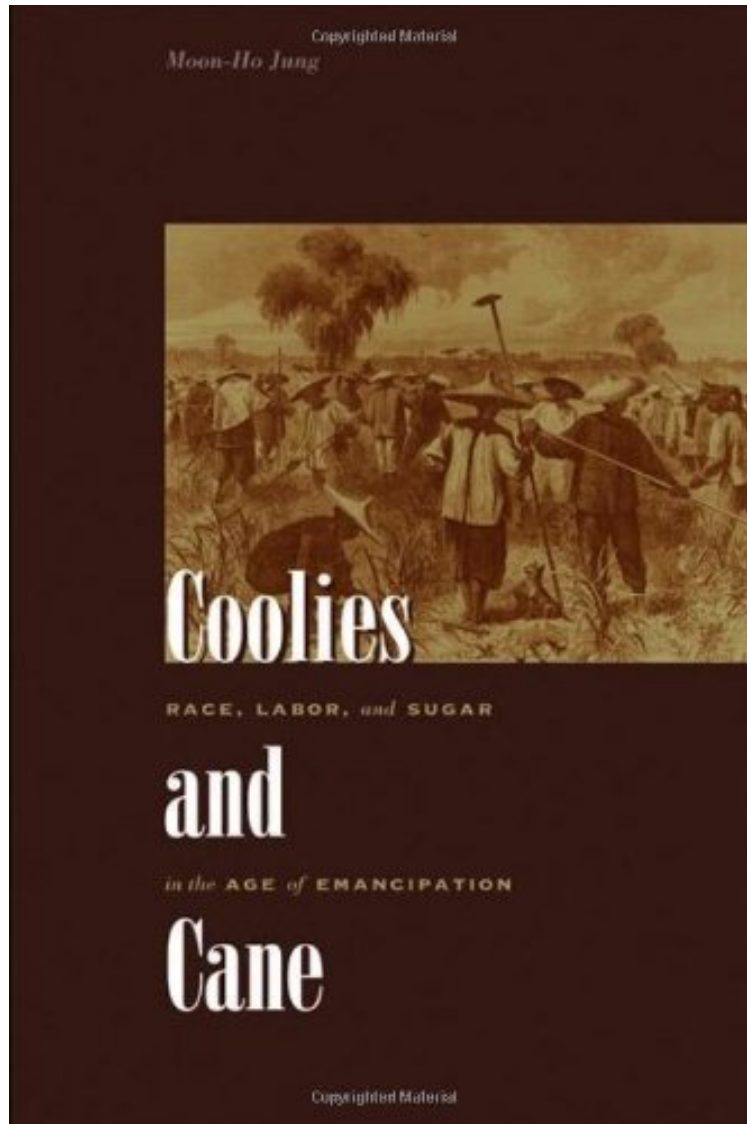


# Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation

*Moon-Ho Jung*

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**Moon-Ho Jung : Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A Very Neglected Topic By A Customer Moon-Ho Jung has produced a very interesting work detailing the little known fact of the importation of large numbers of Chinese workers to the plantations in Louisiana. I disagree with the previous reviewer in that this is one of the few works out of

the academic presses that is not overly ideological in its tone or presentation. The book quotes extensively from contemporary reports, especially newspapers of the period. It is also, unlike many academic volumes of recent times, a well written narrative. I have little cause for complaint, but if I could make one it is that the situation in Latin America is not dealt with in sufficient depth. Chinese workers faced better conditions in most times and places there, but could also on some occasions face worse conditions. The same environment was not present there as in the United States, so some explanation is necessary as to why the same treatment was sometimes felt by the Chinese workforce. Also, comparative work could be done on the position of Japanese workers who were also present in great numbers in both the United States and many different Latin American countries. Perhaps a future edition might cover this. Moon-Ho Jung is an author new to me, and I hope to read more from him in the future. I would also recommend, as a companion to this book, one of the many fine volumes on the position of Chinese workers in California, as well as their role in the building of the western half of the transcontinental railroad. Most new general histories of the railroad now finally do cover, at least a little, the position of the Chinese workers and their accomplishments.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Unique research, very interesting subject. Greatly appreciate your ...By Q. Huang Unique research ,very interesting subject. Greatly appreciate your book! 7 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A Transformative Interpretation of Asian American History and the History of Emancipation By Reader This book tells the little-known story of Chinese migrants who labored in the cane fields of Louisiana in the nineteenth century. More than a story of "recovery," however, Jung uses this episode to advocate for a radically different, politically driven interpretation of Asian American history as well as to probe larger enquiries about the formation of U.S. race, nation, and empire in the age of emancipation. Bringing together the studies of emancipation, U.S. nation- and empire-building, and Asian labor migration, Jung's work speaks to heretofore disjointed fields that, when critically examined side-by-side, produces rich new insights about American culture and the U.S. social formation. The book opens with Jung situating the national push for Chinese exclusion within congressional debates over the meanings of slavery and freedom in the postbellum era. The Chinese Exclusion Act, he argues, rather than a result of anti-Chinese rancor in California, culminated from "U.S. imperial ambitions in Asia and the Caribbean and broader struggles to demarcate the legal boundary between slavery and freedom". An ambiguous figure situated between black and white, enslaved and free, the coolie generated contentious debates in the halls of Congress and in public discourse. Their exclusion, in the end, signaled the nation's rejection of its slavery past and a commitment to "freedom"--in terms of "free labor," "free trade," and European immigration--in the post-emancipation era. In one of the most profound arguments of the book, Jung contends that the recruitment and exclusion of coolies ultimately recast the U.S. as a white nation of immigrants. Critical of recurrent liberal claims that Asians are just like other immigrants, he demonstrates how congressional proceedings about the Chinese's incapacity for citizenship "concretized America's self image as the 'nation of immigrants' and consolidated the 'immigrant' as European and white...". Rather than threatening this democratic and pluralistic image of the United States, the movement against the Chinese actually helped to preserve it. The anti-coolie movement in Louisiana and the nation at large crucially reconstituted whiteness as the central component of U.S. national identity. Not losing sight of the importance of agency and resistance, the last chapter documents the ways in which Chinese workers waged struggles against their status as contracted labor, arguing significantly that it was in their everyday struggles that democracy survived against the reinvigoration of white supremacy. Recasting Asian American history not as a history of "immigration and assimilation, but of labor migrations and resistance", Jung has produced a terrific and much-needed piece of scholarship that has the potential to unsettle and redefine the field.

How did thousands of Chinese migrants end up working alongside African Americans in Louisiana after the Civil War? With the stories of these workers, *Coolies and Cane* advances an interpretation of emancipation that moves beyond U.S. borders and the black-white racial dynamic. Tracing American ideas of Asian labor to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, Moon-Ho Jung argues that the racial formation of "coolies" in American culture and law played a pivotal role in reconstructing concepts of race, nation, and citizenship in the United States. Jung examines how coolies appeared in major U.S. political debates on race, labor, and immigration between the 1830s and 1880s. He finds that racial notions of coolies were articulated in many, often contradictory, ways. They could mark the progress of freedom; they could also symbolize the barbarism of slavery. Welcomed and rejected as neither black nor white, coolies emerged recurrently as both the salvation of the fracturing and reuniting nation and the scourge of American civilization. Based on extensive archival research, this study makes sense of these contradictions to reveal how American impulses to recruit and exclude coolies enabled and justified a series of historical transitions: from slave-trade laws to racially coded immigration laws, from a slaveholding nation to a "nation of immigrants," and from a continental empire of manifest destiny to a liberating empire across the seas. Combining political, cultural, and social history, *Coolies and Cane* is a compelling study of race, Reconstruction, and Asian American history.

In this important and well-researched work, Moon-Ho Jung argues that southern sugar planters looked to Asian 'coolies' to solve their labor problems after the Civil War. (John S. W. Park *American Historical*) Argues that coolies

played an important role in the social construction of 'whiteness' in the United States... Thoroughly researched. (Edward Rhoads *Agricultural History*) Brilliant and beautifully written... Jung's slim volume makes it clear that coolieism was not a marginal issue. The debate over coolieism was bound up in the most pressing issues of the Civil War era, from the policing of the slave-trade ban to the redefinition of citizenship in the postwar South. (Cindy Hahamovitch *Journal of American History*) Well researched study... These larger questions about race and labor are relevant not only for understanding the age of emancipation, but also for the current political climate of intensified debates on immigration and citizenship in the United States. (Kathleen Loacuteppez *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*) The heart, strength, and originality of this riveting narrative rest in Jung's discussion of the debates concerning Chinese coolies among diverse sectors of white southerners... A model of the best of American history and, especially, studies of Asian American history and race and ethnicity. (Evelyn Hu-DeHart *Journal of American Ethnic History*) Not only enriches the texture of Asian American, African American, and southern history, but also offers a global perspective on 19th-century labor migrations. (Carol Huang *Journal of African American History*) Focusing on attempts to import Chinese contract labor to Louisiana sugar plantations in the decade after the Civil War, this book argues for the importance of the Chinese 'coolie' in the construction of race, nation, and citizenship in the United States. (Adam McKeown *Pacific Historical*) Jung's work contains real passion... It will have substantial appeal for academic specialists and university libraries with collections in southern, agricultural, and labor history. (Michael G. Wade *Journal of Southern History*) Breakthrough study... Coolies and Cane stands as an instructive study of race, Reconstruction, and Asian American history that points the way for further research. (Walter T. Howard *Louisiana History*) An ambitious book... A provocative invitation to reexamine our understanding of race in America in the 'age of emancipation.' (Gordon H. Chang *Agricultural History*) An outstanding piece of scholarship and the most complete study of Chinese labor in the South. Through his meticulous research of a vast array of sources, Jung has managed to make a significant contribution to a number of overlapping fields: Asian American history, African American history, Southern history, labor history, race and ethnicity studies, and Diaspora studies. It is rare for one book to touch on so many fields! (K. Scott Wong, Williams College, author of *Americans First: Chinese Americans and the Second World War*) Meticulously researched and boldly argued, this book is by turns, and often simultaneously, social, labor, business, diplomatic, Caribbean, Asian American, Southern, and political history. It is refreshingly revisionist in showing that moving the focus of Asian American history from the West Coast involves far more than simply acknowledging early settlement in Louisiana. Instead, Jung shows the debates over the possibility that the West Indian 'coolie' could be profitably 'transplanted' to the U.S. South made Asian American history part and parcel of debates over slavery and free labor at numerous turns, pre- and post-emancipation, so much so that initial immigration restriction legislation in the United States regulated 'coolie' trading in the context of the Civil War. (David R. Roediger, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, author of *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past*) This invaluable study forever changes our understanding of not only the history of Chinese labor in the United States, but also the very nature of slavery, freedom, and racialized labor in the age of emancipation. (Lisa Lowe, University of California, San Diego, author of *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*) A stunning accomplishment, a work of enormous intellectual and moral integrity. Jung has dramatically resituated Chinese American history both temporally and geographically, to the American South and the Caribbean, and connects both to U.S. ambitions in China. This book is about more than racial constructions and ideology. It is also a moving story about real Chinese laborers, who were recruited to Louisiana sugar plantations after the Civil War, and the myriad ways in which they resisted being treated like 'coolies.' (Mae M. Ngai, University of Chicago, author of *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*) This book is bound to be valuable for comparative purposes... It is also a welcome contribution to transnational approaches to American history. (Ian Tyrrell *Labor History*) From the Back Cover Winner, Merle Curti Award, Organization of American Historians Winner, History Book Award, Association for Asian American Studies How did thousands of Chinese migrants end up working alongside African Americans in Louisiana after the Civil War? Tracing American ideas of Asian labor to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, Moon-Ho Jung argues that the racial formation of "coolies" in American culture and law played a pivotal role in reconstructing concepts of race, nation, and citizenship in the United States." In this important and well-researched work, Moon-Ho Jung argues that Southern sugar planters looked to Asian 'coolies' to solve their labor problems after the Civil War."? American Historical "Brilliant and beautifully written... Jung's slim volume makes it clear that coolieism was not a marginal issue. The debate over coolieism was bound up in the most pressing issues of the Civil War era, from the policing of the slave-trade ban to the redefinition of citizenship in the postwar South."? *Journal of American History* "The heart, strength, and originality of this riveting narrative rests in Jung's discussion of the debates concerning Chinese coolies among diverse sectors of white Southerners... A model of the best of American history and, especially, studies of Asian American history and race and ethnicity."? *Journal of American Ethnic History* "These larger questions about race and labor are relevant not only for understanding the age of emancipation but also for the current political climate of intensified debates on immigration and citizenship in the United States."? *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* Moon-Ho Jung is an associate professor of history at the University of

Washington. About the Author Moon-Ho Jung is an associate professor of history at the University of Washington.