

The new Peruvian-Chinese Association (APCh) or the heirs of the Dragon

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Abstract

In the past ten years the Chinese community composed mainly of descendants of Chinese, has completely changed its face. At the same time as new immigrants arrived and changed the community structure, a small group of Tusans (Tusheng) cluster around the emblematic figure of a rich businessman, Erasmo Wong, to form a new power group within the community. While there is a large number of very active Chinese's descendant associations (in the capital Lima, particularly), the newly created institution "Peruvian-Chinese Association" (APCH) has quickly developed on the basis of elitism but referring constantly to the pioneers, those early traders and trading houses that have made the richness of the Chinese community between 1890 and 1940.

The APCH that emerged originally in connection with the reaffirmation of a sense of identity has been developing various activities in all areas (development of Chinatown, the creation of a journal, a constitution network of youth, cultural and religious events, investments, travel). Its founder has set a goal: to train and support a new generation of "heirs of the Dragon" ("Los herederos del Dragón"), entrepreneurs, executives and officials trained in Chinese trade with China. Chinese virtues and values, constantly claimed, are the very foundations of this organization that gives new visibility to the Chinese community. In reality, the association is not very sensitive to the past history of the Chinese of Peru. Its purpose is primarily to gather the economic elite in the orbit of a powerful tycoon: Erasmo Wong. This arises as a rival deal with large numbers of new immigrants, less well organized that have undertaken to stay in Peru by occupying the same niche of the import-export activities.

We'll analyze the changes induced on the existing Peruvian-Chinese community by the arrival of new Chinese immigrants combined to the impact that may have the newly created Association (APCH) on existing Tusan's associations. More precisely, to what extent the APCH will reinforce or weaken the Tusan community and subordinate all its institutions to the interest of a powerful economic group? Will the APCH contribute to the emergence of a new Tusan economic elite serving as a bridge between China and Peru? Up to what point membership to the Chinese community is being redefined by the new rules imposed by APCH and open the way to a more socially differentiated community?

We'll try to answer to these questions by gathering and analyzing first-hand data coming from reviewing APCH's public and internal documents, interviews in the field with members and Officers of APCH as well Tusans and new Chinese non-members.