

Report about the Research and Lecture Tour to Costa Rica and the USA,
Nov 5 to Dec 2, 2022

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From Nov. 5 to Dec. 2, 2022, I conducted a research and lecture tour to Costa Rica and the United States, sponsored by the Costa Rica Center at Osnabrück University and the Universidad de Costa Rica. In San Francisco, I first participated in the conference "Diasporic Futures: Sinophobia, Techno-Political Strife, and the Politics of Care." A central theme of the conference concerned current and historical conjunctures of xenophobia and violence against Chinese and other Asians, which have gained renewed poignancy and intensity with the COVID-19 pandemic. My presentation, "Teaching Chinese Exclusion, Sinophobia, and Resilience in German Academia," described various ways of approaching these issues and communicating them in German research and teaching. This lecture ties in with my current teaching at Osnabrück University, where I am working with students from the EUMIGs and IMIB master's programs on issues of privilege and exclusion of migrants.

Before Thanksgiving, I went on to Costa Rica, where I participated in a symposium on transoceanic migration of Chinese hosted by the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR). The symposium included lectures, public panel discussions, several book presentations, and collaborative research excursions spread over five days. For part of the symposium, the presenters traveled to the UCR Pacific branch located in Puntarenas. There, in a well-attended auditorium, I was able to present some aspects of my current research on Chinese migrant associations to colleagues and students, under the title "¿Haciendo frente a la exclusión? El asociacionismo chino en las Américas: redes de ayuda mutua, sociedades secretas y resiliencia, 1848-1948". In Puntarenas, the program also included a visit to the local Chinese association, founded in 1909, which maintains original documents as well as historical furniture. In San José, I visited the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Costa Rica with the research group.

While in Costa Rica, I also conducted research in the Caribbean province of Limón. Introduced by the former director of the UCR branch in the Caribbean, Ricardo Wing Argüello, I succeeded in becoming the first researcher ever to make personal contact with the Chee Kung Tong (Zhi Gongtang) Chinese pagans' fraternity. The interest of the members of this association in researching the past of their association turns out to be one of the factors for the (partial) opening. In a short time, it was possible to locate the site of the only ritual building still existing in the city of Limón and to visit it from the inside. In addition, there was the chance to interview members of this association. In Limón, I also visited the pantheon of the Chinese community in the local cemetery, where inscriptions in Spanish and Chinese can be found, which can also be matched with archival sources.

Shortly before the end of my stay, I was invited by the UCR History Department to give a lecture on "Proyectos, tendencias y perspectivas de los estudios sobre la historia latinoamericana en las Américas y Europa. Conferencia 3: Alemania". This lecture gave an overview of current research trends on the history of Latin America in the German research landscape and cooperation as well as funding opportunities. The research and congress stay in Costa Rica and the USA not only fulfilled expectations with regard to the urgently needed re-establishment of personal contacts, but also exceeded them, especially with regard to research opportunities and the resulting dynamics.