonic model for representing characters in Mexican comic strips was Latin Whiteness, a White Latino code made of Pink semitones for skin, which indicated at least proximity to Whiteness but also communicated an air of modernity and at least aspirational belonging to the middle class, and Black for hair. This colour code recognizably placed the Whiteness of Mexican characters in Latin America, as opposed to the Pink characters with yellow hair used for European or Anglo-American White characters. The pre-industrial tendency of representing mostly White Latino characters in Mexican comic strips of the 1910s and 1920s operated in tandem with the preference of representing Blonde White characters by United States comic strips and Spanish comic strips that were circulated in Mexican newspapers. This pre-industrial graphic tendency would continue in the “golden” industrial era of the Mexican comic magazine (1930-1950,) which established the standard of coloured covers and monochrome inner pages. The tendency extended decades later, as I have observed

¹² Aurrecochea and Bartra, 1988, pp. 212, 214 and 218.

first-hand in the comic strips I have consulted in situ, and in the digitized catalogs available on several websites.¹³

Fig. 1 above shows one of the earliest examples of the “Don Catarino” comic strip, which was the first durable Mexican strip. It started to circulate within *El Heraldo de México* in April of 1922. This appearance was presented by an attractive headline, with the hand drawn title of the strip in blue followed by a miniature portrait of the father of the family, Catarino. He was surrounded with stars and lightning denoting mortification and a head injury. This introductory headline with its father figure topped a symmetrical grid of twelve panels of the same size meant to be read left to right. The adventure begins when the Catarino’s family, waving the Mexican flag, decides to navigate El Canal de la Viga in the company of their pets.

The reference to the canal places the strip in Mexico City’s outskirts. What started as an idyllic trip begins to turn sour when the family sees another boat with Black “savages” and Ligia, the mother and wife, annoys Catarino by insisting they “should have brought their rifles.”¹⁴ Racial dangers continue, and the family lands on an island infested by Yellow savages. These chinós are wearing traditional queue hairstyles, woven squares covering their genitals and grass skirts. These anonymous and primitive yellow characters attack the Brown family and capture all its members except for the cat and the little girl Tanasia, who was the only vigilant family member. Tanasia outsmarts the Chinese and liberates her family from imminent death. The last panel of this family

¹³ For example, pepines.iib.unam.mx, tebeosfera.com, and bauldelcomic.com. Despite the congruency of the use of Pink for skin tones in Mexican comics, it is worth mentioning that to make a more definitive claim will be incredibly useful if the digital collection of the Hemeroteca Nacional started to scan its newspapers in colour. So far, the institution has only made available black and white images, making monochrome all the coloured comic strips that circulated in Mexican newspapers.

¹⁴ Zendejas, Hipólito. “Don Catarino y su apreciable familia,” *El Heraldo de México*, Sunday April 16, 1922, Mexico City. My translation.

comic directs the reader first to the smashed bloody head of a *chino* in the left corner. As the eyes continues to read to the right, they discover the head was stepped on by the little girl. The author of the strip, Salvador Pruneda, would eventually be proud of a caricatural style that, he claimed, exalted ideals: "Certain cartoon representations do not pursue derision, but the exaltation of ideals or of outstanding figures of a society or of an entire people."¹⁵

Not all Yellow characters in comic strips were anonymous. The historian Daniel Navarro Granados found three regular Chinese characters in three of the most durable Mexican strips, published in full colour each Sunday in the broadsheet newspaper *El Universal*. These characters are Sam Lee, who appeared from March 1929 in the strip "Nagulás and Naburio," Wan Goo, developed in "Mamerto y sus conocencias," and anonymous Chinese in "El Señor Pestañas." Presenting Sam Lee, Navarro shares a story that "showed the confluence of a feeling of sympathy for the Chinese along with the prejudices against them."¹⁶

The episode Navarro refers to was published in May of 1929. In it, Sam Lee is kidnapped on the outskirts of the building of *El Universal*. In a cartooned Chinese accent, substituting "r" for "l", Sam is described as a race traitor because, in addition to being Chinese, he is friends with an Arab: "tlaitol to the lace, making flendship with melchant Alab."¹⁷ After an armed battle between various characters and the Chinese mafia, Sam Lee is wounded by a bullet and the strips makes a pun out of the bleeding

¹⁵ Pruneda, Savador. *La caricatura como arma política*. Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Mexico City, 1958, p. 11.

¹⁶ Navarro, Granados, Daniel. "Estereotipos, xenofobia y racismo en el humorismo gráfico de *El Universal* (México, 1924-1932)," in *Revista de la Red Intercátedras de Historia de América Latina Contemporánea* 24, Year 2, No. 3, Córdoba, December 2014-May 2015, p. 38. My translation.

¹⁷ "Nagulás and Naburio," *El Universal, Magazine para todos*, Sunday, May 26, 1929, Mexico City, p. 12. My translation.

Sam Lee. The Yellow character does not bleed blood: "Poor little *chale*, so what is that coming out of his wound? Could it be pus, or starch form bleach? On no, it is rice pudding!"¹⁸

In Navarro's examination of two panels of the strip "Mamerto y sus conocencias" which show a Yellow character who "appeared as a friend of the main character,"¹⁹ there are important levels of tension and hierarchy between the two characters that Navarro does not address. In **figure 2**, Mamerto rides a horse and, looking from above, encounters a shoeless Yellow character wandering the street. Mamerto has a huge nose, moustache, and fringe among other cartooned facial details that ridiculed his non urbanized manners. The face of the Yellow character is arresting. His mouth is horse like, and his slanted eyes don't have eyeballs. These elements render him rigid like a mask and lacking human personality. He speaks bad Spanish with a cartooned Chinese accent. His name, Wan Goo, makes fun of the sound of a Chinese name, altering the orthography of the adjective *guango*, which in Mexican slang means loose and ill fitting.

When the Yellow character encounters Mamerto, who is inappropriately riding his horse in the middle of Mexico City, the Chinese begs him not to throw his horse at him. Obeying Mamerto's command, the Yellow character rides behind the protagonist. His shoeless foot penetrates the stirrup in which Mamerto has his boot. The final humorist touch is the discomfort that Mamerto feels in this situation of full contact with the Yellow character. None of this, to me, suggests the interracial friendship which Navarro claims to have observed.

¹⁸ "Nagulás and Naburio," Sunday, May 26, 1929, p. 12. My translation.

¹⁹ Navarro, 2015, p. 37. My translation.



Fig. 2. Acosta, Jesús "Dux" and Hugo Tilghman "Foxi," *Mamerto y sus conocencias*, detail, published by *El Universal*, 24 de mayo 1931, Comic section, p. 1.

The second wave of the anti-Chinese campaign

Chinese immigration to Mexico increased between 1919 and 1921, while comic strips generalized the circulation of dangerous Yellow characters. During these three years, Chinese accounts of legal entry points to Mexico reported 6,000 Chinese new immigrants.²⁰ As had happened during the first anti-Chinese wave (1911-1920,) crimes against Chinese individuals or groups, and their impunity, continued, but since 1921, anti-Chinese violence more and more took the form of laws and institutions attacking them, their families, and places of work. Despite the continuation of anti-Chinese violence, towards the end of the 1920s significant Chinese communities were a fact in several Mexican cities. By then, "at a size of more than 24,000, the Chinese comprised the second largest immigrant group in all of Mexico."²¹

²⁰ Chou, Diego L. "Los chinos en Hispanoamérica," in *Cuadernos de Ciencias Sociales*, No. 124, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO-Costa Rica), San José, 2002, p. 15. Diego Chou translated this data from Chinese documents published by Chen, Ze-xien, "Mexico," in Chen, Han-Shen, *Documentaciones Históricas sobre trabajadores chinos en ultramar*, Vol. VI, Beijing, 1984, p. 287.

²¹ Chao Romero, Robert. *Chinese In Mexico*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2010, p. 1.

This shift in scale in the Mexican Chinese diaspora was noted by the public and while migratory federal regulations kept the appearance of being open, migratory practice increased controls, making immigration more dangerous and costly. As Daniela Gleizer has pointed out, the federal legal openness was not indicative of an open migratory practice, which was based on *circulares*, official documents meant to be circulated across bureaucrats that ruled against open migratory practice. Between 1920 and 1923, these *circulares* were authored by the Secretary of Government, General Plutarco Elías Calles, and they “started to ban entry to specific groups based on ethnic, racial, religious, cultural and national considerations.”²²

Through one of this *circulares* emitted in 1921, General Plutarco Elías Calles ordered the prohibition of Chinese immigration to Mexico. This *circular* went against the *Treaty of Friendship between Mexico and China*, signed in 1899 and still in force.

Additionally, the Servicio de Inspección de Migrantes was focused on the surveillance of immigrants from China.²³ In my opinion, this migratory prohibition initiated the second wave of the anti-Chinese campaign, one that extended from 1921 to 1929.

The second wave of the anti-Chinese campaign involved cooperation between the Executive, members of the Congress and certain Secretaries, and coincided with the promotion of a national leadership that, like General Plutarco Elías Calles, was

²² Gleizer, Daniela. *El exilio incomodo. México y los refugiados judíos 1933-1945*. Centro de Estudios Históricos - El Colegio de México / Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Cuajimalpa, Mexico City, 2011, p. 43. My translation. Prohibitions continued in following years, while General Elías Calles was President (1924-1928) and then Jefe Máximo de la Revolución (1919-1933): “the [prohibition] of Black populations was issued in 1924, the one for Romanies in 1926; while populations of Arab origins were the object of various limitations beginning 1927; Polish and Russian immigration was banned in 1929, and Hungarian in 1931.” Gleizer, 2011, p. 43. My translation.

²³ Yankelevich, Pablo. “Corrupción y gestión migratoria en el México posrevolucionario,” in *Revista de Indias*, Vol. LXXII, No. 255, 2012, p. 436.

originally from Sonora. The *sonorense* group (as they are known) was characterized by its military character, came to national power after the Agua Prieta coup in 1920 and made alliances with a national spectrum of non-military hygienists and racialists.

Secular hygienic instruction and its notions of racial improvement and degeneration became part of the Postrevolutionary project of social engineering in Mexico. This project of social engineering used mass media, and the increasingly popular comics were ideal for visual constructions of race and citizenship. The Postrevolutionary project, according to Beatriz Urías: “sought to create a new society made up by racially homogeneous, morally regenerated citizens [who were] physically and morally healthy, and members of a family.”²⁴

The first *sonorense* mandate was the interim presidency of Adolfo de la Huerta, who handed the Departamento Universitario y de Bellas Artes to the racist intellectual José Vasconcelos, in 1920. This department included the rectorate of the National University, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, which to this day preserves a racist motto authored by Vasconcelos: “Por Mi Raza Hablará el Espíritu,” (Through My Race, the Spirit Shall Speak, or In the Name of My Race, the Spirit Shall Speak).²⁵ After the Agua Prieta coup, the *sonorense* General Álvaro Obregón became the first constitutionally elected president (1920-1924). President Obregón created and handed the position of Secretary of Education to Vasconcelos and that of Secretary of Government to General Elías Calles.

²⁴ “buscó crear una nueva sociedad formada por ciudadanos racialmente homogéneos, moralmente regenerados, física y moralmente sanos y miembros de una familia.” Urías, Beatriz. “Fisiología moral en los estudios sobre las razas mexicanas: continuidades y rupturas (siglos XIX y XX),” in *Revista de Indias*, 2005, Vol. LXV, No. 234, pp. 365-366. My translation.

²⁵ The logo of the institution was made by an imperial eagle and condor forming one Hispanist superiorly cultivated animal.

Secretary Vasconcelos implemented orientalist hygienist practices and directed a huge campaign of monolingual alphabetization (intentionally to the detriment of the dozens of Indigenous languages in Mexico,) and the massive production and distribution of illustrated textbooks, magazines, and newspapers. He understood himself as a member of a mystically entitled leading caste, one that was legitimate as long as it upheld “the idea of creating and purifying, and then preserving a caste.”²⁶ In the synthesis offered by Laura Torres, the plan of oriental hygiene conceived by Vasconcelos included

spiritual exercises for the purification of young Mexican consciences [...]. [Vasconcelos] included outlines that defined meditation and breathing as public hygiene practices [...] the plan of Oriental Hygiene was linked to a specific interest in the production and performance of rural populations.²⁷

This Postrevolutionary orientalism became a culture of internal imperialism, “the domesticating racial populism of revolutionary nationalism.”²⁸ Vasconcelos specifically developed his racist ideas into Brahminic laws published in Mexico in November of 1921 by the magazine *El Maestro*. This magazine had large circulation among the cultural bureaucracy that included rural and urban schoolteachers, librarians, and inspectors of the Mexican Education system. The nature of Vasconcelos laws was more inspirational than judiciary, but still influenced ideas about Hispanization and Mexican modernity. His evolutionary laws were organized in three states in which intellectually

²⁶ Vasconcelos, José, *Estudios Indostánicos*. Saturnino Calleja, Madrid, 1923, p. 83. My translation. This book became very popular and had three editions. Before the Spanish edition the book was printed in Mexico in 1920 by México Moderno. There was a second Mexican edition in 1938 by Editorial Botas.

²⁷ Torres Rodríguez, Laura J. *Orientaciones Transpacíficas. La modernidad mexicana y el espectro de Asia*. Laura J. *Orientaciones Transpacíficas. La modernidad mexicana y el espectro de Asia*. The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2019. My translation.

²⁸ Chang, 2017, p. 18.

and spiritually superior castes, that were the most evolved, had gained the right to oversee the less supposedly evolved castes of the material warriors and politicians.²⁹ In his Brahminic laws, Vasconcelos envisioned a new trajectory for the nation transitioning from the civil war of the Mexican Revolution to modern institutions and less violent leadership. Mexico was finally ending a primitive stage marked by brute force which he described as "the materialistic period in which dealing between tribes is subjected to the needs and randomness of emigrations and the bartering of products."³⁰ As the nation experienced its Postrevolutionary stage, meant to be led by intellectuals like him, strategic frontiers were waiting to be established: "We will call the second period intellectualist, because during this time international relations are founded in coexistence and calculation [...] and strategic frontiers are established after the war has defined the power of each nation."³¹

Vasconcelos spend his younger years horrified by the violence and lack of taste that the Mexican Revolution had generalized. Hence, he put his faith in a Kantian-inspired "superior third state of public order,"³² which was based on an era of Enlightenment and reflective reasoning about to come. Vasconcelos was following the most popular pamphlet of the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant, printed in 1784, in which the Enlightenment state to come was based on the ability to use one's own understating without the guidance of a Master.³³ Kant notion of the self was part of his "scientific" theories of race that justified slavery and other forms of colonial domination on the basis that only civilized European societies were meant to be Masters. While Kant

²⁹ Vasconcelos, José. "La ley de los tres estados," *El Maestro*, November 2, 1921, No. 2, Mexico City, pp. 150-158, ICAA.

³⁰ Vasconcelos, 1921, p. 150.

³¹ Vasconcelos, 1921, p. 152.

³² Vasconcelos, 1921, pp. 152.

³³ Kant, Immanuel. "What is Enlightenment," originally printed in 1784.

wrote in favour of dismantling certain colonial institutions in his 1790s lectures and printed works,³⁴ he maintained his ideas against European racial “degradation” until his death in 1804.³⁵

On a similar trajectory, Vasconcelos envisioned his Postrevolutionary horizon diffusing, initially, racially obscured ideas of Aesthetic Enlightenment: “The third period is yet to come, and we will call it aesthetic, because in it, relations between people will be ruled freely by sympathy and pleasure [...] which is the supreme law of internal life [...] and will then be the undisputed norm of public order and of the relations among States.”³⁶ As we shall see, his racism would become explicit in his 1925 books, but let us discuss first other racist ideas circulating in periodicals and laws printed between 1922 and 1924.

Although the *circulares* restricting immigration to Mexico written in 1921 by the Secretary of Government Plutarco Elías Calles were relatively confidential, the newspaper *El Siglo*, printed in Torreón, publicly recognized Elías Calles’ so-called patriotic work and gave it massive diffusion. Since its founding in 1922, the daily paid special attention to how “the invasion of Asians in the last months has been incredibly dangerous.”³⁷ The newspaper had a regional identity that overlapped with that of the Northern states that had manifest the earliest anti-Chinese traditions in Mexico and was founded in the city of the massacre with the most Chinese victims in the Americas. General Elías Calles’ disposition banning immigration was made public by this newspaper, and others, in May of 1922. According to *El Siglo*, the popular support of

³⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, originally printed in 1795.

³⁵ Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, originally printed in 1798.

³⁶ Vasconcelos, 1921, pp. 152.

³⁷ “Se prohíbe la inmigración de chinos al país,” *El Siglo, Periódico regional*, Thursday May 25, 1922, p. 1, Year I, Vol. I, No. 73, Torreón, Hemeroteca Digital de El Siglo de Torreón (HDST).

General Elías Calles' nationalist protections, and the more specific anti-Chinese cause, was growing rapidly: "the people organized a bloody demonstration against the Chinese because they have invaded the industrial sector."³⁸

Beyond the propaganda factor of the newspaper's opinion, the anti-Chinese campaign was indeed escalating. In July of 1922, Isla de los Venados in the Pacific reappeared as a destination for expelled Chinese. This time the expulsion order did not come from a governor, but from the Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores (Secretary of Foreign Relations), engineer Alberto J. Pani. Secretary Pani transmitted the order to General Ángel Flores, who was governor of Sinaloa (1916-1917 and 1920-1924) and Jefe de la Primera División del Noroeste, a title that meant he was the military supervisor of half of the Pacific coast, from Baja California to Sonora, Sinaloa and Nayarit.³⁹ The precise order was communicated with a lawful tone and a sense of urgency: "The Secretary of Foreign Relations telegraphically ordered the Governor of Sinaloa to immediately expel (deport) the fifty Asians."⁴⁰

Like General Elías Calles or Secretary Vasconcelos, Secretary Pani joined the Mexican Revolution in affiliation with *maderista* groups. Pani was key to the formation of the first Departamento Sanitario (Health Department) in Mexico in 1918, an institution that was instrumental for the so-called "federal sanitary dictatorship."⁴¹ The Departamento Sanitario was based on hygienist propaganda that stripped sanitary sovereignty from

³⁸ "Nuestro patriotismo," *El Siglo, Periódico regional*, Saturday June 4, 1922, p. 3, Year 1, Vol. 2, No. 87, Torreón, HDST.

³⁹ *Diccionario de Generales de la Revolución*, Vol. I. Secretaría de Educación Pública / Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional / Instituto de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, Mexico City, 2014, pp. 376-377.

⁴⁰ "Serán concentrados los chinos belicosos," *El Siglo. Diario regional*, Wednesday July 12, 1922, p.1, Year I, Vol. II, No. 114, p. 1, Torreón, HDST. My translation.

⁴¹ *Boletín del Departamento de Salubridad Pública*, 1926, 3, pp. 5-9. My translation.

states, municipalities, and individuals to concentrate it in the Executive Branch so it could "transform anti-hygienic popular customs."⁴² Pani defended "elemental principles of hygienic education as the most effective racial protection."⁴³

During the second wave of the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico that started in 1921 many more Chinese were jailed, sometimes for months, and some of them were expelled. In the single month of November of 1922, 350 Chinese were put in the jails of Sinaloa and Colima, and 30 of these were expelled.⁴⁴ In December of the same year, in Rosales de Mazatlán, in Sinaloa, 182 Chinese were jailed and 6 were expelled.⁴⁵ There is not a confirmed number of expelled Chinese in the 1920's. The few records kept by the Secretary of Government mention only 59 Chinese expelled in 1926, and 16 in 1929.⁴⁶ Another effort at documentation counts 106 expulsions of Chinese between 1924 and 1934.⁴⁷

In 1923, President Alvaro Obregón published his proposal for a Ley de Inmigración (Immigration Law), another centralizing instrument that concentrated in the Executive Branch the power to determine legal entry to Mexico. It was based on racist ideas, codified as the public need for protection from *indeseables* (undesirables): "Public Power [must be] in a position to select immigrants and exclude individuals who [...] are

⁴² Aréchiga, Ernesto. "Dictadura sanitaria, educación y propaganda higiénica en el México Revolucionario, 1917-1934," in *Dynamis*, Vol. 25, 2005, p. 119. My translation.

⁴³ Pani, Alberto J. *La higiene en México*. Mexico City, Imprenta de J. Balleca, 1916, p. 191. My translation.

⁴⁴ *El Siglo. Diario Regional*, Saturday November 4, 1922, p. 2, Year I, Vol. II, No. 212. Torreón, HDST.

⁴⁵ "Chinos librados de ser expulsados del país," *El Siglo. Diario Regional*, Friday December 8, 1922, p. 1, Year I, Vol. III, No. 242, Torreón, HDST.

⁴⁶ Martínez Marín, Ricardo. "La migración china en el estado de Tamaulipas. 1900-1940." Master's in History Thesis, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa, Mexico City, 1995, p. 70.

⁴⁷ Martínez Marín, 1995, pp. 69-70.

not desirable or pose the danger of the physical degeneration of our race, or the moral depression of our people or the dissolution of our public institutions.”⁴⁸

In November 20 of 1923, on the 13th anniversary of the Revolution as commemorated by the *maderistas*, the Congress of Sonora approved Ley 31, prohibiting marriage and reproduction between Mexicans and Chinese. The law dictated that the rule applied even if the Chinese had become Mexican citizens, and it established fines and other penalties.⁴⁹ In December of 1923, the *circulares* to create ghettos for the Chinese authored by General Elías Calles in 1916, when he was governor of Sonora, were approved as Ley 27.⁵⁰ *Excelsior* and many other newspapers covered the creation of ghettos by distributing speeches of support by politicians like Alejandro C. Villaseñor, member of the local Congress, who expressed the belief that “Racial degeneration is a problem of the West Coast, because there are hundreds, and maybe thousands, of children with slanted eyes.”⁵¹ Villaseñor was the Mayor of Nogales, in Sonora, between 1920 and 1929, and would become the Consul of Mexico in Arizona between 1947 and 1954.

⁴⁸ Instituto Nacional de Migración. *Compilación histórica de la legislación migratoria en México*. 1821-2002. Secretaría de Gobernación / Instituto Nacional de Migración, Mexico City, 2002, p. 123. My translation.

⁴⁹ It had two articles, the first one states the “prohibition of marriage between Mexican women and Chinese men, even if they were naturalized Mexicans. The second indicates that marriage or the illicit union between Mexicans and Chinese will be punished with a fine of 100 to 400 pesos.” De la Rosa, Elsa. “Discriminación de los inmigrantes chinos en Sonora. Un estudio sobre ideas, políticas públicas y leyes migratorias en el contexto transfronterizo y estatal 1920-19340.” Master’s in International History Thesis, CIDE, Mexico City, 2016, p. 108.

⁵⁰ The law 27 marked deadlines for municipalities to create the ghettos, as well as deadlines for Chinese to move into them. It also established the right of expropriation of land to establish the ghettos and the prohibition of being outside of the ghetto for any Chinese. De la Rosa, 2016, p. 106.

⁵¹ “Los Chinos de Sonora serán congregados en barrios,” *Excelsior*, *El periódico de la vida nacional*, Friday January 4, 1924, p. 5, Year VIII, Vol. I, No. 2483, Mexico City, HND. My translation.

During the campaign for the Mexican presidential elections of 1924, the increasingly present mass media of radio, along with a variety of periodicals, fictionalized the violence of ‘tong wars’ and “*mafias chinas*.” The “*peligro amarillo*” (yellow peril) was featured in headlines, letters, photographs, and coverage of rallies. It articulated previously unseen public displays of organized anti-Chinese petitions and demands for expulsions. Petitions for the expulsion of Chinese were sent from municipalities to the Secretary of Government.⁵² Sensationalism, entertainment, genocidal appetites, and the construction of political capital were difficult to separate. General Elías Calles defeated General Ángel Flores in the elections and became president in December of 1924. The same month the Senate recommended to Secretary Pani to formally add expulsion to the de facto anti-Chinese immigration ban.⁵³

The anti-Chinese campaign generated even more—and more frequent—headlines. A cover story that focused on the subject of “the threatening attack of the yellow claw” developed racist rationales justifying the next step of the anti-Chinese campaign, the banning of marriage between Mexican women and Chinese men “to avoid the degeneration of our race and the shameful spectacle presented by the spawn of those abominable unions.”⁵⁴ This prohibition never became a Federal law, but besides Sonora and Sinaloa, which approved the regulation early, it nevertheless became law in

⁵² *Circular del Ayuntamiento de Frontera*, Sonora, June 14, 1924, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Fondo Presidentes Obregón Calles, doc. 104-CH-1 legajo 1. Quoted by Gómez Izquierdo, José Jorge. *El movimiento antichino en México, 1871-1934*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, 1991, p. 121.

⁵³ “En el senado se trató de no admitir más chinos,” *El Informador*, Wednesday December 17, 1924, p. 1, No. 2580, Guadalajara, HND.

⁵⁴ “Intensifícase en esta comarca la campaña contra el amenazante ataque de la garra amarilla,” *El Siglo Periódico regional*, Friday July 4, 1924, p. 1. and 6, Year III, Vol. VIII, No. 732, Torreón, HSDT. My translation.

the states of Hidalgo, Chiapas, Tamaulipas and Zacatecas in 1926.⁵⁵ That's why my ancestors, that were based in Zacatecas in 1926, escaped to the state of Coahuila.

In 1924, *El Siglo de Torreón* announced in a headline that it had become a "Member of the Associated Press of the Pro-Patria States," using what, since 1916, had been the anti-Chinese identifier, the motto "Pro-Patria."⁵⁶ The Congress of Sonora wrote a letter to the Governor celebrating the election of President Elías Calles, which marked a year of expansion for the anti-Chinese campaign: "It has spread across the different states of the Republic, where the Mongol, like here [in Sonora,] invades the different spheres of work, and constitutes an element that makes our activities sterile and is a menace for the future of our *patria* (homeland)."⁵⁷

Yellow pest

In 1925, José Vasconcelos published his most famous book, *La raza cósmica*, where — still using a Kantian paradigm— he stood up for "closing our doors" to the so-called "degenerative" pest.⁵⁸ Imagining the "excessive irruption of the Orientals [...] we recognize that it is not fair that folks like the Chinese, who under the holy advice of Confucian morality multiply like mice, come to degrade the human condition."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "Se elogia a la labor anti-china," *El Siglo de Torreón, Periódico regional*, Monday, December 20, 1926, p.1, Year V, Vol. XVI, No. 1600, Torreón, HSDT.

⁵⁶ *El Siglo de Torreón, Periódico regional*, Friday July 4, 1924, p. 1, Year III, Vol. VIII, No. 732, Torreón, HSDT.

⁵⁷ Letter from the State of Sonora Congress to the Governor of Sonora, November 4, 1924, Archivo General del Estado de Sonora, Fondo Oficialía de Partes, Vol. 3545 bis. Quoted by De la Rosa, 2016, p. 112. My translation.

⁵⁸ Vasconcelos, José. *La Raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana: notas de viajes a la América del Sur*. Agencia Mundial de Librería, Paris, 1925, p. 16. This book has been re-printed and edited numerous times.

⁵⁹ Vasconcelos, 1925, p. 16.

President Elías Calles' ideas continued to receive publicity from the newspaper *El Siglo*, which portrayed him as the leader fighting to solve "the Chinese Problem."⁶⁰ The discourse of "forceful though legal measures [against the] activities of the Yellow,"⁶¹ became generalized. The anti-Chinese campaign instrumentalized the Anti-Chinese Leagues, publicly defended and addressed by President Elías Calles. In the following piece covering the creation of ghettos for Chinese across the country, the writer reported that it was the role of the leagues to pressure Governors to support the cause and follow other recommendations made directly by the President:

[President Elías Calles] did not hide his sympathy for the cause [of Anti-Chinese] groups, which he praised and to which he wished triumph. [...] He considered [the creation of Chinatowns in all cities] appropriate and necessary, and suggested to the delegates to communicate to the [Anti-Chinese] Leagues the usefulness of directing further steps towards the fulfillment of that goal to the Governors of the various States, to whom our Laws grant the faculties required for this. [President Elías Calles'] words of encouragement for this cause will motivate the Anti-Chinese Leagues to enter a period of activity, which nonetheless, as Mr. General [Elías] Calles recommended, must respect the Constitution.⁶²

During 1925, along with the increased activity of the Anti-Chinese Leagues, the first and second Convención de Comités anti-Chinos de la República Mexicana (Convention of Anti-Chinese Committees of the Mexican Republic) were organized. Their main goal was to reinforce the pressure of the leagues on Congress: "since the Federal Congress has taken the nationalist campaign very seriously, and based on reports in our possession, we can assure that they will discuss the Chinese Problem."⁶³ Insisting on

⁶⁰ "Habló con los antichinos el Sr. Gral. Calles," *El Siglo. Periódico Regional*. Miembro de la Prensa Asociada de Nueva York, Saturday, July 4, 1925, p. 1 and 4, Year IV, Vol. XI, No. 1080, Torreón, HSDT.

⁶¹ "Habló con los antichinos el Sr. Gral. Calles," *El Siglo, Periódico Regional*, Saturday July 4, 1925, p. 4.

⁶² "Habló con los antichinos el Sr. Gral. Calles," *El Siglo, Periódico Regional*, Saturday July 4, 1925, p. 4.

⁶³ "Convención Antichina en Hermosillo," *El Siglo. Periódico Regional*, Thursday October 8, 1925, p. 1, Year IV, Vol. XI, No. 1171, Torreón, HSDT.

fascist sentiments calling for the creation of laws to target racial minorities, and the terminology of "solving problems" to designate organized genocidal actions, the duty of the convention was to "activate in the Federal Congress the resolution of the Chinese problem."⁶⁴

At the end of 1925, in another one of the *circulares* made public by newspapers, President Elías Calles recognized the role of anti-Chinese groups, stating they "lead the popular masses against the invading Chinese."⁶⁵ President Elías Calles also called for an "ennobling" of the campaign through orderly and effective actions: "the campaign had to be ennobled and carried along paths of energy, but of order, of effectiveness, but of peace."⁶⁶ This understanding of "ennobling" the campaign involved the elevation of its aesthetic values, its moral quality, and its cooperation with the ruling classes.

Representatives of the State of Tamaulipas in the Senate and other northern states established within the federal Congress the Comité Director de la Campaña Antichina to coordinate the national advancement of the campaign.⁶⁷ One of these representatives could have been Engineer Juan de Dios Bátiz, who was *diputado* on four occasions between 1922 and 1927. He was also interim governor of the state of Sinaloa (1926-1927) during a period of development of anti-Chinese policies and expulsions of Chinese. We will come back to the figure of Engineer Bátiz later.

⁶⁴ "Convención Antichina en Hermosillo," Thursday October 8, 1925, p. 8. My translation.

⁶⁵ "La campaña antichina y el presidente Calles," *El Siglo. Periódico Regional*, Monday October 12, 1925, p. 5, Year IV, Vol. XI, No. 1175, Torreón, HSDT. My translation. This piece also quoted Elías Calles saying: "it can be affirmed that, thanks to the agreements made since 1921, the immigration of CHINESE IS BANNED."

⁶⁶ "La campaña antichina y el presidente Calles," *El Siglo de Torreón*, Monday October 12, 1925, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Martínez Marín, 1995, p. 61.

In 1926, President Plutarco Elías Calles promoted his *Ley de Inmigración*, based on a proposal by his predecessor President Obregón. In the public sphere, Yellow as a colour of infectious danger had taken over a Mexico “infested and threatened by this pest.”⁶⁸ The new Immigration law used the colourless notion of undesirables, and protection against them became a prerogative of national sovereignty instrumentalized by the Instituto Nacional de Migración. Undesirables were a moral, racial and institutional danger: “a danger of physical degeneration for our race, of moral depression for our people, or of dissolution for our political institutions.”⁶⁹ President Elías Calles gave practically the same arguments to derogate the previous law, to protect the people and the *patria* from “the constant entry of individuals not only undesirable, but openly harmful and dangerous to our people and to our country.”⁷⁰ From then on, racial selection was considered indispensable and the Secretary of Exterior received previously unknown power and resources to administer and deny the entry of foreigners.

During the presidency of General Elías Calles (1924-1928), authorities at different levels continued to work in tandem to promote anti-Chinese reforms. In the opinion of Jason Chang, these reforms justified the concentration of power and the emergence of an authoritarian system: “The figure of the Chinese population helped to found a racial logic within the revolutionary imperative to reform through authoritarian rule. Discussions in the national congress reasoned that, in order to save the mestizo nation

⁶⁸ Letter of Francisco Martínez to Plutarco Elías Calles, February 12 of 1926, AGN, Fondo Presidentes Obregón-Calles, 104-ch, legajo 2, caja 28. Quoted by De La Rosa, 2016, p. 120. My translation.

⁶⁹ Instituto Nacional de Migración, 2002, p. 123. My translation.

⁷⁰ “Ley de Migración de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos,” *Diario Oficial de la federación*, March 13, 1926. Quoted by Gleizer, 2011, p. 43. My translation.

from Chinese defilers, the State must dominate social life, expel Chinese people, and dictate a disciplined mestizaje for eugenic benefits.”⁷¹

The most famous law enacted by President Elías Calles, a reform of Article 130, was also emitted in 1926 and popularly called “Ley Calles.” It banned all religious public activities in the country, limited the number of priests of each state, closed monasteries, convents, Catholic schools, as well as hundreds of Churches. It detonated the Cristero War (1925-1929) that brought around a quarter million deaths. When, in 1927, General Álvaro Obregón announced he was running for a second presidential term to succeed General Elías Calles, Catholic military men, and the Cristero Army organized around the candidacies of General Francisco Serrano and General Arnulfo Gómez. Both were assassinated along with his followers in the late 1927, by orders of President Elías Calles, but, in 1928, already elected President, General Obregón was assassinated too by a Catholic radical.⁷²

To neutralize rampant animosity against Catholics and military men, Congress designated a successor who did not come from the military ranks and was not anti-clerical but partook of anti-Chinese values. After being Governor of Tamaulipas (1925-1928) during the set of expulsions and bans on marriage with Chinese, the lawyer Emilio Portes Gil was designated Interim President (1928-1930). Portes Gil had served General Elías Calles as his Secretary of Government and his designation as Interim president was the beginning of the Maximato (1928-1936), a period in which General

⁷¹ Chang, 2017, p. 17.

⁷² Meyer, Jean. *La Cristiada*, Vol. 1, La Guerra de los Cristeros. Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico City, 1973. Olivera Sedano, Alicia. *La guerra cristera. Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, 2020.

Elías Calles, with the title of *Jefe Máximo de la Revolución*, kept control over Mexican politics regardless of who was president.

The foundation of the Maximato overlapped with the constitution of the comic magazine as a multinational commodity for hemispheric circulation in the Americas. The comic magazine made in Mexico became a multicultural unit that proudly inherited and assembled the ancient regime's Hispanic imperialisms, distributed the authoritarian messages of the Postrevolutionary regime, and addressed emergent Pan-Americanisms made in the United States.

Assembling the comic magazine

The only mass media ancestor of the comic magazine in Mexico is the album of *Historietas El Buen Tono* (1909-1914). Although other formats compiled comics, only El Buen Tono developed a mode of production based on labour on an industrial scale. As a format, El Buen Tono album assembled multiple monochrome pages presented with a colour cover. More than 15 years later, the emergent shiny media of the comic magazine copied exactly this general structure. One notable difference between the two is that comic magazines created new covers for each number, while the *historieta* albums used the same illustration every year.⁷³

⁷³ It is still not clear how many comics were collected in each album, if they presented all the numbers printed in a year or a selection of them, or if they created their own thematic sequences. Until now, the main research about *El Buen Tono* comics is based on how they circulated for the newspaper *El Imparcial*. Camacho Morfín suggest that the yearly album made its own patterns of sequencing. Camacho Morfín, Thelma. *Las historietas de El Buen Tono (1904-1922). La litografía al servicio de la Industria*. Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México / Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades - Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, Mexico City, 2013, p. 80.

The emergence of a field of comic studies and the consolidation of comic archives are still unfolding, but today *Adelaido el conquistador* is considered to be the first Mexican comic magazine. The covers of El Buen Tono albums presented a composition of multiple single drawings that occupied as a whole only a third of the entire cover. Their covers remained the same every year and only the year of production at the bottom changed. In contrast, the magazine *Adelaido* produced different covers for each edition with fewer drawings that used more space. The magazine used cheap paper, had a monthly frequency and each issue presented new drawings on the covers. It had two totally different formats.

The first numbers of *Adelaido* had covers printed in two colours presenting Adelaido and other characters of the strip. They bound multiple comic strips together and their format followed the classic extension of the comic strip, narrow in height but wide. Unlike the El Buen Tono album, this format of *Adelaido* started to be sold as an independent product. Accounts of its original places and circuits of distribution in the early thirties are yet to be written. Its first number was published in May of 1932 (fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Arthenak, Juan. *Adelaido el conquistador*. *Revista mensual de historietas*, May 1, 1932, No. 1, Mexico City.

The protagonist of the magazine was the dandy-like Adelaido Torongón, a modern and masculine figure whose *leit motif* was his serial conquest of female attention. On the covers, authorship of *Adelaido* is attributed to Juan Arthenak, a member of the middle class of academically educated artists. He had done illustrations for the broadsheet dailies *El Imparcial*, *El Herald* and *Excelsior*. His work for the weekly illustrated magazine *Tu Tan Kamen* showed an interest in orientalist themes, and in 1931 he was one of the creators of the satirical illustrated magazine *El Turco*, quickly taken out of circulation. *El Turco* was the hateful nick name of General Elías Calles.⁷⁴

The magazine *Adelaido* claimed to be “unique within its genre” and printed at least 100 consecutive numbers. A complete collection of the magazine has not survived in archives, but an examination of existing holdings suggests that, around number 40, the format extended vertically to 15 x 19.5 cms. Each issue ran to about 16 pages and was bound with staples. In this format, the comic magazine carried a typographic logo, made by the title of the magazine with an especially designed typeface; the use of colour and the alienation of graphic elements hold the cover together (fig. 4).

Looking at these images is possible thanks to advertisements for old periodicals on Mercado Libre, Facebook and other online platforms that sometimes include inner pages. This second, longer, format of the magazine included not only Adelaido’s strip, but also other original strips created in Mexico and a few short strips imported from the U.S. Its motto “for children from 0 to 100 years old” was retained with few variations by

⁷⁴ Making fun of this politician has been attributed as the reason for the sudden evaporation of the format. José Vasconcelos and other Hispanistas, made of the nickname, and General Elías Calles Lebanese origins, the sign, and the racial reason of all Mexican problems. General Elías Calles did not practice Catholicism, expelled priest, closed churches, and lynched Cristeros because of his “Turkish hatred for everything Christian [...] and Muslim resentment towards Christ.” Vasconcelos, José. *Breve Historia de México*, Compañía Editorial Continental, Mexico City, 1978 (1956), pp. 390 and 477.

the comic magazine *Paquito* that arrived to consolidate the business of comic magazines in 1934.



Fig. 4. Juan Arthenak, *Adelaido el Conquistador*, No. 48 and 66, Mexico City, 1934.

As mentioned before, both the *El Buen Tono* yearly album and the *Adelaido* comic magazine presented a coloured cover and monochrome inner pages. While the album used industrial lithography, the first *Adelaido* that was printed in 1932, was narrow, and used only two inks and could have used serigraphy; the larger-sized second *Adelaido* that was printed in 1934 used four-colour rotary technologies. On this second, larger format of *Adelaido*, multiple markers of seriality such as number, date, and city of production were included in the masthead of the first page, right below the title. On

these covers, the brightest shade of the colour yellow was used to highlight blonde soft hair. A tender shade of yellow was used in multiple covers to suggest happy sunny afternoons.

Adelaido was an ideal modern man only on the surface. He was the subject of cartooned attention because his attempts to move up the urban ladder and transition to the middle class always failed, like his romances. Placed in a city that wanted to be universal, his adventures avoided too much local colour. The most notable exception was Chito, the archetype of a despised, brutal revolutionary to whom Adelaido was compared in few strips. Other than Chito, the set of characters of this strip was very uniform. Adelaido was a Pink skinned archetypical White Latin with Black hair who was often tutored by older and more gentleman-like light skinned Mexicans. Adelaido pursued light skinned young women with standard big eyes, soft hair, small noses, and lips. These homogeneous soft characters dominated the graphic space of an ideal modern Mexico, barely disrupted by the more cartoony characters kept at bay.

The focus of this strip was the abstraction and simplification of racially clean and aesthetically modern daily dynamics; it took place in an essential undisturbed time in the common spaces of an ideal city, such as clubs, restaurants, and parks. *Adelaido* avoided the representation of politicians as well as ethnic diversity, and most of its conflicts were frivolous. Further comic magazines, uninvested in such elegant gravitas, preferred to cultivate often excessive, violent, contaminated, and insolent racial expressions.

The third wave of the anti-Chinese campaign

By 1929 there were already 215 anti-Chinese organizations in Mexico. The anti-Chinese campaign was strong in the north but extended to Veracruz, Yucatan, and Chiapas in the south.⁷⁵ That year, General Elías Calles founded the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), which mutated into the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM) in 1938. Through the figure of the *Jefe Máximo de la Revolución*, extra constitutional and parallel to the leadership of the party, he was the *de facto* national leader between 1929 and 1933. In 1929, he was also the Secretary of War, a position he held again in 1931 and 1932.

In 1929, while Emilio Portes Gil was still Interim President, he expressed his commitment to the anti-Chinese campaign and carried forward the project of registering the Chinese in Mexico and approving a more restrictive Immigration Law. The registering of the Chinese population in Mexico, in an opinion published by *El Siglo de Torreón*, was meant to serve the expulsion of Chinese: "Portes Gil is willing to act forcefully on the subject of Chinese immigration and is already proceeding to order an exclusively Asian census in order to expel all Mongolians who have entered the country clandestinely."⁷⁶ It was one of General Elías Calles innovations from his second term as Governor of Sonora.

⁷⁵ Gómez Izquierdo, 1991, pp. 131-132. Alicia Gojman enumerates, in an uncomplete list, Liga Obrera Antichina in Cecilia, Tamaulipas (1925) and in Mazatlán, Sinaloa (1926); Comité Antichino in San Luis Potosi (1926) and Parral, Chihuahua (1926); Liga Mexicana Antichina in Tapachula, Chiapas (1930); Acción Partido Cívico in Mexico City (1930); Liga Antichina y Antijudía in Sonora (1931); Liga Antichina in Mazatlán, Sinaloa (1933); Comité Nacionalista Antichino in Culiacán, Los Mochis, Mocorito and Guasave, Sinaloa (1933); Comité Nacional Antichino in Madera, Chihuahua (1934), Comité Antichino in Ensenada, Baja California (1937). Finally, Acción Revolucionaria Mexicanista. Gojman, Alicia. *Camisas, escudos y desfiles militares*. Fondo de Cultura Económica / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2000.

⁷⁶ "La campaña anti-China," *El Siglo de Torreón, Periódico Regional*, Monday January 7, 1929, pp. 1 and 6. Year VII, Vol. XXIV, No. 2348, Torreón, HSDT. My translation.

The Portes Gil Ley de Inmigración (Immigration Law) was approved on July 14, 1930. It increased the power of the Secretary of Government and the President concerning immigration and introduced the criteria of racial "assimilation." The law explained the principle of assimilation in Artículo 60: it is considered "of public benefit [that] the individual or collective immigration of foreigners [be limited] to those trained for work, of good behaviour and belonging to races that, because of their conditions, are easily assimilable to our environment."⁷⁷

In that same year of 1930, General Elías Calles' anti-Chinese legacy started to inspire militia groups. In Chihuahua, Nicolás Rodríguez Carrasco would make his name through the Alianza Nacionalista de Chihuahua and the paramilitary group of the Guardias Verdes. The group started out supporting the presidential campaign of José Vasconcelos, but eventually followed General Elías Calles and his candidate Pascual Ortiz Rubio, elected President in 1930.

In this brutal third wave of the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico, Nicolás Rodríguez Carrasco, a former *villista*, used his fascist militia *Camisas Verdes* to harass Chinese merchants and their clientele physically and verbally. The militia even made arrests and imprisoned some of them "charged with public scandal."⁷⁸ The paramilitary group continued to grow until 1934: "under the protection of a *callista* official, if not from [General Elías] Calles himself, [Nicolás] Rodríguez created the *Camisas Verdes* (Green Shirts) [...] with them the campaign of Mexico for the Mexicans began and would continue with the *Dorados* (Golden)."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *Diario Oficial de la Federación*. August 30, 1930, Vol XLI, suplement of number 53, Mexico City, p. 6. My translation.

⁷⁸ Martínez Marín, 1995, p. 64.

⁷⁹ Pérez Montfort, Ricardo. "Los camisas doradas," in *Secuencia*, January-April 1986, Mexico City, p. 71. My translation.

Rodríguez oversaw *camisas verdes* while being a member of the Comité Pro-Raza. This committee was founded inside of the government party PNR in 1931 as its official racist and anti-Chinese section. The Comité Pro Raza was directed by Jose Ángel Espinoza, whom I have discussed in previous chapters, and military engineer Juan de Dios Bátiz. Despite his vast sphere of action, Engineer Bátiz has remained under the radar. He came from an elite northern family in Sinaloa and had strong connections with the Postrevolutionary State and the Army. Between 1929 and 1931, he was Jefe del Departamento de Enseñanza Técnica of the Secretary of Public Education. He was a senator between 1932 and 1936, and the treasurer of the blooming PNR. The periodical press published his pamphlets and his numerous racist speeches in the Congress. The early 1930s were also the period in which the social activities of the Círculo Sonora Sinaloa, based in Mexico City, were announced in the social section in the very popular broadsheet newspaper *La Prensa* (1928-present). Sometimes their meetings received radio coverage.

In 1931 in Sonora, Francisco S. Elías, who had been in and out of the governorship since 1921, approved Ley 100, which forced all foreigners to register, and pay for a photo ID to always be carried. Free circulation of foreigners in the state was soon banned. Ley 89 was approved in June of 1931 and forced all places of business in Sonora to have a minimum of 80% of Mexican employees.⁸⁰ This law had its antecedent in the Artículo 50 approved in 1919 by General Elías Calles when he was the Governor of Sonora. A strict enforcement of Law 89 caused the massive exit of Chinese from this state. The expulsion was enforced mostly by the successor of Governor S. Elías, Governor Rodolfo Elías Chacón (1931-1934), the son of General Elías Calles.

⁸⁰ De la Rosa, 2016, pp. 113-114.

On July 21 of 1931, one month after Ley 89 was added to the Sonoran Constitution, Mexican Congress approved a similar but even more strict clause inside the Ley del Trabajo (Labor Law): "requiring commercial employers that at least 90 percent of the employees of every business establishment, regardless of the national origins of its owners, be native-born Mexicans."⁸¹ This law affected Chinese business owners, but also their Mexican wives and offspring who, without a means of living, and facing militia harassment, were forced to leave Mexico. On the basis of his work with Chinese sources, Robert Chao Romero calculates that as a result of the enforcement of Law 89 "at least two thousand individuals from five hundred Chinese-Mexican families had settled in China by the early 1930's."⁸²

Constantly in the political shadow of this Northern group, President Ortiz Rubio resigned in 1932. By unanimous vote, Congress designated General Abelardo Rodríguez, born in Sonora, as interim president. General Abelardo Rodríguez proudly recognized his anti-Chinese values in his autobiography, as well as the ideological mentorship of General Elías Calles, who "had clarified many revolutionary principles for me."⁸³ The election of President Rodríguez meant the creation of another anti-Chinese militia, the *Guardias Blancas* (White Guards) which, according to *El Siglo de Torreón*, was doing the same thing as the *Guardias Verdes* a couple of years before: "who will be stationed at the doors of shops run by the Chinese to prevent the clientele of those establishments from entering to make their purchases."⁸⁴

⁸¹ Chao Romero, 2010, p. 187.

⁸² Chao Romero, 2010, p. 86.

⁸³ Rodríguez, Abelardo L. *Autobiografía*. Novaro Editores, Mexico City, 1962, p. 156. My translation.

⁸⁴ "La campaña anti-chinos. Se recrudece aquí empleando la acción directa," *El Siglo de Torreón*, Wednesday, August 1, 1934, p.1, Year XIII, Vol. XLIV, No. 4867, Torreón, HSDT. My translation.

El Nacional (1929-1998) was the official newspaper of the government party, and its director was chosen by the ruling president. *El Nacional* was a source of official press releases distributed by other newspapers and, in this role, it participated in the formation of patterns of information, directing the attention of the press to the government agenda or expressing official points of view about of the news cycle. *El Nacional* also participated in the anti-Chinese campaign, which it called the “radical campaign for elimination of undesirable foreigners.”⁸⁵

At the beginning of March of 1933, after a first wave of expulsions of Chinese in 1931 and 1932, in the words of the then senator Engineer Bátiz, the time had arrived to slow down, and the anti-Chinese committee reached out to provide comfort to those that may think this meant disapproval:

The Steering Committee [of the Nationalist Pro Raza Campaign] suspends the time limits that had been given to Chinese citizens and other nationalities, by some local committees, for [them] to liquidate their businesses and leave specific regions. [...] We insist that [...] this statement does not imply the disapproval [by the President] of our basic ideology, which continues to be the same, to radically and economically protect Mexicans—it does not even imply the disapproval of previously practiced methods.⁸⁶

In this political climate, President Abelardo Rodríguez, who was also a General, was surrounded by representatives in the senate with military ranks. Although the PNR was in theory civil, the power concentrated in its military sector was undeniable. General Rodríguez governed between September 4th of 1932 and December of 1934. During

⁸⁵ Bátiz, Juan de Dios. “Solidaridad del Comité Pro Raza. Se une con el Gobierno en su Resolución con respecto al conflicto chino-japonés,” *El Nacional. Diario popular*: Wednesday March 1, 1933, p. 1 and 2, No. 1871, Mexico City, Biblioteca Lerdo (BL). My translation.

⁸⁶ Bátiz, Juan de Dios. “Solidaridad del Comité Pro Raza. Se une con el Gobierno en su Resolución con respecto al conflicto chino-japonés,” *El Nacional. Diario popular*: Wednesday March 1, 1933, p. 1 and 2, No. 1871, Mexico City, BL.

his presidential mandate, part of the paramilitary group of las *Guardias Verdes* mutated into *Los Gorados*, which cultivated a base strong enough to form its own public organization. In 1934, when it was time to choose a president again, *los dorados* established Acción Revolucionaria Mexicanista (ARM).

ARM, unlike *Camisas Verdes*, had a national presence; it had anti-Chinese and anti-Jewish values and recognized as its *Jefe supremo* General Nicolás Rodríguez. Julio Madero, the brother of former President Francisco I. Madero, who was assassinated while in power in 1913, was one of the notable members of ARM. This far right public organization has been considered close to General Elías Calles and General Rodríguez. The evaluation of its relationship with the incoming president, General Cárdenas (1934-1940,) is not as obvious.

In the illustrated magazine *Provincias*, another one of the periodicals printed by the government party, a revealing visual composition integrates the figures of General Elías Calles, General Rodríguez, General Cárdenas, the *Plan Sexenal* (1934-1940) and the visual signs of the hammer and sickle and a sack of coins.⁸⁷ *Provincias* was founded by Coronel García Valseca and Engineer Bátiz. Coronel García Valseca joined the Mexican Revolution in the *carrancista* band and was a reporter for *El Nacional* and *La Prensa* in the south of Mexico.⁸⁸ After founding *Provincias* he would direct the comic magazine *Pepín*, which will be the focus of the next section.

The text of *Provincias* proposed an allegory of the Mexican State: General Elías Calles was the strong brain guiding revolutionary ideology, General Rodríguez had been its

⁸⁷ Vázquez Mantecón, Álvaro. "Cine y propaganda durante el cardenismo," *Historia y gráfica*, 2012, Mexico City, pp. 87-88.

⁸⁸ Smith, Benjamin T. *The Mexican Press and Civil Society, 1940-1976. Stories from the Newsroom, stories from the Street*. The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2018.

support and surveyor of new goals, incoming President Cárdenas (1934-1940) was the applier of the proletarian program contained in the *Plan Sexenal*.⁸⁹ This plan was put together by the *antichinista* Engineer Bátiz among others who, inspired by Stalinist policy, intended to provide a political compass for the Executive Branch. Engineer Bátiz addressed General Elías Calles as “Jefe y fino amigo” (Boss and fine friend) and, with Coronel García Valseca, produced a special issue of *Provincias* in June 1933 for the birthday of General Elías Calles. This edition was “an example of the confidence of all the living forces of the country.”⁹⁰

In October of 1933, under President Abelardo Rodríguez, the Secretary of Government Eduardo Vasconcelos issued Circular Confidencial 250. It prohibited, for racial reasons, the immigration of Black and Yellow individuals: “Black race and Yellow race with the exception of the Japanese, Malay and Hindu.”⁹¹ For political reasons, it banned citizens of the SSR, “for their bad customs and notoriously inconvenient activities.”⁹²

During General Cárdenas’ presidential campaign tour in 1933, he was invited to a double purpose event in Sonora. General Cárdenas was introduced with leaders of the commercial and industrial sectors, but the official occasion was to celebrate what the Elías Calles Clan had achieved in their *terruño* (boondocks). The speeches during this campaign event were published in as a pocketbook. One of them praised General Elías Calles’ early ideas, from 1919: “The fearsome diseases called beriberi, tuberculosis,

⁸⁹ About General Elías Calles: “Hombre fuerte y cerebro guía que plasma la ideología revolucionaria.” Rodríguez: “Sostén incólume de los postulados institucionales, que supo trazar con pulso firme nuevos derroteros patrios.” Cárdenas: “Vanguardia y leal amigo del proletariado que sabrá cumplir estricta y fielmente el programa de la revolución.” *Las Provincias, Revista Gráfica Revolucionaria*, June 1934, cover.

⁹⁰ Letter from Juan de Dios Bátiz and José García Valseca to General Elías Calles, June 24, 1933, Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles, New Mexico Digital Collections (FAPECFT), Exp. 562. My translation.

⁹¹ “Circular 250,” exp. 4-350-2-1933-54, 17 October, 1933. Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Migración (AHINM), Departamento de Migración. Quoted by Gleizer, 2011, p. 46.

⁹² “Circular 250.” Quoted by Gleizer, 2011, p. 46.

trachoma and many others, considered to be innate to the Chinese race, present further proof of the harmful effects of this dire immigration.”⁹³

According to this rhetoric, early anti-Chinese ideas were complemented by the ideas and actions of others, but all belonged to “the vigorous mind of the Jefe de la Revolución [General Elías Calles]” who took on “the imperative need to cut off the head of the octopus that with its disgusting tentacles was sucking our blood.”⁹⁴ The result, thanks to the coordination of General Elías Calles’ uncle and son in favor of the “extirpation of yellow evil,” which included anti-Chinese Committees and “*Guardias Verdes* at the gates of the venues of exploitation” was astounding: “gentleman, it is hard to get used to the idea that in Sonora there are no Chinese grocery stores anymore.”⁹⁵ It is undisputed that General Cárdenas arrived at the presidency supported by General Elías Calles and that General Cárdenas was a guest of honor of this fascist event.

Technically on the far right, ARM should have been an adversary of the PNR and General Cardenas. While he was president, ARM posed for the cameras of newspapers as proud uniformed landowners, with cowboy hats and long arms. This “golden” class was proud of its notorious whiteness, and forged their values distorting indigenous symbols, appropriating them as their colonial right. They gloated about attacks against Chinese, Jews and communists and bragged about having correspondence with Klan

⁹³ Speech by Jose S. Healy, *La Labor de Organización Económica y Social en el Estado de Sonora*, 1933. Imprenta Cruz Gálvez, Sonora, 1933, p. 28, FAPECFT. Healy spoke on behalf of the Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Hermosillo (Hermosillo National Chamber of Commerce).

⁹⁴ *La Labor de Organización Económica y Social en el Estado de Sonora*, 1933, p. 29.

⁹⁵ *La Labor de Organización Económica y Social en el Estado de Sonora*, 1933, p. 29 and 33.

members, the Silver Battalion of America, and the German American Bund in the States, as well as having representation in Nazi Germany.⁹⁶

Hidden behind anti-vice and institutional euphemisms, anti-Chinese values promoted by General Elías Calles and his political heirs have only been partially addressed in the decades which followed. This group never abandoned their initial combative sense of mystical spirituality. General Cárdenas was elected to the Presidency in 1934. His government has classically been located on the authoritarian left by scholars such as Arnaldo Córdova, because it integrated “working masses within the political apparatus.”⁹⁷ The role of purification and centralization in his regime could furthermore categorize his practices. Purification was the result of unification under revolutionary leadership. In General Cárdenas’ words, such revolutionary purity came from the “unified criteria [that allowed] to tell the truth about the country’s matters [and] return thoughts and politics of the Revolution to their primitive purity.”⁹⁸ In the next section, I will point to some of the ways in which practices of centralization and values of revolutionary and nationalist purity were translated within communication practices.

⁹⁶ These facts are highlighted in the alt right wiki pages *Politica Universal* and *Metapedia*. Scholars have flagged the connection between Arthur Dietrich “propaganda attaché of the embassy and prominent member of the Nazi party” with Gral. Nicolás Rodríguez, and Dr. Krum Heller, that represented the Dorados in Germany, as a “correspondent of Hispanist newspapers based in Berlin and very close to the Nazi Party.” In terms of funding, oil businessmen John Smithers financially supported the dorados from the United States. Gojman, Alicia. “Los Camisas Doradas en la época de Lázaro Cárdenas,” in *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, Vol. 20, No. 39/40, Special Issue: Cárdenas, Vargas, Perón and the Jews, 1995 1995, pp. 56-57. My translation.

⁹⁷ Córdova, Arnaldo. *La política de masas del cardenismo*. Ediciones Era, Mexico City, 2014, p. 123. My translation.

⁹⁸ AGN, Fondo Presidentes Lázaro Cardenas, exp. 545.2/33. December 15, 1936. Quoted by Pilatowsky Goñi, Priscila. *Para dirigir la acción y unificar el pensamiento. Propaganda y Revolución en México, 1936-1942*. Centro de Estudios Históricos-El Colegio de México, Mexico City, 2014, p. 14. My translation.

Only in 1936 did General Cárdenas definitely oppose the ARM leader Nicolás Rodríguez. The latter was exiled to the States, where he was welcomed by the Klan. General Elías Calles was exiled soon after, but only then did deterioration of a sense of alliance between him and the presidency of General Cárdenas seems decisive. Still, the basis of General Cárdenas regime' was the PNR founded by General Elías Calles, a party with factions in the right and the center left, and perpetuating his anti-vice values. To discuss this matter exceeds the objective of this dissertation, but it is useful to clarify this general idea since we are about to consider some dynamics of continuity between the Maximato and the presidency of General Cárdenas which questioned the viability of this binarism. In terms of legislation, media, and certain actors, continuities are numerous.

Pan-American standard

In 1934 Editorial Sayrols, founded by Francisco Sayrols, launched its weekly comic magazine *Paquín*. Each issue of *Paquín* (1934-1947) included multiple comic stories some of which were imported, and others produced in Mexico. Two years after its emergence, the comic magazines *Pepín* (1936-1956) and *Chamaco* (1936-1954) were launched and together these produced a solid supply of comic titles printed by the millions.

Paquín, as a low-cost industrial medium assembled with staples, was printed on Wednesdays at first, and daily later on, with increasing support by multinational commercial sponsors. At the height of its life, it circulated in three different sizes. The larger *Paquín* was similar to a small poster (17 x 25 cms.) and offered the most benefits for the appreciation of drawing detail. The smaller one (10 x 13 cms.) was very mobile, similar in size to a pocket flyer. The medium size *Paquín* (20 x 13 cms.), was cheaper to

print than the larger one, and easier to ink and read than the smaller one. The magazines which followed preferred this format.

Early covers of *Paquín* suggest that, like *Adelaido el conquistador*, this format was still not fully separated from that of the illustrated satirical magazine. Its motto recovered the notion of the satirical weekly, a popular medium since the 19th century in which illustrators followed a certain stylistic decorum: "The best humorous weekly for children from 100 months to 100 years"; it sometimes shifted to "children's weekly."⁹⁹ Only when other comic magazines appeared, after 1936, did *Paquín* reclaim its place as media pioneer, revising its motto to "The oldest comic magazine in Mexico for children from 100 months to 100 years."¹⁰⁰

The display of systems of race, class and gender provided the raw materials for *Paquín* and subsequent comic magazines. To this day, there is not a single academic study of *Paquín*, nor an index to the stories it published. Judging by the few covers available online, the way in which characters of different ethnicities were cartooned seems heavily inspired by comics created in the U.S.¹⁰¹ Between 1934 and 1936 *Paquín* covers seem to be dominated by white kid characters. It seems that, initially, the Mexican magazine distributed what seems to be *Skippy*, marketed by the King Features Syndicate. Strips featuring white pretty girls, such as *Betty*, also took up space during these initial years.

⁹⁹ *Paquín*, 1934, No. 40, cover. An incomplete collection of originals is available in the HN-UNAM, but it has not been digitized. My translation.

¹⁰⁰ At least since No. 439, printed in 1938, but it could be before.

¹⁰¹ These observations can be made by the covers available in baudelcomic.com, that do not present plot resumes.

December of 1936 saw the creation of the Departamento Autónomo de Prensa y Publicidad, DAPPP (1936-1939,) and the Dirección General de Información, DGI (1936-1942,) to overview the creation and dispersion of centralized content inside the Mexican territory and for foreign media. The foundation of these institutions by the presidency of General Cárdenas marked, according to Priscila Pilatowsky, “the first systematic attempt to centralize administrative mechanisms —and the use of media— to report about government affairs, but also to induce moral and civic principles. Furthermore, this office had the mission of purifying and stabilizing the image of Mexico.”¹⁰²

In 1935, President Cárdenas created Productora e Importadora de Papel SA (PIPSA) in order to regulate and intervene directly in the printed sphere. PIPSA mediated the relation between media owners and the government and oversaw “all acquisitions and transfers of paper.”¹⁰³ The operations of PIPSA included the regulation of prices, and the distribution of paper and credit to buy it. This was an indirect and very effective instrument of censorship. It regulated the import of paper and a national production of paper that was growing as fast as possible. In this sense, this institution was an instrument of print capitalism and developer of government propaganda as well as an “organ of political control.”¹⁰⁴

President Cárdenas’ goal of revolutionary unity was mediated via propaganda and entertainment, including the rapidly expanding comic magazine. The survey of the Comisión Mexicana de Cooperación Intelectual, conducted in 1936 and 1937,

¹⁰² Pilatowsky, 2014, p. 11. My translation.

¹⁰³ AGN, FLCR, exp. 437.1/287.

¹⁰⁴ Mejía Barquera, Fernando. *La industria de la radio y la televisión y la política del Estado mexicano, 1920-1960*. Fundación Manuel Buendía, Mexico City, 1989, pp. 66-67. My translation.

concluded that “the people most inclined to read preferred the graphic magazine with reduced text.”¹⁰⁵ The heavily mediated government of General Cárdenas expanded its catalogue of printed possibilities in the comic magazine and was furthermore supported by a set of observations, polls and assumptions aimed to take advantage of the persuasive resources of propaganda.

By 1937, the covers of *Paquín* referenced adventure and detective comic strips written and drawn in the United States years before, which focused on strong white male characters, such as *Brick Bradford* and *Dan Dunn*. The latter was created in 1933 and marketed by Publishers Syndicate. This genre of strips modelled interracial dynamics more explicitly, since they displayed white characters encountering characters of colour in situations of crime, battles, or conquest. This is the case of **fig. 5**, where what could be a composition of two characters from the series “On the trail of Wu Fang” inside the comic *Dan Dunn*, is presented in *Paquín* as *Pancho Doodle*.

¹⁰⁵ Pilatowsky, 2014, p. 35. My translation.

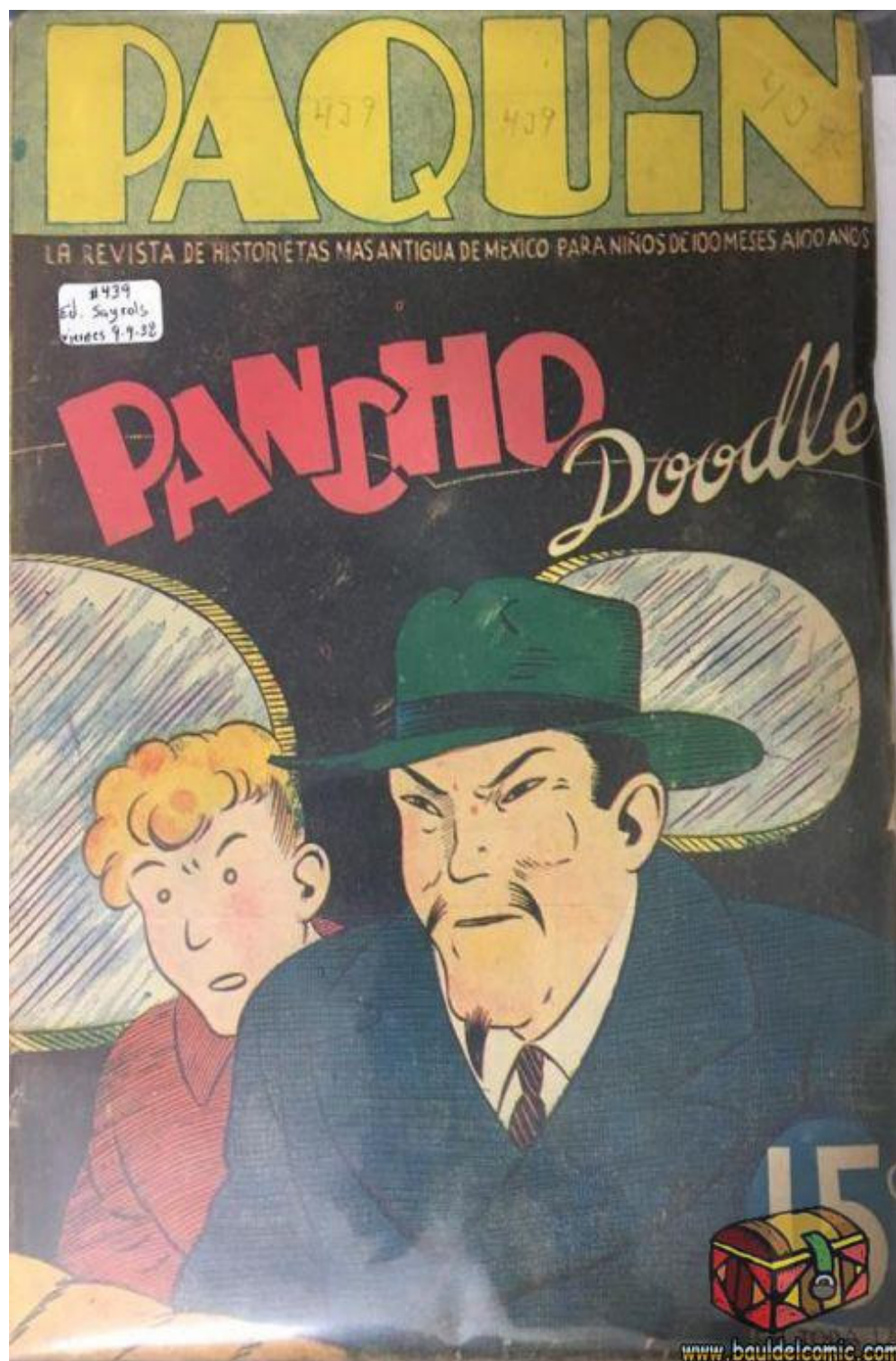


Fig. 5. Chinese type on the cover of *Paquín*, 1938, No. 439.

This and many other exotic adventures and detectives' stories distributed by *Paquín* were led by white characters. The comic story "Terry and the Pirates" created by Milton Caniff in 1934 in the United States was significantly focused on intrigues involving a white male protagonist and Asian characters. *Paquín* distributed it as "Terry y los Piratas." Inside of the comic magazine, "Terry" was to be found with shortened and simplified illustrated versions of Hispanic Medieval literature classics, *El Quixote* or *El Mío Cid*, for example, and other orientalist stories with magic genies and desserts.

Ramón Valdiosera, who would become one of the most relevant Mexican comic cartoonists of the 20th century, acknowledged that *Terry* was his favourite strip as a young reader of *Paquín*. In his mid-teens, inspired by it, Valdiosera pitched to *Paquín* a story with a Chinese character: "I was very young, and I presented a story that now seems absurd: *The Black Orchid of Fu Manchu*. [...] As Milton Caniff and *Terry and The Pirates* were very popular, and all that influence of the Chinese, I made *Clark in China* [...] we are talking about 1933 or 1934."¹⁰⁶ Ramón Valdiosera continued with his line of orientalist fictions and authored his comic versions of "Simbad el Marino," and "El ladrón de Bagdad" for the comic magazine *Chamaco chico* which appeared on the market in 1936. By then, the comic magazine *Chamaco*, founded by Ignacio Herreras, printed two formats daily and had two Sunday editions.¹⁰⁷ Valdiosera later became the director of *Chamaco Chico*.

The era of a thick industrial stratum of Mexican comic magazines had fully begun. It relied on a *Hispanista* network not just because it "targeted" the Spanish reading and

¹⁰⁶ "Entrevista con Ramón Valdiosera," August 26, 2007, *Cultura comic*. Quoted by Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 56.

¹⁰⁷ In this moment of his career Valdiosera tries to form a Pan-American agency of comic distribution without the endorsement of government institutions and fails.

listening market, in terms of magazines, written plots, graphic language, advertising, radio programs and films. It was *Hispanista* because it operated in the printed sphere that linked media elites and politicians in the Americas with Iberian traditions of storytelling, its imaginaries and traditional printing industries, capitals, and technologies. The influx was not one way and printed matters also bounced from Mexico to Spain.

The comic magazine relied also on an exchange with the United States. In the second half of the 1930s foreign policy was reshaped in a context of the Pan-American expansion of the United States. Printed media from the U.S. invested obsessively in developing its own propaganda of racial hierarchies. It promoted racial inferiority, punishment, imprisonment, and violence against Asians. As well, it targeted certain varieties of Mexicans and Latinhood. At the same time, as I have documented in this and previous chapters, by the time U.S. strips circulated massively in Mexican media, anti-Chinese sentiments were deeply rooted locally and sometimes linked to politics that were more aggressive than in the United States.

In terms of the market for industrial print culture, the labour of sustaining anti-Chinese cartooning for mass distribution became a shared goal and a common load across Mexican, U.S. and Spanish comics. The more space there was for design and graphic play, the more space there was for flashy multinational advertising. This dialogue shaped an array of specific adaptations for niche audiences.

Inside the format of the comic magazine, the inner pulse of cartooning experienced an expansive transformation. With a medium of their own, graphic stories circulated by magazines could extend their plots and distance themselves from the news cycle that had been an important reference for comic strips. Independence meant more regular

and faster periodicity. It brought iterations of characters which were the occasion for oscillating, alternating, adjusting focus, and the delivering of surprises. Recurrent characters developed to a degree that was not possible in the comic strips that were limited to a weekly page. In comic magazines, dramatic arcs built up but, paradoxically, the multipanel extension of the comic magazine meant less detailed drawing and an increased need to standardized graphic punches.

The enlarged space of the comic magazine needed to be filled more frequently and with more sequences. Its graphic mark became thicker and deeper. More details could be observed as well as sudden changes. Certain recurrences constituted streams and currents that accumulated against the more conscious messages. Associations became diagrammatic and the forms being repeated, even if peripheral, became standards. The patterns left by this formal industrial structure allow us to grasp it. The repetition of forms across a plurality of containers, genres and styles incarnates what becomes a Pan-American standard.

The most visible example that pops out in the mid 1930s, and continued to circulate until the late 1980s, is the genre of orientalist exotic adventures, that sometimes overlapped with the messages of race hate distributed by science fiction. Science fiction comic stories "and their accompanying iconography used imagined Asians to play out fantasies of race hate, revenge, and militarist aggression rooted in mainstream American and European politics."¹⁰⁸ Mexican comics were flirting with, and directly inspired by, this graphic convergence. As we have mentioned, Valdiosera publicly recognized the impact Caniff's work made on him, but his taste was also formed by

¹⁰⁸ Agnew, Jeremy. *The age of Dimes and Pulps. A history of Sensationalist Literature, 1830-1960.* McFarland & Company, Jefferson, 2018, p. 192

other exotic adventures at the time. For *Pepín*, Valdiosera made “El mago maravilla” out of the classic U.S. strip “Mandrake the Magician.” Another cartoonist in *Pepín*, A. Ximenez, made “Ferry y los corsarios” from “Terry and the Pirates” and “Dick Troy” out of “Dick Tracy.”¹⁰⁹

Specific comparisons between the U.S. originals and their Mexican versions, which started to be distributed in the vast Spanish reading market of the Hemisphere, have yet to be made to determine how much local invention and adaptations these Mexican creations involved. The use of more Mexican content represented savings for Editorial Juventud as well as an easier chain of production that did not have to pay for copyrights to the syndicate system, did not have to import and transport any plates from the United States and did not have to translate and type text inside strips. Along with the comparison of inner pages, the creation of original Mexican covers showed a different level of graphic construction. U.S. originals circulated as comic strips in newspapers and did not have covers. More disconnected from the United States traditions of graphic storytelling, but assisted as well by orientalist tropes, comic magazines printed in Mexico to be distributed in the American Hemisphere also developed standard views about remote ancestral pasts that involved Indigenous populations. I will discuss a particular example in the following section.

Organized in a diagrammatic continuum of pulses, graphic currents and printed streams show a “notion of agency that crosses the human-nonhuman divide.”¹¹⁰ It moves from printed forms and their edges to social behaviors. In this animated

¹⁰⁹ Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 93, 136 and 142.

¹¹⁰ Bennet, Jane. “The Agency of Assemblages and the North American Blackout,” *Public Culture*, 17(3), Duke University Press, 2005, p. 446.

diagram an “ethnography of forms” can be found, to borrow terms from Gaonkar and Povinelli:

the diagram, as Foucault’s acolyte Gilles Deleuze would name this node in the production of life that provides us with the outline of the thing and its excess. This *ethnography of forms*, for want of a better term, can be carried out only within a set of circulatory fields populated by myriad forms, sometimes hierarchically arranged and laminated but mostly undulating as an ensemble, as a *mélange*, going about their daily reproductive labor of mediating psychosocial praxis.¹¹¹

The animated diagram is dynamic and groups together symbolic and material elements, artistic and commercial, abstract and political, natural and invented, industrial and artisanal. In the understanding of Jane Bennett, the pulses of different units are added without integration: “Because each member-actant maintains an energetic press slightly ‘off’ from that exuded by the assemblage, such assemblages are never fixed but open-ended block wholes.”¹¹² Impulses across this assemblage move from the stream of creative origin to what happens in the softer waves of centralized power, where their ghostly racialized coloured forms are the standard of what the eye is allowed to see. Following the proposal of Karen Barad, confronting such assemblages we face an “ambiguity of scale” in which “proximity and location measures of spatiality become ineffective. Distance loses its objectivity -its edge- to pressing questions of boundary and connectivity.”¹¹³ The characteristics of an area of unstable borders and relative distances, overflow edges and fuzzy depths and extend their impact pages outside, to the societies and visual economies in which comic magazines circulate.

¹¹¹ Gaonkar, Parameshwar Dilip and Elizabeth A. Povinelli. “Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition,” in *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2003, pp. 391-392.

¹¹² Bennett, 2005, p. 447.

¹¹³ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Duke University Press, Durham / London, 2007, p. 223.

As comics took over multiple consecutive pages, formal resources of perspective, administration of speed, logics of association, juxtaposition, and contrast —among many others— enriched the language of cartooning and partially reshaped its politics about forms. Unlike filmic sequences that run their course in a continuous whole, sequences of multiple panels inside comic books are bound —and contained— by the gutter, the blank space in between the frames of the panels of a comic. This architectural resource introduced pauses, silences, jumps and the space for guttural textures. Similar to storyboards, comics expose simultaneously a sequence of visual narration and its structure. Running a succession of panels always requires the activation of the reader, who drives the speed of the montage.

While articulating their own structure of rhythms about ideal cities and exotic scenarios, the comic reader would be confronted with a language that, often, brought racial preoccupations and social anxieties to the forefront. The comic magazine became an industrially serialized provider of saturated visuals about twisting and contrasting lines and narrative orders. Hyper visible Yellow incarnated racial danger and alarm in a graphic visual universe that was already thick with exaggerated expressions of discomfort about the diluting of social difference.

These graphic signs modelled Chinese characters into materials controlled by someone against them. This antagonism aimed to keep the anti-Chinese public animated. The graphic constitution of *chinos* as monsters and astringently saturated forms documents the values of their persecution and contours of the structures that invested in maintaining such haunting figures in fashion. For Alice Jim “the spectre of yellow peril discourse” remains “obviously [...] in our face.” It started “referring to the alleged threat of ‘Asiatic invasions’ by unassimilable ‘filthy yellow hordes’ to the preservation of white nations, became the prevailing imperialist discourse legislating Chinese identity

and immigration across the British Empire, including territories in North America (present-day Canada and the United States,) Australia, South Africa and elsewhere.”¹¹⁴ Mexico contributed with a standard of its own.

Golden era

Pepín arrived on the market in September of 1936, distributed by Editorial Juventud, and became the most successful of the first-generation comic magazines printed in Mexico. Stylistically, it was less conservative than *Paquín*, and unlike its rival *Pepín*, it was not invested in trying to emulate *belle époque* styles of drawing. Its lack of formality revelled in grotesque high contrast. *Pepines*, the plural of a *Pepín* magazine that became the Mexican slang for comic magazines, were made faster, with less polished strokes and a guaranteed abundance of arresting visual roughness. While Editora Sayrols published illustrated magazines of different sorts, and some Nazi propaganda as observed in Chapter One, Editorial Juventud, founded by Coronel García Valseca, was based on a business model founded expressly to print comic magazines. The first successful product of Editorial Juventud was the comic magazine *Paquito* (1935-1950). According to Jorge Hernández Pirod, “to support this magazine, Editorial Juventud made connections with a number of comic unions, mainly King Features Syndicate.”¹¹⁵

As I explained above, in 1935 President Cárdenas created PIPSA and through it were established federal subsidies for paper,¹¹⁶ and centralized control over media owners. Media owners were represented on PIPSA’s board of directors. Among its stakeholders

¹¹⁴ Jim, Alice. “Yellow Man,” in *After all*, Autumn-Winter 2018, No. 46.
<https://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.46/lee>

¹¹⁵ Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 50.

¹¹⁶ Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 51.

we find Miguel Lanz Duret and Félix Palavicini from *El Universal*, Rodrigo de Llano from *Excélsior*, Coronel García Valseca from Editorial Juventud, and Ignacio Herrerías, a printer businessman who came not from tabloid newspapers but from the entertainment press, with magazines like *Mujeres y deportes* and the comic magazine *Chamaco*. All these businessmen operated during the rule of General Elías Calles.

Pepín copied *Paquín* in the sense that their brand name referred to the childish nick names of their owners Francisco Sayrols (*Paquín*) and Coronel José García Valseca (*Pepín*). Both magazines named their mascots after these nick names. The figures of the mascots were taken from characters of white male kids from comic strips from the United States: "*Paquín* had taken Henry as its mascot, renaming it as the magazine [*Paquín*], *Pepín* did the same with Smitty by Walter Berndt."¹¹⁷

Pepín achieved unprecedented success in a considerably large format of 37 x 28 cms. and 44 pages. It contained stories with different extensions, running from a half page to 8 pages each. During its first year of circulation, 1936, all of its stories were imported. Starting in its second year, *Pepín* took off with more and more of its content made in Mexico. It was printed on cheap "poor quality newspaper. They cost around 5c to print, and they were then sold for 10 c in newsstands, barbershops, markets, apartment blocks and villages."¹¹⁸

Both *Paquín* and *Pepín* distributed *Terry and the Pirates*. In the version appearing in *Pepín*, the translated texts of the imported strip were hand drawn. In 1936 a boom in a genre of exotic adventures was starting, responding partially to the emergence of a transnational printed climate that relied heavily on the propaganda of war and Yellow

¹¹⁷ Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 49. My translation.

¹¹⁸ Smith, 2018, p. 192.

peril fantasies.¹¹⁹ Graphic values in North America overlapped and supported each other, consolidating perceptions and indelible traditions.

Milton Caniff, like other cartoonist drawing exotic adventures, displayed a durable passion for the dehumanized representation of Asian types and exuberant landscapes.¹²⁰ He showed his knowledge of phrenology and interest in anthropomorphism in his illustrated manual *How to spot a Jap* (1942,) where he provided excruciating detail to methodically differentiate between Chinese, Koreans and Japanese. On top of the comic strips circulated by the New York News Syndicate in multiple newspapers in the U.S., he produced a weekly version of Terry's strip for newspapers published for military camps, subject to military contractual obligations, and his new version of Terry included the creation of sensual oriental women.¹²¹

In **fig. 6** we see three covers of *Pepín* with Yellow characters. All of them were based on characters from *Dick Tracy* and *Terry and the Pirates* but were, at the same time, original Mexican creations. When these characters from the U.S. jump to the Mexican covers, they are being redrawn and coloured in original compositions, incarnating probably unseen social situations for a totally different audience. *Pepín* exploited the potential of cover art as a space of coloured cultural adaptations and production of

¹¹⁹ Terry came from the format of a daily strip for the *Chicago Tribune* and was later distributed in other newspapers by the New York News Syndicate. Since 1940, the story circulated too as a weekly in the States, in the format of a special page printed in colour for Sunday editions.

¹²⁰ Terry and the Pirates follows the path of the classics of comics, being remediated for radio and tv and reprinted in waves in the formats of comic compilations, and eventually hard cover special editions for distribution across different eras. After Caniff finished his contract with Chicago Tribune Syndicate, George S. Wunder continued drawing the strip for 26 years, until 1973.

¹²¹ "Contractual obligations forced him to substitute it with another strip, which became 'Male Call', starring the equally sensual Miss Lace. The gag-a-week strip was distributed to military newspapers by the government's Camp Newspaper Service from the winter of 1943 through the springtime of 1946." Bas Schuddeboom, "Milton Caniff," <https://www.lambiek.net/artists/c/caniff.htm>

poster like social messages staging concise compositions of social situations charged with the signs of race gender, age, and class.

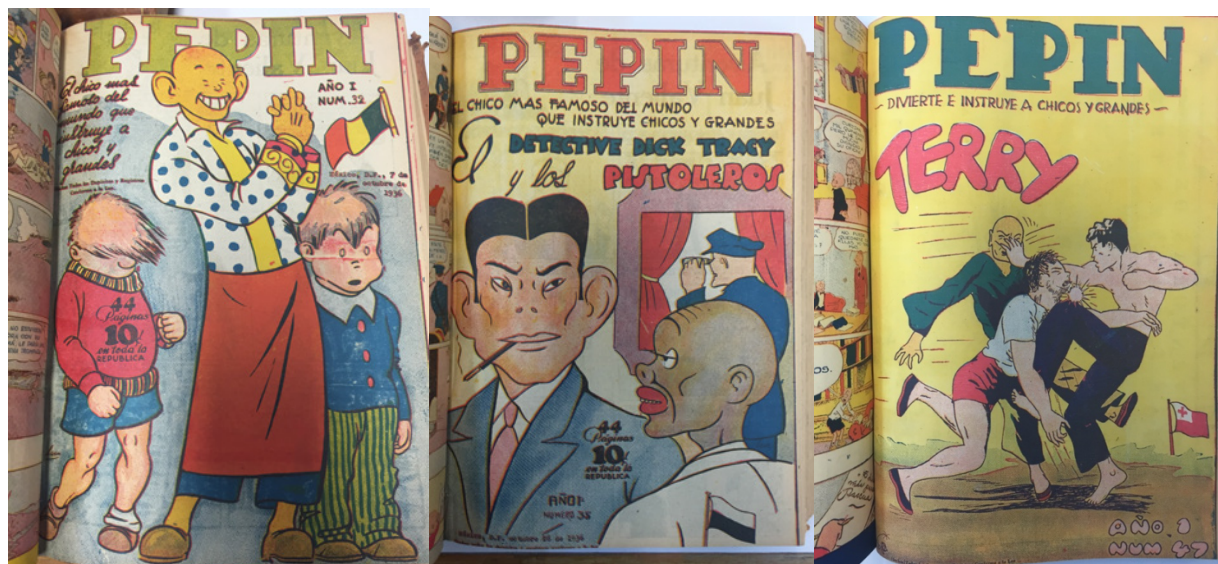


Fig. 6. Three covers of *Pepín* depicting Chinese figures. *Pepín. El Chico más Famoso del mundo que instruye a chicos y grandes*. No. 32 (October 7 of 1936), No. 35 (October 28 of 1936), and No. 47 (January 19 of 1937). Editorial Juventud, Mexico City.

In all of these covers with their Yellow characters made in Mexico we find a display of whiteness that nests in light pinks, filling contours of innocence or authority. Light Pink placed next to Yellow is endangered, in roles often filled by children, women, and elders, and other versions of the slightly helpless. Lighter shades of Pink can also incarnate the super active and compulsive shape of athletic, brave masculinity. Contoured by this figure, contact with Yellow is systematically choreographed as vigorous wrestling and physical punishments. Fists, and forceful impact enable light Pink bodies to legitimately contact and touch Yellow.

The cover in the center displays the greatest subtlety of semitones. The tallest figure is a dangerously pink-passing Yellow character who stands, arrogant and refined. Dressed

in high business style, his strong jaw line is contoured with sickly bright orange. His gnarled cranial structure sinks around his slanted eyes. This determined, twisted gaze race is paired with the sleepy half-opened eyes of the Black character and is being ignored by the eyes of a white police officer, looking the other way with his binoculars. The Black character is renamed in inside pages with the very Mexican name of Pancracio. His familiar name does not translate into any possibility of graphic assimilation. The imagination that constituted this shape made the space of his skin a cruel field of constitution by subjugation, where animal-like teeth and nose, empty looks, and a reduced scale conjure dominated figures. In the monochrome level of interior pages of the magazine, the text of the comics is translated but also partially adapted to Latin contexts. The process meant renaming certain characters, introducing local slang, and tweaking plots. Haunting characters are rendered more familiar, they sound local, but their graphic identity is still hypervisible, suspicious and triggers disgust.

In the following years, *Pepín* became a force that shaped a graphic canon of the comic in the Americas. Sales “hit a high of 350,000 copies per week.”¹²² Pieces from the U.S., Mexico and Spain converged in the magazine. *Moscones interplanetarios*, with a script by Valdiosera and drawings by Antonio Gutiérrez emulated *Flash Gordon* but had significant parallels with *Piratas Amarillos* and *La Mosca Tse Tse* printed in Spain. Across the Atlantic, these two stories were the occasional adventures of Roberto Alcázar, the hypermasculine White Latino protagonist.¹²³ Later, this type of heroes will be intensely developed in adventure comics from the 1960s and 1970s.

¹²² Smith, 2018, p. 192.

¹²³ Editorial Valenciana and Editorial Bruguera articulated the Spanish market of the comic magazine in the 40's and 50's. *Roberto Alcázar y Pedrín* appeared in 1940 as a booklet with cover in colour printed weekly. Published “new” material until 1976, with a total of 1219 numbers. It continued to be reprinted during the 1980's. The editions in the 1980 are 16 pages magazines printed in full color, in 18 x 26 cms

Hemispheric and Transatlantic resonance can also be found in stories originally written for *Pepín*. “El Flechador del Cielo” was created by Alfonso Tirado in 1937. “El Flechador” was, in a peculiar sense, more local than the imperialist, exotic adventures circulating at the time. It twisted symbols of indigeneity to fit the fantasies of *criollos*, the white passing heirs of Latin colonial elites. Away in exotic lands but connected to the imperial metropolis through birth and whiteness, *criollos* (White Latinos) kept the most legitimately human-like shape in this fantastic ideation of remote times. Placed on the page next to anonymous indigenous savages and caveman of mixed ethnicities, these white monochrome characters were the chosen warrior cast of superior physique and beauty (fig. 7).

rectangular formats. There are not indications of how the format evolved. Porcel Torrens, Pedro. *Clásicos en Jauja. La historia del tebeo valenciano*. Alicante, 2002, pp. 86-87 and Comics de Colección, https://www.comicsdecoleccion.com/comics-por-editoriales/1869-roberto-alcazar-y-pedrin-num-205-el-club-de-los-cien-arqueros.html?search_query=alcazar&results=334

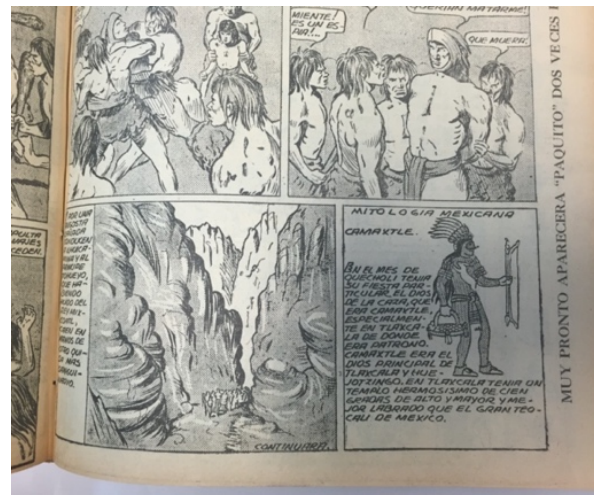
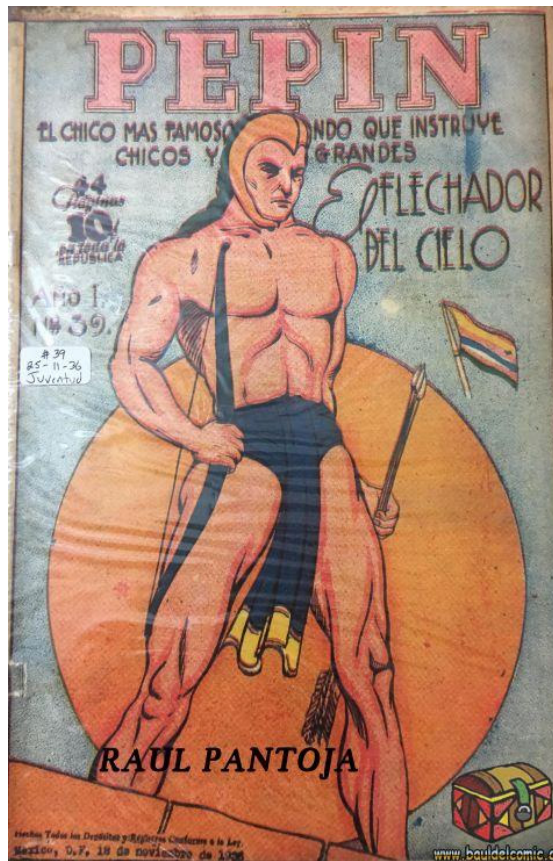


Fig. 7. Left: "El flechador del cielo," announced in the cover of *Pepín, El chico más famoso del mundo que instruye a chicos y grandes*, No 39, Year I, Wednesday November 25, 1936. Right: Tirado, Alfonso. "El flechador del cielo," last panels from No. 39, Year I, Wednesday November 25, 1936; and first panels of No. 40. Year 1, Sunday December 2, 1936.

The second of the original comics developed by *Pepín* also fantasized about the remote past at the exact moment of colonial contact, as the euphemism goes. “Aztoc: la ciudad perdida” was written by Ignacio Muñoz and illustrated by Cecil V. Law. It spoke and rendered visual a world of codified signs for a new “ruling caste”¹²⁴ meant to dominate animals and monsters (fig. 8). Early in the plot, a superhuman royal family emerges from the miscegenation of one medieval-like male figure and one female figure portraying some sort of vulgarized *art deco* indigenous royal. The mestizo royal caste hides in a subterranean city where the “spirit of a hundred generations,”¹²⁵ dressed like a Spanish conqueror and with lexicographic marks from the Spanish of Spain, blesses them from a throne. The blessing includes immortality and full access to treasures whose mysteries and nature mostly remain hidden for non-initiates.

None of these two original stories circulated by *Pepín* were specifically anti-Chinese, but used a full catalogue of orientalist symbols, atemporal chronotopes, decoration and motifs of gardens, fountains, exuberant vegetation, jewels and so on. *El flechador del cielo* is embedded in a register of exotic affections that involved combat, war, rape, genocide and twisted spiritualized desires. This mystical orientalism continued to be sheltered in the terrain of comic magazines and the imaginaries of a solid number of politicians, militias, and media owners of the postrevolutionary order. Mexican mystical orientalism would continue to inspire stories in following decades.

¹²⁴ Ignacio Muñoz and Cecil Law, “Aztoc. La ciudad perdida,” in *Pepín*, 1936, Year 1, No. 46 and 47.

¹²⁵ Ignacio Muñoz and Cecil Law, “Aztoc. La ciudad perdida,” in *Pepín*, 1936, Year 1, No. 46 and 47.

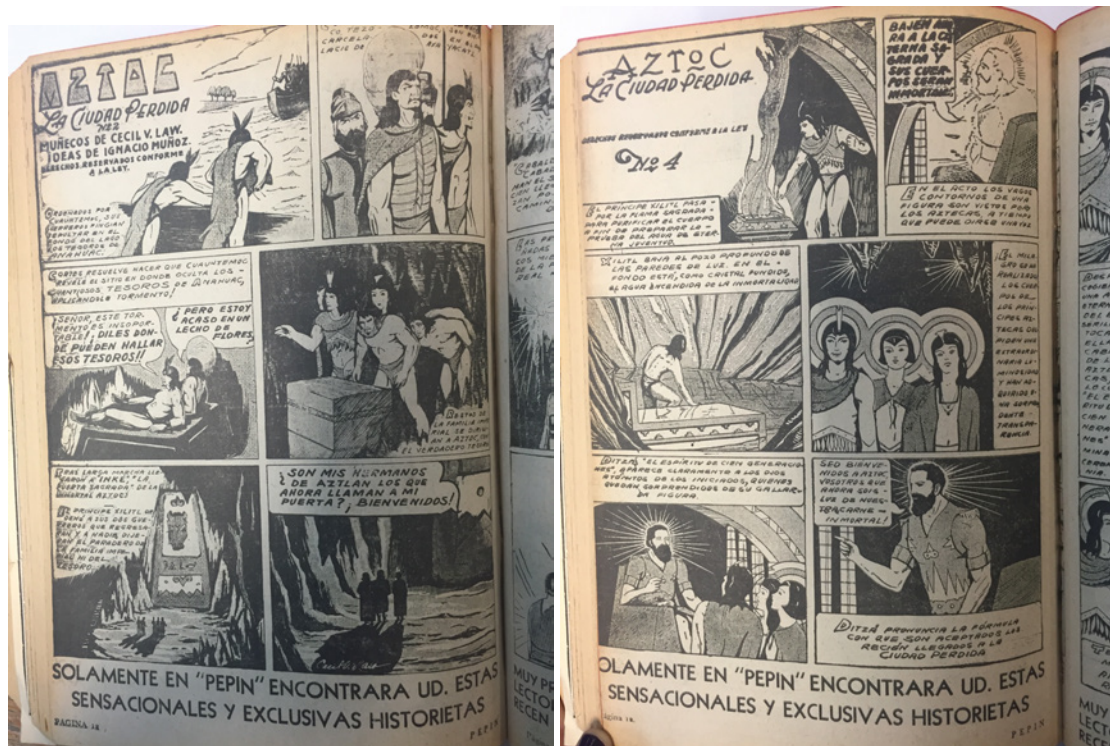


Fig. 8. Ignacio Muñoz and Cecil Law, "Aztoc. La ciudad perdida," in *Pepín*, 1936, Year 1, No. 46 and 47.

During its 18 years of continuous circulation, *Pepín* (1936-1954) published four or five weekly stories in monochrome sepia, plus some single page comics in each issue. Like other Mexican comic magazines, after circulating weekly for a few years, it attained a daily rhythm. *Pepín* printed 30,000 copies a day in its moments of greatest popularity.¹²⁶ The representation of Yellow was one of its habitual refrains. In 1938 alone, the artistic team coordinated by Ramón Valdiosera created for *Pepín* the series "Mafias Chinas," "Shangai," "Bill El Millonario Audaz," "O'Hara," "El Rajah y sus misterios de la India."

Comic magazines modelled intervernacular and Pan-American politics of colour and lines. According to Kajri Jain, the pan-national reiterative flow of the "visual idiom" of

¹²⁶ More in Hernández Pirod, 2011.

print capitalism is extended to “comics book illustrations, advertising, packaging, theatre, film, and television.”¹²⁷ Visual Print capitalism, “like other forms of community manufacture, is not just about one *imagined* community called the nation; it can also be about many *enacted* communities and their *intervernacular* interactions.”¹²⁸ Its ability to be intervernacular is based in “its ability to work *both with and across* communitarian, regional and linguistic differences to inscribe an extensive web of circulation.”¹²⁹

The Mexican comic magazine of largest circulation satisfies this premise of grouping together different cultural productions in one commodity for Pan-American distribution. Made from clashing but complementing imperialisms and heritages, the comic magazine often converged in its inhuman Yellow characters. The intervernacular mass media display of Yellow was astringent and hyper visible and justified more than alarmist racist discourse.

Amarillo mexicano

In the years of rising fascism, Walter Benjamin’s sensitive eye fixed on a peculiar tonal dynamic. Colour was particularly catching and memorable when found in the process of unending dissolution. It became astringent in the fluorescence of rotting flesh. According to Esther Leslie, Benjamin’s observation on phosphorescence speaks of arresting memories that stay, they present “deep coloration as a connection to the passing away of earthly life. The rainbow colours of phosphorescence in rotting meat are proof of this connection between colour and transition. The paling of people in

¹²⁷ Jain, 2007, p. 15.

¹²⁸ Jain, 2007, p. 72.

¹²⁹ Jain, 2007, p. 69.

death [...] is a passing into the finality of death and the zone of *überidisch* [...] It leaves behind unending dissolution."¹³⁰

The undisputable control of the Clan Calles in Sonora left in its most haunting printed material a Yellow trophy of genocide. The book *El Ejemplo de Sonora* provided a map which legend explains what Yellow is for the patriotic anti-Chinese man: "Mexican: the colour yellow that you see over the map of your *patria* is the demonstration of the Mongol dominion. You see Sonora clean of this Asiatic stain."¹³¹ As the map illustrates, once the Yellow "stain" is removed, vast whiteness emerges (**fig. 9**). Within the pages of the same book, Yellow was the colour of skin dissolving into death, it tasted like purulent wounds, and infectious secretions. Mexican Yellow saturates the eye and captures. Modelled as a technique of horror, full printed colour unmuted monochrome lynching photos, photos of piles of rotting corpses of *chinos* in the street, impaled body parts, and unburied flesh produced during the anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico.

This genocidal shade of Yellow grabs by the guts, it is haunting and terribly sensorial. It is based on revolting types industrially printed and massively displayed. According to Jack Tchen, affectively, Yellow propaganda hails through a visceral animation of politically operative nightmares: "heavily coded with repeated motifs of thread and fear, hail on a visceral, often subconscious level [...] Fear as a recurrent pattern, as a tradition, becomes part of the politics of people. It becomes ideology and faith."¹³²

¹³⁰ Recollection of Leslie about "On Fantasy," Leslie, 2004, p. 265.

¹³¹ Espinoza, José Ángel. *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Mexico City, 1932, p. 186. My translation.

¹³² Tchen, John Kuo Wei and Yeats, Dylan. *Yellow Peril. An archive of Anti-Asian fear*. Verso, London / New York, 2014, p. 16.



Fig. 9. The colour Yellow in Anti-Chinese propaganda for illustrated books, anonymous, in Espinoza, José Ángel. *El Ejemplo de Sonora*, Mexico City, 1932, pp. 186 and 93.

These models echoed Orientalist classic motifs adapted to a more agile palette of violence for daily distribution. With the amplitude of tonalities in full coloured images, emotional possibilities and saturated emotions grew as well. One could enter into this universe of graphic violence *a toda plana*, or just access it via its covers. In this universe of graphic printed forms, the Yellow got dense and sticky around villains, monsters, beasts, anthropomorphic details of vices and depravations. Repellent and alluring, violence also twisted into erotic figures.

The press campaign against the Chinese was specific and vast during the 1920s, while numerous rules were imposed against the creation or sustenance of families and communities of the diaspora. Behind militia, green or golden militarized castes, the anti-yellow campaign made of Sonora a territory of exemption. Judicial anti-Chinese practices need to continue to be formally studied, but the tendency of cooperation between anti-Chinese governments and the Mexican Supreme Court seems strong.¹³³ When the comic magazine emerged and was consolidated as a format during the 1930s, anti-Chinese violence in Mexico became more institutionalized and contained but did not stop. General Lázaro Cárdenas built a reputation of benevolence by granting asylum to thousands of Spanish citizens after the Civil War (1936-1939) particularly refugees and the orphans of fallen Republicans. However, he also:

refused entry to the small numbers of Chinese man who had remained with their Mexican -origin families in China and wanted to repatriate to Mexico in the late 1930s. [...] preventing Chinese men from returning brought intense suffering to some families. [...] in the end, Cardenas's exclusionary repatriation fell in line with dominant revolutionary and post-revolutionary notions of race and mestizaje that excluded Asians.¹³⁴

¹³³ De la Rosa, 2016, p. 97.

¹³⁴ Schiavone Camacho, Julia María. *Chinese Mexicans. Transpacific Migration and the search for a homeland 1910-1960*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2012, p. 7.

Anti-Chinese violence in Mexico was strongly rooted in military and political networks that shaped the structure of the government party since its foundation in 1929.

Cárdenas fully belonged to both. In 1937, when the disarticulation of the ARM group was imminent, Nicolás Rodríguez addressed his faithful *dorados* for the farewell. The speech contained hypermasculinity, twisted mysticism, melancholy, and was also egregious. Rodríguez's prophesied a time when the golden army of titans, as chosen soldiers would "use [their] spirits of strength and the enthusiasm that the *Patria* demands from [them], so that, when the times comes to say 'to the fight, comrades' all, like a *falange* of titans, will answer with the cry of *PRESENT*." ¹³⁵

The ARM coat of arms had the initials of the organization on top of a gavel and a shield that is a remodelled version of the Nahua glyphs of *macahuitl* and *chimalli* from codices of central Mexico. With this procedure, anti-Chinese clans reclaimed ancestral ownership over the land and transformed Indigenous signs into Nazi emblems. Their politics and speeches received front- page attention and sympathy from newspapers, and some complicated opposition.

A cartoon published by *Revista Futuro* (1933-1946) offers an awkward snapshot of late 1930s politics in Mexico and the role of printed media. *Revista Futuro* was published by the ideologically elusive figure of Vicente Lombardo Toledano who was a part of the President Cárdenas bureaucratic apparatus, while also a leader of the workers movement. Lombardo Toledano published in various newspapers of the far right and the government left, but the cartoon published by his magazine presents a Manichean vision (fig. 10).

¹³⁵ Nicolás Rodríguez, quoted by Pérez Montfort, 1987, p. 75. My translation.

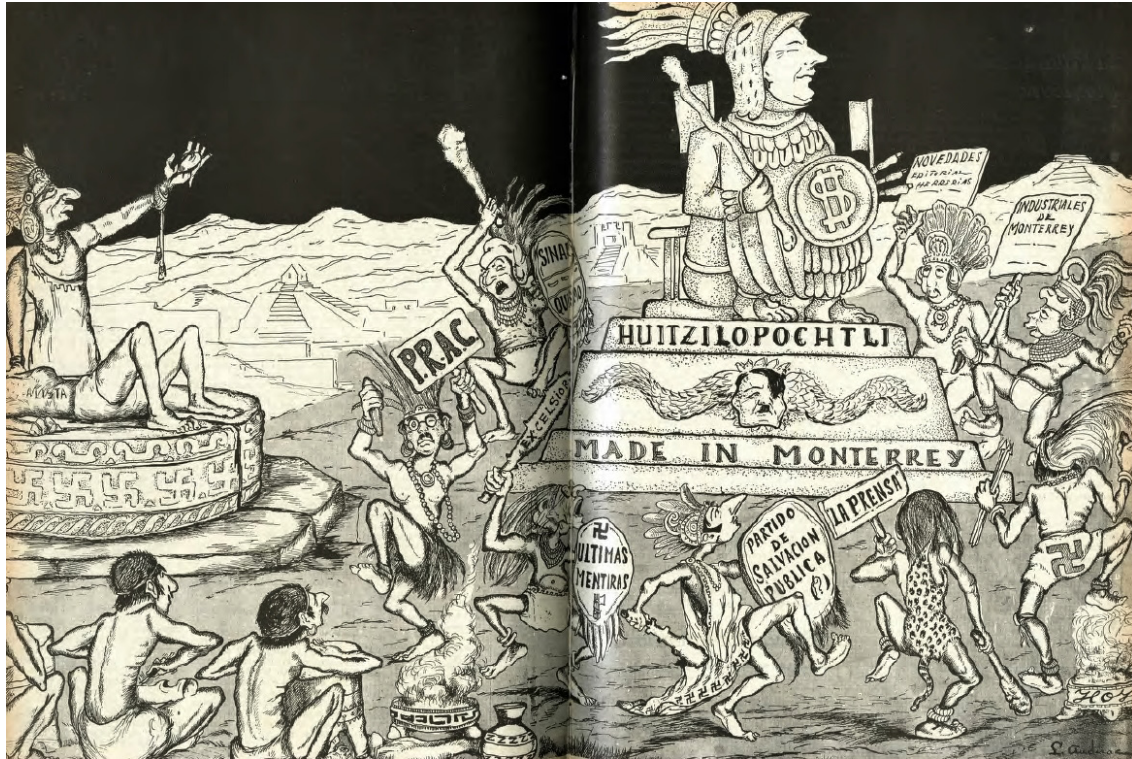


Fig. 10. Audirac, Luis. "Danza en torno al candidato millonario," *Revista Futuro*, August of 1939, No. 42, Mexico City.

The cartoon by Luis Audirac presents the leaders of the Mexican right wing as cavemen wearing fake indigenous attire. A human heart is offered in ritual sacrifice to a "Made-in-Monterrey Hitler." The colossal figure who receives the offerings and endorsements is the ARM presidential candidate Juan Andrew Almazán, dressed as Huitzilopochtli, the Mexica war god, who holds what could be the ARM emblem altered with a dollar sign in the center. When Almazán lost the elections in 1940, he toured the country looking for supporters and included anti-Chinese values in his platform: "I believe that the Asian problem should be radically resolved by shipping the Chinese to their

country, [...] we have the indisputable right to look for a better injection of blood for our race and to prevent its degeneration.”¹³⁶

Coming back to the cartoon, Monterrey was the operations center of a group of conservative businessmen, Industriales de Monterrey. This group is mentioned by name in the cartoon via a banner held by Luis N. Morones. Morones was Secretary of Economy for President Elías Calles, leader of the workers union during the Maximato, and two years of the General Cárdenas presidency. He wears a headdress inspired by a Quetzalcoatl ceramic jug, a symbol of the Mason lodges in Mexico.

The most notable Mexican publishing entrepreneurs are depicted in the cartoon, except for Coronel García Valseca, and dance in a circle around the Nazi idol. Senior Directors of daily industrial newspapers *La Prensa*, *Excélsior*, *Últimas Noticias* (Últimas Mentiras) pop out. In the corner, the owner of the magazine *Hoy* offers sacrificial fire.¹³⁷ According to some, *Hoy* published “pieces with tendencies that were Hispanist fascist-catholic and *anticardenista* (against General Cárdenas).”¹³⁸ Despite the antagonism suggested by the cartoon, and the quoted opinion, *Hoy* also published official government pieces and gave frequent space to the technically leftist owner of *Futuro* Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Since 1935, all the figures in the cartoon, no matter their political preference, had solidly collaborated with President Cárdenas via PIPSA.

This is also the case of the only younger press businessman depicted in the cartoon, Ignacio Herreras, who appeared on the Mexican publishing scene as the founder of

¹³⁶ Almazán, Juan Andreu. “Antecedentes sobre mi actitud para el exterior,” *Informe y Documentos sobre la Campaña política de 1940*. Senado de la republica México, Mexico City, 2003 [1940], p. 87. My translation.

¹³⁷ *Hoy* published at the time the entire higher cultural spectrum from Vaconcelos, Salvador Novo, Xavier Villaurutia to Rivera, Siqueiros, and José Revueltas.

¹³⁸ Pilatowsky, 2016, p. 49.

the Asociación de Periodistas Metropolitanos in 1911. A cousin of photographer Agustín Víctor Casasola, he was the cofounder of the Agencia Fotográfica Mexicana. He had cultivated a friendship with General Elías Calles since the 1920s, when he established the powerful tabloid *El Gráfico*, which specialized in sports and *socialité* coverage. Herrerías studied journalism in the United States and returned to become a writer for *Excélsior*. He founded the magazine *Mujeres y Deportes* which had print runs of 100,000 from 1935 onwards. The comic magazine *Chamaco* was distributed in Central and South America thanks to its interdependence with the magazine *Novedades*. This illustrated tabloid magazine, also referred to by the cartoon, was considered by some to be “aggressively pro-Franco, anti-Communist, and openly sympathetic towards private companies and the Catholic church.”¹³⁹ Lombardo Toledano described it as a media that distributed “the most profane gossip, made in the sacristies, the hidden nuns’ colleges, in the back rooms of Spaniards or Italians shops.”¹⁴⁰ But *Novedades* often defended President Cárdenas.

A similar ideological inconsistency happened with *La Prensa*, which fit far-right classifications but experienced its second and best era in terms of print runs during the General Cárdenas government. When *La Prensa* was directed by Luis Novaro, important figures of this newspaper represented Mexico in international journalist associations. In 1935, Novaro took on Fernando Mora as manager; Mora would become the “permanent General Delegate in Mexico of the new International Federation of Journalists.”¹⁴¹ Propelled by General Cárdenas, Editorial Novaro started

¹³⁹ González Marín, Silvia. *Prensa y poder político. La elección presidencial de 1940 en la prensa mexicana*. Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico City, 2006, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Lombardo Toledano, *Futuro, revista mensual*, August, 1940, p. 14. My translation. The tone in Spanish is rather insulting through the words *mercanchifle* and *gachupín* that do not have a direct translation to English.

¹⁴¹ González Marín, 2016, p. 9.

to publish Pan-American comic magazines soon after, amassing a significant fortune in the 1950s.

In 1938, Cárdenas reformed the PNR to create the PRM, Partido de la Revolución Mexicana. This second version of the government party “was born as a party of mass organizations that gave life to the party, and of which the party should be [...] coordinator, a servant, and the expression of its political unity around the program of the Revolution.”¹⁴² This program was determined by General Cárdenas.

Editorial Juventud experienced a brief *interregnum* that involved Engineer Bátiz. During the Mexican Revolution, he was an early supporter of the *maderistas* and *villistas*, whose combat behaviors included the targeting of *chinos* and supervising infrastructure projects that used “cuadrillas” of indentured *chinos*, like the highway between Mexicali and Ensenada in Baja California, and the train tracks of Salina Cruz in Oaxaca.¹⁴³ After these activities, he launched his successful political career as temporary Governor of Sinaloa, *diputado* and *senador*, culminating in his leadership of the Pro Raza Comité between 1931 and 1933, where he was the author and spokesperson of anti-Chinese political horror. He was honored in the book *El Ejemplo de Sonora* with an elegant portrait that presented him as who has “contributed to the resolution of the Chinese problem in Sinaloa and to the propagation of the Campaign all over the country as Secretary of the Directive Committee of the National Anti-Chinese Campaign.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Córdova, Arnaldo. “La política de masas del cardenismo y el futuro de la izquierda en Mexico,” in *Cuadernos políticos*, No. 19, January-March, 1979, Editorial Era, Mexico City, p. 18.

¹⁴³ “The establishment of Salina Cruz as a reliable Mexican port drew hundreds of Chinese people to clandestine journeys. Night landing at this port provided a reliable location for clandestine entry until bans on nocturnal disembarkation in 1919.” Chang, 2017, p. 170.

¹⁴⁴ Espinoza, 1932, p. 65. My translation.

In November of 1938, Coronel José García Valseca communicated with General Cárdenas asking for a one-year leave of absence from his role as manager of Editorial Juventud. The letter indicates that his position would be covered by Engineer Bátiz, his superior in the government magazine *Provincias*, and Jesus B. González, director of *El Heraldo* at the time.¹⁴⁵ *El Heraldo* had been the main developer of modern Mexican comic strips since 1919.¹⁴⁶ It created the anti-Chinese *Lipe*; and the patriotic *Don Catarino y su apreciable familia*, full of dehumanized Yellow and Black characters. During the presidency of General Cárdenas, Engineer Bátiz did not accept the Secretary of Education but founded and directed the Instituto Politécnico Nacional, the biggest educational project of General Cárdenas.

Anti-Chinese politics connected an entire litter of elite politicians and media who took over the Mexican public sphere and institutions towards 1920. The factors that marked the end of the dominance of this revolutionary anti-Chinese ruling class are not entirely clear. For some, the year of rupture is 1936, when General Cárdenas expelled General Elías Calles from Mexico, although he returned in 1942. As pointed out by Daniela Gleizer, General Cárdenas' Immigration Law, *Ley General de Población*, issued in 1936, did not cancel circulares 250 and 157 from the early 1930s, which extended the effect of laws modelled during the worst period of the anti-Chinese campaign.¹⁴⁷

They were cancelled in 1937, when General Cárdenas gave the Secretary of Government full authority to foment integration through *mestizaje*: "racial distribution within the territory; the ethnic fusion of national groups between each other; the

¹⁴⁵ Letter of Coronel García Valseca to President Lázaro Cárdenas, November 7, 1938, AGN LC 704/305. Quoted by Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 54.

¹⁴⁶ In it appeared strips made in Mexico since 1919 with its strips about films *Películas*, and *Historietas para niños* based in Esopo's fables. Hernández Pirod, 2011, p. 40.

¹⁴⁷ Gleizer, 2011, pp. 96-97.

increase of national *mestizaje* through the assimilation of foreign elements.”¹⁴⁸ Not all foreign elements were considered assimilable and, in 1938, General Cárdenas implemented a restrictive system of quotas for the number of foreigners that could enter Mexico. Its interpretation entirely depended on the Secretary of Government Miguel Alemán (1940-1945), and consular authorities. There was never any limit for U.S. and Spanish citizens, while the rest of Europe and Japan had a limit of 5,000 individuals; undesirable ethnicities, including Chinese, were limited at 100 per year.¹⁴⁹

In 1938, these restrictions combined with the denial of repatriation for Chinese fathers of Mexican Chinese families by General Cárdenas, prevented the reunification of Mexican Chinese families. Other similarities between the policies of General Elías Calles and General Cárdenas were the “crusade against alcohol, gambling, prostitution and vice,”¹⁵⁰ and the use of radio to “inform the population about how to fight plagues and epidemics and launch hygienic and *pro-aseo* programs.”¹⁵¹

At the level of graphic media, the cartooned trauma, dehumanization and bestialization of Yellow characters, brutal and eroticized plots and other social marks of violence circulated by comic magazines since the late 1930s, and became part of a Pan-American canon that remained in place many decades later. At the level of the media owners, the most credited cartoonists and the leaders of institutions regulating printed matter, we can also map continuities of names and accumulation of capitals. The case

¹⁴⁸ Diario Oficial, August 29, 1936, Ley General de Población, article one. Quoted by Gleizer, 2011, p. 75. My translation.

¹⁴⁹ Diario Oficial, November 19, 1937, Acuerdo por el cual se fijan las tablas diferenciales que regirán la admisión de extranjeros, en calidad de inmigrantes durante el año de 1938. Quoted by Gleizer, 2011, p. 79. My translation.

¹⁵⁰ Pérez Montfort, Ricardo. Lázaro Cárdenas. Un mexicano del siglo del siglo XX. Debáte, Mexico City, 2019, p. 272 and 373. My translation.

¹⁵¹ Cárdenas, Lázaro. Obras, Vol. 1, p. 373. Quoted by Pérez Montfort, 2019, p. 268.

of Coronel García Valseca is outstanding: "By 1946 he owned Mexico's two most popular comics, its most popular sports daily, and a chain of six local newspapers."¹⁵²

According to the Mexican writer and overt Nazi Salvador Borrego, one of Coronel García Valseca's biographers, by the end of the 1960s, "García Valseca's sales accounted for as much as 22 percent of the newspapers sold in the country."¹⁵³

Benjamin Smith establishes an interesting comparison: "even at the height of [William Randolph] Hearst's influence, his chain never accounted for more than 10 percent of U.S newspaper sales."¹⁵⁴

The way Mexico conceptualized the Yellow specter drastically changed in WWII, when anti-Asian sentiments switched to target the Japanese. Thus, civil associations and media initiated by Chinese in Mexico started to secure their presence in the public space. The magazine *Qiaosheng Yuekan* [monthly voice of the Chinese Colony], was printed in Mexico and according to Fredy Gonzalez "published more than eighty issues during the eight years of the war, was distributed for free and supported entirely through donations and advertising." In 1938, the magazine referred to how anti-Chinese violence still "lingers in our minds."¹⁵⁵

The presence of military fantasies increased in the media and while the WWII was a distant phenomenon for most Mexicans, Asian diasporas in Mexico directly experienced hardships and transformations. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in

¹⁵² Smith, 2018, p. 194.

¹⁵³ Smith, 2018, p. 95.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, 2018, p. 95.

¹⁵⁵ *Qiaosheng Yuekan*, July 1938, p. 7, No.5, Mexico City. Quoted and translated by González, Fredy. *Paisanos Chinos. Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico*. University of California Press, Oakland, 2017, p. 80.

December of 1941, President Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) designated General Cárdenas the Commander of the Pacific Region and Secretary of National Defense in September of 1942. Under General Cárdenas' leadership "the structure, conformation, image and even the mentality of the Mexican armed forces" was changed.¹⁵⁶ Beginning in December of 1942, with the assistance of the Mexican army, Japanese Mexicans started to be sent to concentration camps in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Perote, Temixco, and Querétaro.¹⁵⁷

Despite the genocidal anti-Chinese campaign in Mexico, by 1943 "the Chinese diplomatic corps estimated that there were 12,400 Chinese in the country."¹⁵⁸

Complicating the panorama of the Asian diaspora in Mexico, Chinese Mexicans were called to enrolled in the military and participate in the anti-Japanese resistance. Their participation was never numerous. At the time, about 30% of the registered population of Chinese in Mexico were "foreign-born Chinese Mexicans,"¹⁵⁹ which suggest that the great majority of Mexican Chinese were mixed raced, and like my ancestors, based their survival on completely avoiding any census.

¹⁵⁶ Pérez Montfort, Ricardo. *Lázaro Cárdenas. Un mexicano del siglo del siglo XX*. Debate, Mexico City, 2019, p. 449. My translation.

¹⁵⁷ Peddie, Francis. "La colonia Japonesa de México y la segunda guerra mundial." Master's in History Thesis. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 2005, pp. 83-84.

¹⁵⁸ González, 2017, p. 68.

¹⁵⁹ González, 2017, p. 88.

For the future

Throughout this dissertation, I have proposed concepts and methods for research on modern print culture, industrial comics and the way race was materialized in them in fundamental ways. I explored these lines of inquiry in the context of the first half of the 20th century in Mexico, and the way I studied them has drawn connections between rich, developing fields such as the history of the modern press and of the market for comics in the Spanish language, studies of trauma and genocide, and histories of the multi-scalar articulation of anti-Asian hatred; a phenomenon or racial hate that was local and multinational and had hefty impact across the Americas.

We are still far from a historical clarity that only a structured accumulation of interpretations and sources concerning the graphic press and racial violence will allow, but at the end of this effort, I have a heightened curiosity about print culture and a very tangible sense of wonder, initially unforeseen. In the following pages, I articulate some of the arguments I consider most significant, either because they unsettle dominant interpretations or because of the questions they leave unanswered. I group them into two bigger themes: one having to do with forms of violence in relation to industrial comics, the other concerned with questions of ontology and phantasmagoria.

Forms of violence and industrial comics

I have looked at cartoons and comics as distinct printed forms that interact and contrast with numerous other forms that circulated massively within what I call the Universe of Graphic Forms. In this convoluted universe, interactions of images and texts can remain rare or singular or, if they are repeated, may shape standard formats such as satirical magazines, illustrated newspapers, or comic magazines. Reiterative interactions in this universe occur pre-industrially (1890-1920) and then industrially (1930-1950) in Mexico through rotary printing techniques and other mechanized characteristics such that their patterns of production and content are rendered massively abundant, numbered, and circulated as series. The characteristic of seriality—coherent through the sequentiality of one issue following another—affected the volume, availability, extension, frequency, integration, and durability of printed matter and forms of violence.

It is less abstract to imagine industrial patterns as formal outputs that delineate printed matter, defined, for example, by their extension, size, standard layout, type of paper, inks employed, technique of printing and so on. However, these formal factors are also engaged in modelling and condensing the visual materials of racial forms. Industrial and serial patterns have made forms like the comic—in all its formats of circulation—a privileged ground for dense and durable graphics whose enormous volume boldly impacted the images, contours and stereotypes that shaped mainstream perceptions of what is human, created hierarchies, and served to provide the outline of the nonhuman.

Thus far, studies of the racial constitution of Asian diasporas and the aesthetic of racist campaigns made against them have mostly focused on the modern, racialized notion of yellow, which emerged in the 1870s in the context of the German Empire, and

conceptualized Asians as dangerous invaders who were somehow distant. In this regard, the Mexican context I studied offers a productive contrast for two reasons. Firstly, by the 1870s the immigration of Asian laborers in Mexico was beginning to increase, and both the possibility and specific context of their real presence was discussed by newspapers. Secondly, Mexico's relations with Asia during the colonial history of the Americas were among the strongest, comparable only with those of Peru, and this historical specificity created deeply rooted Asian ontologies in Mexico, long before the appearance of the notion of yellow. I will come back to this long-term articulation in the next segment of the conclusions.

While the racial category of yellow started to permeate European and Anglo-American channels of information, the preferred racial terms to designate Asians in Mexico in the last third of the 19th century conveyed more invisibility. As I show in my research on Mexican newspapers, the racial terms that operated most often were *colonos* and *motores de sangre* (blood engines).¹ Both terms were ethnically ambiguous, even as they fabricated legitimacy for the highly unregulated exploitation of Asian laborers in Mexico. In contrast, other countries of the Americas, such Peru, Cuba, or the United States, participated in a more centralized traffic of laborers, through the British Coolie Trade or the Spanish Coolie Trade between, roughly, the 1830s and 1880s.

The Coolie System enslaved laborers of East Asian and South Asian origins with time-limited contracts that few of them survived. The migration pattern of Asians to countries in the Americas followed different trajectories. In two of the bigger markets for the collie trade, United States and Cuba, the enslavement of Black people and

¹ I have given credit to Jason Chang who pointed to the term for the first time, Chang, 2017, p. 51. I hope the examples I have added of how the term circulated in the Mexican press contribute to the discussion he initiated.

Asians happened simultaneously, until 1865 in the U.S., and until 1886 in Cuba, lasting 35 and 56 years respectively. Mexico abolished slavery in 1810 and although it had a smaller and less regulated traffic of Asians, it continued to employ them in adapted versions of slavery and the coolie trade in plantations until 1910. Despite these significant local differences, hemispheric dynamics converged in the last third of the 19th century, when the coolie trade was being dismantled and an international wave of Anti-Chinese violence expanded across the Americas.

One of the areas opened by my research that feels most promising is the translocal articulation of anti-Asian hate in the Americas and the study of the ways in which highly biased reports about violence were circulated by newspapers across the continent. We are far from attaining a comprehensive legibility for Anti-Asian violence, but while the following data should be taken cautiously, it indicates very solid dynamics. The Mexican press reported on a massacre of Chinese for the first time in 1871, when at least 15 men were killed in Los Angeles, in the United States. Then came the report of the first destruction of a Chinatown in 1881, in Lima, Peru, where the historically Chinese neighborhood of Capón and its residents was burned down, and survivors were expelled. I plan to continue classifying the rituals around Asian massacres but, at this point of my research, I can claim that, since 1885, we have grounds for talking about genocidal escalation. That year, the massacre of at least 50 Chinese in Wyoming, in the United States, included ethnically specific forms of torture, mutilation and the desecration of corpses.

In the Winter of 1886 in Vancouver, Canada, Chinese shops were burned and destroyed, and Chinese were expelled to the Island of Victoria in the Pacific. A comparable episode took place in Mazatlán, Mexico, during the summer of 1886. The extended Mexican press coverage of 300 Chinese laborers to be disembarked in the

Pacific port of Mazatlán started covering their journeys, from San Francisco and Vancouver. Reading through the affect of disgust transmitted by the press, it is possible to grasp that they were mutinies onboard against their travel conditions, their terrible housing conditions once disembarked, the specific ways they were subjected to policing and hygienic controls, and the harassment and physical violence they suffered at the hands of some residents of the port. What separates the Mazatlán episode from others at the time, is that the expulsion of Chinese was debated in the State congress and enforced by the Governor and the police, and that after their expulsion, they were interned on the Island of Venados in the Pacific. This may be the first episode of modern “internment” of Asians in the Americas, but a stronger argument could only be built with more research in the archives of Mazatlán and the State of Sinaloa, and a rigorous comparison with the expulsion of Chinese to Victoria Island in Canada.

As my translocal curiosity about Anti-Asian violence continued, and my notes about violence in Mexico became more systematic, I grew increasingly uncomfortable with how Anti-Asian racism in Mexico has been studied and categorized. Across the dissertation I discussed forms in which the press, textual or graphic, engaged with racial violence. In the course of this research, I noticed a second Mexican particularity. After the 1880s, Anti-Asian actions and ideologies continued to be present in the Americas, but in general terms, they unfolded in less brutal ways, at least until WWII (1939-1945). However, in contrast to this tendency towards de-escalation, at the broader hemispheric level, the Anti-Asian campaign in Mexico during the first half of the 20th century continued its genocidal escalation. I grouped my findings and the findings of other scholars so as to show four distinct waves.

The first wave of the Anti-Asian campaign in Mexico extends from 1911 to 1920 and starts with the Massacre of Torreón where at least 303 Chinese and 4 Japanese were

killed, and several genocidal logics were applied to their corpses. The second wave starts in 1921 with the prohibition of Chinese immigration to Mexico and extends until 1930. The third wave starts in 1931, when the first “expulsion of any Chinese diasporic community anywhere in the world during the twentieth century”² happened in the North of Mexico. At the end of the fourth wave, which runs from 1939 to 1941, anti-Asian hate shifted in Mexico from the Chinese to the Japanese and Koreans, who were expelled from the Pacific coastal states and those along the US border and concentrated in labor camps away from those limits. The trajectory of the fourth wave is unique in being aligned with the behaviour of the Anti-Asian campaigns in the rest of the Hemisphere. By then, Mexico had three previous waves between 1911 and 1938, and this is one of the reasons I proposed to reconceptualize Anti-Asian racism in Mexico as a genocidal movement.

Returning to the press, newspapers printed in Mexico City had begun using the term yellow at least as far back as 1899, although more intensive research in the newspapers of states like Yucatan, which borders the Caribbean, or states with a Pacific coast that received the earlier groups of Asian laborers, might adjust this parameter. In the year 1899, in which Mexico and China signed their first diplomatic agreement and Mexican periodicals started to align themselves with the campaign of the “Yellow peril;” terms like *raza amarilla* (yellow race) or *amarillos* (yellows) became more common, and the first cartoons appeared ridiculing Chinese in Mexican periodicals.

The language of cartooning, as distinct from the more ceremonious caricature that tends to focus on politicians and notorious figures, boomed as a strategy for the negotiation and design of exaggerated social types signifying the racial, class and

² Chao Romero, 2010, pp. 174-175.

gender imaginaries of modern Mexico, which included a growing population of Asians. This constitutes a third particularity of Mexican anti-Asian violence, whose context was marked by a contrast with the contraction of Chinese immigration that many nations experienced after the dismantling of the coolie system and its high mortality rate. In fact, the Chinese population in Mexico continued its growth in the 1900s. This was mainly due to the illegal traffic created by the Exclusion Act that the U.S. established in 1882. Cheap Asian labour was still in demand by Mexican companies, and several companies with U.S. and British capital continued to profit from the exploitation of Asians in Mexico after the British coolie system was abolished. At the level of the press, while the circulation of images had been accelerating in Mexico since the 1860s, the era of graphic saturation arrived with the generalized use of colour in the 1910s, coinciding with the emergence of visible Chinese communities in several cities, and with the wars, social crisis, and increase of periodical titles detonated by the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917).

The decades of the Mexican Revolution and initial post-Revolutionary period (1918-1928) saw the cultivation of several forms of violence in a context of abundant periodical production. The expansion of the periodical press and the pervasive experimentation with graphic forms and colour aligned with the anti-Chinese values of key actors of the Mexican press, such as the owners of periodicals, editors, cartoonists, and journalists, producing an effective visual materiality with which to express revolutionary theories of race. The national audience for graphic forms was exposed to repetitive imaginary lines and increasingly standardized stereotypes for understanding what should separate different ethnicities surviving in the same cities and territories in the context of civil war. The officially recorded numbers of new Chinese immigrants were about 13,000 in 1910, and 24,000 by the 1920s. In these two decades, Chinese

communities were visible in several Mexican cities and “comprised the second largest immigrant group in all of Mexico.”³

Cartoons and comics produced industrial graphic patterns delineating how human and less human groups were different to each other and participated in the construction of ethnic hierarchies complemented by orders of class and gender. Each chapter of the dissertation has presented different reiterations of this contrast between real and imagined Chinese in Mexican printed matter, as rendered public by the periodical press, books, laws, and policies. The focus across chapters shifts from the first representations of Chinese in comic strips (1908-1920s), to the emergence of the new format of the comic magazine and the depiction of Yellow characters within it (1932-1940s).

The industrial Mexican comic strip of the 1910s circulated mainly inside of daily newspapers of large circulation such as *El Imparcial* and *El País*, that assembled attractive coloured strips in their Sunday edition, and monochrome daily strips during the week. Large circulation newspapers like these two supported the creation of their own stories and imported few strips from the United States and Spain. The strip with the largest circulation at the time was neither imported nor created by a newspaper; it was a Mexican single-ink advertising comic for the company El Buen Tono. It was printed every Sunday by *El Imparcial* between 1904 and 1914, and intermittently by other dailies. To explain the dominance of the comic stories of El Buen Tono that were standardized into a 9-panel strip, scholars will have to continue imagining ways of finding archives that permit research into the more long-lasting ways they circulated outside of newspapers. El Buen Tono advertising comics also circulated as single

³ Chao Romero, 2010, p. 1.

sheets of comic strips, or single panels inside cigarette packets, were compiled inside of annual albums with a coloured cover. However, these formats are yet to be found in archives.

The research of Thelma Camacho Morfín has made significant contributions to outlining the formal characteristics of the Mexican advertising comic, and, drawing on her findings, my main contribution is to analyse their formal characteristics and to observe how this variety of formats modelled racial content. The advertising comics for *El Buen Tono* gave more space to figures that were notable due to their style, beauty, or participation in the purchasing of modern commodities. Despite this pattern, the most visible figures were the more severely cartooned low-class stereotypes that transmitted bold repugnant emotions. Among them, cruelly cartooned Chinese were in circulation since 1908. Chinese were caricatured as workers whose manners, hairstyles, shape of their eyes and jaws transmitted arresting ugliness and vicious character. These flatly cruel stereotypes were set in quotidian contexts, working at laundries or shops. Just when they started to prosper, anti-Chinese violence escalated in Mexico in 1911, and cartooning escalated too to convey dehumanization and humorize massacres.

I am the first scholar to analyze the advertising comic from *El Buen Tono* that referred to the Massacre of Chinese in Torreón in 1911. My analysis of the comic version of these horrendous historical episodes shows how graphic violence functions within the larger universe of printed forms that surrounded this comic at the time of its original circulation. Graphic advertising of racial violence circulated with fictionalized interviews, graphic jokes, and biased coverage of anti-Chinese real violence. Within this larger field of printed echoes, I have sought to maintain my concept of flat trauma. I hope that it becomes useful for theorizing and exposing the ways cartooned violence massively dispersed banal, grotesque, and softened violence, and that more concepts

like this continue to recognize the forms of power that cartoons hold in the wake of violent acts. These include the power to keep the values of perpetrators of violence in circulation after violence was committed. While flat trauma flags the density of graphic violence, it also marks places of social and historical dispute. This formal density is a crucial methodological difference with methods of visual analysis that consider violence in more surface fashions. The concept of flat trauma involves analytical and visceral efforts that link graphic forms of violence with social forms of violence, as a formalist ethnography serves to articulate an historiographical narration that faces the epistemological collapse of genocide to restore the flatness of traumatic rupture into historical amplitude.

Outside of newspapers, by the 1910s comic strips in Mexico also circulated within satirical newspapers and magazines with weekly or biweekly frequency such as *Frivolidades*, *La Risa*, and *Multicolor*. There, artists like Ernesto García Cabral and Rafael Lillo, and less trained anonymous cartoonists, contributed to the vocabulary of the media and to the ways in which way visual signs served as tools of condensation and became sticky—in the sense of recognizable, memorable, and dense—and evolved into classic tropes. Cartooned language transmitted violence in the shape of facial expressions, the personality of the characters, and the stories attached to them.

A second era of the comic strip for newspapers began in 1919, when the cartoonist Andrés Audiffred created the first Mexican comic story based on a Chinese character for the recently created newspaper *El Heraldo Ilustrado*. By then, a new generation of big format newspapers linked to different revolutionary groups dominated the Mexican press. These included *Excélsior* and *El Universal*, who invested in the creation of their own original comic stories which they assembled with strips from the U.S. translated

into Spanish. As the offer of strips diversified and started to occupy more space inside periodicals, repugnant Yellow characters were made abundant and flat.

My initial strategy to deal with this corpus of comics was visual and formal analysis, but then traveled from concrete forms to the analysis of diagrammatic pulses. At a diagrammatic level of analysis, I tried to convey how comics channel pre-industrial and industrial pulses that communicate vertically, horizontally, or diagonally across the universe of graphic forms in which they circulate, contrast, or resonate with other forms. Thinking about the flexible geometry of the diagram, I tried to map how certain signs travelled simultaneously outside of Mexico and across Mexico, or how signs referred both to hyper local contexts (using local slang or commenting local news, for example,) and signs recognizable on streams of international circulation at the same time. Occasionally, these pulses (intermittent) and streams (of higher density and permanence) were renovating old specters that had emerged from unresolved local violence, such as real lynching episodes, but their industrial dispersion linked them to other local audiences and traumatic specters.

The second format I focused on was the comic magazine, which made its appearance in Mexico in 1932 and was booming by the late 1930s. The first Mexican comic magazine was created from a comic story originally circulated by the illustrated newspaper *El Universal Gráfico*. In its transition to the format of comic magazine, the story was bound with a cover and a logo, and, following the model established by newspapers, was being assembled with other cartoons and strips, made in Mexico and the U.S. The real industrial expansion of comics came in 1934 with the creation of *Paquín* (1934-1947), *Pepín* (1936-1954) and *Chamaco* (1936-1956). These mass media comic magazines offered an expanded set of frequencies, weekly, bi-weekly, and eventually daily, and expanded length of a couple of dozens of pages. This

standardized visualization of text and its composition with graphics was key to keeping up with industrial production and while layout lost some of its inventiveness, it is this standard that made the consistency of the new format palatable.

The standard Mexican comic magazine became a light-weight format printed on cheap paper, bound with staples, with inner pages printed in one ink and a cover in colour. It was less spectacular than the comic books printed in the U.S., which were all in colour, but it was more affordable, and was produced faster and more easily. These formal advantages made the Mexican comic magazine a profitable standard commodity. Like its predecessors, it assembled Mexican comic stories and comic stories made in the U.S. that were translated into Spanish. By the late 1930s the Mexican government was interested in taking advantage of persuasive resources of propaganda and granted discounts on supplies and abundant paper for Mexican comic magazines that promoted patriotic values. Inside the comic magazine recurrent characters developed to a degree that was not possible in the comic strips, which were limited to a single weekly page. While dramatic arcs were built-up in comic magazines, drawing became less detailed.

Both Mexican and U.S. stories inside the comic magazine offered abundant exotic comic adventures where, with increasing frequency and consistency, different shades of Yellow characters expanded a violent palette, enriched by the formal resources of perspective, new forms of narrative speed, logics of association, juxtaposition, and contrast enabled by the gutter which set each panel in a comic within a blank space.

Ontology and phantasmagoria

The Transpacific exchanges between Asia and the Americas date back to prehistoric times and are expressed in the genetic heritage, streams of words, artifacts, flora, and fauna that sustained the development of Indigenous societies across the Pacific Ocean. In 1492, looking for an alternative route from Europe to the East Indies —what is today Southeast Asia and parts of East Asia—, Christopher Columbus landed in what he called Hispaniola —in what is today Haiti—, marking the beginning of the Colonial era. Colonial enterprises and European settlements permanently transformed global societies and ecologies and contemporary Mexico is no exception.

In this section I organize some ideas about ontology and phantasmagoria that despite their deepness, are not an acknowledged part of Mexican history or the philosophies and ontologies of being Mexican. They started with the Transpacific route of the Manilla Galleon (1565-1815) that linked the ports of Acapulco and Veracruz, and the dominion of the Spanish crown over the various kingdoms, states, and territories administered by the Viceroyalty of New Spain, in what is today the South of the United States and Mexico.

The colonial racial category of *indios chinos* (Indigenous Chinese), was extensively used from the late 16th through most of the 17th century in the Viceroyalty of New Spain.⁴ New Spain was the key to the imperial structure connecting the Spanish East Indies in Asia and the Spanish West Indies in the Caribbean, but the day-to-day life of the dominion and the extraction of resources was constantly undermined by the active resistance of Indigenous people and Maroons, and mines and plantations demanded a continuous supply of enslaved Black people and *indios chinos*.

⁴ Oropeza, 2011, p. 8.

The racial category of *indios chinos* integrated multiethnic waves of Asians who were trafficked as slaves and indentured laborers to New Spain. They were subjected to colonial practices of concentration, forced labour and Christianisation affecting Mesoamerican Indigenous nations but the enslavement of Native Indigenous people in colonial Mexico became illegal in 1542, and the slavery of Indigenous Chinese continued to be legal until 1672. After this prohibition, the slavery of Asians was still legal if Asians were captured during a rebellion, or if they were Muslims. It is unclear how many generations it took for the Indigenous Chinese to cease being *chinos*, but sources from the 18th and 19th century still differentiate a *chino* group inside of the *casta mixta* (mixed caste) in New Spain, the racial antecedent of the modern category of *mestizo* that actively excluded the Chinese in modern Mexico.

By the 1810s, on the verge of Mexican independence from the Spanish crown, the colonial *casta mixta* was extremely complex, but rather transparent words like *chinos*, *malayos*, *filipinos* and *negros* (when they referred to dark skinned Asians) were still in use. Trying to understand why this differentiation remained meaningful across centuries is one of the interests I hope to pursue in future research. Historians need to find ways by which this colonial deepness of relations between Asia and Mexico is incorporated into curricula for children and teenagers, since it remains largely unknown. This ignorance also affects scholarship whose weakness of rigour projects North American history onto Mexican History, on the assumption that relations between Mexico and Asia started only in the 19th century when the colonial racial category of *indios chinos* was dramatically transformed.

The last trip of the Manilla Galleon to Mexico was recorded in 1815 and, in 1821, the Mexican empire declared its independence from Spain. Although the financial chaos of the first years of independence collapsed the old colonial Transpacific route to Mexico,

official registers of Asian laborers trafficked to Mexico started again in 1840. Transpacific stories were just beginning in other places of the Americas at the time, after most wars of independence against the Spanish dominion had concluded, and by the mid 1830s, young independent nations joined the “Coolie Trade” to capitalize their struggling economies and colonize their remote borders. Between the 1830s and 1880s, millions of Asian laborers were sent in bondage to Cuba, the United States and Peru, which were the largest markets of Coolie Trade in the Americas. In comparison, Canada, Panama, and Mexico had smaller markets. Contrary to the opinion of many scholars, the smaller size and opaqueness of the trade of Asians to Mexico does not mean that Mexico did not continue to enslave Asians when it had become an independent nation, or that the slavery of Asians in Mexico started in modern times

It is difficult to study the modern Transpacific route to Mexico of the second half of the 19th century because its structure was fragmented. In my opinion, there is a need to find ways of accounting for the multiple short-term contracts and relationships between steamships companies from Great Britain, the United States, Canada and Russia, Mexican diplomats and entrepreneurs, old colonial European-Latin-American capitals and the infrastructures of mines, and agro-industrial production of multiple regions. As I have mentioned, unlike the categories of coolies or *amarillos* preferred in other latitudes, Mexican elites, after the collapse of the colonial racial frame, preferred technical categories like “colonos,” which imagined Asians as human instruments of colonization administered by White settlers in Mexico. Soon after 1858, the racial category of “motores de sangre” that was imported from agro-industrial manuals printed in Spain, started to circulate in Mexico, and, as I have documented, the exact same term was used by the Mexican press since at least 1886.

When Mexico and China signed their diplomatic agreement, the *Tratado de Amistad Comercio y Navegación* (Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation) in 1899, Mexico became one of the few countries of the region that openly received the legal immigration of Chinese. Partially because of the freedom of entry that Chinese had due to the Treaty, they arrived in Mexico from the United States, the Caribbean, and Central America. Specific research on Asian immigration in the Southern states of Mexico (Yucatan, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo) is just beginning and promises to revise the dominant views of Mexican studies of Asian Immigration, which are thus far based on patterns from Northern states. In the Mexican South, coolie survivors who bought their own freedom from slavery or won it after fighting in the civil wars of emerging American nations, as well as their mixed raced descendants of Indigenous and Black folks, entered Mexico as merchants, entrepreneurs, and farmers.

The ideal white immigration that elites of independent Mexico dreamed of –and its cultural, financial, and racial benefits– was never achieved during the entire 19th century. In this context, the modern immigration of Chinese laborers that was so significant in agro-industrial and infrastructure enterprises made historical contributions in many cities of recent formation such as Torreón, Mexicali or Tampico. Mexico saw a diversity of Asian immigrants, including merchants, investors previously based in the United States, and coolie type workers who, under different names, left their legacy in the roads, wells, aqueducts, and other infrastructures they built from scratch on frontier territories, mines, cotton plantations, and sugar lands, which had colonial and post-colonial versions.

In this era of modernization, the construction of a Yellow racial category that circulated extensively in the Western Hemisphere placed emphasis on the impossibility of assimilation of Chinese to cultures and societies. In Mexico, the idea of Chinese lacking

the capacity for assimilation clashed with colonial hierarchies in place that had set *indios chinos* as subjects that could naturally be “transplanted” inside the New Spain. In the colonial model, Asians were trafficked on the Pacific Middle Passage as species apt for hot weather, a variation of the philosophical frame of Black slavery operating in the Atlantic. As a result, enslaved Asians were allowed to set roots in New Spain through their labour in the fields and as domestic slaves. In the modern model of the 19th century, Asians were mechanized and conceptualized as temporary and mobile human instruments of colonization or “blood engines” that were fit to work but not fit to settle. In the modern paradigm, although the breeding of Chinese has been documented in remote plantations in Yucatán,⁵ in the rest of the Mexican territory the Yellow race was theorized as a source of labour that represented a danger of racial “degeneration” for the nation if they mixed with Indigenous and other ethnic groups.

This clash created an ontological paradox that Nationalist philosophies could never fully solve. The multiple waves of Transpacific miscegenation had already established so many connecting streams to Mexico that it was not a simple task to distinguish incoming Asians from Mexicans, as the category of *chale* expressed. This ethnical and visual ambiguity allowed many Chinese to escape the violence cultivated during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) and the Post-Revolutionary State.

I hope that my research has contributed to clarifying some of the diagrammatic structures connecting press entrepreneurs, writers and politicians, and the apparatus of the government party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR). I have drawn strong connections between several actors, but would like, in this conclusion, to focus on the

⁵ Turner, 1910, p. 62.

one that, in my opinion, is marked by the most coherent anti-Chinese values, the General Plutarco Elías Calles.

Unlike some scholars who have seen some ambivalence in the “attitudes”⁶ that General Elías Calles had towards the Chinese, my research has shown the firm commitment that he had to the advancement of the anti-Chinese campaign since its beginning in 1911. In that year, Plutarco Elías Calles was a school professor and the Secretary of the Club Democrático Sonorense that proposed to ban Chinese immigration to Mexico. Between 1912 and 1916, his military charisma took form, and he became a General, the object of attention by revolutionary newspapers with anti-Chinese values like *La Defensa*, *La Información*, *El Pueblo* and *El Demócrata*. Between 1915 and 1916 General Elías Calles served a double mandate as Governor and Military Commander of Sonora. The killing and humiliation of Chinese increased under his mandate, just as the anti-Chinese ideology began to be rationalized in periodicals founded by his closest officials and friends, and his anti-vice agenda targeted casinos and saloons owned by Chinese. In 1916, Governor Elías Calles directly prohibited the immigration of Chinese to Sonora and allowed multiple municipalities to pass ordinances targeting the remaining legal sources of income for the Chinese.

General Elías Calles’ second mandate as Governor of Sonora started in 1917 and extended with some interruptions until 1919. During this period, he modified the constitution of Sonora to legalize the creation of ghettos for Chinese and wrote a mandate to employ at least 80% of Mexican nationals that particularly affected Chinese businesses. These two laws, and the prohibition of interracial marriage between

⁶ “Calles displayed an ambivalent attitude toward the large Chinese population of his state.” Buchenau, 2009, p. 69.

Mexicans and Chinese, approved in Sonora by Governor Francisco S. Elías, General Elías Calles's uncle, in 1923, became the core of the anti-Chinese campaign in following years.

In the mid 1920s, General Elías Calles ran for President and his campaign included anti-Chinese radio speeches and public support of anti-Chinese leagues newspapers with regional and national audiences. He served as Mexican President between 1924 and 1928 and his Immigration Law (1926) introduced principles of racial selection to control entry into Mexico. After his presidency, he took-on the title of *Jefe Máximo de la Revolución* between 1928 and 1936, a period in which he supported anti-Chinese politicians, created a political party with an anti-Chinese section, and found place for the anti-Chinese agenda in the newspaper of the government party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR).

A stricter application of the laws that General Elías Calles promoted as governor of Sonora caused the expulsion of Chinese from Sonora in the early thirties and was enforced by Governor Rodolfo Elías (1931-1934), General Elías Calles's son. The General publicly celebrated his son's achievements and protected the openly fascist paramilitary groups of *camisas verdes* and *camisas doradas*, which targeted Chinese and Jews in the second half of the 1930s. In 1931, General Elías Calles initiatives served as inspiration for the "Ley del Ochenta por Ciento" ruled in Peru mandating to employ at least 80% of Peruvians.

Perhaps the most difficult feature of this thesis for me to produce was the integration, if only partial, of the trauma I inherited as a Mexican Chinese, from which emerged my concept of haunting objects. It was uncomfortable, painful, and laborious to work with the silences, the voids, and the objects overcharged with family trauma. While other

types of research that better fit within academic knowledges felt easier to produce, I think that intimate stories based on stuff around us, and on the few words transmitted orally carry powerfully ambivalent deposits of deep presence and phantasmagoric belonging. As Indigenous Chinese during the deep colonial era—one that extends beyond the strictly-accepted dates of 1521 to 1821—, as mechanized *colonos* or blood engines, vilified *yellows* and *mongols*, Asian Diasporas have been resisting their erasure from the ethnic landscape in Mexico for a long time.

Many of my arguments started to take form in my early studies as a historian, when I could not connect what I was learning in class with words that made sense for the concrete ways in which I became to be Mexican. It took years of work to be able to identify my Chinese, Filipino, Nahua and Zacateco ancestors and start to tie them to chronologies and temporalities, some of them more haunted than others. While I hope that in the future the convergence of my own work and the work of other scholars continues to expose the amplitude of print culture and the potential of studying traumatic specters that were circulated by periodicals to reconstitute its ontological phantasmagoria, I also hope that the organization of archives in Mexico improves, and that many monographs and catalogs begin to facilitate access to primary sources in the archives. Aware of all the work that still could be done, I am satisfied by having contributed to unsettling a couple of stiff conceptions about the mass media of the comic, the Mexican Revolution and Chinese Mexican history. I can only hope that histories connecting haunting objects and periodical specters continue to generate scholarly research that is aware of both their nuances and their amplitudes.

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| <i>Excelsior</i> | <i>Pro Patria</i> |
| <i>Frivolidades</i> | <i>Las Provincias</i> |
| <i>Harper's Weekly</i> | <i>La Razón de México</i> |
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| <i>El Hijo del Ahuizote</i> | <i>Revista Futuro</i> |
| <i>El Imparcial</i> | <i>La Risa</i> |
| <i>El Informador</i> | <i>El Siglo</i> |
| <i>Milenio</i> | <i>El Siglo Diecinueve</i> |
| <i>El Monitor Republicano</i> | <i>El Siglo de Torreón</i> |
| <i>Multicolor</i> | <i>Sucesos para Todos</i> |
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