

American Ships, Chinese Mutinies: The Coolie Trade *via* Southeast Asia

John Shufelt

Associate Professor, Dept. of Foreign Languages & Literature, Tunghai University, Taichung, Taiwan; Visiting Associate Professor, Department of American Studies, Brown University



Over a period of twenty-eight years, 1847-1874, nearly a quarter million young men were taken, often abducted, from southern China and transported to the Chincha Islands of Peru and to the sugar cane plantations of Cuba where they were held, and worked mercilessly, in conditions of virtual slavery. This presentation analyzes the role Southeast Asian ports, especially Anyer, in West Java, and Manila, played in supporting the coolie trafficking network for the 125,000 abducted Chinese taken to Cuba and the approximately 90,000 taken to Peru. Records of several mutinies aboard American coolie transport ships reveal that these ports provided not only essential supply lines for overloaded coolie ships, but also communication routes and legal resources that supported the trafficking – and that they occasionally regulated extreme abuses of Chinese by

the traffickers. Special attention is paid to mutinies aboard the *Waverly* off Manila in 1855, which resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of surviving crew members, the *Kate Hooper* off Anyer in 1857, and a crew mutiny on the Boston-based *Staghound* off Anyer in 1860. The early role of British merchant James Tait, and his commercial activities in Manila and southern China, is also examined.

John Shufelt is an associate professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Tunghai University in Taiwan. Since the mid-1990s, he has been engaged in research of travel literature. Recent publications include, with co-editor, Douglas Fix, a critical edition of Charles Le Gendre's *Notes of Travel in Formosa* (National Museum of Taiwan History, 2012), and a Chinese translation of this (2013). Le Gendre's previously-unpublished manuscript reaches nearly 200,000 words and includes more than one hundred original photographs, sketches, paintings and maps. More recently, he has been engaged in research on the Chinese coolie trade. A book project, *Bound by Contract: American Abolitionist and the Chinese Coolie Trade*, focusing on the 1850s when U.S. shippers dominated the transport of trafficked Chinese, is underway. He is also editing a collection of early missionary reports from southern Formosa, *The Correspondence of Hugh and Elizabeth Ritchie*, which is planned for publication in 2018.

Wednesday, March 1

12:00 Noon

Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue