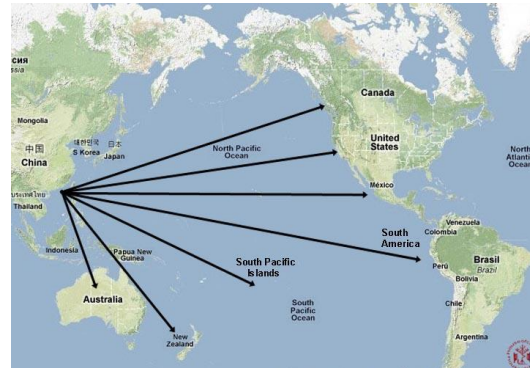


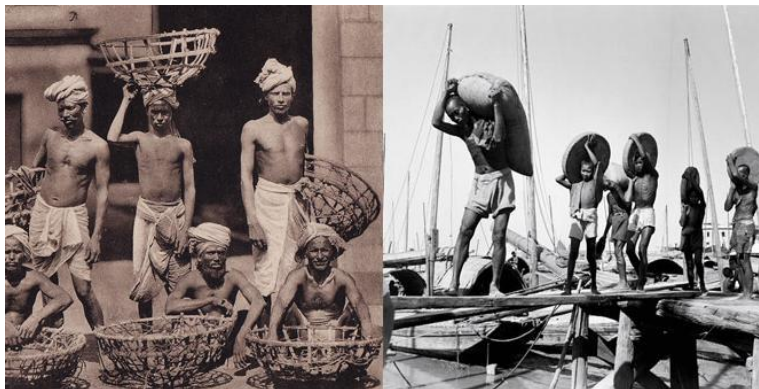
Chinese Emigration in the 19th Century – The Chinese Diaspora

Waves of **Chinese emigration** (also known as the **Chinese diaspora**) have happened throughout history. The mass emigration known as the Chinese diaspora, which occurred from the 19th century to 1949, was mainly caused by wars and starvation in mainland China, invasion from various foreign countries, as well as problems resulting from political corruption. Most immigrants were illiterate peasants and manual laborers, called "**coolies**" (In Chinese: pinyin: literally: "hard labor"), who emigrated to work in places such as the Americas, Australia, South Africa, Southeast Asia, and Zealandia.



According to Lynn Pan's book *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, the Chinese coolie emigration began after slavery was abolished throughout the British possessions. Facing a desperate shortage of manpower, European merchants looked to replace African slaves with indentured laborers from China and India. A British Guyana planter found what he was looking for in the Chinese laborers: "their strong physique, their eagerness to make money, their history of toil from infancy".

Labor recruiters sold the services of large numbers of unskilled Chinese in the coolie trade to planters in colonies overseas in exchange for money to feed their families; this type of trading was known as *Mai Zhu Zai* (In traditional Chinese: pinyin: literally: "selling piglets") to the Chinese. The laborers' lives were very harsh. Some labor recruiters promised good pay and good working conditions to get men signed onto three-year labor contracts. It was recorded on one pepper estate, fifty coolies hired, only two survived in half a year. Most coolies were treated badly, and many died en route to South America and South Africa because of bad transport conditions. Usually, they were cheated of their wages and were unable to return to China after their contracts expired.



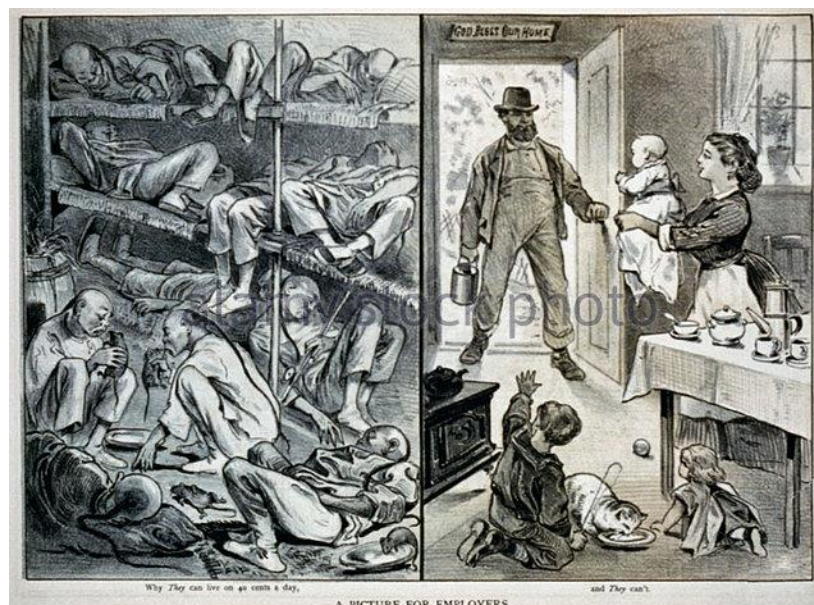
Indian and Chinese "coolies"

In Malaysia they were used in the tin mines and on the rubber plantations. They built the duty-free British port of Singapore.

In the Americas they worked in the gold and silver mines in South America and Mexico and on the many plantations growing sugarcane, coffee and other cash crops.

In 1849, many came to America because of the California Gold Rush and the emergence of the trans-continental railways. Most of the workers were men, very few were women. They refused to assimilate into American society which caused them to be seen as a threat to society on the West Coast. They were hard workers and this also caused resentment, especially with building the railroads. The Chinese coolies carved their way through the Rocky Mountains to meet the Irish “navvies” (cheap-labor workers) making their way west. Their work ethic greatly surpassed that of the Irish. The most famous event being the link of the Western and eastern railroad construction at Promontory Point in Utah where they laid the Golden Spike.

The American people created a political and social campaign of Yellow Peril against these Chinese workers, warning society of their “evil” ways. The campaign finally ended in 1882 with the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first government act against a specific race of people. Many Chinese men were forced to leave and were sent back to China while others managed to find their way to the east coast cities working as textile washers and then starting Chinese laundry stores.



Anti-Chinese Immigration political cartoon