Settlement Orientations and Ethnic Identifications of the Chinese Cuban Diaspora:

The Case of the Eng Herrera Family

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Abstract

From the days of coolie importation in the mid-nineteenth century to successive waves of voluntary migration in the 20th century, the Chinese presence in Cuba has created a significant Chinese Cuban diaspora community. This paper seeks to explore the settlement orientation of Chinese Cubans against the framework of sojourner theory, originally coined by sociologist Paul Siu to describe Chinese American immigrants, in order to gain deeper insight into the motivations and experiences of Chinese Cuban migration. Using oral histories and archival photographs from the Eng Herrera family, this analysis seeks to reconstruct the rich fabric of Chinese Cuban life in the twentieth century with an emphasis on transnational connections and identity formation. As the settlement orientations and ethnic identifications of the Eng Herreras evolve from generation to generation, this case study both exemplifies a typical Chinese Cuban family and highlights exceptional nuances in an intergenerational chronology.

Historical Background

The Chinese presence in Cuba dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. Between 1847 and 1874, around 140,000 young Chinese men were deceived through disingenuous work contracts or kidnapped from port cities in Southeastern China.[1] Enduring harsh conditions and high mortality rates on steamships and frigates, just under 125,000 landed in Cuba. These men were intended as contract coolie labourers to support Spanish Cuba's primacy in sugar production by supplementing a declining African slave labour force in Cuba, as growing movements for abolition hampered the Atlantic trade and drove up the cost of slaves.[2] The majority were destined to work on sugar, tobacco, and coffee plantations, with a small number being assigned to other industries like cigar factories or domestic service.[3]

Although they were called contract labourers, the treatment of Chinese coolies closely resembled that of slaves. Their contracts were auctioned to owners, or *patronos*, in the same market used for the sale of slaves.[4] Once purchased, the coolie was sent to live, work, and endure abuse from his *patrono* under the same conditions as slaves.[5] Contract stipulations regarding working hours, provisions, and wages were constantly broken with no recourse, and the termination of the initial eight-year contract period provided no relief as many who survived the first contract were coerced into recontracting.[6]

However, according to Hu-DeHart, a large number of workers managed to escape contract labour permanently after only recontracting once.[7] Many were able to register as foreign residents by applying for residency permits, which allowed for naturalisation as Spanish subjects in the matter of several years, or else certified their Chinese citizenship with

[1] Hu-DeHart, Evelyn, "The Chinese Presence in Cuba: Heroic Past, Uncertain Present, Open Future," in *Contemporary Chinese Diasporas*, ed. by Min Zhou (Singapore: Palgrave, 2017), 349.
[2] Kathleen López, "The Chinese in Cuban History," in *Essays on the Chinese Diaspora in the Caribbean*, ed. by Walton Look Lai (2006), 105.
[3] Ibid, 107.
[4] Ibid, 106.
[5] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 349-50.
[6] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 106-109.
[7] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 353.

the newly established Chinese Consulate of Imperial China beginning in the 1870s.[8] It is important to note that although the coolie trade did not officially end until 1874,[9] nearly a quarter of the Chinese Cuban population had already achieved their freedom by then.[10]

Although the coolie traders that brought these Chinese men to Cuba only intended them as a transient labour force, López remarks that former indentured labourers "chipped away at the markers of their former status" by forming families with local Cuban women, establishing small businesses, and creating the first Chinatown in Havana as early as the 1860s.[11] They also demonstrated their commitment to Cuba by actively participating in the Cuban wars for independence in the final decades of the nineteenth century, escaping plantations alongside slaves to become *mambises* (freedom fighters.)[12] The contributions of the Chinese *mambises* were recognised with a monument erected in Havana, with the tribute "There was no Chinese deserter; there was no Chinese traitor."[13]

Around the 1860s, Cuba saw its first wave of voluntary Chinese migration as a sizable population of Chinese began to arrive from California.[14] The arrival of these merchant elites from America, as well as others directly from China, brought the capital and connections to establish transnational businesses and associations. Simultaneously, they began to spur class stratification in Chinese Cuban communities, with the majority of former indentured labourers working in agriculture or small enterprises.[15] After the end of indentured labour, Chinese migration to Cuba for economic opportunity continued, notwithstanding brief periods of

[8] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 353.
[9] Kathleen López, "The Revitalization of Havana's Chinatown: Invoking Chinese Cuban History," in *The Chinese in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. by Walton Look Lai and Chee-Beng Tan (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 212.
[10] Margaret Mih Tillman, "Laboring between Empires: Coolie Solidarity and the Limits of the Chinese Civic Association in Havana, 1872," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 2, no. 2 (2016): 191. https://doi.org/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.2.2.0188.
[11] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 112.
[12] Mauro García Triana and Pedro Eng Herrera, *The Chinese in Cuba, 1847-Now* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 1.
[13] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 356.
[14] Rolando Antonio Pérez Fernández, "The Chinese Community and the *Corneta China*: Two Divergent Paths in Cuba," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 46 (2014), 63, https://doi.org/10.5921/yeartradmusi.46.2014.0062.
[15] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 113.

restriction in the first decades of the twentieth century.[16] A particularly prosperous period in Cuba in the 1920s saw a large influx of free Chinese, with some bringing women and families for the first time.[17] The last major wave of Chinese immigration to Cuba was spurred by the political upheaval of the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949.[18]

Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework that this paper draws on is sojourner theory, initially coined by sociologist Paul Siu in 1952. Siu describes the sojourner as "a stranger who spends many years of his lifetime in a foreign country without being assimilated by it."[19] Socially isolated and steadfastly maintaining the culture of their own ethnic group, the sojourner's unassimilable nature is contingent on their psychological refusal to perceive themselves as a permanent resident of their host country.[20] Rather, the primary purpose of the sojourn is to complete a job in the shortest possible time before returning home. The job is usually a means to an end to be reaped in the home country, such as greater prestige, fortune, or security.[21]

However, this paradigm is complicated by the ever-moving goalpost of achievement that can prolong the job and create the dilemma of staying abroad or returning home. The sojourner's social attitudes and values inevitably change to adapt to their new environment, complicating their original plan and leading some to stay abroad indefinitely until retirement or death.[22] Instead, the sojourner maintains a homeland tie through "writing letters, exchanging gifts, and participating in home social and political affairs" and making a series of trips home.[23] In some cases, Siu emphasises that an individual can still be a sojourner even if they are never

[16] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 114.
[17] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 357.
[18] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 122.
[19] Paul C. P. Siu, "The Sojourner," *American Journal of Sociology* 58, no. 1 (1952): 34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2771791.
[20] Ibid, 34-35.
[21] Ibid, 35.
[22] Ibid, 35-6.
[23] Ibid, 39.

able to take the trip home, the status being primarily linked to the unassimilable psychological orientation.[24]

Siu identifies several other key characteristics of the sojourner type. The sojourner tends to associate with people of their own ethnic group, forming cultural areas such as Chinatown or Little Tokyo. These areas become the centre hub of activity for immigrants of the same ethnic group, a locus for the replication of their homeland culture and the primary site of the sojourner's private social relationships.[25] While on one hand a form of symbiotic segregation, the cultural colony is also indicative of the social isolation and disengagement of the sojourner in wider community affairs.[26] The cultural colony can also become a site of commitment for sojourners, as an alternative home away from home for those unable to voyage or a haven as the sojourner develops "a mode of living which is totally characteristic neither of his home nor of the dominant group."[27]

More contemporary discourse on sojourner theory has settled on a balanced perspective on the motivations for Chinese sojourning patterns. Philip Yang attributes the causes of sojourning among early Chinese American immigrants to a combination of voluntary cultural preferences and involuntary forces.[28] In terms of cultural preference, he emphasises the strong homeland-attachment tradition in Chinese culture, where the primary goal of going abroad is to bring home the prosperity achieved.[29] This is reflected in the split family structure of emigrant families, where male family members sojourned abroad and left behind their wives to tend to homemaking, a commonly reproduced social arrangement that ensured the continual flow of remittances and improved family reputation in the home village.[30] The other side of

[24] Siu, "The Sojourner," 42.
[25] Ibid, 37.
[26] Ibid, 37.
[27] Ibid, 42.
[28] Philip Q. Yang, "From Sojourning to Settlement to Transnationalism: Transformations of the Chinese Immigrant Community in America," in *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora* (Milton Park, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012), 126.
[29] Ibid, 126.
[30] Yang, "From Sojourning to Settlement," 126.

this arrangement was the creation of bachelor's societies in America, precluding the possibility of permanent settlement through family-making. The extremely imbalanced sex ratios in Chinese immigrant communities in America, as severe as over 26 men to every woman in 1890, were exacerbated by anti-miscegenation laws that prohibited marriage to Caucasian women and barred the possibility of familial life.[31] Here the factor of white racism against the Chinese also figured prominently, which resulted in targeted violence, mob attacks, and discriminatory legislation ultimately culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.[32]

This paper seeks to build upon the existing discourse about sojourning Chinese immigrants in the United States by applying the theory to the Chinese Cuban diaspora of the 20th century. In this particular period, Chinese immigration both to and from the Caribbean island was influenced by turbulent political developments in both China and Cuba, with the former experiencing two regime changes and a civil war and the latter experiencing a national revolution. Through the application of sojourner theory to the case study of the Eng Herrera family, this paper endeavours to illuminate the nuanced socioeconomic and identity-based motivations that contribute to new understandings about immigration and settlement orientations.

The Eng Herrera family

Spanning over three generations, the Eng Herrera family's story in Cuba begins with Guillermo Eng, who immigrated to the country from Guangzhou in the early 1910s. He went on to marry a white Cuban woman named Elvira Herrera Perez, with whom he had three children. After the unfortunate death of their first two daughters, Pedro Eng Herrera was born on January 15, 1933 as the sole surviving son of Guillermo and Elvira. Pedro married a white

[31] Ibid, 127.
[32] Ibid, 127.

Cuban woman named Belkis Ramos Trejo, with whom he had a daughter and a son, named María Eng Ramos and Vladimir Eng Ramos respectively.

The Eng Herrera family has entered a rich array of oral accounts and personal photographs into the scholarly archives, providing a comprehensive basis for the following analysis. The main primary source used is the oral history of Pedro Eng Herrera, describing his father's immigration to Cuba, Pedro's upbringing in Havana's Chinatown, and Pedro's later involvement in the Cuban Revolution. More details about Pedro's family life were obtained through the visual analysis of family photo albums, revealing how cultural fusion characterised the Eng Herrera family's life in late 20th century Cuba.

Arrival in Cuba: Guillermo's journey

From the beginning, Guillermo Eng's immigration path diverged significantly from the average Chinese immigrant to Cuba in the early 20th century. Guillermo entered Cuba using a student visa, although he did not ultimately pursue a course of study and instead used the access to work in Cuba.[33] In Pedro's words, his father's education made him "different from most of the uncultured overseas Chinese."[34] Although it is unclear what level of education he obtained at home in China, he had already achieved fluency in Spanish by the time he arrived in Cuba, by virtue of the time he spent in Peru and Mexico en route to his final destination.[35]

Guillermo's use of a student visa in some ways indicates that he was highly motivated to move to Cuba. In the early 20th century, Cuba enforced an immigration ban on Chinese labourers. The ban was initially imposed during the US occupation of the island in 1902 as Military Order No. 155, explicitly prohibiting Chinese immigration under a larger blanket ban

[33] Pedro Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," in 末路移民：古巴華僑訪談錄 *Molu yimin: Guba huaqiao fangtanlu* [Surviving Castaways in Fading History: Interviews with the Cuban Chinese], ed. by Louie Kin-sheun (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2017), 315.
[34] Ibid, 317.
[35] Ibid, 315.

on foreign contract labour.[36] Sustained in immigration policy even after the occupation ended, the ban was not lifted until 1917 during a sugar boom that increased the demand for nonwhite immigrant labourers.[37] The only exceptions to this ban were merchants, diplomats, students, and tourists.[38] It is interesting to note that three of these four groups are necessarily transient and temporary, reflecting a desire to discourage long-term settlement among what few Chinese were permitted to enter the country. Hence, Guillermo's leveraging of the student visa loophole to enter Cuba, despite the hostile immigration policy, was especially motivated by either the push factors in his previous host country or the strong pull of opportunity in Cuba. Based on an understanding of the contemporary situation in Peru and Mexico, a rising and pervasive anti-Chinese sentiment in both countries may have contributed to his decision to leave these countries and move on to Cuba.[39] [40] While Cuba was by no means free from anti-Chinese sentiment in the same period, in Guillermo's case it appears that conditions were more favourable for a long-term stay.

Marriage and family life: the psychological sojourner

Prior to leaving China, Guillermo started a family in his home village in Guangzhou, marrying a woman named Lin Hongxing (林紅杏) and having a son and a daughter together.[41] His wife and children stayed behind in China while Guillermo went abroad, in a split family structure common among Chinese emigrants. Cohering with sojourner theory, the familial division allowed male family members to sojourn abroad in search of economic opportunity

[36] José Amador, "Caught between Crime and Disease: Chinese Exclusion and Immigration Restrictions in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba," in *Imagining Asia in the Americas*, ed. by María Rivas Zelideth and Debbie Lee-DiStefano (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 87-88.
[37] Ibid, 91.
[38] Ibid, 88.
[39] Julia María Schiavone Camacho,"Crossing Boundaries, Claiming a Homeland: The Mexican Chinese Transpacific Journey to Becoming Mexican, 1930s–1960s," *Pacific Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (2009): 552, https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2009.78.4.545.
[40] Patricia Palma, "Peru's Historical Anxiety about Asian Immigration May Have a Contemporary Twist," *Migration Information Source*, Migration Policy Institute, June 20, 2024, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/peru-asian-immigration-history.
[41] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 315.

while the wife maintained the home and received remittances.[42] According to Yang, this configuration best served the needs of Chinese sojourners as their ultimate goal was to bring home the economic prosperity they achieved overseas. This also enabled the continual maintenance of the sojourner's connection with their homeland and indicated the intention for eventual return.[43]

However, several years after arriving in Cuba, Guillermo married Elvira Herrera Perez, a white woman from the Canary Islands. The two wed and had three children, among them Pedro.[44] At first glance, this appears to be a significant challenge to the sojourner narrative. Guillermo's decision to marry a local woman and have children with her could indicate a conscious decision to start a family and settle in Cuba in some permanent capacity, rather than remaining attached to his Chinese family back in Guangzhou. The reality of the situation may be far more complex, as Guillermo's continued relationship with his Chinese family and his psychological orientation continue to point to a sojourner mindset in spite of his Cuban family.

In Pedro's oral history, one of the first things that he mentioned in relation to his father is the family that he left behind in China. He spoke fondly of his half-brother and half-sister, offering up their names and professions and appearing to express regret that he was never able to meet them as they had already passed away:

> They would be my half older brother and sister by the same father but different mother, but I have never met them. My older brother was named Diting (帝壬), he always stayed in China and never came to Cuba, now he has already passed away. He was in the Air Force, belonging to the Flying Tigers *(ed.: Possible First American Volunteer Group*

[42] Yang, "From Sojourning to Settlement," 126.
[43] Ibid, 126.
[44] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 316.

of the Republic of China Air Force). My older sister was named Qiumei (秋美), later she went to Hong Kong to work in a hair salon, now she has also passed away.[45] [46]

Clearly, Guillermo's "other" family in China was something that he did not hide from his son. In another section, Pedro also mentioned that he and his father had various letters sent from their Chinese relatives in their possession, indicating that they maintained regular correspondence with Guillermo's family in China, who were aware of the new family Guillermo established in Cuba. In fact, López notes that Chinese men customarily could have multiple wives, and cases of migrant men marrying a "secondary wife" in addition to their "primary wife" in China have been previously documented.[47] While this may have been a known practice, this represents a deviation from sojourner theory by creating of significant familial ties to the community in the host country, contrary to Siu's characterisation of the disengaged sojourner.

One of the major factors leading to impermanent settlement patterns among Chinese immigrants was the predominantly male immigration that led to the formation of bachelor societies, which were necessarily transient.[48] Yang supports this by stating that "familial life [is] a fundamental condition for permanent settlement" for these Chinese immigrants.[49] In the US, the Chinese were excluded from local family formation due to anti-miscegenation laws;[50] however, in Cuba this was largely not the case. There were no legal restrictions on cross-racial alliances between Chinese men and Cuban women, whether white, black, or *mulata* (mixed black and white heritage). López offers evidence of interracial marriages dating back to the

[45] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 315.
[46] Translation from Chinese to English my own, see Appendix A for full translated text.
[47] Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 176-7.
[48] Anthony B. Chan, "'Orientalism' and Image Making: The Sojourner in Canadian History," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 9, no. 3 (1981): 40, www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/orientalism-image-making-sojourner-canadian/docview/1300555840/se-2.
[49] Yang, "From Sojourning to Settlement," 127.
[50] Ibid, 127.

period of indentured labour as early as the 1860s, and these unions became increasingly common as Chinese labourers gained greater freedoms following emancipation at the end of the nineteenth century.[51] In the case of Guillermo and Elvira, the only resistance their marriage faced was racial discrimination on the part of her parents,[52] but clearly familial life was possible and accessible for many Chinese immigrants in Cuba.

This raises the question of whether Guillermo entered into this marriage with prior intention of staying long-term, or if the creation of a new family in Cuba was what motivated him to remain in Cuba. Indeed, even after Elvira's untimely passing shortly after Pedro's birth, Guillermo went on to live in Cuba for sixty-odd years without taking a single trip home. Guillermo's story deviates from a classical sojourner model by marrying and forming a family in his host society, and his prolonged stay in Cuba could be described as something akin to permanent settlement.

However, according to Siu's original theory, a sojourner was not necessarily defined by their actions, but by their mental orientation of being "psychologically [...] unwilling to organise himself as a permanent resident in the country of his sojourn."[53] Here, we come to see the intricate nuances inherent to the sojourner versus settler problem. The delaying of a homebound trip or even a complete lack thereof did not necessarily exclude an individual from the category of sojourner.[54] Pedro noted in his account the prohibitive cost and logistical difficulties of making such a journey for his family.[55] This is corroborated by other accounts, where Chinese migrants who were able to make a trip back to China and return to Cuba afterwards were "an unusual case," with these outlying cases attributed to exceptional

[51] Kathleen López, "Afro-Asian Alliances: Marriage, Godparentage, and Social Status in Late-Nineteenth-Century Cuba," *Afro-Hispanic Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 59–72, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23055223.
[52] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 316.
[53] Siu, "The Sojourner," 34.
[54] Ibid, 42.
[55] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 321.

economic ability.[56] In the end, Guillermo was only able to return to China once in the early 1970s, at which point he was already advanced in age. This proved to be his final trip home, as Guillermo passed away soon after.

It becomes clear in Pedro's description that, despite his marriage and family in Cuba, Guillermo was still a sojourner that ultimately remained oriented towards China as his homeland: "He had discussed it with me and I advised that he leave. He was getting old, and he should go back to China to live with his family that he had not seen in several decades."[57] What was left unsaid was the clear understanding, on the part of both father and son, that Guillermo was preparing to die at home in Guangzhou. Despite the complicated political circumstances surrounding his departure from Cuba, from political upheavals in Havana's Chinatown to China's own Cultural Revolution, Guillermo was firm in his desire to see his family in China one more time before his death. Aside from being a reflection of his continued attachment to his family in China despite spending the majority of his life abroad, the wish to die in one's native village is also deeply rooted in Chinese cultural preference. Woon corroborates this cultural tradition through interviews with Chinese Canadian immigrants who expressed similar sentiments in old age or ill health.[58] The responsibilities of overseas Chinese district associations also often included transporting the bones of those who passed away overseas back to their native villages for final burial.[59] This further supports the hypothesis of Guillermo as a sojourner, as a migrant forever oriented towards the homeland.

As a man with two families on completely opposite sides of the world, Guillermo Eng appeared to dedicate his devotion to both as long as he lived. Guillermo remained a committed father that laboured and sacrificed to raise his son in Cuba, all the while staying connected with

[56] Armando Choy et al., *Our History is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* (Atlanta: Pathfinder Press, 2005), 26.
[57] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 321.
[58] Yuen-fong Woon, "The Voluntary Sojourner among the Overseas Chinese: Myth or Reality?" *Pacific Affairs* 56, no. 4 (1983): 680. https://doi.org/10.2307/2758597.
[59] Ibid, 680.

his family in China, as a testament to the diverse relationships arising from such global migratory flows and the subtleties in the debate between sojourner and settler. However, for the next generation of Chinese Cubans like Pedro, the question of settlement orientation becomes significantly more complicated when tracking the complex interplay between a Cuban upbringing and a Chinese identity.

Growing up in Havana's Chinatown: inculcating a Chinese consciousness

Pedro Eng Herrera spent most of his upbringing in Havana's Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s, offering a compelling slice of life in Chinatown during this period through his anecdotes. Early on in Pedro's life, the Eng Herrera family was in the throes of an economic crisis. After Elvira passed away in Pedro's infancy, Guillermo was left to raise his son alone. Although Pedro noted that his father's educated background allowed him to work as a newspaper editor at a local Chinese publication, this did not secure the family's fortunes. Pedro described how his father's gambling addiction impacted their family in his youth, leading them to lose everything and being evicted from their home. Thereafter, the pair were forced to move into a shared house for the poor in Chinatown.[60]

From Pedro's account, it can be gathered that poverty and gambling were issues that plagued the neighbourhood. He shared some evocative and shocking stories of suicides due to gambling losses:

> At the time many Chinese gambled, some people would kill themselves after losing everything through gambling. I saw these kinds of suicides with my own eyes. At the time there was a gambling house on the fourth floor of the Pacific Ocean Restaurant.

[60] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 317.

> One person jumped off the building in front of everyone below after losing everything, [he] died a horrible death, I was there to witness this.[61]

Such anecdotes illuminate the widespread nature of the vice and its devastating impacts on the community. Gambling was imported to Cuba from China alongside coolies as a popular cultural practice. In the days of indentured labour, the practice of these cultural traditions was a way for coolies to maintain a separate cultural identity once in Cuba.[62] The establishment of Chinatowns in Havana and elsewhere in the country in the 1860s made it easier to recreate elements of traditional Chinese life, creating a safer space of subcommunity where free Chinese could gamble and practise other traditions free from policing.[63] Unfortunately, gambling was used as fuel for the negative racialisation of Chinese in Cuba. Gambling was cited as a prime example of Chinese criminality, leading to claims by racial scientists about the Chinese and their "inherent affinity for minor crimes."[64] It became embedded in disparaging stereotypes about the Chinese, alongside opium use, idolatry, and suicide.[65]

However, despite the negative aspects of Chinatown, the ethnic enclave was also an important site of mutual aid. Community organisations like the Casino Chung Wah figured prominently in Havana's Chinatown socially, politically, and economically. According to Hu-DeHart, the first of these associations were formed in Chinatown in 1867, where free urban Chinese provided leadership for others in escaping recontracting and applying for the freedom-granting residency permit.[66] These community associations were also crucial in offering business loans and legal support to enterprising Chinese Cubans, allowing for the formation of a thriving Chinatown in Havana.[67] The Casino Chung Wah was established in 1893 and quickly

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[61] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 318.
[62] Benjamín N. Narváez ,"Subaltern Unity? Chinese and Afro-Cubans in Nineteenth-Century Cuba," *Journal of Social History* 51, no. 4 (Summer 2018): 876. https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shx019.
[63] Ibid, 878.
[64] Amador, "Caught Between Crime," 95.
[65] Narváez, "Subaltern Unity," 877-8.
[66] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 354.
[67] Narváez, "Subaltern Unity," 878.

became one of the main organisations in the area, continuing to be active in the Chinese Cuban community to this day.[68]

Beyond business and legal assistance, the Casino Chung Wah was also vital in providing community services. The Colegio Chung Wah in Chinatown, referred to by Pedro as only "the Chinese school," was established and operated by the Casino Chung Wah from 1936.[69] Pedro recalled attending this school for six years of elementary education. The school offered a split schedule in Spanish and Chinese, with Chinese classes in the morning and Spanish classes in the afternoon. Pedro remarked that the Chinese instructors at the school were "very old-fashioned" and "the Chinese education style is very poor," while separate teachers were employed to teach Spanish. Of the students, he noted that most were "children of overseas Chinese [whose] parents were ethnically Chinese."[70]

Pedro's observations of the Chinese school are illustrative of the position that Chinese Cubans occupied in Cuban society in the twentieth century. Whereas previously Chinese immigration to the country was predominantly male to fill transient labour needs, Chinese women and families began to migrate to Cuba during an immigration boom in the 1920s, leading to "Chinese communities [taking] on the semblance of normal community life."[71] Hu-DeHart purports that the growth in families was primarily due to the creation of a second generation of mixed descendants between Chinese men and Cuban women,[72] with Pedro being one such example. However, Pedro's remarks on the majority ethnically Chinese composition of the student body at his elementary school also points to increasing numbers of Chinese families immigrating with children or having children in Cuba. With the upbringing of a second-generation, who tended to have diminished homeland ties to China, such educational

[68] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 356-8.
[69] López, *Transnational History*, 187.
[70] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 318.
[71] Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Presence in Cuba," 357.
[72] Ibid, 357.

institutions were part of a concerted strategy to "promote transnational identities among [...] Cuban-born children."[73]

The Chinese school, alongside other community institutions like Chinese-language newspapers and recreation centres, occupies a conflicted and emblematic position. The strong desire to recreate cultural practices and maintain a distinct ethnic identity may appear to indicate a strong homeland attachment and subsequently a community-wide sojourner mindset, recalling Siu's description of the ethnic enclave.[74] However, the creation of these community services also demonstrates an increased commitment to long-term settlement in Cuba. As López argues, "Chinese migrants became increasingly settled into the daily routines of life in their new environment" even as they worked to actively maintain homeland ties and upkeep their cultural traditions.[75] As the political developments of twentieth century China and Cuba will further demonstrate, a more nuanced understanding of national identity and settlement orientation is required to encapsulate the diverse attitudes of Chinatown's residents towards their new home in Cuba, as members of the second generation began to leave the sojourner label behind in favour of transnational ideas.

Involvement in the Cuban Revolution: transnational identities and mobilisations

The twentieth century was a tumultuous period in politics for both Cuba and China. In the first decades of the century, China underwent successive regime changes and wars that led to widespread unrest and spurred an exodus of migrants, some of whom arrived in Cuba.[76] After the 1911 Revolution overthrew the Manchu Qing dynasty,[77] the newly established Nationalist Republic was soon challenged by the Japanese invasion in 1937.[78] The defeat of

[73] López, *Transnational History*, 186.
[74] Siu, "The Sojourner," 37.
[75] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 115.
[76] Albert Manke, "Chinese in the Cuban Revolution: An Ethnically Marked Political Mobilization?" in *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions, and Periods*, ed. by University of Cologne Forum (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2015), 238-9.
[77] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 116.
[78] Manke, "Chinese in the Cuban Revolution," 239.

the Japanese was quickly followed by the Chinese Civil War, resulting in the triumph of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party and the subsequent establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.[79] Cuba would go on to experience its own revolution led by Fidel Castro from 1957 to 1959, bringing a slew of upheavals throughout the country.[80] The political developments in both China and Cuba had significant impacts on the Chinese Cuban community, leading to "new political and class conflicts" that would permanently reshape the landscape of Havana's Chinatown.[81] The prominent political involvement of some Chinese Cubans in the Cuban Revolution, among them Pedro himself, raises compelling questions of national, ethnic, and transnational identities.

For Pedro, his political involvement began around the time of the Cuban Revolution. He recalled that he began working with the revolutionary movement starting in 1957.[82] In the beginning, Pedro was not a member but only a collaborator, but he was later influenced by his wife's nephew to become a more active participant. His involvement entailed hiding revolutionaries in his home and occasionally transporting them using his car, before moving on to more direct actions like occupying labour union buildings.[83] Manke notes that mobilisation was particularly high in the gastronomy and retail sectors in Havana and included many Chinese like Pedro, who tended to work in those industries and empathised with the struggle of the working class.[84]

After the triumph of the revolution in 1959, Pedro was instrumental in organising the popular militia in his union: "it was a worker's militia [...] I was the second commanding officer, there were Chinese and Cubans in this popular militia."[85] He became the military and

[79] López, *Transnational History*, 221.
[80] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 122.
[81] Ibid, 122.
[82] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 322.
[83] Ibid, 322.
[84] Manke, "Chinese in the Cuban Revolution," 242.
[85] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 323.

political instructor of this militia and trained various Chinese employees from the gastronomy sector, before his dismissal in early 1960 under accusations of leftist agitation.[86] Pedro departed with around 20 Chinese members that he had trained, founding the *Milicia Popular China Brigada José Wong* (Chinese Popular Militia José Wong Brigade). The militia was especially created for Chinese residents and descendants of Chinese and named after José Wong, a famous Chinese Cuban Communist martyred in the 1930s.[87] Pedro headed the Chinese militia in occupying the Casino Chung Wah and the Guomindang headquarters, raising the Communist flag of the PRC in 1960 and marking a major shift of power in Chinatown towards the leftist faction.[88]

When asked about his ideological influences, Pedro primarily cited the political education he received from his father: "he always told me about the ideas of Sun Yat-sen [...] plus I lived in Chinatown and went to the Chinese school, so my sense of Chineseness was very strong."[89] Pedro believed that his political progressiveness stemmed directly from his connection to the Chinese identity and revolutionary spirit, complicating his motivations for joining the revolution beyond his patriotism as a native-born Cuban. He was not the only one, as Pedro remarked that "at the time in Cuba many Chinese were politically active," demonstrating their commitment to Cuba despite their continued affinity to China.[90] López accords with this claim by arguing that "ethnic identification in China, even Chinese citizenship, did not preclude national identification with Cuba and involvement with Cuban politics [...] Chinese migrants of all classes joined the anti-Batista struggles."[91] In fact, the

[86] Manke, "Chinese in the Cuban Revolution," 242.
[87] López, *Transnational History*," 226.
[88] Manke, "Chinese in the Cuban Revolution," 243.
[89] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 322.
[90] Ibid, 322.
[91] López, *Transnational History*, 224.

Chinese ethnic identification of these revolutionaries invigorated them by merging their political support of both Chinese and Cuban revolutions.[92]

Pedro's discussion of his own political influences and the strong evidence for a distinctly Chinese mobilisation in the Cuban revolution demonstrates the transnational flows at play within the revolutionary movement. According to Yang, transnationalism is "the process that links together people, groups, and institutions across national borders."[93] In this case, the migratory flows between China and Cuba did not exclusively consist of bodies, but also ideological connections as party activities and political activism crossed and recrossed the borders between the two countries. As the Guomindang sought to enlist loyalty of overseas Chinese for the domestic cause by establishing a party outpost in Havana,[94] Chinese Cuban leftist groups sought transnational collaboration in the reciprocal direction by aligning themselves with the Chinese Communist Party during the Chinese Civil War.[95] In the 1920s, several well-known Chinese political activists were persecuted by the Cuban government for their transnational organising.[96] Hence, the Chinese Cuban diasporic community served as a crucial point of transnational connection that bridged the political developments happening in both China and Cuba by transmitting news, establishing political party outposts, and forming transnational alliances.

The strong participation of Pedro and other Chinese Cubans in the Cuban Revolution can be seen as evidence of their commitment to their life in Cuba by pursuing the betterment of their conditions through political means, even through armed resistance and revolution. However, the continued identification with a distinctly Chinese Cuban identity also gave rise to a form of local mobilisation aimed at creating change within their own community. Among

[92] Ibid, 226.
[93] Yang, "From Sojourning to Settlement," 131.
[94] López, "Chinese in Cuban History," 116-7.
[95] Manke, "Chinese in the Cuban Revolution," 239.
[96] López, *Transnational History*, 197.

the politically active Chinese, it is noted that "participants opposed class structure within the Chinese immigrant community as much as within Cuban society as a whole,"[97] informing the Chinese leftist militia's takeover of perceived capitalist institutions within Chinatown itself. The Chinese ethnic identity provided a group of distinct individuals a space of common ground beyond popular ideological support for the revolution, which served to localise their target for change in Chinatown.

It is difficult to apply the sojourner label to a second-generation Chinese Cuban such as Pedro, who was born and raised in Cuba his entire life. Nevertheless, his identification with China persisted in different ways, perhaps not so strong as to be considered a homeland orientation, but certainly beyond simple cultural affinity. In this case, Pedro can be viewed as a second-generation Chinese Cuban who "maintained transnational ties to China, even while settling permanently in Cuba."[98] Scattered throughout his oral histories and his family's photographs are many clues of the transnational connections that Pedro developed and cultivated throughout his life. Some family customs merely reflect a strong sense of Chinese identity that Pedro has held onto, like his insistence upon giving Chinese names to both of his children and his sole grandson.[99] In family photo albums, his daughter is never referred to by her Spanish name María, instead going by her Cantonese name Lay Sim (麗嬋).[100] Other instances are more direct examples of transnational connections. Most notably, Pedro recounts that the only time he ever left Cuba was at the advanced age of 81 to take a trip to his father's home village in Guangzhou.[101] The intentional decision to visit a site of "home" in China, with only notions imparted by his father and tenuous connections maintained through previous

[97] Ibid, 226.
[98] López, *Transnational History*, 216.
[99] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 323.
[100] Photo album of Pedro Eng Herrera. Chinese in Cuba Archive. Chinese University of Hong Kong Library Digital Collections, https://repository.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/item/cuhk-2646283.
[101] Eng Herrera, "政治弄潮兒 *Zhengzhi nongchao'er*," 324.

letters exchanged with relatives, reflects Pedro's transnational psychological orientation that never relinquished China as an anchoring counterpart to his Cubanness.

Conclusion: (Re)defining a Chinese Cuban identity

Returning to the original debate regarding sojourner theory, the family chronology of the Eng Herreras from Guillermo to Pedro to his children and beyond demonstrate a complex and unconventional picture of settlement orientations specific to their historical contingencies. Guillermo, the first generation to reach the island, remained a lifelong sojourner in his psychological orientation despite developing new commitments and attachments to his Cuban family. His son Pedro, a native Cuban who dedicated his life to the revolutionary cause, lays claim to a transnational identity that strongly emphasised his Chinese background alongside his commitment to Cuba. As for Pedro's children, Lay Sim and Vladimir, the question remains open as to their degree of identification with Chineseness or the conceptualisation of a Chinese homeland. As the third generation of descendants, how does Chinese Cuban identity manifest in their life?

From racialised indentured labourers to glorified *mambises*, the Chinese Cuban community continued to maintain a distinct identity despite their progressive incorporation into Cuban society throughout the twentieth century.[102] However, the very identity of being Chinese Cuban, already a nebulous concept historically, has seen new attempts towards redefinition in recent years. Government-sanctioned revitalisation projects of Havana's Chinatown since 1993 have led to an increase in visibility for the Chinese Cuban identity, with the intention "to 'recover' Chinese culture, customs, and traditions for the Cuban nation" and transform Chinatown into a tourist attraction to remedy its decline. The revitalisation projects have focused on celebrating Chinese festivals, creating schools for Chinese language and martial

[102] López, *Transnational History*, 190.

arts, supporting the local Chinese-language newspaper, and promoting Chinese food and medicine.[103] The appeal of the endeavour has invited many Cubans who previously knew little of their mixed Chinese heritage to lay claim to a Chinese identity and increase their participation in the Chinese Cuban community.[104] The involvement of a diverse array multiracial descendants with varying notions of "Chineseness" has complicated the question of Chinese Cuban identity as cultural heritages and practices are remade and redefined in a contested space between touristic interests and personal reclamation, which serve to open novel avenues for "Chinese Cubanness" in the future.[105]

As for Lay Sim and Vladimir, the materials available to us allow no conclusions to truly be drawn about their personal notions or attachments to a Chinese ethnic identity. A childhood of growing up against the backdrop of revolutionary Cuba has yielded photos documenting a unique time; from Vladimir grinning alongside his uniformed father at militia training grounds to Lay Sim showing off her quinceñera dress in front of a framed photo of Fidel Castro,[106] the unmistakably Cuban surface is still undergirded by a strong family affinity to China. As the Chinese Cuban identity continues to see reformulation, the difficult task of deciphering the "Chineseness" of Cuba's present and future Chinese Cuban community remains a question yet to be answered.

[103] López, "Revitalization of Havana's Chinatown," 224-5.
[104] Ibid, 229-30.
[105] Ibid, 233.
[106] Photo album of Pedro Eng Herrera, Chinese in Cuba Archive, Chinese University of Hong Kong Library Digital Collections.

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Appendix A: Translation of Pedro Eng Herrera's Oral History

Translator's note:

This is a personal translation of Pedro Eng Herrera's oral history, taken from Louie Kin-sheun's book 末路移民：古巴華僑訪談錄 (Surviving Castaways in Fading History: Interviews with the Cuban Chinese). I have tried to faithfully translate the text from Chinese with minimal liberties taken on punctuation to improve the reading experience. In instances where the Chinese phrase could mean multiple things, I have added a footnote to elaborate on my own translation. For the full original text, please refer to pages 313 to 324.

My father came to Cuba at the start of the twentieth century. After he left China, he first went to Peru, then went from Peru to Mexico in Veracruz, then went from Mexico to Cuba, around 1910 to 1911. When he came to Cuba, his Spanish was already very good. I think he used a student visa to come to Cuba. After he came here he started to do business operating grocery stores in Havana. Before my dad went overseas he married a woman in his home village named Lin Hongxing (林紅杏) and they had one son and one daughter. They would be my half older brother and sister by the same father but different mother, but I have never met them. My older brother was named Diting (帝壬), he always stayed in China and never came to Cuba, he has already passed away. He was in the Air Force, belonging to the Flying Tigers *(ed.: Possible First American*

Volunteer Group of the Republic of China Air Force)[1]. My older sister was named Qiumei (秋美), later she went to Hong Kong to work in a hair salon, now she has also passed away.

Afterwards my father moved from Havana to San Juan de los Remedios *(ed.: also known as Remedios)* in Villa Clara province. There were lots of Chinese there, most of them doing business. There he met a Cuban medical student named Ortelio Martínez-Fortún, through him my father met his later wife and my mother. She is Spanish from the Canary Islands. She was originally a nun in Mexico, but she did not like being a nun. Her whole family moved to Cuba and she became a nursing assistant. Her and my father fell in love in Remedios, but her parents opposed the marriage due to racial discrimination, but she persevered and the two of them married in a church. After the wedding they moved back to Havana. Martínez-Fortún was about to graduate, and my mother was working at a hospital named Reina Mercedes. My mother gave birth to three children, two daughters and one son. I was that son, born on January 15 1933. I just happened to turn 82 a few days ago *(ed.: As of 2013)*. I was born in Chinatown, at the time we lived at 417 Manrique in Chinatown, between San Miguel and San José [street]. My two sisters had already passed away.

My father was educated, different from most of the uncultured overseas Chinese. He was a newspaper editor working at the Chinese Business Newspaper[2] in charge of society news. He would go to different parts of Cuba to conduct interviews and he was editor until the newspaper went defunct after the Revolution. After he ran grocery stores and restaurants in Regla *(ed.: Another city in Havana province bordering Havana city)*.

[1] The editor's notes and questions in italics are those of Louie Kin-sheun in the original text, here translated with the rest of the oral history.
[2] 華文商報 - I was unable to find the official English name of this publication, so here the translation is literal.

(Question: If your dad was educated, then was he rich?)

He fell from a high place. When I was eighteen months old my mother passed away. Her family had a history of asthma, but she didn't pass away from asthma, but from measles.[3] She died at only 34 years old. At the time, smallpox was not serious for children, but it was deadly for adults. My mother was beautiful, and my father was also handsome. Afterwards I was raised and educated by my father, we spoke Chinese together. My father really paid attention to the importance of Chinese culture, he taught me to speak and write Chinese, he also taught me music. It was because of him that I was immersed in high culture. But my father's failure was his love of gambling, he lost everything because of gambling, even where we lived, we were forced to move out. This is also the weakness of Chinese people, if you have no power or money, then people will force you out. In the end we had to move to an old house where many people lived, everyone who lived there were very poor Chinese people, in Chinatown. This place was in between a photo studio and Golden Eagle Cinema, the building that the photo studio was in was almost collapsing. We had to sleep on mats *(ed.: meaning there was no bed)*, on a platform, there was no pillow, we used wood blocks as pillows, multiple people sleeping together. My father had to go out and I was often at home alone, there was only one 15 watt lightbulb, so it was hard to see. I remember I slept in between my father and another person. One day, after my father got up and went out, I woke up alone and wanted to wake up the person sleeping on the other side of me. I kept calling "uncle, uncle" for a long time but this person still wouldn't wake up, later I realised he was already dead.

At the time many Chinese gambled, some people would kill themselves after losing everything through gambling. I saw these kinds of suicides with my own eyes. At the time there

[3] 天花 - this can be either interpreted as measles or smallpox as Pedro uses the terms for both in his description of his mother's illness.

was a gambling house on the fourth floor of Pacific Ocean Restaurant. One person jumped off the building in front of everyone below after losing everything, [he] died a horrible death, I was there to witness this. There was another man surnamed Wu, his wife had already passed away and left behind three children, two sons and one daughter. They lived on Dragones street, between Manrique and Campanario. He lost at gambling, sold one of his sons, and then killed himself with a knife to the stomach. I still remember his son was named Roberto, he was taken back to China, but the remaining son and daughter became orphans, I don't know what happened to them after that.

After my mother died my father did not remarry, and my two sisters also passed away very young, the two of them died when they were children, leaving behind only my father and I living together. He left me in the care of a Chinese woman, in a place with a photographer and a painter. This Chinese woman was surnamed Jiang, I called her "Auntie."[4] This was an honorific and because of this I did not know her name. At the time I only spoke Chinese, I didn't know how to speak Spanish, so Auntie spoke with me in Chinese.

I started going to school when I was 5. I went to the Chinese school in Chinatown owned by Chung Wah Casino, which was located in the Min Chih Tang building. At this school there were three Chinese teachers, Mr. Wong was the principal, then there was Mr. Mai and Mr. Wong, between the three of them there was one who spoke Mandarin.[5] However, the methods of the Chinese teachers were very old-fashioned, and the Chinese educational style was very poor. The Chinese school was actually bilingual, there was Chinese and Spanish, we had Chinese classes in

[4] 阿嬸 - loosely means "Auntie" and used to address a respected older woman, does not necessarily mean blood relation.

[5] 國語 - this usually refers more specifically to Mandarin rather than just "Chinese," as a way to distinguish the officially designated language of China from other dialects like Cantonese.

the morning and Spanish classes in the afternoon. There were two teachers who taught Spanish. [We] had to pay tuition, but the amount was very little. There were many students at the school, usually they were the children of overseas Chinese, both parents were ethnically Chinese. I finished six years of elementary school at this school.

For middle school, I went to a private school called Colegio Academia Montessori. [We] had to pay tuition, I don't know how much, but father sacrificed a lot to be able to afford the tuition. At the time my father was working with an overseas Chinese surnamed Liang selling vegetables. [We] moved to the countryside where the new zoo is right now and learned to plant vegetables and raise river snails. I stopped going to school and went to help out at the farm, at the time I was pretty much done with middle school. Because of my time on the farm, I gained some farming experience. We went on farming for a period of time, my father earned some money, so we went back to Havana. We opened a restaurant in Regla called Regla Moderna in a busy area near the city government building. We also moved back to live in Chinatown on Salud street. This was in 1947 or 1948, when I was 10 years old. I was also helping out with washing dishes at the restaurant.

Afterwards I went back to school, after my dad sold the restaurant and the snack shop. I went to Havana Business Academy for two, three years, where I studied typing, accounting, English, and more, but my English pronunciation is very poor. I did not finish the program at this academy. After my dad went on to open other businesses, opening up a street stall selling different kinds of food, grinding soybeans to make tofu, I also helped him with that.

Because of his painful experiences with gambling, my father cautioned me to not gamble, so I don't know how to play mahjong, only chess[6]. My father was named Wu Guoxiang (吳國祥), Spanish name[7] Guillermo Eng. He was born on June 27 1890 and died on December 23 1973.

In 1948 or 1949, when I was sixteen or seventeen, I left my father to live independently. First I worked in a Chinese grocery store, the boss was surnamed Li. He went back to Hong Kong and died there, so his nephew became the boss, [he] also left back to Hong Kong after the success of the Cuban Revolution. After working at the grocery store I became a waiter at a restaurant. At this time I made some money and I bought a small place for myself in Chinatown. The place where I worked served authentic Chinese food, nearby there was the only Chinese funeral home, so we had many guests who were funeral goers. We also had a lot of Japanese guests, but the Chinese and the Japanese did not get along. I was responsible for serving the Japanese guests, because the Japanese liked to eat fish, and this restaurant specialised in fish. I worked at this restaurant for around a year.

After I left my father to set up my own life, we maintained a good relationship. He continued to do business until he retired in 1958, around the start of the revolution. Later he returned to China, on a Chinese boat arranged by the Chinese consulate. The Cultural Revolution had an impact on Cuba, and the reason why my father left Cuba to return to China was related to this.

[6] 下棋 - this generically means to play board games and can describe chess, Go, or any other variety of board games.
[7] 西名 - this can either translate to "Western name" or "Spanish name," with the character 西 representing both. Contextually, I have chosen to use the translation "Spanish" and this persists in all other instances of this term for the remainder of the piece.

During the Cultural Revolution the President of the Chung Wah Casino was Manuel Lui (呂戈子), he was also the President of the Chinese Democratic Socialist Alliance, he was an extremist Communist. At the time many Chinese Cubans were members of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang), Manuel Lui called them counterrevolutionaries. He did many scary things, like he would desecrate dead ancestors, [he] ordered for the graves of Nationalist Party members in the cemetery to be destroyed, he seemed to do this (*ed.: This refers to the Nationalist Party graveyard in Havana's Chinese cemetery. In 1952 the Nationalist Party Headquarters in Cuba was constructed and it still exists.*) There was a monument dedicated to the contributions of Chinese fighters in the Cuban War of Independence, it bore the name of the Chinese Consulate at the time of erecting the monument, Manuel Lui wanted the name to be scratched off *(ed.: Mr. Eng was not entirely correct. This monument was erected in October 1931, the Chinese on the monument said "Monument to the Chinese Cubans who helped in Cuban independence." There was no mention of a Chinese consulate or anyone who erected the monument)*. In Chung Wah Casino there were two large mirrors, gifted by the Nationalist Party and the Min Chih Tang when the Casino opened. The names of the two organisations were on there and Manuel Lui scratched the name of the Nationalist Party off one of the mirrors *(ed.: This is correct, I saw this in Chung Wah Casino in Havana, the name was originally carved into the wooden frame, but it has been scratched off)*. He did many scary things. He accused me of doing intelligence work for the Nationalist Party, [he] said I was a member of the Three People's Principles Group. At the time many overseas Chinese were members of the Three People's Principles Group. I participated in a musical band that belonged to this organisation, so he accused me of being a member. They also found my name in a Chinese register, I did not understand Chinese and did not recognise the name. Manuel Lui accused me of being ideologically Nationalist, [he] accused me of being a spy collecting

intelligence about Cuba, I was even detained. This was in 1970. In order to avoid trouble, we burned all of the letters at home we had received from our relatives in China. At the time the Nationalists in the Chinese Cuban community were persecuted quite viciously by Manuel Lui.

Under these circumstances, my father went back to China. He had discussed it with me and I advised him to leave. He was getting old, and he should go back to China to live with his family that he had not seen in several decades. It was really not easy to leave Cuba in the 1970s, but because of the arrangements of the Chinese consulate, [you] did not have to pay, but you could not bring your money with you. He gave the money to me and I remitted it back to China. However, because of me, Manuel Lui also hated my father. He refused to give my father the documents to apply for return to China, but my father was very tough, he was not easy to push around. He said to Manuel Lui: "You are not a Communist, you are an opportunist." My father never participated in any political parties, but he was progressive, he supported Castro's revolution, [he] attended the relevant meetings at the Casino, and was a member of the Chinatown pro-revolutionary council. My father was already quite old when he left Cuba to return to China, plus the Cultural Revolution was going on at the time, so we lost contact after he went back. I only learned of his death a year after he passed away. After he went back to China he lived in Guangzhou, and he died there.

(Question: When did you start actively participating in political activities?)

In 1957. Even before then I already had progressive political views, this is through the influence of my father, he always told me about the ideas of Sun Yat-sen. Plus I lived in Chinatown and went to the Chinese school, so my sense of Chineseness was very strong. From 1957 I started working with the *Movimiento 26 de julio*. I was not a member of the movement, only a collaborator. However, my wife had a nephew who was an active member of the movement. I was

influenced by him to start actively participating in politics. We married a year earlier in 1956 *(ed.: Later he claims that they married in 1954)*.

At the time in Cuba many Chinese were politically active. In 1958 there was a wave of immigration, this was the last wave of immigration before the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Many Chinese people came to Cuba, many of them first went from China to Hong Kong, then from Hong Kong to Cuba, because things were very chaotic in China, these people first went to Hong Kong. Their thoughts and beliefs were different from previous Chinese immigrants. At the time Cubans knew very little about the real situation in China, the new immigrants told me about the situation in China, and I also told them about the revolutionary situation in Cuba.

During the Cuban Revolution we hid revolutionaries in our home. We had a car, I would drive the revolutionaries to different places from time to time. At the time someone was caught, his code name was Negrito, real name Luis Pantoja, he almost died in jail. Afterwards he went to the Venezuelan consulate to plead for political asylum, then he went to Venezuela, he only returned to Cuba after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. At the time I was in contact with the *Partido socialista popular* (PSP), the PSP had a division in the grocery industry, so I joined this division. When the revolution triumphed, we occupied the 11th precinct, and afterwards we occupied two more unions. These actions happened before Fidel arrived in Havana and many people participated in them. Later I joined the popular militia, it was a worker's militia. Our first commanding officer was named José Roque and I was the second commanding officer, there were Chinese and Cubans in this popular militia. After I transferred from the militia to work in the Ministry of the Interior in a department called Organo de seguridad de estado *(ed.: This was the National Security Bureau*), conducting intelligence work. It was approximately equivalent to the CIA of the US. I worked there for seventeen years. Afterwards I transferred to the Department of Culture, checking

documents and publications, also related to intelligence work, for around 10 years. I retired in 1999 at the age of 54. I was not at the retirement age yet, but I had to retire because I was sick.

I married in 1954. My wife is Spanish but she is not a *mulata*. Her name is Belkis Ramos Trejo. The next year [she] gave birth to our daughter Lay Sim (麗嬋), Spanish name María Magdalene Eng Ramos. In 1962 we had a son, named Shihua (仕華), Spanish name Vladimir Eng Ramos. Lay Sim later married a black person, they did not have children. She studied agriculture in college, now she works at a film production company in human resources. Vladimir later became a doctor, in 2006 he died due to an asthma attack, he was only 44 at the time. Vladimir has a son, I gave him a Chinese name Wuming (武明), Spanish name Vladimir Eng Conde, his name is just like my son Vladimir. This grandson of mine was born in 1987, now he is 27 living in Oriente province.

I have not spoken Chinese in 40 years, I have forgotten many of the words.

With the help of a friend, I went to China in May 2014, arriving in Hong Kong through Moscow, then I went to Guangzhou and my home village. This was my first time leaving Cuba.