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Cultural adaptation of the Chinese community in Cuenca since 2000 to 2013.

**Thesis prior to obtaining the degree in International Studies, bilingual mention
in Foreign Trade**

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抄毛主常詩：重上井岡山

世上無難事
只怕肯登攀

遲浩田

己丑年
成夏

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Index

Acknowledgments	III
Resumen	VI
Abstract.....	VII
Introduction	8
CHAPTER 1: METODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	10
1.1 Type of research.....	10
1.2 Data collection and methodology	10
1.3 Terms and definitions	11
1.3.1 Migration: definition.....	11
1.3.2 Terms related to migration.....	11
1.3.3 Migration: causes	12
1.3.3.1 Migration theories	12
1.3.4 Migration: consequences	14
CHAPTER 2: CHINESE DIASPORA	15
2.1 Chinese immigration to Latin America.....	15
2.1.1 History and situation in China	15
2.2 Chinese immigration to Ecuador.....	18
2.2.1 19th century, coolie trade.....	19
2.2.1.2 Situation in Ecuador.....	19
2.2.1.3 1889 and the entry ban on Chinese to Ecuador	20
2.2.1.4 Chinese and their environment: dispute with traders from Guayaquil.....	22
2.2.1.5 Chinese community in Ecuador	24
2.2.2 20th century.....	26
2.2.2.1 Repeal of the banning of entry of Chinese to Ecuador	27
2.2.3 21st century.....	29
2.2.3.1 Chinese community in Ecuador at the moment	32
2.3 Chinese citizens in Cuenca	33
CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL BACKGROUND	35
3.1 Chinese thought and philosophy	35
3.2. Food and drinks.....	37
3.3 Chinese festivals	39
3.3.1 The lantern festival	40
3.4 Their language	40

CHAPTER 4: THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN CUENCA	42
4.1 When did they come?.....	42
4.2 Where do they come from?	42
4.2.1 Their level of education and jobs back in China	43
4.3 Why did they choose to come to Cuenca?	44
4.4 Chinese immigrant's current status in Cuenca.....	45
4.4.1 Current employment status	45
4.4.2 Generations of Chinese living in Cuenca	45
4.4.3 Spanish fluency	46
4.4.3.1 Language gap	47
4.4.4 How do they describe their life in Cuenca?	48
4.4.4.1 Their perception of the city and its society	49
4.4.4.2 Local's perception about this group.....	50
4.4.5 Cuenca's tradition and typical food	53
4.4.6 Religion.....	53
4.4.7 How do they feel in Cuenca's society?.....	55
4.4.8 Comunicación e interacción entre inmigrantes chinos	56
4.4.9 Their connection with China and its traditions	57
Conclusion.....	60
Recomendations	62
Bibliography	63

Illustrations Index

Illustration 1. People's Republic of China map	16
Illustration 2. Navigation route from Macao, China to Callao, Perú	18
Illustration 3. Lee Sam's store	22

Resumen

La inmigración china ha sido visible en Cuenca a partir de inicios siglo XXI pues antes de esta fecha, los inmigrantes chinos que venían a Ecuador se asentaban principalmente en las cuencas de los ríos de la Costa. La historia migratoria china a Ecuador data desde hace varios siglos; sin embargo, es lamentable que no haya sido tema de estudios exhaustivos, probablemente debido a la barrera lingüística que nos separa. En general los inmigrantes chinos han sido catalogados como emprendedores en el ámbito comercial, pero si hablamos del ámbito social y cultural su aislamiento es notorio. En el caso específico de Cuenca, tanto el nivel de organización entre ellos como el nivel de interacción con su entorno es casi nulo lo que es preocupante ya que a pesar de que ellos son parte de la sociedad cuencana, su participación social en la misma, no ha sido visible y esto ha dado lugar a su aislamiento.

Abstract

Chinese immigration was evident in Cuenca only since the early 21st century. Before this period, Chinese immigrants who came to Ecuador were mainly settled in the watersheds of the coastal rivers. Despite the fact that the history of Chinese immigration to Ecuador dates back several centuries, it has not been subject of extensive studies. One of the reasons for this could be the language barrier between Chinese immigrants and locals. In general, Chinese immigrants have been considered as entrepreneurs in the commercial field, but if we talk about the social and cultural aspects, their isolation is notable. In the specific case of Cuenca, the level of organization among the Chinese immigrants, and also the level of interaction with their environment, is almost nil. This situation is worrying because even though they are part of Cuenca's society, in the social and cultural field they do not participate actively in it and this has led to their isolation.

Introduction

Around the 19th century and after the abolition of slavery, the first Chinese immigrants came to the Americas. At first, the Chinese immigrants were brought from Hong Kong and Macao ports under a neo-slavery system. They were brought to work on the cotton and sugar cane fields on the coasts of the continent. In the specific case of Ecuador, Chinese “coolies” came from the Guangdong and Fujian provinces located in the south of China. And they worked on farms located in Guayaquil and Quevedo; from where they later dispersed and started to establish their own shops and restaurants.

Since the beginning, Chinese immigrants were not welcomed in Ecuadorian society. This lack of friendship led to the Presidential Decree in which the entry of Chinese to Ecuador was banned, from 1889 to 1944. The decree had a social and economic background because in the social sphere the government was trying to establish a state with western characteristics where only European immigrants were welcomed. In the same way, as a result of the growth of the Chinese business networks, the local commercial elite were affected and they presented several complaints to the authorities.

Likewise, in the 21st century during the administration of Lucio Gutiérrez and Rafael Correa, there have been some events that have marked Chinese immigration. For example, in 2008 during the government of Correa, a Presidential Decree established that there would not be a visa requirement for any person of any nationality who wants to visit Ecuador as a tourist for no longer than 90 days. A short time after this decision, the number of Chinese who entered Ecuador started to increase but only the departures of a few of them were registered. That is why it is suspected that many of the Chinese who entered the country as tourists decided to stay in an illegal situation.

Focusing on Cuenca, it can be said that the immigration of Chinese to the city was noticeable since the beginning of the 21st century. Most of the Chinese immigrants who live in Cuenca come from Guangdong province. These immigrants are characterized for being entrepreneurs in the commercial field because all of them

own shops or restaurants. However, when considering their development in the social and cultural field, their level of communication and interaction within their community and with their environment is almost non-existent.

There are several reasons for this occurrence. One of this is the language barrier between locals and immigrants because their Spanish is limited to their daily conversations with clients at work; and at the same time, there are only very few people who can speak Mandarin fluently in Cuenca. Also, as it will be explained in the next chapters, another reason for their lack of communication is that Chinese immigrants are completely focused on their work, leaving aside everything that is not related to this.

Based on the observation and on the above statements, this work is an ethnographic study that seeks an approach to the social and cultural reality in which the Chinese immigrants develop. Even though there are only a few studies that deal with this topic, this was not an impediment for the development of this investigation but it became the incentive to make public the social and cultural context in which this migratory group lives.

CHAPTER 1: METODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Type of research

This is an ethnographic study that uses exploratory and interpretative tools to learn and understand Chinese immigration and its current social and cultural situation in Cuenca.

Ethnographic research was the chosen method, taking into consideration that this kind of research provides a systematic approach to learning about the social and cultural life of communities. An ethnography seeks to analyze human behavior and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their world and their lives which are highly variable and locally specific (LeCompte & Schensul 2010). The basic tools used were observation, focus groups, and interviews. It is important to mention that one of the most important characteristics of this kind of study is that the community sees the researcher as a member of the community. Finally, this is a qualitative study because the objective of this research is to find out the causes of the Chinese migratory phenomenon, and at the same time, understand the behavior of the Chinese community residing in Cuenca.

1.2 Data collection and methodology

There are a limited number of Chinese immigrants in Cuenca, so data collection is restricted to interviews and the examination of previous studies about Chinese immigration to Ecuador. It is worth noting that in Ecuador the research on Chinese immigrants has not been explored much, thus I will be quoting only two studies about the Chinese migratory history. The first one was written by Ana Carrillo (2012) and it is about the immigration of Chinese citizens during the 19th and 20th century; the second one was written by Juan José Fierro (2010) and it analyzes Chinese immigration from 2000 to 2009. I will use these two studies to determine the possible causes of the phenomenon and at the same time to recreate historical memory. This will lead to a better understanding of the reality of the Chinese community residing in Cuenca at the moment.

In addition to the bibliographic research, a series of interviews was conducted in Cuenca and Guayaquil. According to the "VII Census of Population and VI of

Housing" 2010, 44 Chinese nationals reside in Cuenca, the interviewed immigrants were ten families formed by Chinese citizens who have lived in Cuenca for longer than five years and are older than 18 years old. Meanwhile, in Guayaquil the interviews were conducted with the representatives of the Chinese Community in Ecuador. Furthermore, in Cuenca a focus group session was held with local people in order to understand the perception that Cuencanos have about this group. To protect the identity of the immigrants living in Cuenca, all the information was provided anonymously and if necessary, pseudonyms are used.

1.3 Terms and definitions

1.3.1 Migration: definition

Migration is defined as the movement of residence in order to find better life conditions than the ones people had in their original place because the existing opportunities in that place did not satisfy their needs. Also, migration is part of humanity's history that is why migration is considered an inherent phenomenon of the human condition (López Sala 2005). In this work, migration will be understood as the displacement of people whose objective is a change of residence for a significant period of time, which in this case is longer than five years.

To have a better understanding of the concept of migration it is important to discuss some of the terms that are closely related with this phenomenon, such as migrant, origin and destination zone, types of migration, causes of migration and consequences of migration.

1.3.2 Terms related to migration

First, the zone of origin or 'exit zone' is the native place where the migrant comes from and to where he moves to his zone of destination or 'entrance zone', which is the new place where he will settle (Bueno Sánchez 2004).

Second, in this work migrants will be understood as people who make the decision to change their original location from one place to another for a significant period of time. It is important to mention that every migrant is at the same time an "emigrant"

and an “immigrant” since she/he is emigrating from her/his zone of origin, and she/he is immigrating in her/his destination zone (Bueno Sánchez 2004).

Third, according to Gordon F. de Jong and James T. Fawcett (1981), “migration typologies often focus on such issues as time (permanent, temporary); distance (short, long); boundaries crossed (internal, external); areal units involved (communities, countries, status, nations, cultures); and the numbers involved (individual, groups)”.

In brief, it can be determined that humans always seek to improve their quality of life in different ways, so migratory movements are somewhat typical of the development of human history. People move their residence to a place where they believe there are better opportunities. There are many migration typologies and each of them has its own characteristics, but in this research international long distance migrations that in some cases are made by an individual and in other are made by the whole family group are analyzed.

1.3.3 Migration: causes

Migrations are caused by an enormous range of factors but the most important ones are related to political, social, economic, or cultural problems. These problems incite people to look for a better quality of life in a different place. In the case of China, the existing demographic explosion also contributes to the aforementioned problems. So, in order to have a better understanding of these causes some migration theories that explain the causes of the phenomenon and are appropriate for this study are analyzed.

1.3.3.1 Migration theories

Based on research conducted by different sources, migration theories focus on three variables, “macro”, “meso”, and “micro”. Theories based on macro variables analyze the global aspects that incite migration; the theories based on micro variables focus on the personal aspects, and the theories that focus on the meso variables, consider the social relation factors of the migration phenomenon (Arango 1985).

The theories that focus on “macro” variables try to explain migration from the economic and historic differences between the countries of origin and destination. One of the theories that includes these variables is the one of the pull and push effect (Arango 1985).

According to the pull and push effect theory, the pull effect is produced when the country of destination attracts the migrant, and the push effect occurs when the economic, social, or political situation in the country of origin incite people to emigrate. An example of the pull effect is that since Ecuador uses the American dollar as main currency, immigrants who consider they do not have the opportunity to get the same income in their own country feel attracted to come. On the other hand, a push effect is when the economic, social, political or environmental conditions in the place of origin push people to migrate to other areas. For example, due to China’s huge population of about 1.34 billion, the job opportunities are becoming harder to get while China’s population keeps growing. This factor could encourage the Chinese to look for better opportunities either by moving from rural to urban areas or going abroad.

Theories based on the “micro” variables, aim to explain migrations by analyzing how a person makes the decision to migrate or remain in their place of origin. In this category the “neoclassic” theory is found, and George Borjas is its main proponent. Borjas maintains that the individual is a rational being, so before making the decision to emigrate or not, a migrant makes a cost-benefit calculation in which she/he hopes to get positive revenues which could justify the decision to emigrate even considering all the implied risks. In this same category there is the theory of the “new economy of migrations”. This theory analyzes how much the migrant will earn by migrating which especially points out that the decision to migrate is not taken by the migrant alone, but the entire family is involved because decisions are taken in a context of relations (Agatón 2008).

Lastly, there are theories that neither focus on micro variables nor macro-economic data, instead these theories consider the social relation factors that are involved in the migration phenomenon. In this category the most important theory for our study is the “social capital”, “social networks”, or “migration networks” theory. This theory

states that what determines migration movements is the establishment of interpersonal relations that link migrants, returnees or prospective migrants with relatives, friends or compatriots, either in the country of origin or destination (Arango 2003).

These networks are built by well-defined routes that make migration easy by transmitting information, providing financial support, housing, or supporting migrants in different ways. These multiple ways of support facilitate migration because it reduces the costs and the uncertainty that often accompany the process. The migration networks theory is also called “social capital” theory, because these social relations allow access to other economic goods, such as employment or better salaries. Therefore, “migration networks” constitute one of the most important factors for explaining migration movements because networks have a multiplier effect and they are the primary mechanism that makes migration a phenomenon that can perpetuate itself. Migration networks are also the best predictors of future migratory flows (Arango2003).

These migration theories will help explain the origin and causes of the Chinese migratory movement in Cuenca from three perspectives. The widest perspective is the one that analyzes “macro” variables, such as economic or political situations, “micro” variables will help to understand the movements from a personal point of view and “meso” variables will focus on the social environments that incite the migration. This information makes it possible to understand that migration is a complex process that can involve various factors and situations; all these factors will influence the decision-making process.

1.3.4 Migration: consequences

Like any other social phenomenon, migration causes a wide range of changes not only in the migrant but also in the host society. The arrival of immigrants in a country can alter the ethnic and cultural landscape of its society. These changes or consequences are linked to the social, cultural, environmental, and economical differences between the native and the hosting society (Cachón Rodríguez 2008).

All these variations will be faced by the immigrant, and will shape the changes that the immigrant will have to go through in order to fit into the new environment. By integrating into a new society, not only the migrant's life changes but also modifications in the new society are generated. Individually, the migrants may achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their families, including better jobs, improvement of educational opportunities as well as personal and professional development. Alternatively, there could be a breakdown of family ties and friendship with the people who remain at the place of origin (Bueno Sanchez 2004).

The most important fact is that both the migrant and the host society adapt to new political, social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects in order to reach a harmonious interaction between immigrants and their environment.

The terms and methodology explained in this chapter are fundamental for the development of the research. They are the beginning of this study and they set the path that will be followed in order to meet the goal of this research. The tools that will be used in the research will lead to a better understanding of the reality that the Chinese immigrants live, in Cuenca. The theories will be useful to explain the causes which provoked the phenomenon of Chinese immigration to Cuenca.

CHAPTER 2: CHINESE DIASPORA

2.1 Chinese immigration to Latin America

2.1.1 History and situation in China

Since the tenth century A.D., the economic center of China has been located south of the Yangtze River. The southern provinces of China, primarily Guangdong and Fujian have been historically important in Chinese economy. These provinces were focused on agricultural and textile productivity. Prior to the Opium War of 1840-1842, China exported a variety of textiles to Europe and other territories. However, the Opium War and the coming of western imperialism to China marked two events

in Chinese history; the decline of its agricultural system, and the starting of the coolie¹ trade (Mei 1979).

Illustration 1. People's Republic of China map



Source: Flavor & Fortune.

<http://www.flavorandfortune.com/dataaccess/article.php?ID=582>. Accessed: January 5, 2015. Table added.

After the War, China became a big buyer of cotton goods, and the importation of such products naturally caused disruption in those areas where the manufacturing of commercial clothes was their principal means of livelihood. Also, the opening up of Shanghai and Ningbo to foreign trade caused thousands of porters and boatmen in Guangdong to lose their jobs and created extreme poverty in the region. Lastly, although under traditional Chinese law emigration was forbidden, the intervention of western countries in China also created the background for Chinese emigration (Mei 1979).

The influence of these factors plus the human survival instinct made the Chinese see in the Americas a chance to escape from the extreme poverty, and as a result this is when the Chinese coolie trade started.

¹ Coolie: In India, China and other Eastern countries, indigenous worker or servant. Source: Diccionario de la lengua española (DRAE). Accessed: October 02, 2014.

2.2.1 Chinese immigration to Latin America

According to the information obtained from various sources, the first Chinese immigrants who arrived to Latin America came in the 17th century. They were registered in the census of 1613 in Lima, and in 1635 in Mexico City their presence was noticeable when a group of Spanish barbers filed a complaint to the municipal council of the city for the inconvenience caused by the Chinese barbers to their business (Hu-Dehart & Lopez, 2008).

However, in spite of these facts the large scale immigration of Chinese did not occur until the 19th century when the republics began to settle, slavery was abolished, and China was immersed in a social and economic crisis.

The abolition of slavery, and therefore the lack of free labor led to the trafficking of Asians under a neoslavery system. Since free labor was the basis for the accumulation of capital, landowners looked for methods to maintain their high incomes. They saw the impoverished southern provinces of China as an opportunity, and since the Chinese population was looking for means of survival, they were recruited to work as cheap labor (coolies) in the cotton and sugarcane plantations in Latin America. It should be noted that, among the Chinese coolies who came, there were some differences; the farmers from the most fertile areas of Guangdong went to North America and the ones from the poorest areas were brought by trickery or by force to the Caribbean, Central America and South America².

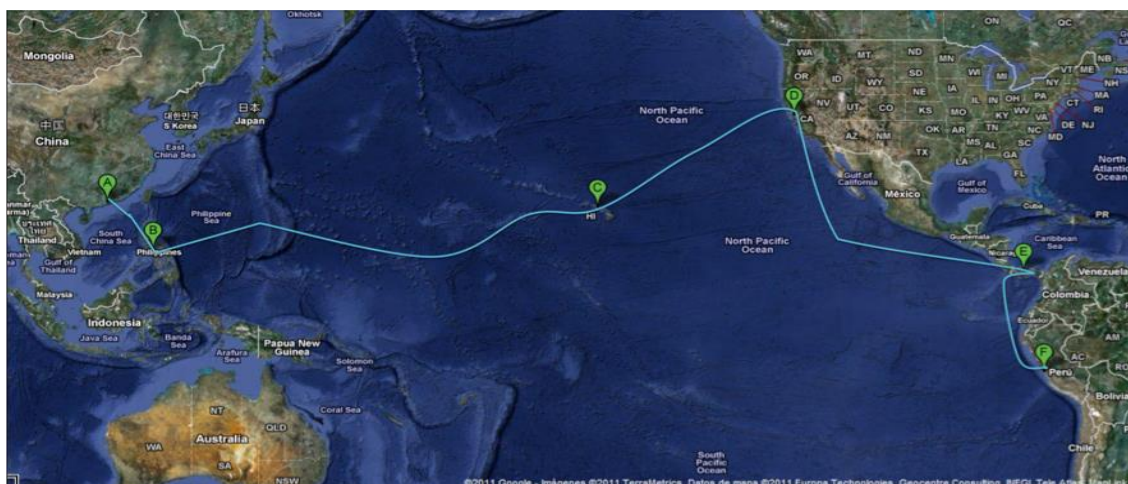
The economic crisis in China at that time, was caused by two factors; the European colonial presence and the population explosion. The European colonial pressure not only produced imbalances in the overall economic structure of China, but also provoked the displacement of native traditional jobs such as spinning and weaving. This situation led to the collapse of the whole artisanal production. At the same time, the population explosion in the late 18th and 19th century triggered the impoverishment in the southern part of the Chinese empire (Hu-Dehart & Lopez, 2008).

² Evans 1989, quoted in Moritomo, Amelia; Araki, Raúl, (and more), Cuando oriente llegó a América, 2004: 3.

The “Coolie trade” occurred in the second half of the 19th century. It is estimated that between 1847 and 1874 around 225,000 coolies, mostly men, came from the ports of Hong Kong and Macao to work on the cotton and sugarcane production in Cuba and Peru. In the early 20th century, the Chinese were in almost all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean; Cuba, Peru and Mexico hosting the largest Chinese populations (Hu-Dehart & Lopez, 2008).

Illustration 2. Navigation route from Macao, China to Callao, Perú

A: Macao, B: Philippines, C: Hawaii, D: San Francisco, E: Panama, F: Callao



Source: Carillo, Ana. Comerciantes de Fantasías. IAEN. Quito, 2012: 173.

It is worth mentioning that since the Latin American countries were becoming established, they did not see Chinese coolies as permanent citizens who could become builders of the new nations, instead they were only seen as cheap labor. Several countries in the region looked at Chinese immigration as detrimental and issued laws against it, as is the case of Ecuador in 1889 when it was established the entry ban of Chinese. The main reason for this was that the new countries were looking for the establishment of a state with western characteristics, where only the white immigration was welcomed.

2.2 Chinese immigration to Ecuador

There is very little information regarding Chinese immigration to Ecuador; thus, in this research the works of Ana Carrillo and Juan José Fierro will be used, combined

with interviews carried out with the immigrants who live in Cuenca and the Chinese community in Ecuador representatives.

2.2.1 19th century, coolie trade

2.2.1.2 Situation in Ecuador

During the 19th century, slavery was the basis for the accumulation of capital in Ecuador, but in 1852 in accordance with the Treaty of Vienna (1815), President Urbina abolished slavery, and this created an imbalance in the economic system. This lack of free labor generated the need to find ways to address the economy, and then the trafficking of Asians under a neoslavery system³ was seen as the best option.

Thus, before Chinese citizens began coming to Ecuador on their own, entrepreneurs wanted to bring Asian people to work in this territory as coolies. As Carrillo (2012) indicates, in 1854, "the businessman Nicolás Izquierdo petitions the President of the Republic of Ecuador, through the governor of Guayas, to bring Asian or European settlers, as appropriate"⁴, but as slavery had just been abolished, this request was denied.

However, according to the Ecuadorian historian Rodolfo Perez Pimentel, in 1860, an Ecuadorian merchant named Luis Cuadrado Bonnin sailed between Ecuador and Macao, bringing some Asians to Ecuador, which possibly were Chinese coolies⁵.

According to Camilo Destruge, fourteen years later, in 1874, during the second presidency of Garcia Moreno, the landowner and diplomat Vicente Piedrahíta brought a shipment of Chinese to work in his farms, Palestina and Anasque. Apparently these immigrants later dispersed because shortly after this event, they

³ It is considered a neoslavery system because although the Chinese coolies signed individual contracts, they were forcibly recruited and they were subject of harsh work regimes (Moritomo, Amelia; Araki, Raúl, (and more) 2004).

⁴ "El empresario Nicolás Izquierdo peticiona frente al presidente de la República de Ecuador, a través del gobernador del Guayas, la posibilidad de traer colonos asiáticos o europeos, «según convenga» (*Periódico 6 de Marzo*, 23.05.1854)". Quoted in, Carrillo, Ana. *Comerciantes de Fantasías*, IAEN, Quito 2012:174.

⁵ "Un comerciante ecuatoriano llamado Luis Bonnin Cuadrado navegó entre Ecuador y Macao, trayendo de Macao a algunos asiáticos a Ecuador, y posiblemente, eran los culies chinos". Fierro, Juan José. *El fenómeno migratorio asiático a Ecuador, el caso chino*. Flacso. Quito 2010: 41.

started diners in Guayaquil and monopolized the business of breaded steak, fried rice, etc. (Destruge 1917)⁶.

According to data from the Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador, the arrival of the first Chinese communities in Ecuador began around 1900 with migrants who settled on the Coast, mainly in Quevedo, where they did agricultural work, and then they moved to Guayaquil where they started businesses in the city center⁷.

2.2.1.3 1889 and the entry ban on Chinese to Ecuador

As Carrillo (2012) mentioned, in 1889 by an Executive Order, President Flores Jijón banned the entry of Chinese citizens to Ecuador, and ordered that those who were already living in the country could be expelled if it suited the interests of the nation.

If the most attractive incentive for Chinese is found in America, and a million immigrates, will it come towards a trillion, what fate awaits for this continent if we do not PROMPTLY look for its salvation? (Report of Chile, s / r, cit Jijón Flores, 1889b: 16)⁸.

In this context it is relevant to mention that the new Latin American states were barely under construction, so the banning was justified in order to respect the national sovereignty of the countries and in order to keep the obligation of the president to ensure the interests of the nation. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that at that time presidents were interested in the modernization and westernization

⁶ “El hacendado y funcionario diplomático en Lima, Vicente Piedrahíta, oriundo de Daule, trajo para trabajar en sus haciendas de Palestina y Anasque un cargamento de chinos que, al parecer, terminaron dispersándose. Según el historiador: «ya para la misma época ponían fondas en Guayaquil y llegaron a monopolizar el negocio del *bité apanao*, del *aló* con huevo *flito*, etc.» (Destruge, 1917: énfasis en el original)”. Quoted in Carrillo, op. cit., 175.

⁷ Interview with Vicente Lee Chan, president of Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador, October 7, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

⁸ Si el aliciente más lisonjero para los chinos se encuentra en América y emigrando un millón vendrán en pos millones de millones, ¿qué suerte le espera a este continente si no se mira PRONTAMENTE por su salvación? (*Informe de Chile*, s/r, cit. por Flores Jijón, 1889b: 16). Quoted in Carrillo, op. cit., 176.

of the State. Therefore it was in their interest to attract white western immigrants, as you can see in the following text.

9° On my recent trip to the North Coast I have seen towns, including a capital of a province, with very few inhabitants; and this has created on me the fear that between us would happen the same as in some districts of the Republic of Argentina. This is, that foreigners predominate over the naturals (I am a strong supporter of foreign immigration, one of the four cardinal points in my program, but I would like foreigner dominance to be one of white people), *I do confess that I have feared that the Chinese will prevail over the good migrants* (Flores Jijón, 1889: 7)⁹.

In this context of state-building, an internalized speech about race played a critical role, so that the concept of "good migrants" refers to European migrants, and therefore the "yellow" race, was not welcome to populate the territory. The racist and elitist foundations of the era came to a point where Chinese immigration was seen as a threat, as Carrillo (2012) quoted: "But the crossing of the Mongolian and American races cannot improve, but downgrade our conditions" (Report of the Chamber of Commerce in Guayaquil, in Flores Jijón, 1889b: 9)¹⁰.

Thus, the ideal of a western state where citizens with white skin color predominates, is reflected along the lines that President Flores argues in defense of his Executive Order in which the entry ban on Chinese immigrants to Ecuador is established.

⁹ 9° En mi reciente viaje a la costa del Norte he visto poblaciones, incluso una capital de provincia, con escasísimos habitantes; y si no me ha asaltado el temor de que suceda entre nosotros lo que en ciertos distritos de la república Argentina, esto es, de que predominen los extranjeros sobre los naturales (pues soy tan decidido partidario de la inmigración extranjera, uno de los cuatro puntos cardinales de mi programa, que esta perspectiva en manera alguna me asustaría con tal que ese predominio fuere de raza blanca), sí confieso que he temido que predominen allí los chinos y alejen a los buenos migrantes (Flores Jijón, 1889a: 7). Quoted in Carrillo, op.cit., 193. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Pero el cruzamiento de la raza mongola y americana no puede mejorar, sino rebajar la condición de la nuestra. Quoted in Carrillo, op.cit., 193.

2.2.1.4 Chinese and their environment: dispute with traders from Guayaquil

Illustration 3. Lee Sam's store



Source: AHG: *Fondo fotográfico*, fotografía No. 3815.¹¹

At the time that the entry ban was established, some Chinese citizens had already settled in the territory, residing mostly around the watersheds of the rivers in the Coast, mainly in Quevedo and Guayaquil. And in fact, the ban on their entry was not only based on subjective reasons, but there were also reasons involving an economic basis because since the boom of the production and export of cocoa, Guayaquil and in general the Ecuadorian Coast had become the economic center of the country. This movement of money generated the emergence of social strata that were strongly linked to the political order.

Due to this capital accumulation, Chinese citizens began to generate small networks of shops along the Ecuadorian Coast. Their warehouses were mainly engaged in the import and distribution of various items, from silks and bazaar items to construction materials and hardware. It is apparent, that the establishment and growth of these business networks constituted a danger to the economic stability of the bourgeois merchants of Guayaquil, and this situation is reflected in the report of the Chamber of Commerce of Guayaquil which states:

[...] Among all the immigrants in Ecuador, the Chinese seem to be the least suitable to meet the real needs and aspirations of the country, this due to their *moral backwardness, and the eccentric ideas and habits that commonly characterize the inhabitants of that vast empire* that is

¹¹ Tomado de Carrillo, op. Cit., 190.

almost apart from other nations because of its rare nature, quirky language and odd social, political and religious organization [...] *European races which are superior to Asians*, are the ones called to give us the useful and valuable contingent of their intelligence and ability, accompanied by the noble spirit of family, and property and work love [...]. But the crossing of the Mongol and American race cannot improve but reduce our condition; *nor is possible to have Chinese as labors on the field, because they usually live clustered in coastal towns and focused on monopolizing some kinds of industries of little significance, creating an imperative necessity of hands for the agriculture and workshops, of people to populate the unoccupied territory and of skills to improve our main crops and manufacturing industries* (Flores Jijón, 1889: 8)

In this report there can be seen both derogatory arguments about Chinese culture and customs, and also references that the economic sphere of Guayaquil bourgeoisie has been affected by the presence of Chinese traders. Under these circumstances, Manuel J. Calle, in one of his articles talks about how traders from Guayaquil have been affected by the presence of Chinese merchants and at the same time he argues in defense of the Chinese:

It is said that the Chinese have ruined the trade in Guayaquil, and that they tend to take over all our industrial energy [...] The complaint is general, if here there is poverty, it is because of the Chinese, because by taking part in the local industrial activity, they took over the business of many children of the country and at the same time they limited the actions of other companies, snatching even their brothels and gambling houses. [...] *It is a great folly to affirm that Chinese competitors have ruined local traders. Local traders were ruined-and they know it well-for many different reasons.* [...] The costs: this is the issue, a Chinese sells cheap mainly because they hardly spend on their own maintenance. They live in the establishment of the store, [...] and as

they hardly eat and do not drink, or play, or party, and they dress the most humbly possible (Calle 1916)¹².

As Calle points out the local merchants were affected by the presence of the small Chinese commercial networks. However, it is important to emphasize that at the same time, he clearly expresses the possible reasons for the economic growth of Chinese merchants.

An example of the economic success that Chinese have had in the coast region of Ecuador is the company Industria Arrocera San Carlos. According to what Víctor M. Gencón expressed, this company was founded in 1963 by his father. After his father retired in 1973, he and his brother Luis started to work together in the company until 2010 when his son David Gencón Ajoy started to administrate it. Víctor's father came from Guangdong to Ecuador in the beginning of the 20th century. He started to get involved in the rice production industry in the forties. Now this company is well established and seeks to keep growing. It is important to note that at the moment, the president of the "Corporación de Industriales Arroceros del Ecuador", an organization that brings together the largest producers of rice in the country, is also a Chinese descendent and his name is Javier Chon.

2.2.1.5 Chinese community in Ecuador

According to the information gathered by Carrillo (2012), the full incorporation of Chinese citizens into social life was difficult because, as she indicated, "they are beings who are not actively involved in society". This continues nowadays and it will be treated in the next sections. Although the accumulation of capital has been their

¹² *Se dice que los chinos han arruinado el comercio guayaquileño, y tienden a apoderarse de todas nuestras energías industriales [...] Si hay pobreza aquí a los chinos es debido, pues al compenetrar en la acción industrial autóctona, quitó trabajo a muchos hijos del país y limitó las empresas de otros, arrebatándoles hasta los burdeles y las casas de juego. [...] Resulta un gran disparate aseverar que la competencia china ha arruinado a los comerciantes nacionales. Los comerciantes nacionales se arruinaron —y ellos lo saben de sobra— por causas bien diferentes. [...] Los gastos: he ahí la cuestión, porque un chino vende barato, es principalmente debido a que casi no gasta en su propio mantenimiento. Vive en el local del almacén, [...] como casi no come, y no bebe, ni juega, ni parrandea, se viste lo menos posible y lo más humildemente dable. Quoted in Carrillo, op. cit., 196-197, emphasis added.*

tool for inclusion in society, in the upper classes its full acceptance never took place, and even within the Chinese Community class separation exists. For example, the class division between *Chinese Chinese and grafts*¹³. In order to keep a better class status, the Chinese with higher incomes sought to make their children marry Chinese citizens, while Chinese citizens of medium or low economic status, formed Chinese – Ecuadorian families.

Also, as part of the organization of Chinese immigrants, several societies were created within the Chinese community. The first was the Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador. This Charitable Society was founded in 1908 by Felipe Cam Tong. Some of the main tasks of the Society were to integrate Chinese and their descendants, support community projects, welcome new immigrants, and help them financially and/or activating the social networks of trade and credit. It also served as a medium to present complaints against the different governorates, and in general guarding the wellbeing of the Chinese immigrants. As part of their program to integrate Chinese descendants they also founded a school to teach the Cantonese language; at the moment this school is not open¹⁴.

Even though in some aspects they were looking for the integration of the immigrants, within the Society, the separation of social classes that existed in the community was also reflected. This Society submitted several distinctive immigration projects to the National Congress. These projects sought to anchor a migration control that ensured the financial quality of immigrants. One such project was “The Request that the Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador rises to the honorable National Congress of 1931, looking to obtain a clear and stable legal situation of the Chinese residents in the country, as well as the admission of immigrants of our

¹³ These are terms used to distinguish those who were born in China or are children of Chinese father and mother called “Chinese Chinese”, from who are children of a Chinese – Ecuadorian couple called “grafts” (Carrillo, op. cit., 203).

¹⁴ Most of the immigrants came from the Guangdong province where their mother language is Cantonese and not Mandarin Chinese. Interview with Vicente Lee Chan, president of Public Welfare of the Ecuadorian Chinese Community, October 7, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

nationality who can guarantee their competence, health and solvency” (Signed by Aparicio Muián on September 3, 1931)¹⁵.

In conclusion it can be determined that the division of social classes has been a barrier that has prevented the inclusion of Chinese immigrants into society. And since this class division also occurs within the Chinese community, the level of integration between themselves is also limited.

2.2.2 20th century

In 1909, the government issued a circular to the provincial governors in which the obligation of each governor to make an annual census of Chinese immigrants was established. This census should be done in the first three months of the year, and the results would be published in the Official Record, and the census would provide a restriction of movement in the territory, and prevented Chinese immigrants to move to places where their compatriots were not residing (Carrillo, 2012).

- 3 So, as Carrillo (2012) states, "according to the Chinese censuses published in the Official Record and to several other sources, it is known that for the year 1908 there were 908 Chinese along the Coast; and in 1939, the national population of Chinese counted 819 people. Available data indicates, that for example between 1918 and 1920 there were about 100 Chinese settled in Manabí; in 1922 there were 398 Chinese in the provinces of Los Ríos and El Oro; and in 1923, 585 Chinese were registered in Guayas"¹⁶. It is also important to note that, at the end of the 1930s the Chinese population compared with the total number of foreign

¹⁵ Petición que la Sociedad de Beneficencia de la Colonia China eleva al honorable congreso nacional de 1931, relativa a obtener que se establezca una situación clara, estable y legal para los ciudadanos chinos residentes en el país, así como la admisión de inmigrantes de su nacionalidad garantizados por su competencia, salud y solvencia. Firmado por Aparicio Muián el 3 de septiembre de 1931. Quoted in Carrillo, op. cit., 196.

¹⁶ “De acuerdo con los censos de Chinos publicados en el Registro Oficial y diversas fuentes, se sabe que para el año 1908 había 908 chinos en todo el litoral; y para 1939, la población de chinos a nivel nacional se registró en 819 personas. Los datos disponibles indican, por ejemplo, que entre 1918 y 1920 había alrededor de 100 chinos asentados en Manabí; en 1922 estuvieron 398 en las provincias de Los Ríos y El Oro; y en el año de 1923, se registran 585 chinos asentados en Guayas”. Carrillo, op. Cit., 186.

residents in Ecuador was, the second largest group of foreign population in the country, and this is even more interesting when we take into consideration that the entry for the Chinese citizens was forbidden (Carrillo, 2012).

Likewise, Fierro (2010) quotes Li Chunhui who stated that “in 1918, there were about 1,500 Chinese in Ecuador, including 30 Chinese women, all from the province of Guangdong. In 1926 the number of Chinese increased to about 2000, and between 1941-1944, there were 3155 Chinese and around 3000 Chinese descendants in Ecuador” (Yan and Li Chunhui Shengmao 1990: 683-685)¹⁷.

It should be noted that due to the mobility restrictions for Chinese citizens, at the beginning of the century the arrival of Chinese to Quito and other cities in the highlands was a complex act. Chinese immigrants who wanted to go to the highlands needed a pass issued by the Minister of the Interior, managed through the American consul. So, according to the census of 1922, in Riobamba there were just five Chinese citizens in this town. And apparently even before the signing of the Treaty of Friendship of 1946, very few Chinese were residing in Quito. According to Carrillo (2012), the first Chinese who settled in Quito were of good social position and they were very few until the sixties.

It is relevant to mention that due to the threats of expulsion and the few guarantees that the state granted to this group, this data may not reflect the true social reality of Chinese immigrants in Ecuador at that time. Thus, we can state that the existing data is really relative, since there is no complete census data in all regions or all years. And also as Carrillo (2012) suggests, in all the years of prohibition of entry of Chinese, there were constant scandals of smuggling and evasion of records and inscriptions.

2.2.2.1 Repeal of the banning of entry of Chinese to Ecuador

The ban on the entry of Chinese to Ecuador was repealed on August 1, 1944, during the presidency of José María Velasco Ibarra. It took place after the first

¹⁷ En 1918, había en Ecuador unos 1500 chinos, entre ellos, 30 mujeres chinas, todos provenientes de la provincia de Guangdong. En 1926, el número de chinos aumentó hasta unos 2000. Durante 1941-1944, en Ecuador había 3155 chinos. Además, había unos 3000 descendientes de chinos. (Li Chunhui y Yan Shengmao 1990: 683-685). Quoted in Fierro, op. cit., 44.

Interamerican Congress, in which countries were exhorted to eliminate any policy of racial discrimination (Tamayo 1952) ¹⁸. This act was endorsed in 1946 by the Chinese-Ecuadorian Treaty of Friendship:

"The doctrine of the equality of nations and its immediate corollary, non-discrimination based on race, language, sex or religion entered in the fundamental principles of universal coexistence in the Universal Charter, and before it, in the human consciousness, they inspired the Ecuadorian Government to abolish the laws on the Chinese, and to form, with the Republic of China, a friendship treaty. A friendship treaty in which the rules of mutual respect and its implementation is consecrate, to the nationals of a country in the other, of the laws and general regulations which apply to all foreign nationals, regarding to their entry, individual freedom and civil rights "(Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Nation August 1944 to June 1946, signed on January 6, 1946) ¹⁹.

With this Treaty of Friendship the relations between the Ecuadorian state and the Chinese immigrant population were normalized. This treaty led to Chinese immigrants' freedom of movement, assembly and association. These events occurred within the context of the Second World War and the Japanese invasion of China. And since Chinese immigrants had freedom of assembly and association, this triggered Chinese patriotism around the world. In the case of Ecuador, it led to the creation of the Association October 10 of the Chinese Community in Ecuador.

¹⁸ Carrillo, op. cit., 206.

¹⁹ "La doctrina de la igualdad de las naciones y su corolario inmediato, la no discriminación por cuestiones de raza, idioma, sexo o religión consignados en los principios fundamentales de la convivencia universal en la Carta Universal, y antes que en ella, en la conciencia humana, inspiraron al Gobierno del Ecuador la abolición de las Leyes sobre los chinos, y la firma, con la República China, de un tratado de amistad, de un Tratado de amistad en el que se consagran las normas del mutuo respeto y la aplicación, a los nacionales de un país en el otro, de las leyes y reglamentos generales que rijan para todos los súbditos extranjeros, respecto al ingreso, libertades individuales y derechos civiles" (instrumento suscrito el 6 de Enero de 1946). Quoted in Fierro, op. cit., 44.

According to Jorge Chang Jo, current president of the organization, the Association was created with the objective of sending financial aid to defend China during the Japanese invasion. "The Double Ten²⁰ Association is the institution created by the descendants of Chinese immigrants in Ecuador. It was founded 72 years ago due to the civic spirit of its founders towards the homeland of their Chinese ancestors. At that time, our ancestor's motherland was facing its existence due to the invasion of the powerful Japanese army since 1938, and we could not just stand there with one's hands in one's pockets"²¹. The members of this association collected funds that were sent to China through the Chinese Embassy and Consulates. Currently, this association brings together the intellectual and economic elite of the Chinese community in Guayaquil, and their objective at the moment is to create an economic network to help Chinese immigrants who are in need.

The Chinese-Ecuadorian Treaty of Friendship was the basis for the establishment of diplomatic relations on April 9, 1949, between China (Republic of China, current Taiwan) and Ecuador. According to some records, the first Embassy of Ecuador in the Republic of China (Taiwan) would have been established in 1958 with Gustavo Larrea Cordova as the first Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ecuadorian Ambassador to China. Years later, Ecuador withdrew its recognition of that country; instead recognizing the People's Republic of China (Fierro, 2010).

2.2.3 21st century

Since 2000, two significant events have taken place concerning the migration of Chinese citizens to Ecuador, the first one under the presidency of Lucio Gutiérrez (2003-2004) and the second in 2008 under the presidency of Rafael Correa.

During the regime of Lucio Gutierrez, between January 2003 and April 2005, an estimated 4,000 Chinese entered the country with irregular visas. Based on research, Chinese citizens came into the country with Tourist visas and in the National Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Government those visas were transformed into industrial Investor visas. Presumably these visas would had been

²⁰ The Association October 10 is commonly known as Double Tenth within the Chinese Community.

²¹ Interview with Jorge Chang Jo, October 7 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

given at consulates in Beijing (China), Tumbes (Peru), Panama, San Jose de Costa Rica and Buenos Aires (Argentina) at a cost of three or four thousand dollars per unit²². This episode is relevant for this research because, according to interviews and as we discussed above, many Chinese citizens now living in Cuenca, arrived in the country during this period. Thus, this situation raises the question whether or not they were part of the 4,000 Chinese who entered the country with irregular visas.

On the other hand, in June 2008 President Rafael Correa, by Presidential Decree, declared that no visa would be required for any citizen of any nationality who wishes to visit Ecuador as a tourist for a maximum period of ninety days. According to data collected by Fierro (2010), in this year 14,468 entries of Chinese citizens were registered, and just 7,314 Chinese left. This mismatch creates three possible scenarios, the first is that many of these people still had valid time as tourists at the time of data collection; the second would be that these people chose to stay in the country and the third would be that they used Ecuador as a bridge to other destinations.

This decision of removing the visa requirements for tourists was a strategy to promote the global tourism market in Ecuador, especially the Chinese one. Probably because the Chinese tourist market is one of the markets with more potential for tourism growth, this measure was applied for Chinese citizens a week before other nations. However, in the short term after taking such action, it was visible how this decision led to several consequences, because by opening borders in this way, it is difficult to know the true intentions of the people who enter as "tourists".

The concern of the Chinese authorities in the country due to the high flow of Chinese citizens to Ecuador was such that in November of the same year, the Chinese Ambassador in Ecuador, Cai Runguo, "requested the Government of Ecuador to require a visa again as a condition for the entry of tourists to the country. According to Ambassador Runguo, this was necessary because not all tourists that were coming were traders, businessmen or investors. He also mentioned that China understands the Ecuadorian Government's initiative to stimulate tourism, trade and investment, but among the people arriving, there were people coming for other purposes and this

²² Diario el Universo. June 18, 2005. "Bajo lupa 4 mil visas para chinos". <http://www.eluniverso.com/2005/06/18/0001/8/1DFDE6FD50A44B8E8D5B967E5F302057.html>. Accessed: 10 de octubre de 2014.

had to be controlled. Most worrisome, as Ambassador Runguo said, would be the fact that some Chinese citizens would be subject to criminal organizations that use the removal of a visa to process the documents that allow them to travel to other nations like the United States, turning Ecuador into a transit country for illegal migrants” (El Universo Quito, November 19, 2008 "China pide a Ecuador volver al visado")²³.

In response to this request, from December of the same year, the Decree enforcement was stricter. In the airports, for example in Quito, "the police should ensure that the citizens of that nation meet several requirements before entering our country. They should also get a tour package certified by the authorities in China. This is a measure to ensure that they do not become victims of traffickers." (El comercio.com: “China y Ecuador acuerdan filtros para los inmigrantes”, 10 de Diciembre del 2008)²⁴.

The results of this measure were reflected in the number of Chinese who entered the country as tourists in the first months of 2009. During these months the number of Chinese tourists dropped from 9th to the 18th in the rank of nationality of the tourists who entered the country, while other countries remained at relatively constant positions (Fierro, 2010).

With these data it can be assumed that the measures taken had an important effect on reducing the number of Chinese who came as tourists. Thus, the Chinese citizens who entered in 2008 probably did not meet the characteristics of tourists. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that as we pointed out, according to the interviews conducted in the city, many of the children and partners of Chinese

²³ Cai Runguo, “pidió al Gobierno de Ecuador exigir nuevamente el visado como requisito para el ingreso de turistas al país. Pues según el Embajador Runguo no todos los que vienen son turistas, comerciantes, empresarios o inversionistas. Además mencionó que China comprendía la iniciativa del Gobierno ecuatoriano de estimular al turismo, al comercio y a la inversión, pero entre las personas que llegan se encuentra gente que viene con otro propósito y eso hay que controlar. Lo más preocupante según el Embajador sería el hecho que algunos ciudadanos chinos estarían siendo objeto de mafias que se aprovechan de la eliminación del visado para tramitar sus papeles que permiten viajar a otras naciones, como Estados Unidos, convirtiendo al Ecuador en un país de tránsito de los emigrantes ilegales”. Quoted in Fierro, op. cit., 59-60.

²⁴ Quoted in Resumen Diario de noticias Prensa Nacional UTE. <http://www.ute.edu.ec/diariodenoticias/10-12-2008.pdf>. Accessed: October 10, 2014.

immigrants who now reside in Cuenca came during this period, revealing that indeed Chinese nationals who entered the territory during this period were not just tourists.

Finally, it is important to mention that the access to reliable statistics of the immigration issue in Ecuador is very complex. This is because statistical bases for electronic files do not go beyond 2000 and in many cases there is only information since 2005. If we consider the information registered by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) after the "VII Census of Population and VI of Housing" made in 2010, the number of Chinese citizens living in the territory is just 3.016 and in Cuenca this is only 47 people. This figure diverges completely from the registers of Chinese citizens managed by the Chinese Community in Ecuador which indicates that only in Guayaquil about 6,000 Chinese are living²⁵.

2.2.3.1 Chinese community in Ecuador at the moment

Currently, the Chinese Community in Ecuador and its associations are well structured. These associations are well organized, especially in the cities with a long history of Chinese immigration, such as Guayaquil and Quevedo.

In addition to the Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador, there are other organizations such as the aforementioned Double Ten, and many other small communities that belong to different cities in China such as Fujian, Qingtian and the Taishang Community. These organizations seek to maintain their own traditions through events on Chinese special dates where the community gets together. For example, this year during the Lunar New Year or Spring Festival (春节), the most important festival in China, the Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador with its president Vincent Lee Chan, organized different events in Guayaquil where third and second-generations of Chinese could participate in the tradition. One of these events was a lunch organized to celebrate the arrival of the Year of the Horse, beginning on January 31. This lunch was held at the Palace Meimi, a place where the community frequently meets. Besides organizing these

²⁵ Interview with Vicente Lee Chan, president of Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador, October 7, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

kind of events, one of the aspirations of Lee is to create a Chinatown in Guayaquil; however, so far it has not materialized²⁶.

The level of organization that the Chinese Community has reached in the coastal cities of Ecuador is noteworthy. Especially in Guayaquil and Quevedo they hold frequent meetings where the whole community can get together, and they even have established small societies depending on the city where they come from. However, this organizational level that the Chinese have reached in other cities, is not been replicated in Cuenca. As we mentioned, at the moment in Cuenca there is not any kind of organization among Chinese immigrants, thus the level of association and interaction between them is very low.

2.3 Chinese citizens in Cuenca

Since there is no literature that deals with the history of Chinese immigration specifically in Cuenca, all the information collected was obtained through interviews with Chinese immigrants residing in the city. It is noteworthy that at the beginning, many of them were reluctant to cooperate; however, the fact that the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese was a determining factor in the decision to take part in this research.

Interviewees do not speak Spanish fluently. They have never attended language schools, mainly due to lack of time, but as all of them have their own business, shops where they sell products made in China like clothes, shoes, accessories, and decorations or restaurants that sell Chinese food called *chifas*²⁷. So, they can speak a basic level of Spanish required for their daily commerce.

Interviews revealed that they decided to come to Cuenca due to the invitation of relatives or, in other cases, friends who were already living in Cuenca. According to what interviewees stated, social networking among them functions as follows: John has a *chifa* and he needs help. His cousin in China has a low income, so John and his

²⁶ Interview with Vicente Lee Chan, president of Charitable Society of the Chinese Community in Ecuador, October 7, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

²⁷ *Chifa* comes from the Mandarin Chinese *chifan* (吃饭) which means “to eat a meal”. This term, widespread in our society, probably comes from Peru where there has been a greater acceptance and influence of Chinese food.

cousin settle an agreement where John is responsible for paying the visa and the flight and once his cousin is in Ecuador, he will work with John to pay back the money invested. The amount of time his cousin would work with John depends on the agreement reached. It should be emphasized that during this time his cousin will not receive a salary, but instead he will get housing and food, and he will also learn how to cook and manage the business. When their agreement comes to an end, John would help his cousin to settle down by either paying him a salary or, if his cousin wants to be independent, help him to start his own business.

As interviewees mentioned, this is the most common way in which Chinese people have come and established themselves in Cuenca. This fact shows that social networks play a key role in attracting immigrants and it can even be considered as a cause of the phenomenon of immigration, because this system would not only be going on in Cuenca, but in the whole country. It is also important to note that in their way of thinking this is considered 互相 帮助 (hùxiāng bāngzhù), which means mutual help since both benefit from it.

In the same way, interviews revealed that most Chinese immigrants, who live in Cuenca at the moment, came to Ecuador between 1995 and 2003. Before coming to Cuenca, they lived, for several months or years, in Guayaquil, Quito or in other cities in Ecuador. So, they settled in Cuenca between 2003 and 2008 because during these period of time, there was too much business competition in the bigger cities so they decided to look for opportunities in other cities.

Although all of them had people waiting for their arrival, in all cases one member of the family came first. According to their testimonials, in most cases men were the first to come and their children or partners came some years later, around 2007 and 2008. This matches with the removal of visa requirements for the entry of tourists to Ecuador.

Likewise, they indicated that, unlike in other cities, here an organized Chinese Community does not exist, so their level of association in the city at the time is nil. One reason for this would be that according to the interviewees, the presence of Chinese immigrants in the city was higher until two years ago when most of them decided to emigrate to other countries because "the business was bad and the only

ones who stayed were the ones who had been here for a longer time"²⁸ (Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese October 3, 2014). Susana attributes this situation to the global economic crisis and to the rise and greater control of tariffs in Ecuador, because the immigrants who left were mainly involved in the import and sale of products made in China. According to Susana, most of these people emigrated to Peru and Chile because there they had friends who would help them to settle down. Thus, here again we see that social networks are very relevant when talking about the causes of Chinese immigration.

It is noteworthy that there is a difference between the Chinese immigrants who came at the beginning of the century and the ones who come now. This difference is created because China is no longer a nation that provides cheap labor, but it has become one of the largest economies in the world. This has led to some Latin American countries, including Ecuador to decide to receive Chinese investment, which has focused mainly on infrastructure and mining. All these investments have also brought Chinese immigration, but from another kind because the Chinese immigrants who come as personnel of the companies, have a higher level of education than the Chinese immigrants who arrived in previous years, and therefore they also have higher incomes and a better quality of life. Thus, the new Chinese immigrants do not meet the characteristics of this investigation and therefore they are not part of this study.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL BACKGROUND

For such a large country their culture is relatively uniform. With the exception of the fifty six minorities who have their own culture, language and customs, the rest of the Chinese territory shares the same cultural values. So, in order to understand the life and culture of the Chinese immigrants who live in Cuenca, it is necessary to first understand their thought, traditions, language, and culture.

3.1 Chinese thought and philosophy

Chinese thought and way of life in the last several hundred years have been the product of Neo-Confucianism which is an outgrowth of ancient Confucianism,

²⁸ “那时候生意不好所以很多人走了，只有我们留在这里”。Susana, October 3, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

modified by Taoism and Buddhism. All three have been there for centuries and have been preserved to this day.

In brief, it can be said that Confucianism is considered an exercise of a public and socially responsible self, Taoism involves a more personal and independent religion and emphasizes the relativity of things, and Buddhism focuses more on the spiritual and supernatural plane (Chan 1969). These three streams form Chinese thought and they will be explained below in a chronological order.

The first school of thought is Taoism which was founded by Lao Tsé (VII b. C.). Taoism is a mystical quest and a religion of individual salvation. This religion is characterized by the worship of various deities, the veneration of ancestors, and the interpretation of the concepts of yin, yang and Tao or Dao -path-. According to this philosophy the cosmos works by the action of the forces of yin and yang. Yin is the negative, passive, weak, and destructive force and yang is the positive, active, strong, and constructive force. These two forces are reflected in the Dao which is the supreme principle of order and unity of the universe, the way through everything becomes what it is. Dao comprises a series of religious, physical and medicinal practices that allow the union of men with the eternal Dao; thus, Taoists not only aspire to the salvation of their soul but also the immortality of their body. The harmony of yin and yang accounts for much of the central emphasis on harmony in Chinese life and thought. This theory has helped to develop the view that all the things are related, so this is also applied in their lives. An example of the methods that Taoists use to maintain harmony, are the respiratory and diet techniques as tai chi and the intake of tea which has been present in Chinese society for centuries (Palacios & Ramírez 2011).

Secondly, there is Confucianism which is understood as a political and social morality. Master Kong Fuzi (551-479 BC) is its highest representative and the work attributed to the master is the Analects or Conversations (論語 lúnyǔ) through which he sought to restore harmony between the individual, society, and the cosmos. Confucianism uses old words and concepts with a new philosophical sense. Thus, according to this doctrine, each person should act following the Dao; that is, according to their designation or by their position in society (i.e. father, servant, sovereign). When a man does not follow the Dao, he destroys the pre-established

harmony and he causes all kinds of disturbances. Therefore; Confucianism ends up being a pattern for life and a morality that tries to maintain the order and hierarchy in society and in the state. This morality is based on virtues such as respect, humility, submission and subordination to superiors in rank and age. It is important to note that this aspect of Confucianism is really visible in the current Chinese society where respect and authority is practiced towards parents and elders in general (Chan 1969).

In third place we have Buddhism. Buddhism came from India during the Han dynasty. The Mahayana schools were the most accepted, and between the fourth and sixth centuries Buddhism became the most widespread religion in China. The broad acceptance of Buddhism in China was mainly because it was confused with a variety of Taoism as both are doctrines of salvation with similar external practices. For example, Buddhist enlightenment, or Nirvana, was understood as the union of man with the eternal Tao. Later on, differences between Buddhism and Taoism were becoming clear as the translations from Sanskrit appeared, but by that time, Chinese society had already taken as theirs Buddhism, giving it its own personality. According to Buddhism, everything happens for a reason and therefore living beings are the results of their own kamma²⁹. They state that there is a life after death, it is a permanent rebirth where we die and we are reborn every day a little bit. In this way, Nirvana would be understood as the annihilation of all quarrel, and in such a state attained enlightenment Gautama Buddha and other Buddhas (Palacios & Ramírez 2011).

The most important characteristics of these three philosophical schools were reflected in the Neo-Confucianism which mainly covers two aspects: one reformist, concerned on politics and society, and other speculative, metaphysical-moral and even mystical. As mentioned, even though these philosophies have been present in Chinese society for many centuries, they are still really visible in the daily life of Chinese society not as religions but as philosophies of life.

3.2. Food and drinks

As I have mentioned in previous sections, the Taoist Yin-Yang doctrine has influenced many aspects of Chinese civilization, including their diet. An example of

²⁹ Kamma is understood as the energy of the physical and/or mental actions and their corresponding reactions (Palacios & Ramírez 2011).

the habit of balance in their diet is the intake of tea. The habit of drinking tea has been present in China since the eighth century, when Lu Yu wrote *The classic of tea* (茶经 cháījīng). Tea spread throughout China on the Silk Road, and it was considered a cure for a wide range of ills and it was even considered the secret for the eternal life. Thus, since many centuries ago, tea has become a basic element in Chinese diet all around the country.

On the other hand, Chinese cuisine differs by regions, climate and local preferences. Chinese cuisine has Eight culinary traditions of China by region (八大菜系 bā dà cài xì), which are: the Yue Cuisine (粤菜 yuè cài), the Chuan Cuisine (川菜 chuān cài), the Hui Cuisine (徽菜 huī cài), the Lu Cuisine (鲁菜 lǔ cài), the Min Cuisine (闽菜 mǐn cài), the Su Cuisine (苏菜 sū cài), the Xiang Cuisine (湘菜 xiāng cài), and the Zhe Cuisine (浙菜 zhè cài). Out of this list one of them belongs to Guangdong -Yue Cuisine- and one to Fujian -Min Cuisine- (Civitello, 2008).

Yue Cuisine from Guangdong is characterized by using the freshest ingredients, almost all kind of meats, and sparingly use of sauces and condiments. The most used cooking methods are steaming, stir frying, or deep frying. The most famous dish is Tim Sam, which are bit-sized dumplings, pieces of dough wrapped around a spiced meat or seafood filling, then steamed. This kind of cuisine is well known outside China due to the great number of emigrants from Guangdong and for this reason, in most cases people generalize Yue Cuisine as Chinese Cuisine.

In the same way, as Fujian people also migrated outside China, their cuisine has become popular in Taiwan and abroad, especially in South-East Asia. The Min Cuisine from Fujian is renowned for its soups, seafood, and slightly spicy flavoring from mustard and pepper. They also use edible mushrooms and bamboo shoots to cook. Its cooking methods are stewing, boiling, braising, quick-boiling, and steaming. Cutting is important in the Fujian cuisine. Most dishes are made of seafood, and if the seafood is not cut well, the dishes will fail to have their true flavor. Fujian dishes are slightly sweet and sour, and less salty than other dishes of the region.

3.3 Chinese festivals

There are many festivals in Chinese culture; however, the most important one is the Spring Festival (春节 chūnjié). The Spring Festival is celebrated during the Lunar New Year, on the first day of the first new moon. It is the most colorful and joyous of all Chinese festivals, and often lasts up to two weeks.

This festival has many traditions. First, all the family and friends get together to pay respects to the gods and spirits, and wish good fortune for the coming year. Second, during this period, many families do “spring cleaning” to make sure their homes are cleaned spotless. Third, they decorate their doors with spring couplets (春联 chūnlián) and posters that contain lucky symbols. The most popular symbol is the character 福 (fú) which means good fortune or happiness and it is usually hung upside down. This is because in Mandarin Chinese the word for upside down is “dào”, which also means “to arrive”. By hanging the “fú” character upside down (fúdàole), they imply “the good fortune came”. Likewise, spring couplets are poems that are hung up in pairs on New Year’s Eve, one on each side of the entryway. They usually contain a wish for wealth, good fortune and long life to those inside. Finally, lucky money is distributed to children by elders in red envelopes (红包 hóngbāo).

Red is the most popular color during the festival because it is considered the luckiest color. The legend behind it is that in ancient times, there was a horrible creature called Nian (the same word as “year”) that appeared at the end of the year. The beast attacked the people and their livestock, and even though the villagers fought fiercely, they never succeeded in destroying the creature. After many failures, they discovered that the monster had three weaknesses: it was frightened by noise, it disliked sunshine, and it was terrified by the color red. So, at the end of the year, the villagers built a huge bonfire, set off hundreds of firecrackers and painted the doors in red. The creature never appeared anymore. This is how red became the color of the festival and firecrackers became an important part of it too (Stepanchuk & Wong, 1991).

Food plays an important role during this time. During the New Year’s eve family dinner Chinese people honor their ancestors at the family banquet table by having a big feast called “surrounding the stove” (围炉 wéilú), which symbolizes the unity of

the family and honors the past and present generations of the lineage. At this banquet there are served many dishes that represent good fortune in different ways, such as kumquats (gold), coconut (togetherness), lotus seeds (children), and fish (wealth and abundance year after year).

There are differences between the most important Spring Festival dishes of North China and the most important Spring Festival dishes of South China. In northern China, during this festival the most popular food is dumplings called jiaozi (饺子) which symbolizes wealth. Jiaozi are layers of dough filled with chopped pork, cabbage, garlic, ginger, and other ingredients. Jiaozi are cooked in large pots of boiling water and eaten with dipping sauces made from soy sauce, vinegar, and chili oil. While in South China, niángāo (年糕 - New Year cake) is the most popular dessert. Niangao is a sweet steamed glutinous rice pudding, and before people eat their first bite, they say “ascend step by step” (步步登高 bùbù dēnggāo) because the word for cake also sounds like the word for “soaring high” (Mullen, 2005).

3.3.1 The lantern festival

The Lantern Festival (灯节 dēngjié), is the climactic night of the New Year holiday. It is celebrated on the 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar. In this festival the streets are full of lanterns and processions lion dancers, clowns, and actors in festive costumes and painted faces. The variety of the lanterns was the main attraction of the festival in ancient times. Nowadays, candlelit lanterns are usually replaced by wall lamps, but a blending of old and new traditions still exists.

The reason why I mentioned this festival, is because these lanterns are the main characteristic of the shops and restaurants owned by Chinese immigrants in Cuenca. Most of them have hung these lanterns outside their shops, which have become an easy mark of distinction for the rest of society.

3.4 Their language

Even though China is a vast mosaic of languages and dialects, Mandarin Chinese or Putonghua is the national standard language of the People’s Republic of China. The Language Atlas of China (1987) lists around eighty officially recognized “dialects”

used in China, but these dialects would better be considered languages since most of them are incomprehensible among them.

In the early years of the Republic, the Chinese saw the establishment of a well-defined national language as a pillar of the unity of the country and as an indispensable element in the functioning of the modern nation-state. The linguistic standards then used in China only applied to the written, but the way the texts were read depended upon what part of the country one came from. That is why, in 1919 Putonghua (普通话 - common speech) or Mandarin Chinese became the National Language (国语 guóyǔ) that should be taught in all primary, middle and high schools. Nevertheless, this new language was not fully used until 1955 when the process of creating the standard language was finished and Putonghua was declared the common language within the territory.

Putonghua was created on the basis of the Northern Dialects. The Beijing pronunciation was used as the phonetic foundation and the model works written in the modern Baihua 白话³⁰ were chosen as the grammatical foundation. Finally, as an attempt to increase literacy, the simplified writing system³¹ and the pinyin³² were developed (Palacios & Ramírez 2011).

Even though the official language in China is the Putonghua, all the other languages and dialects of every province and minority are used in daily conversations. In this way, as I have mentioned that the Chinese immigrants mainly come from Guangdong and Fujian, they learned Putonghua at school, but their mother languages are Cantonese (广东话 guǎngdōnghuà or 粤语 yuèyǔ) and Fujian dialects respectively.

To have a better understanding of the differences between these dialects, here are some of the differences that exist between Mandarin Chinese and the Cantonese. The main difference between these two languages is the pronunciation, although both are tonal languages, in Mandarin there are only four tones while in Cantonese there are nine tones. In the same way, while in Mandarin there are 21 consonants and 39

³⁰ Colloquial Speech, (Ramsey 1989)

³¹ Reducing the number of character strokes. The average number of strokes of the 2000 more used characters dropped from 11.2 to 9.8; making easier the learning process of the characters. (Martínez Robles 2007)

³² Pinyin is the writing of the Chinese pronunciation of words in Roman characters. (Palacios & Ramírez 2011)

vowels, Cantonese has only 19 consonants but 53 vowels. So, as it was mentioned above, although the writing is the same, the way these characters are read changes according to where each person comes from.

Now that the cultural background of Chinese immigrants has been contextualized, it will be compared with the social and cultural reality that this migratory group live in Cuenca.

CHAPTER 4: THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN CUENCA

4.1 When did they come?

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the Chinese who currently live in Cuenca came to Ecuador in the late 20th century and early 21st century. At first, most of them lived in Guayaquil and after some years they came to Cuenca. They started arriving in Cuenca between 2003 and 2008. At this time, their partners and children also started to immigrate.

4.2 Where do they come from?

Ninety percent of the interviewees come from small towns located in two provinces of China; Guangdong and Fujian. The other ten percent come from the north of China. It is important to note that Guangdong and Fujian are located in China's southeastern coast, close to the ports of Hong Kong and Macao, which, as we have mentioned before, are the ports from where the first Chinese immigrants came as coolies in the 19th century.

As previously mentioned, these provinces, Guangdong and Fujian, have been the center of the Chinese economy for centuries. This is where, during the Dynasties, the agricultural and textile production zones were located. After China became a Republic, the first four Special Economic Zones (SEZ) created by Deng Xiaoping were located in these provinces, three in Guangdong and one in Fujian³³. Thus, we can understand that these provinces went from being agricultural regions into

³³ Special Economic Zones are areas where market-driven capitalist policies are implemented to entice foreign businesses to invest in China. The three Special Economic Zones in Guangdong are Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shantou, and in Fujian it is Xiamen (Mack, 2012).

industrial zones, which unsurprisingly caused disruption in their principal means of livelihood.

The application of the laws of the market economy and the development of the mass production industry, led to the development of a huge social gap. Guangdong and Fujian's economy have been highly industrialized and urbanized, but in the rural areas absolute poverty, inequality in opportunity, and income inequality have risen to an alarming level (Yang & Adams, 2011). This information is supported by one of the interviewees, Mauricio who stated that he decided to leave China because even though he was a hard worker, his income were not high enough to support his family, and also he sensed that his children could not have the same opportunities as any children from a big city.

Therefore, this economic and social situation in the rural areas of Guangdong and Fujian provinces could be considered a push factor that encourages people from the rural areas to seek for better opportunities outside China.

4.2.1 Their level of education and jobs back in China

All the Chinese who were interviewed and live in Cuenca at the moment have finished elementary school, but almost none of them have finished high school. They have only studied up to what here would be the tenth grade.

The school system in China is different from the one in Ecuador. In China, they have primary school (小学) from 6 to 11 years old, junior middle school (初级中学) from 12 to 14 years old, and senior high school (高级中学) from 15 to 17 years old. Only primary school and junior middle school are part of the compulsory education program; therefore, most of the immigrants have only studied up to junior middle school.

As mentioned before, the great majority of the Chinese living in Cuenca comes from the south of China and only a few immigrants come from Northern provinces as Jilin. Here it is important to note that the ones coming from the South of China, from the Guangdong and Fujian provinces, are the ones who after finishing the compulsory grades started to do jobs where high education levels were not required, for example

as laborers in factories. On the other hand, the ones coming from the North of China report higher levels of studies and therefore better jobs as white-collar workers.

It is important to mention that their level of education also influences their level of fluency in Mandarin Chinese. As we have mentioned before, Putonghua is taught at schools and since most of them have only finished the tenth grade, their level of Putonghua in some cases is really basic. While doing the interviews it was easily noticed that some of them could not express themselves really well in Mandarin and they had to check how to say certain things. Also, according to what they have told me, due to the lack of practice, at the moment they can only write basic characters.

4.3 Why did they choose to come to Cuenca?

Based on the information provided by the interviewees there are two main factors that contribute in the decision making process to immigrate in Cuenca. The first one is explained by the migration networks theory and the second one is understood as an economic pull factor.

As exemplified before with John's story, their presence in the city is explained by the migration networks. As I mentioned, this social networks theory states that what determines the migration movements is the establishment of interpersonal relations that link migrants with relatives, friends or compatriots, either in the country of origin or destination. Therefore, these networks make migration easier, and in this case, they also provide them with money for the visa and the flight, a job, housing and food once they have arrived. Accordingly, they came here because they had relatives or friends who would help them to settle.

On the other hand, regarding the economic aspect, the pull factor that attracted them to come to Ecuador is the fact that Ecuador uses the American dollar as the national currency. As they stated, they also have friends or relatives in other countries, especially in Peru and Chile; however, the decisive reason why they came to Ecuador is the currency. The purchasing power of the dollar is much higher than the currencies of other countries, and that is what made the difference when they made the decision.

Consequently, we can state that the migration networks would explain their presence in this city; but, the fact that Ecuador uses the American dollar as national currency was decisive when making the decision.

4.4 Chinese immigrant's current status in Cuenca

4.4.1 Current employment status

Chinese living in Cuenca have become business people. When talking about their employment, their main characteristic is that all of them own their business. As mentioned above, all of them own shops where they sell products made in China or restaurants where they sell Chinese food, called *chifas*. Most of these shops are located downtown or in well-known sectors like La Remigio and Zona Rosa. These shops are open seven days a week, and usually from eight in the morning to nine at night. The restaurants are also open seven days a week from ten in the morning to ten thirty at night.

Regarding their shops, they sell clothes, shoes, decorations, and accessories, all of them made in China. These products are characterized for being cheaper than the other brands in the market, and their quality is also lower. In Cuenca society's mentality, the price depends on the quality. And since Chinese brands are usually cheaper than other brands, many people consider these products as disposable. It is also important to note that Chinese shops are usually the only shops that stay open on Sundays and holidays.

When talking about their *chifas* and based on the information obtained from the focus group, even though many Cuencanos consider that these restaurants do not have high standards of cleanliness, they are usually crowded and especially at the weekends. The dishes that they serve have a mixture of Cantonese and Ecuadorian flavors, since the original dishes have had to adapt to Ecuadorian tastes.

4.4.2 Generations of Chinese living in Cuenca

At the moment there are only first and second generations of Chinese living in Cuenca. This is because the Chinese who come to Cuenca only want to settle temporarily; their only objective is to work. The first Chinese who came to Cuenca

and started the migration network are not here anymore. After working for many years they went back to China or in some cases they moved to other countries. Even though I have tried to contact them in many ways, it has not been possible to do it.

The first generation can be seen as Chinese citizens who immigrated to Cuenca, who still hold their Chinese citizenship, and who are still living here. The second generation exists of children of Chinese parents who were born in Ecuador, and hold Ecuadorian citizenship. With very few exceptions, all the interviewed families are living together; only in two cases the parents sent their children back, to live in China with their grandparents. It is important to note that according to their parents, these children still hold Ecuadorian citizenship.

4.4.3 Spanish fluency

With the exception of the children who belong to the second generation, the fluency of Spanish amongst the Chinese living in Cuenca is really poor. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, even though they have been living here for more than 10 years, their Spanish is limited to the conversations they have with their customers. Thus, even though they can speak Spanish, they cannot write it because they have never studied it. Their spoken Spanish consists of numbers, days, dates, bargaining language, some basic daily conversations, and some polite and welcoming phrases they use with their customers. Therefore, even though they can speak basic Spanish, they cannot write it because they have never learned it. Their Spanish vocabulary is based on numbers, days, dates, everyday phrases of business, some basic everyday conversations, and some polite and welcoming phrases that they use with their clients.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, the facts that their Spanish is not fluent and that they cannot write it, are not due to a lack of interest, but due to a lack of opportunity to study. There are two reasons for this, the first reason is that they work seven days a week, at least twelve hours per day so they do not have free time to invest in their learning. The second reason is that in Cuenca, there are no places that teach Spanish to Chinese people. The language schools that exist in Cuenca are focused on teaching Spanish to English native speakers, and since these Chinese immigrants do not speak English, they cannot attend these schools.

4.4.3.1 Language gap

The fact that the parents' level of Spanish is really poor, and the children's level of Chinese is not good either, creates a language gap within their families. The communication between them is complex because they cannot use the same language to communicate and as a result in some cases children have developed language problems because they do not speak any of these languages fluently.

There are some exceptions in which the children can understand and speak the native language of their parents, which is not Mandarin Chinese but Cantonese or other Chinese dialects, but they cannot write it or read it. Nevertheless, the most common situation is that children can understand their parents' language, but they do not speak it. An example of this situation is Victoria's family, she and her husband mother tongue is Cantonese, and even though they can understand basic Spanish necessary for their business, they cannot speak it fluently. They have two children, Alvaro who is 7 years old and Ximena who is 4 years old. Alvaro speaks Spanish fluently and he can also understand Cantonese but he cannot speak it. On the other hand, his sister Ximena has developed language problems and even thought she understands Spanish and Cantonese, she cannot speak fluently either of them.

This language gap creates insecurities when raising their children because it is really difficult to understand each other. And in the case of the children who are attending school, for their parents it is hard to help them with their homework or anything that has to do with school because everything is in Spanish. The parents do not understand what their children are learning, and it becomes even more complicated when it is about English assignments.

This language limitation not only affects their family life but also their interaction with the whole environment where they develop. Inside their business, the communication with their employees is manageable, because their employees have been working with them for many years and also because, as I said before, the spoken Spanish which they need for the daily interaction at their business is fluent.

However, when talking about their interaction with their environment outside their work, this interaction is really poor. The interviewed Chinese immigrants can only hold basic daily conversations and they do not speak English at all. In the same way,

most of the locals do not speak English or Chinese. So, under these circumstances, how could a real interaction and understanding with their environment take place?

Therefore, this great language barrier results in minimal interaction with their environment. According to the interviewees, their only interaction with local people, besides their employees and customers, is with their neighbors whom they greet. Their ignorance of the language limits their social development, and that is why many interviewees consider their life here a very lonely one, because they know some people, mainly customers and neighbors, but they do not have friends because they cannot communicate with them.

4.4.4 How do they describe their life in Cuenca?

When I asked them about how their life in Cuenca is, all of them used the same term, “calm” (平静 píngjìng). And by calm they mean calm compared to the rhythm of their life back in China. Because even though they work many hours per day, seven days a week, which in our society is often seen as a lot, they still consider their life calmer than the one they had back home. The rhythm of life here in Cuenca is indeed slow, but when compared with China, it seems even slower.

There are many differences between our lifestyle and the common lifestyle in China. Here we usually work eight hours per day, five days a week. In Cuenca, on Saturday afternoon and on Sundays, everything, besides the restaurants and the shopping centers, is closed, because in the weekend, especially on Sunday, we try to spend time with our family. Also, some people go to church; this is part of our cultural background. But in China, they do not have time for this. There, most people have left their hometowns in order to find better opportunities in the big cities and since the distances there are significantly larger they do not have the time to travel back to visit their families every week. Moreover, if we consider the religious sphere, most of the population in China consider themselves as agnostic or atheist, so they do not have a specific religious practice time.

For their children, life in Ecuador is easier too. In China they grow up under a lot of pressure, and their whole lives there will be involved in an overwhelming competition. Everyone wants to succeed, but how much more complicated is it to succeed when you have to compete with over one billion people?

Well, this is the reality of the Chinese who live in China because since they are children they have to deal with this pressure. Inside the class they keep a daily record of the best students and only the ones who get the highest grades will have the opportunity to go to the best high schools, then to the best universities and later to get the best jobs. Therefore, since they are young they start to attend after school classes on weekdays and weekends, these classes range from sports and arts to advanced physics and mathematics, with the firm objective of succeeding later.

Knowing this, we can state that the rhythm of life of Chinese immigrants in Cuenca is actually slower and calmer than the rhythm of life in China. They can actually spend time with their children and their children also have time to enjoy their childhood.

4.4.4.1 Their perception of the city and its society

Regarding the city, they mainly like its weather, the water and the air quality. For them the weather in Cuenca is really comfortable because it is not as cold as a winter in China and it is not as hot as Guayaquil. Regarding the water and air quality, in China these are both cause of big problems, in most Chinese cities the water and air quality is really poor and they can even be hazardous to people's health. So compared with China, in Cuenca the quality of air and drinking water is really high. They also consider Cuenca as a clean city, and a safe place to live, especially compared with cities like Guayaquil, where most of them lived before. Interviewees did not mention anything that dissatisfied them about Cuenca.

When talking about Cuenca's society they consider the people to be polite and educated, but unpunctual and noisy. When I asked them about their perception of our society they compared it with the societies in China and also with the ones in the other cities where they have lived.

For example, they said that in Cuenca, neighbors always greet. Also, when people want something they usually say please and thanks. And, even though cuencanos are not really educated on yielding to pedestrians, they consider that this is something outstanding here because they have not seen it anywhere else. They also like the fact that Cuenca is a cultural city, because even though they do not take part in any of the

cultural events, they like to know that their children are growing up in such an environment.

Regarding punctuality, they said that at the beginning it was really annoying having to wait always for someone but that now they already got used to the fact that in Ecuador people will always be at least five minutes late. Antonio, even mentioned that at the beginning he had problems with his employees for this reason. Concerning noisiness, in China they also have parties and drink alcohol, but they do not do this on the streets, and the fact that Cuencanos party on the streets disturbs them. When people drink on the streets, they often also play loud music, which they consider disturbing. Since most of the interviewees live in places like La Remigio, where in the weekends many people gather to drink and play loud music, they have to deal with this a lot.

4.4.4.2 Local's perception about this group

A focus group with local people was held in order to understand what their perception is about this migratory phenomenon. This focus group was attended by 10 people between 20 and 40 years old. They were professionals, university students, Jehovah's witnesses' preachers, and Chinese immigrants' friends and neighbors. The session lasted around two hours and it gave interesting results.

The participants who took part in the focus group started noticing the presence of Chinese immigrants since 2003. According to their perceptions, at that time it was the peak of the Chinese immigration because then it was really easy to find shops owned by Chinese people everywhere in the city center. Belen who lives in the city center mentioned; "at that time the Chinese immigrants' shops were everywhere in downtown and when you needed something you knew that they were the only ones that were opened until late at night and even on Sundays. The prices were lower than other shops but the quality was really bad, now the quality is a bit better; but when they just started opening the shops you knew that even the clothes that you bought were disposable because after washing them, they broke". In the same way, Pablo said, "at that time it was really easy to recognize the Chinese immigrants' shops and restaurants downtown because they usually hang Chinese lanterns outside their shops, I think that is their sign. And In 2003 you could see it everywhere around downtown".

Likewise, José who owns a clothes shop in Bolivar St. mentioned; “the opening of the Chinese immigrants’ shops affected our business. When they just started to come our sales decreased, so we (the owners of shops in the city center) wanted to present a formal complaint at the town hall, but at the end we did not do it because we could not organize it. I think that it was also a bit racist to do it because at the end it is like when Ecuadorian people go to Spain or USA and the Spanish people complain about them. We already got used to their presence and now many of them are gone. Furthermore, our clients also realized that the quality of our products is really different so now I do not consider them my competition.”

Moreover, participants have noticed that in the last two years the presence of shops of Chinese immigrants in the city has decreased. According to their perception, the number of *chifas* has not modified, but the number of shops has. Participants consider that the number of shops owned by Chinese people has decreased in the last two years because in these shops all the products were imported. And now since the government aims to promote the national industries, they have set up more barriers to imports, so it was not profitable for Chinese immigrants to have these shops anymore.

Besides the commercial sphere, participants also consider that Chinese immigrants are hard workers, friendly, and direct. Participants consider that Chinese are hard workers and entrepreneurs since they usually aim to establish their own business, and they keep their shops open on weekends, holidays and until late in the evening. In the same way, they consider that Chinese immigrants always greet with a smile on their faces and try to make jokes with you despite their limited Spanish. And in the specific case of the Jehovah’s witnesses, they consider that Chinese immigrants are more direct and sincere than local people because when Chinese immigrants cannot attend to them, Chinese explain that they are busy and they tell Jehovah’s witnesses when they can come back, while locals usually just look for an excuse about their availability of time.

Likewise, the participants mentioned that besides the commercial activity, they have not noticed the presence of the Chinese immigrants in any social or cultural aspect. In their opinion, this is because Chinese immigrants are working every day and until late in the evening, so they do not have free time to use in these aspects. Also, since

their spoken Spanish is limited to the daily conversations at their business, they might not take part in social or cultural events because they would not understand it.

In like manner, the participants who have had a closer relationship with Chinese immigrants are their friends and neighbors. Their friends have built this relation by going to the Chinese immigrants' shops or restaurants frequently and for many years. Their friendship is based on greetings, and simple daily conversations. Patricio commented that his level of confidence with Chinese immigrants is limited by the language limitation that has not allowed them to become closer friends. But still Patricio knows something about Julian's background. For example, Patricio knows that Julian came from Guangdong, that he only studied up to tenth grade, and also that he came because his uncle helped him to come. In the same way, María who is Sandra's neighbor said, "I try to help Sandra as much as I can because I know that for her it is hard to communicate, but sometimes the willingness to do it is not enough because we cannot understand each other really well".

In general, participants consider that Chinese immigrants are a closed group that does not interact with their environment. They consider that even though Chinese immigrants are friendly, they have not adapted to our social and cultural structure because they do not take an active part in it. At the same time, they consider that Chinese immigrants' life is a bit lonely because they are focused on work and spend most of the time inside their jobs and houses so they do not interact with their surroundings.

It is noteworthy that it was easy to notice that participants generalize the term "Chinese" all the people who have Asian features. For example, they call "Chinese" to the owner of the shop Towa that sells clothes in Bolivar St., but actually he is from South Korea. Even though at the moment the government has many projects with Asian companies for most people in Cuenca, Asia is still a place out of our reality and they are not interested on learning more about it.

A final perception that participants have about Chinese immigrants is that Chinese sound angry or upset when speaking in their language. From the participants only Ivan from the Jehovah's witnesses can speak Mandarin Chinese, so since all the other ones ignore how important the intonations in Chinese languages are, they

consider that when Chinese immigrants are speaking in their mother language, they sound really rude, and “it sounds like if they were having an argument”.

4.4.5 Cuenca’s tradition and typical food

Regarding our traditions, they know very little about them. Since they focus on their work, they do not feel the need to understand and integrate in our culture. For example, speaking of our traditions, the only traditional festivity that some of the Chinese immigrants know is the carnival, but according to what they said, they had never taken part in it. Furthermore, as Victoria said, she considers it a problem that the school requires her child to participate every year in the "Pase del niño" because in first place she does not understand the concept of this activity and in second place she mentioned that she does not have time for it either.

Concerning our typical food, all interviewees have tried some traditional dishes like ceviche, guinea pig and arroz con menestra. They consider that the Ecuadorian food flavors are nice but they do not consume Ecuadorian food every day. All interviewees cook at home and they prepare traditional Chinese food daily because as they said, they try to maintain the customs and flavors of their motherland.

4.4.6 Religion

None of the Chinese immigrants living in Cuenca practice a religion. Even though Cuenca has always been a catholic city, Chinese immigrants do not feel attracted to this or any religion; probably because most Chinese consider themselves agnostic or atheistic.

Despite the fact that none of them practice a religion, all the interviewees mentioned that there is a group of Jehovah's Witnesses who speak Mandarin Chinese and have visited them on many opportunities. These Jehovah's Witnesses are mainly foreigners who come as volunteers from the USA and some European countries, there are also some local people preaching in Mandarin Chinese but they are a minority.

This group has about ten people and they get together every Thursday at 19:30 in a hall located in García Moreno y Martínez Mera. This meeting lasts around an hour and the main activity is to read the Bible and practice to preach in Mandarin Chinese.

Every Thursday, at the same time, they hold a gathering in Spanish, and in a separate room they hold it in Mandarin Chinese. It is noticeable that all the books, songs, and texts that are used during the ceremonies are in Mandarin Chinese.

Ivan Brigan is the preacher who is in charge of organizing the group of the people who preach in mandarin in Cuenca. According to the information he gave during the interview in Cuenca they have been preaching in Mandarin Chinese for almost nine years. They started preaching in Mandarin Chinese because they noticed that the presence of Chinese immigrants at that time was increasing quickly. They also organize these meetings and preach in Mandarin in Guayaquil and Quito. Guayaquil was the first city where they started doing it because there the presence of Chinese immigrants is higher. In Cuenca, besides Mandarin Chinese, they also hold meetings in Quechua, English, and sign language because, as Ivan said, their objective is to make the understanding of this religion easy for everyone.

The system they use to preach to Chinese people is the following. They visit Chinese shops and restaurants once a week; they read the Bible with the Chinese people, then they explain what it means. Later they give the Chinese small magazines and brochures that talk about different aspects of the religion, and finally they invite them to participate in the weekly meetings. According to Ivan, they not only preach religion but they also try to build a friendship with these immigrants.

The congregation does not have Mandarin Chinese classes; instead every one studies Mandarin by themselves. They use different books, magazines, or brochures in order to learn the language necessary to preach. One of their main tools to study the language is an app called JW Library. With this app they can read and study the Bible, as well as other books and brochures, in many languages including Mandarin Chinese. With only two exceptions, the other preachers cannot hold a conversation in Mandarin Chinese, so if they want to have a conversation that does not focus on religion, they need to use different apps to translate what they want to say.

According to a survey that Ivan has done, there are around 30 Chinese immigrants who own shops or restaurants in Cuenca. He mentioned that Chinese immigrants are kind people, they listen to the preachers and ask questions, but only rarely someone takes part in the congregation. He mentioned that before there was a family that used to participate frequently, but now they moved to another city. They were the only

Chinese immigrants who used to participate in the meetings regularly. Now there are only some Chinese immigrants who come sporadically. According to Ivan the reason for this is that at 19:30 all of them are still working, so instead of waiting for them to come, they go to the Chinese immigrants' shops and restaurants.

There are three Chinese families who they visit every Sunday afternoon to read the Bible and teach them Jehovah's teachings. The preachers' perception is that these three families are interested in the religion and are willing to learn more. However, based on the Chinese interviewees' testimonies, the Chinese immigrants seem not to be interested in taking part in any religion. Instead, since in this case there is no language barrier, they might consider the visit of the preachers as a way to interact with their environment, having no interest in religion itself.

4.4.7 How do they feel in Cuenca's society?

In general they feel really comfortable living in Cuenca, but some mentioned that on some occasions they have felt discriminated against. In Cuenca we live in a society that is just learning to receive and include immigrants; therefore, there are some people who ignore immigrants' cultural background and based on prejudices, judge them or just prefer to keep away from them.

The Chinese immigrants that have been in Cuenca for a longer time, mentioned that when they just got here, they felt that they were not welcome. Julian said, "people thought that we came here to steal their jobs and take their money so when I was on the street I could feel that they were looking askance at me"³⁴. According to him, this situation has improved and now he has not felt like that anymore.

Adults in general indicated that they have not felt discriminated against, but they did mention that their children have suffered discrimination by their classmates. Due to their physiognomic features, it is easy to identify them as Asians and this has led to discrimination based on prejudices. In Ecuador we have an idiom that says "chino cochino", which means "dirty Chinese"; and that is the most common phrase that classmates use to make fun of children of Chinese descendants. For example, Xavier

³⁴有人以为我们来这边是为了和他们争夺工作机会并赚他们的钱，所以我在街上能感觉到，他们轻蔑地看着我。Julián, october 1st, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

said that, “There were two times I had to go to talk with my son’s teachers at school because he was fighting with some classmates, they were calling him *chino cochino*”³⁵. Xavier’s son studies in La Salle school, and it is important to note as Xavier, many Chinese are ashamed to accept that they have suffered discrimination, so it is hard to determine if Chinese immigrants suffer or not discrimination.

It is relevant to note that, even though in general they feel comfortable living in Cuenca, most of them have not developed a bond with the city, the society or the culture. Interviewees said that they do not feel a real connection that attached them to Cuenca, and the main reason for that is probably the language barrier that does not allow them to get involved in our society. A sign that shows they do not have a bond with Cuenca is that they are not planning to stay here permanently. They have not invested in real estate here but they have done this in their hometowns. With only two exceptions, all the other interviewees rent a place to work, and in most cases this is also their home. It is important to note that not even the second generation feels a tie with our society. Even though they were born here, and grew up in Cuenca, they still feel more connection with their parents’ country than with Ecuador. Since they are small, they are already looking forward to going to China and live there.

4.4.8 Comunicación e interacción entre inmigrantes chinos

Well, we have already determined that their communication and interaction with the local people is limited by the poor fluency of their Spanish, but what about the level of interaction and organization among Chinese immigrants?

In Cuenca, at the moment, their interaction and communication is really poor and their level of organization is nil. As interviewees mentioned, until 2007 there was some sort of organization among them, they used to get together to celebrate their festivals and they even had monthly meetings. The organizers of these events were the immigrants who had been in Cuenca for a longer time and were a bit older compared to the other Chinese immigrants here. However, according to Manuel between 2007 and 2008, they "decided to return back home because they were

³⁵我孩子的老师已经联系我两次了，因为我孩子跟他的同学打架。他们叫他“chino cochino”。Xavier, october 5, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

already too old to continue working here, and the people who are coming now are young people who just want to work, earn money and nothing else. In fact, our life is very lonely, because the language barrier does not allow us to have true Ecuadorian friends, we have limited availability of time and the unwillingness of the other Chinese does not allow us to meet"³⁶.

Furthermore, the Chinese living in Cuenca have not gotten involved in the Chinese organizations of Guayaquil or any other city. They do know about them, but they do not take part in any of them and according to their statements they are not interested in participating in them either.

According to the above information, we can state that at the moment, the Chinese immigrants living in Cuenca, do not have any kind of organization among them. The interaction with their environment is really poor too, and this has led to their isolation. The most significant reasons for their isolation are the language barrier between them and the locals, and a lack of free time due to their jobs.

4.4.9 Their connection with China and its traditions

Interviewees still keep close ties with their homeland, family, and friends. Since they live in Ecuador, all the interviewees have been back to China between two and three times, every time spanning a period of about two months. They went to China with their whole family. The main reason why they have not been back more frequently is that the price of the tickets is really high, between \$2000 and \$3000 per person for a round trip. Furthermore, all the immigrants interviewed send money to their family in China at least twice a year, especially during the Spring festival. And as said before, some of them even invested in real estate in their hometown.

Chinese immigrants try to keep updated on news about China and they keep in touch with their relatives and friends. To talk with their friends and family, they do not use western applications such as Facebook or Whatsapp, which are really popular here. Instead they use the Chinese version of these applications such as QQ and Weixin.

³⁶他们回国是因为他们老了，他们已经工作了很久所以他们累了。新来的中国人都很年轻所以他们只想赚钱。其实，我们在这里的生活很孤单因为别的中国人没空或者不想见面，并且我们的西语不那么流利，所以很难有真正的本地朋友因为不能交流。Manuel, October 13, 2014. Interview conducted in Mandarin Chinese, own translation.

And also, to stay up to date about Chinese news, they use Baidu instead of Google and Youku instead of Youtube. So, in order to keep a close tie with their country, family and friends which they have left behind, they try to use the same applications that are common in mainland China; 80% of the interviewees have not tried to use the apps that are common here.

On the other hand, all Chinese immigrants living in Cuenca try to keep and practice Chinese traditions. For example, Chinese immigrants living in Cuenca still practice some Taoist respiratory and diet techniques such as Tai Chi, and the tea intake to keep harmony between their mind and body. Especially the intake of tea is a tradition that is deeply rooted and still present in their daily lives; for example, while I conducted the interviews, 100% of interviewees offered tea prepared in the traditional Chinese way because this is also considered a gesture of courtesy to guests. Also, Confucian practices are still present in their families, especially when speaking of respect for elders. For example, the children call me 姐姐 (jiějiě) which means older sister and when I visit them, their parents have taught them to come, say hello and bring something to drink; likewise, Chinese parents have taught their children that at school teachers are the authority and they must respect them. Finally, in the shops and restaurants of some Chinese immigrants it can be found some altars to different Buddhist gods, especially to those that are related with money and wealth. They put offerings such as food and incense looking for the blessing to their families. As it has been explained, each of these three philosophies of life are still present in the daily life of Chinese immigrants living in Cuenca and also, they try that these values continue that is why traditions and values are what they emphasize on their children.

Finally, traditional Chinese festivals and traditions are still present, especially during the Spring Festival. This festival is commonly known as the "Chinese New Year", so during this festival Chinese immigrants living in Cuenca try to celebrate it with their family and in some cases they even rest for one or two days. Also, some of them meet with some of the other Chinese immigrants but due to the poor communication between them, this could be complicated. According to Victoria every year she prepares New Year dinner with her family and at the same time, pays tribute to their

ancestors, they also clean the whole house, and give to each one of her kids a 红包 (hóngbāo) which is a small red envelope with money.

Conclusion

After studying and analyzing the actual situation of the Chinese immigrants in Cuenca, it can be stated that in Cuenca cultural adaptation of the Chinese migratory group to their environment does not exist.

In the first place, after carrying out the investigation, it can be determined that the most important element that provokes the lack of cultural adaptation is the language barrier that exists between the Chinese immigrants and the local society. This is because there is not a common language in between them, thus communication becomes a complex process. As it was mentioned, Chinese immigrants only speak the Spanish phrases they need for their daily tasks at work with their clients or employees. Likewise, none of the interviewees can speak English and since in Cuenca there are only a few people who can speak fluent Chinese, there is only a small possibility that a solid communication will be established. Furthermore, it can be determined that this language barrier is not created due to the lack of interest of the Chinese immigrants on the language, but it is due to the lack of opportunities to study the language because the Spanish schools in Cuenca only teach in English and since none of the interviewees can speak English, it is no use for them to attend these schools.

Secondly, another element that does not allow the adaptation of this group to their environment is their lack of free time. Since the Chinese immigrants are focused on their work, they leave aside everything that is not related with it. That is why, even though with the rest of Chinese immigrants a language barrier does not exist, their interaction and communication is still weak. Thus they have not organized any kind of association like the ones that exist in other cities such as Guayaquil or Quevedo. Therefore, at the moment in Cuenca there is not any kind of organization that gathers all the Chinese immigrants who live in the city.

Third, it can be determined that within the community of Chinese immigrants in Cuenca, the idea of return is a fact. This can be claimed because none of the immigrants who started the migratory network is still living here, and after working here for some years, all of them have gone back to China. Likewise, as it was

mentioned in previous chapters, Chinese immigrants prefer to invest in real estate in their native towns and not in Cuenca. That is why at the moment only first and second generations are living in the city. Thus, Chinese consider Cuenca only as a temporary migratory destination, so they would not consider it a necessity to adapt to a society that sooner or later they will leave.

Finally, it is undeniable that Chinese immigrants are still deeply entrenched with their cultural roots. Whether they are philosophical traditions, gastronomic traditions or festivities, these are all still present in the daily lives of Chinese immigrants. The respect for their elders and ancestors such as the daily tea consumption is visible in the daily life of this migratory group. Their festivities and especially the Spring Festival is their way to demonstrate that they still have their Chinese identity.

Recomendations

In first place, I consider that it is really important to seek a way to integrate Chinese immigrants to Cuenca's society. For example, since the main difficulty for their integration is the language barrier, it would be useful to create an institute that focuses on teaching Spanish to this group. And, they should have the option to take private classes at home because Chinese immigrants do not have free time to leave their work and go to a school to take classes.

Second, Chinese immigrants should seek integration among them. That is, encourage them to keep meetings and celebrations as they used to do some years ago. I consider it is transcendental to encourage their joining together and communication because in this way their quality of life will improve and they will feel more comfortable living in Cuenca.

Third, the local government and authorities should look for initiatives to integrate this migratory group. For example, they could use the "Semanas Internacionales" organized by the Municipality of Cuenca to create a space where local people can have a better understanding of Chinese culture; and at the same time, they would give the opportunity to the Chinese immigrants to participate in the promotion of their culture. In this way they would sense that the rest of the society is also interested in knowing about their background.

Finally, I consider it is essential to continue with the study and the investigation of this migratory group not only in Cuenca but also in the rest of Ecuador. That is why I hope this work will become the initiative to inspire a deep study of Chinese immigrants in Ecuador because not only Andean migrations have modified our ethnic and cultural background but there are also other migratory groups, like the Chinese, that have been present in our society for centuries but little is known about them.

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