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Narvaez Receives Imagine Fund Award for Research on Chinese Indentured Labor

Summary: His work will address Chinese laborers in Cuba and Peru during the 19th century.

(June 12, 2014)-Benjamin Narváez, assistant professor of history, received a 2014 all-University Imagine Fund Award for his research on Chinese indentured labor in Cuba and Peru. Narváez will travel to Peru to finalize research on this topic. He will be working with 19th-century government records and newspapers at the national library and national archives in Lima.

Narváez's latest research in Peru will focus on the associations Chinese indentured laborers formed once they entered free society during the 19th-century. This research will help him complete an article titled "Becoming Sino-Cuban and Sino-Peruvian: Post-Indenture Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Cuba and Peru," which examines how post-indenture Chinese in Cuba and Peru came to incorporate both Chinese traditions and the culture of their host societies into their identities.

"Some laborers started to form Chinese associations for group solidarity and to maintain aspects of their culture," says Narváez. "This part of the project is about how they assimilated but also maintained a Chinese identity through these associations."

This research will also contribute to a comprehensive book Narváez is writing on the topic of Chinese indentured labor in Cuba and Peru. This larger project seeks to explain the rise and fall of indentured servitude and how it shaped the transition from slavery to free labor in both societies.

This project is supported by generous funding from the University of Minnesota's Imagine Fund Awards.

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