

# Guide to the Chinese Indentured Laborers in Cuba Collection

MS 2117



compiled by Jana Krentz

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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

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## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	4
Conditions Governing Use .....	4
Preferred Citation .....	4
Processing Information .....	4
Biographical / Historical .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	4
Arrangement .....	4
Collection Contents .....	5
Selected Search Terms .....	9

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 2117

**TITLE:** Chinese indentured laborers in Cuba collection

**DATES:** 1870–1881, 1870–1881

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** .42 linear feet (1 box)

**LANGUAGE:** The materials are in Spanish.

**SUMMARY:** Official documents regarding Chinese indentured laborers in Cuba in the nineteenth century. The documents include death certificates, new contracts, official petitions to the court, documents outlining the movement of workers, documents concerning fugitive people and imprisoned laborers, arrest warrants, and identification documents.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2117>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2117>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Transferred from the Latin American Collection Curator, 2020. Purchased from Kevin Jackson, 2019.

## Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

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## Preferred Citation

Chinese Indentured Laborers in Cuba Collection (MS 2117). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Processing Information

Folder titles were supplied by Yale University Library processing staff based on document contents. Processing staff included names of people in the folder descriptions when they were identified in the materials.

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## Biographical / Historical

During the nineteenth century, around 125,000 Chinese people, predominantly men, were brought to Cuba to work as indentured laborers under conditions similar to, if not actual, enslavement. They primarily worked as laborers in the sugar industry, shipping, mining, and building railroads, among other industries.

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## Scope and Contents

Official documents regarding Chinese indentured laborers, often referred to as "asiático" (Asian), in Cuba in the nineteenth century. The documents include death certificates, new contracts, official petitions to the court, documents outlining the movement of workers, documents concerning fugitive people and imprisoned laborers, arrest warrants, and identification documents.

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## Arrangement

Some materials are arranged into groupings and are arranged chronologically within those groupings. Other materials are arranged in no particular order.

## Collection Contents

	Death certificates Spanish; Castilian	1867-1870
	Scope and contents notes for the death certificates were created by Yale University Library processing staff from translated transcriptions of the first lines of the certificates.	
b. 1, f. 1	Socorro Spanish; Castilian Socorro, a "free" Asian person from Macao, age 32, died in the hospital.	1867
b. 1, f. 2	Crispin Spanish; Castilian Crispin, a "free" Asian person from Macao, died in the early hours of the morning in the hospital.	1867
b. 1, f. 3	Manuel Spanish; Castilian Manuel, a "free" Asian man from Canton, single, age 29, died in the hospital.	1867
b. 1, f. 4	Unidentified Asian man Spanish; Castilian An unidentified Asian man died at 9:00 pm, while he was in the observation room, of acute meningitis.	1870
b. 1, f. 5	Timoteo Spanish; Castilian Timoteo, a Canton native, died in the infirmary of the jail. He was a "confined Asian."	1870
b. 1, f. 6	Basilio Fernandez Spanish; Castilian Basilio Fernandez, an Asian man, was incarcerated in the Havana prison. He was a "confined Asian" from Canton, son of "incognitos" (unknowns), and died from cirrhosis "hepatica" in the infirmary of the prison.	1870?
	Recontratas/New contracts	1872-1876
b. 1, f. 7	Recontratas of two Asian laborers Spanish; Castilian	1872
b. 1, f. 8	Petition regarding ten Chinese laborers Spanish; Castilian A petition with a list of ten Chinese names to obtain permission to obtain a "recontrata" for them to work in a plantation (ingenio) after fulfilling their primitive contracts.	1872
b. 1, f. 9	Formal petition Spanish; Castilian Formal petition to have 16 "colonos" given permission for their recontrata.	1872

b. 1, f. 10	<p>Formal petition regarding sixteen Chinese laborers Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Petition for 16 Chinese people to obtain permission to obtain recontratas to work in an "ingenio" (plantation).</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 11	<p>Petition regarding fifteen Chinese laborers Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Petition for fifteen Chinese people to obtain permission to obtain a recontrata after having completed their initial primitive contract working in an "ingenio" (plantation).</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 12	<p>Recontrata petition discussion Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Manuscript petition from the Central Commission of Colonization discussing ten Asian laborers who have fulfilled their primitive contracts and are petitioning to have their Recontrata signed.</p>	1873
b. 1, f. 13	<p>Petition discussion Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Manuscript from Central Commission of Colonization discussing the "Recontrata" of sixteen "colonos" in a sugar plantation.</p>	1873
b. 1, f. 14	<p>Petition Spanish; Castilian</p>	1876
	<p>Movement of laborers Includes three documents pertaining to the movement of a group of Asian laborers.</p>	1874
b. 1, f. 15	<p>Notification of agreement regarding a plantation owner waiting to receive Asian workers to put under contract Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Notification that an agreement has been received from the Central Commission of Colonization regarding the owner of a plantation who is waiting to receive Asian workers to put under contract.</p>	1874
b. 1, f. 16	<p>Letter seeking to locate Asian workers and their documentation for an ingenio Spanish; Castilian</p>	1874
b. 1, f. 17	<p>Letter indicating that the Asian workers have moved locations Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Letter directed to the Central Commission of Colonization letting them know that the Asian workers have moved locations.</p>	1874
b. 1, f. 18	<p>Manuscript regarding seventy Asian laborers working on the railroad Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Manuscript, eight pages, stating that the Company of the Railroad of Puerto Principe has asked for seventy Asian laborers to work on the railroad.</p>	1874
b. 1, f. 19	<p>Document pertaining to Timoteo Chan, an Asian man, declaring himself to be free Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Timoteo Chan shows himself to be "free," and he wants a papers, according to paperwork from the Portuguese Consult; he is not listed in an registry.</p>	1872

b. 1, f. 20	<p>Manuscript stating that Asian laborers have been approved to work at Ceiba Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Manuscript states that a group of Asian laborers have been approved to work at Ceiba, and they are to be registered and provided with identification cards (cedulas).</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 21	<p>Manuscripts regarding moving two Asian laborers Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Two manuscripts regarding moving two Asian laborers for the "Ingenio Asuncion" (plantation) to Matanzas. They were captured and delivered the same day. The second document discusses moving one of the Asian laborers in particular.</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 22	<p>Request for baptismal certificate Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Document from the Jefatura de Policia requesting a baptismal certificate for an Asian male. His godfather is listed, as well as the man's "Patrono."</p>	1875
b. 1, f. 23	<p>Document pertaining to a fugitive Chinese man Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Discusses an Asian man who arrived oaboard a ship. He has been a fugitive for four years.</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 24	<p>Document pertaining to recaptured fugitives Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Document discussing money paid for two fugitive Asian people working for a sugar plantation who were recaptured.</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 25	<p>Manuscripts addressed to a Marquis discussing two fugitive Asian people Spanish; Castilian</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 26	<p>Document pertaining to two imprisoned Asian people Spanish; Castilian</p> <p>Discusses two Asian people in the Depository for Cimarrones (rebel slaves).</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 27	<p>Manuscript discussing the delivery of two fugitive Asian people from an "ingenio" (sugar plantation) Spanish; Castilian</p>	1872
b. 1, f. 28	<p>Petition to the court that a forty-year-old Asian man named Isidoro has escaped and is being pursued Spanish; Castilian</p>	1880
b. 1, f. 29	<p>Petition by owner to recontract laborers Spanish; Castilian</p>	1879
b. 1, f. 30	<p>Notification that laborers have completed their contract Spanish; Castilian</p>	1878
b. 1, f. 31	<p>Identification cards for Pedro Saler, Venacio Riesgo, and Enrilio Galves, indentured laborers from Canton Spanish; Castilian</p>	1880-1881
	<p>Labor contracts Spanish; Castilian</p>	1860-1872

b. 1, f. 32	Labor contracts Spanish; Castilian Includes twelve contracts.	1865-1868
b. 1, f. 33	Labor contracts Spanish; Castilian Includes seven contracts.	1870-1878



## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Chinese -- Cuba  
Indentured servants  
Sugarcane industry -- Cuba

### **Geographic Names**

Cuba -- Economic conditions  
Cuba -- History -- 1810-1899  
Cuba -- Social conditions