

16. *Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965*, "Remarks at the Signing of the Immigration Bill, Liberty Island, New York, Oct. 3, 1965" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 1037-1040.
17. Major Asian American beneficiaries of amnesty, by country, were: Philippines—26,542; India—20,863; Pakistan—17,215; China—15,352 [includes PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan]; and Korea—10,146.
18. Data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1999* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999), Tables 8 and 9; U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1997 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999), Tables A, B, and C.
19. "Diversity programs" were originally a special way for Europeans—mostly Irish—to enter the country. Since 1995, however, up to 55,000 visas annually may be made available to persons applying from countries that had not received 50,000 numerically limited admissions over the preceding five years. This is usually called the *lottery provision*.



Chapter 3

THE CHINESE

The Early Years



No one is sure when the first Chinese came to America. Isolated navigators may have crossed the Pacific before the voyages of Columbus. We know that a few Chinese were in Mexico in the seventeenth century and that some Chinese seamen were in northeastern U.S. ports such as Philadelphia and Boston in the late eighteenth century. But the first trans-Pacific immigrants from China almost certainly came to San Francisco just before the fabled Gold Rush of 1849. By 1860 there were more than 30,000 Chinese in the United States, almost all of them in California. Who were these Asian argonauts, and what drew them 7,000 miles from home?

THE SOJOURNER PATTERN

The second question is easier to answer than the first. The Chinese, along with hundreds of thousands of others, were drawn to California by gold and the economic boom that its discovery set off. Between 1850 and 1860, California's population more than quadrupled to nearly 400,000. Almost all of the Chinese were from one small part of South China, Guangdong, and more than 90 percent of them were adult males. Most of them probably intended to come to the "Gold Mountain"—as the Chinese characters for California can be translated—work for a time, and then return home "rich," which meant, by Chinese standards, with a few hundred dollars. This has caused some scholars to label Chinese as "sojourners" and thus not

immigrants, and to proceed to blame many of the troubles the Chinese encountered in America on their refusal to assimilate. This "blaming the victim" for discrimination is an old and ongoing device used by groups in power to excuse their own behavior. The question must be asked: How different were the Chinese from other immigrants to this country?

A recent student of immigration, Thomas Archdeacon, has made it very clear that Chinese sojourners had their counterparts in other ethnic groups.

The Chinese thought of themselves as sojourners who would return with honor after spending their working years in America. Among members of many European groups . . . the hope became to earn enough money in a brief period to secure the family's farmstead, to provide dowries for female relatives, or to reestablish themselves solidly in the mother country. For these people, migration to the United States became an extension of the international seasonal migrations that were becoming common in Europe.¹

Archdeacon also shows that many ethnic groups had very heavy male migration (Scandinavians, 61.3 percent; Italians, 74.5 percent; Greeks, 87.8 percent) and a high rate of return migration (Scandinavians, 15.4 percent; Italians, 45.6 percent; Greeks, 53.7 percent).

Thus the sojourner pattern was common to many immigrant groups, European as well as Asian. What made the Chinese experience in America unique were three other factors: (1) their race, (2) the region to which they came, and (3) the fact that in 1882 they became the first group of voluntary immigrants ever to be shut out by the American government. Their continued immigration to America, despite undisguised and brutal discrimination, reflects the often wretched conditions under which they lived at home. China, a once great and powerful empire, was by the mid-nineteenth century in a long period of decline.

THE CHINESE DIASPORA

South China, the home of almost all of the Chinese immigrants to America, had a long tradition of both political rebellion and emigration. South China was the springboard from which most of the worldwide diffusion of Chinese—what can be called the *Chinese diaspora*—began and continued. It was also the main contact point for British, Americans, and other Westerners and the region of their first concessions. Places such as Hong Kong and Macao became ports through which not only foreign goods like opium came in, but also from which Chinese people embarked for new worlds.

The labor migration of Asians outside of Asia—what the British scholar Hugh Tinker has called "a new system of slavery"—began a little earlier in the nineteenth century with the bringing of indentured workers from India to work the sugar fields of Mauritius. The indentured Indians,

used largely in the British Empire, were soon followed by Chinese who were taken to places like Cuba and Peru under abominable conditions in what came to be known as the "coolie trade." Later in the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, Southeast Asians, and even a few thousand Indonesians were brought under semifree conditions of indenture to labor in the plantation and extractive economies of the Indian Ocean, East and Southern Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean.² While some of these Asian workers entered willingly into their contracts or indentures, others were kidnapped or "shanghaied," a word that came into the English language in 1871. Still others were tricked into going where they did not want to go. One American consular report from the mid-nineteenth century speaks of Chinese being lured onto ships that took them to work in the deadly guano fields of Peru's Pacific islands or the sugar plantations of Cuba; the Chinese believed that they were being taken to the gold fields of California or Australia. As we shall see, most of the early Asian immigrants to Hawaii, both Chinese and Japanese, were brought in as indentured laborers. Some immigrants to the United States proper, immigrants from both Europe and Asia, came as contract laborers, but such contracts, after the abolition of slavery, were all but impossible to enforce.

The coolie trade did not come to America. Tens of thousands of Chinese, and later other Asians, were too willing to come to the United States to make their "fortunes" for coercion to be necessary. Most of them went into debt to come here. In the 1850s, for example, Chinese in Hong Kong who wanted to come to America could borrow the equivalent of \$70–\$80 for passage and \$20 for expenses—if they would obligate themselves to repay \$200. This "credit ticket system" continued for almost a century; its persistence is the best evidence that the Chinese were free immigrants and that most borrowers paid back their loans.³

ANTI-CHINESE SENTIMENT

In the first two decades of Chinese immigration—the census of 1870 found some 60,000 Chinese, with almost 50,000 in California—Chinese worked at gold mining, in agriculture, at various urban occupations, and, most spectacularly, as the builders of the western leg of the first transcontinental railroad. After an initial welcome, the Chinese soon became the targets of both legal and extralegal harassment and, beyond that, of sometimes murderous violence. The California Foreign Miners Tax, originally directed at Hispanics, soon had Chinese miners as its chief target. In San Francisco, which became the metropolis of Chinese America, a variety of municipal ordinances put special taxes on their livelihood, fined them for living in overcrowded tenements, and even required arrested Chinese to have their heads shaved.

That most of these regulations, as well as many anti-Chinese statutes passed by the state legislature, were eventually declared unconstitutional by various courts is beside the point. The fact of the matter was, as an early California historian noted, that "the legislation on Oriental labor sprang from the people." The new California constitution, adopted by a popularly elected convention in 1879, was loaded with specifically anti-Chinese provisions, which sought, among other things, to bar the Chinese from employment and ownership of land. As one delegate noted, some sections of this document amounted to "starvation by constitutional provision."⁴

Even worse was the fact that Chinese were often defenseless targets for all kinds of violence, ranging from casual abuse on city streets to mass murder. Until well after the Civil War, California courts refused to accept the testimony of blacks, American Indians, or Chinese; even when Chinese testimony was admitted, testimony against whites was almost always ignored by juries. From Los Angeles to Seattle and as far east as Denver and Rock Springs, Wyoming, Chinese were run out of town or beaten and killed by mobs whose members were almost never brought to justice. The worst atrocities were in Los Angeles in 1871, where between eighteen and twenty-one Chinese were hanged or burned to death; in Rock Springs in 1885, where at least twenty-eight Chinese coal miners were shot to death; and in desolate Hell's Canyon, on the Idaho-Oregon border, in 1887, where thirty-one Chinese gold miners were robbed and murdered. Some of the killers were caught but none was convicted. As a contemporary white rancher noted, "I guess if they had killed thirty-one white men something would have been done about it, but none of the jury knew the Chinamen or cared much about it, so they turned the men loose."⁵

During the 1870s the Chinese population in America increased by about two-thirds, to just over 100,000, with more than 95 percent in the far western states. This decade witnessed the development of the anti-Chinese political movement in California and throughout the West, sparked by working-class agitation led by a recent Irish immigrant, Denis Kearney. The 1870s were a time of economic hardship in the Far West, and the Chinese made convenient scapegoats. Kearney's Workingman's Party demanded a whole range of economic and social reforms, but the one demand that dominated the movement was that "The Chinese Must GO!" As an 1877 party manifesto put it:

Before the world we declare that the Chinaman must leave our shores. We declare that white men, and women, and boys, and girls, cannot live as the people of the great republic should live and compete with the single Chinese coolie in the labor market. We declare that we cannot hope to drive the Chinaman away by working cheaper than he does. None but an enemy would expect it of us; none but an idiot could hope for success; none but a degraded coward and slave would make the effort. To an American, death is preferable to life on a par with the Chinamen.⁶

The economic radicalism of the Kearneyites never prevailed, although its anti-Chinese sentiments were shared by the overwhelming majority of the population. Some employers of labor insisted that the Chinese presence was necessary for economic growth, and a few Christian missionaries pointed out that their soul-saving endeavors in Asia would be hampered if Chinese here were ill-treated. In addition, the recently negotiated Burlingame Treaty with China (1868), which gave great advantages to American merchants and shippers hungry for the China market, had guaranteed Chinese the right of immigration.

CHINESE EXCLUSION

These obstacles were soon surmounted. In 1875 Congress passed the first piece of national legislation aimed specifically at Asian immigrants. It sought, first of all, to bar contract labor from "China, Japan, or any Oriental country," and secondly, to bar prostitutes. As George Anthony Peffer has shown, this Page Law, although largely ineffective, was aimed chiefly at Chinese women.⁷

In 1880 a new treaty was negotiated with China, giving the United States the right to "regulate, limit, or suspend" Chinese immigration, but not to prohibit it absolutely. After some political maneuvering, including a presidential veto, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was adopted, which barred the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years. (The act was renewed in 1892 for another ten-year term and reenacted, without temporal limits, in 1902.)⁸

THE STRUCTURE OF CHINESE AMERICAN SOCIETY

When the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, there were perhaps 125,000 Chinese in the United States. From that time until sometime in the 1920s, Chinese population in the United States steadily declined (see Table 3.1).

A major reason for this decline was the heavily imbalanced sex ratio in the Chinese American community. In 1890, for example, only 3,868 Chinese females were recorded by the census; there were 26.8 males for every female. This ratio went down steadily, and by 1940 there were 2.9 Chinese American males to every female. In 1940 citizen Chinese for the first time outnumbered alien Chinese, 40,262 to 37,242. But it is necessary to look more closely at the demographic data to get a true picture of the Chinese American community in the years before World War II. Let us take 1920 for our example (see Table 3.2). It is necessary to examine the age structure of the sexes to complete our picture. Chinese males had a median age of 42 years; the largely citizen females, a median age of just 19 years. The largest

Table 3.1 Chinese in the United States, 1890–1940

Year	Population
1890	107,620
1900	89,863
1910	71,531
1920	61,639
1930	74,954
1940	77,504

Source: U.S. Census data.

single five-year cohort of Chinese males, 5,850, were 50–54 years of age; the largest single five-year cohort of females, 1,418, were under 5 years of age. If we subtract all Chinese, male and female, under 10 years of age in 1920, we find that there were almost ten males to every female—9.84 to be precise.

If one were trying to create a population model that would be likely to resist acculturation, one could do a lot worse than to use the reality of Chinese America. Add to that a heavily male-dominated culture, a history of brutal discrimination, extreme residential segregation, and a high degree of cultural differentiation between Chinese and most other Americans, and one can begin to understand why acculturation took relatively long for Chinese Americans as a community. Individual Chinese, of course, successfully acculturated almost from the beginning of Chinese American history. Perhaps the earliest example was Yung Wing (1828–1912), who was born in southeast China, near Macao. He attended a missionary school in Hong Kong and came to America in 1847. Three years later he entered Yale College and in 1854 became its first Chinese graduate. In the meantime he had become a Christian and, in spite of the law, a naturalized citizen of the United States. He married an American woman and had a long and distinguished career in both China and America.⁹

Table 3.2 Chinese American Population, 1920

Group	Male	Female	Total	Males:Females
All Chinese	53,891	7,748	61,639	7.0:1
Alien	40,573	2,534	43,107	16.0:1
Citizen	13,318	5,214	18,532	2.6:1

Source: U.S. Census data.

CHINESE-AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

As the small but growing native-born segment of the population evolved, it began to form its own American-oriented organizations. The most notable of these was the Native Sons of the Golden State, an organization that was founded in San Francisco in 1895 and evolved into the Chinese American Citizens Alliance in 1915. The Americanizing thrust of this organization can be seen by the following clause from its first constitution: "It is imperative that no member shall have sectional, clannish, Tong or party prejudices against each other or to use such influence to oppress fellow members. Whoever violates this provision shall be expelled. . . ."¹⁰

Most Chinese Americans, however, were part of the largely unacculturated "bachelor society" that dominated the Chinatowns of America until World War II. The major institutions of that society were oriented towards China rather than America. Most, if not all, American ethnic groups have had some kind of organizational focus. For many European immigrant groups, much of the focus was provided by ethnic or ethnically oriented churches. Since traditional Chinese religions tended to be familial rather than societal, religion was not a unifying communitywide force, except for the minority who were or became Christians. For most immigrant Chinese, the family association, or clan (that is all those who had a common last name and thus a putative common ancestor), was the primary associational focus. Originally village-oriented and representing real blood relationships, the clan system was adapted by overseas Chinese to fit conditions wherever Chinese settled. Outside of San Francisco, or *dai fou* (big city) as the Chinese called it, one clan tended to dominate the smaller Chinatowns. Thus in Pittsburgh, Yees predominated; in Chicago, Moys; and in Denver, Chins. A Moy in Pittsburgh, for example, whose mother or wife had been a Yee, could affiliate himself with and expect support from the powerful Yee clan there.

An even more complex arrangement, called the *four-clan association*, also arose. Rose Hum Lee has described such a situation in Butte, Montana, whose 710 Chinese residents were in 1880 more than a fifth of the population. There two four-clan associations arose, and almost all Chinese residents were considered members of one group or the other. The associations were used to settle disputes between individuals and functioned as a kind of court; a loser in a local dispute could always make an appeal back to headquarters in San Francisco. The functions of the family associations were similar to those of the benevolent and protective societies of other ethnocultural groups, sometimes called generically *landsmanschaften*. They tendered protection and mutual aid to members. The family associations, however, went far beyond most other such societies, as they were considered extended family groups. Chinese Americans, many of whom had no blood relatives in this country, would speak of all other members of their association as "clan cousins." A wife was considered a member of her husband's

clan. If, however, he predeceased her, often she would be financially assisted by her own clan, as her husband's clan might regard her and her children as not being entitled to the clan's scarce resources. Although they were not "incest groups," marriages within clans and clan associations were discouraged. Thus in Butte, according to Lee, where there were special tensions between the two four-clan associations, not one of the ninety-nine members of the Chinese American community born in Butte had married a fellow resident of Butte as late as the mid-1940s!¹¹

In addition to being a member of a clan, each Chinese, at least in the city, belonged to a district association. Originally based on regional districts of Guangdong Province, the ancestral home of most Chinese immigrants, the associations were eventually governed by an umbrella group, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, popularly known as the Six Chinese Companies. The Six Companies also resembled *landsmanschaften*, having benevolent and protective functions. They also acted as agents of social control and served as the community's voice to white America. That later capacity was exercised as early as 1853, when Company heads (there were then only four) appeared before a committee of the California legislature. The Companies often hired white lawyers to serve as their spokesmen before national, state, and local governing bodies and courts, and, especially, before the administrative authorities who governed immigration.

In addition, their agents met incoming ships, arranged for the initial housing and employment of migrants, organized medical treatment for the sick, and performed other welfare functions. They also helped to arrange for the shipment of the bones of the dead for burial in China and arbitrated disputes between individual members. In an age when government assumed none of the responsibilities of what is now called the welfare state, ethnic organizations all over the United States performed similar functions.

The Six Companies also came to exert a very high degree of social control over the lives of American Chinese and, in this, were quite unlike most other immigrant community organizations. The association's chief beneficiaries were the merchants who came to dominate it. In China merchants had little prestige and authority; China was governed by a gentry-dominated scholar officialdom whose ideology placed the merchant at the bottom of the social scale. But gentry did not emigrate—the merchants did and quickly turned their economic power into social and political power within the Chinese American community. In addition to trade, merchants derived some of their income from the credit ticket system and from services performed as labor contractors. As the leading lights of the district associations, the merchants used the associations as a mechanism to make sure that individuals not only settled their debts but also paid their share of the Chinese American welfare system. Every Chinese who returned to China was supposed to be checked at the dock to make sure that his debts had been paid. In addition, each returnee was assessed a "tax" to support the welfare

functions of the district associations. While, of course, the system was far from 100 percent effective, the fact that it continued to function for decades suggests that it was more than marginally so. Since most Chinese in America thought of themselves as sojourners who would return to China, any system that affected that return was an ideal mechanism for social control.

But parallel to these "establishment" organizations, an "antiestablishment" form of social organization developed, centered around the *tongs*, or secret societies. Tongs had flourished as illegal opposition to the establishment in China since at least the fourteenth century and, as happens in nations where political opposition is illegal, often operated in that gray area between political opposition and crime. The Chinese American tongs were patterned on, and probably had some direct relation with, the Triad Society, and anti-Manchu, antiforeign society based in Guangdong. Unlike the family and district associations, which were universal (all Chinese in America theoretically belonged), the tongs were particularistic. No one knows how many Chinese Americans belonged to tongs. As Chinese were debarred from American political life, the criminal aspect of the tongs predominated here, although it is clear that the tongs played an antiestablishment role within Chinese American society. Eventually, some merchants managed to gain membership and influence in some tongs, and some tong leaders gained respectability among the establishment. After 1900, Dr. Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary movement (which became the Guomindang) found its chief support among American Chinese in the antiestablishment tongs: It was clearly more expedient to support a revolutionary movement through a secret organization. After the Guomindang became the government of China, of course, the Chinese American establishment embraced it publicly.

The tongs were also involved in criminal activities that preyed on, rather than protected, the immigrant community. As Daniel Bell has noted, speaking only of European ethnic groups here, crime has been an "American way of life" for many immigrants and second-generation ethnics. For Chinese criminals, the nature of their crime was dictated largely by the nature of their community. The immigrant working men and petty entrepreneurs wanted recreation that could only be provided within the immigrant community. The most popular entertainment seems to have been gambling, chiefly fan-tan, faro, and lottery; as a testimony to Americanization, poker had become popular by 1900. Opium rather than alcohol seems to have been the favored narcotic, although there is no way of determining what percentage of Chinese used the drug. In addition, Chinese brothels and, to a lesser degree, opium-smoking establishments were frequented by whites. Such establishments were quite numerous in Chinese American communities of any size. Since these activities were illegal, lucrative, and semipublic, it is clear that police and politicians in the white community were involved in sanctioning and profiting from them. Competition for scarce commodities—narcotics and Chinese women—often sparked murderous "tong

wars," in which all or almost all of the casualties were Chinese. One such war, between the Hip Sings and the Bing Kungs, began with four assassinations in Butte, Montana, in 1922, and quickly spread to every Chinatown in North America and entailed dozens of killings.¹²

In 1921, as Loren Chan has told us, a tong quarrel that started in San Francisco spread throughout northern California and even to Nevada. On the night of August 27, 1921, a 74-year-old laundry proprietor and nominal member of the Bing Kung tong answered a knock at his door in tiny Mina, Nevada. He was shot to death with a Colt .38 by a 29-year-old Canton-born hit man from San Francisco named Gee Jon, who had come to the United States in either 1907 or 1908. The finger man was Hughie Sing, 19 years old and perhaps U.S. born. Sing had been educated in the Nevada public schools and knew the victim well, having been apprenticed to him for two years. Because the perpetrators were arrested and convicted and because they talked—none of which usually happened in tong killings—we know some of the details.¹³

URBAN CHINESE AMERICA

But most Chinese were not hit men—or "hatchet men" as the sensation-seeking white media liked to call them—and their only connection with tongs was as customers of their illegal establishments. Although agriculture, mining, and railroad building were the chief occupations of Chinese Americans until about the 1880s, after that time urban service occupations—laundries, restaurants, grocery stores—became the pursuits of the majority. Unlike most modern immigrant groups, Chinese were initially found largely in rural and small-town America. In 1880, for example, only about a fifth of all Chinese Americans lived in cities with populations over 100,000. This percentage increased with every census, with close to half of Chinese Americans living in such cities by 1910 and more than seven out of ten by 1940. At first almost all large-city Chinese lived in San Francisco, but by 1940 fewer than one in three did. According to the 1940 census, San Francisco had a Chinese American population of 17,782, with another 3,000 living across the bay in Oakland. There were more than 12,000 Chinese Americans in New York, nearly 5,000 in Los Angeles, and just over 2,000 in Chicago; Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, and Boston each had between 1,000 and 2,000 Chinese.

While it is customary today to write off such ethnic enclaves as ghettos—and the Chinatowns of America certainly had many of the worst characteristics of ghettos—there was, for many of the Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans of later generations, a positive aspect of these urban neighborhoods. One Chinatown resident remarked in the 1920s:

Most of us can live a warmer, freer and a more human life among our relatives and friends than among strangers. . . . Chinese relations with the population outside Chinatown are likely to be cold, formal, and commercial. It is only in Chinatown that a Chinese immigrant has society, friends and relatives who share his dreams and hopes, his hardships, and adventures. Here he can tell a joke and make everybody laugh with him; here he may hear folktales told which create the illusion that Chinatown is really China.¹⁴

The shift to larger cities, coupled with a shrinking total population, meant not only disappearance or near disappearance of many smaller Chinatowns (Butte's shrank from 710 in 1880 to 88 in 1940) but also a sharp reduction of the percentage of Chinese found in California and the West in general. Although the Golden State contained an absolute majority of Chinese Americans in every census of the period, save that of 1920, within California the incidence of Chinese in the population contracted drastically. In 1860, Chinese had made up 9.2 percent of California's population; in 1940 they represented about 0.6 percent. In some other western states, particularly Idaho, Montana, and Nevada, Chinese population was once quite high. The Idaho Territorial Census of 1870 reported them as 28.5 percent of the population; in that year they were 9.5 percent of the population of neighboring Montana. A decade later Chinese made up 8.7 percent of the population of Nevada. Each of those figures declined rapidly as Chinese were eliminated from the mining industry and the mining industry itself declined. These Chinese pioneers have largely been written out of the histories of the western states. When Chinese do appear in them it is as exotic curiosities or as victims. Their pioneering role as developers of the economy of the West has simply been ignored.

The heart of Chinese America was San Francisco, whose Chinatown contained between an eighth and a fifth of all Chinese Americans during the years under discussion. But the city was much more important to the Chinese than mere numbers indicated. As one Chinese American recalled about his father's experience early in the twentieth century, San Francisco was always his home base, the "safest place," although his work took him up and down California's valleys and as far away as Alaska, where he packed salmon.¹⁵

San Francisco was the cultural, economic, and administrative hub of Chinese America, the entrepôt through which Chinese goods and services were distributed, the communications center through which information and people passed back and forth between the old world and the new. And, despite Chinese exclusion, large numbers of persons did continue to go back and forth across the Pacific, legally, illegally, and extralegally. Until 1924, American law did not exclude Chinese per se but rather "Chinese laborers." In addition to diplomats and students, who were not technically immigrants (but many of them did stay here), Chinese merchants, or "treaty merchants" as they are sometimes called, and members of their families

were admissible. An 1893 law specifically and insultingly defined a merchant and required that the status of any Chinese merchant had to be sworn to "by the testimony of two credible witnesses other than Chinese." Chinese were held up until 1910 in a grim facility on the San Francisco waterfront called the Shed; after that they were kept in the special detention facility in the bay on Angel Island. A missionary described the Shed around 1900 as a place where

merchants, laborers are all alike penned up, like a flock of sheep . . . often weeks at their own expense . . . while the investigation of their cases moves its slow length along. . . . A man is imprisoned as a criminal who has committed no crime, but has merely failed to find a white man to prove his right to be here.¹⁵

Even bona fide upper-class students were often detained. One of the famous Soong sisters, Ailing, was held for more than two weeks when she arrived to attend college even though she was traveling with two white American missionaries and had influential persons intercede for her. As an articulate Chinese diplomat, Wu Ting-fang, put it to New York reporters in 1901: "Why can't you be fair? Would you talk like that if mine was not a weak nation? Would you say it if the Chinese had votes?"¹⁷

OUTWITTING THE IMMIGRATION LAWS

In addition to the hundreds who came in legally, if with difficulty, there were uncounted others who jumped ship or sneaked across the border; the Puget Sound region, the Mexican border, and Florida seem to have been the most favored places. But perhaps most numerically important of all were the thousands who came in extralegally, that is, by successfully claiming a status they were not entitled to. A combination of circumstances, including incompetent and venal federal employees and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire that destroyed many birth and other records, made it possible for many Chinese men to obtain documents falsely indicating that they were native-born American citizens. If such persons traveled to China and fathered children there, the children were eligible to enter the United States. Those who came in falsely were known in the community as "paper sons." Years later, after a federal amnesty program, begun in the 1950s, was in place, some paper sons were willing to talk. One of them described the process:

In the beginning my father came in as a laborer. But the 1906 earthquake came along and destroyed all those immigration things. So that was a big chance for a lot of Chinese. They forged themselves certificates saying that they were born in this country, and when the time came they could go back to China and

bring back four or five sons just like thahey might make a little money off it, but the main thing was to bring a son nephew or a cousin in. Now my father thought he was even smarter than t When he came the second time he didn't use that native-born certificate had. He got a certificate saying he was a student. But that didn't make se at all. He thought he was smart being a student, but then, if you came is a student, how could you bring a son into this country? If he had used hirth certificate, I could have come in as a native son. Instead we had to go bato the same old thing, "paper son." They had to send me over not as my o father's son, but as the son of another cousin from our village.¹⁸

Another paper son, Jim Quock, told interwvers in 1979 that:

I came to America because my grandfer was here during the Gold Rush times, the 1860s. Somebody robbed himd he got killed and they never found the body or anything. My grandther told us that grandpa had a lot of gold, made quite a bit of money, youow. So that's what got in my mind, "Oh, this is a fortune. I'm going over to erica to make money." Only fifteen at the time. So the only way I could ce is to buy a paper, buy a citizen paper. I paid quite a bit of money, too,aid \$102 gold! That's quite a bit of money at that time in China.¹⁹

Immigration officials quickly caught to the paper son and other gambits and subjected Chinese applicants for aission to detailed and quite prolonged interrogations. Ironically, some of first Chinese to get federal jobs were employed to help discover illeganmigrants. The immigrants, of course, developed elaborate countermeass. As Jim Quock told it:

They give you a book of about 200 pago study—all your life, your family, your brother's name, the whole village, lost. They ask you all kinds of questions when you get to the United Statthe immigration [station] at Angel Island. . . . I was there for three weeks. y ask you how many steps in your house? Your house had a clock? Quests like that. You got to remember all this. They asked me, "Where do you sleat your house?" I said, "I sleep with my grandmother and my brother." Tfsay, "Okay which position do you sleep?" All kinds of questions, you gotthink. But, I'm pretty smart. I said, "Tonight I sleep over here, tomorrow I p over there, it doesn't matter."²⁰

Archivists have discovered "crib slts," obviously written for paper sons, that describe in detail some Chinesillage. It is clear that most of the thousands of successful paper sons wentelligent, alert, and more than marginally literate.

U.S. immigration records show ast 95,000 individual entries of Chinese "immigrants" between 1883 arthe end of Chinese exclusion in 1943, an average of about 1,500 a year. Ny of these were former residents returning, and many individuals came eral times. Until 1924, when the immigration law made it impossible, peps 150 Chinese women per year were admitted as wives of either citizen/ treaty merchants. A 1930 act relaxed this ban, as long as the marriage l taken place before the 1924 law

went into effect, and allowed an average of sixty women a year until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Thus the sexual imbalance of Chinese immigration was reinforced by Chinese custom and American law.

Obviously, large numbers of the "bachelor" immigrants to the United States had wives in China. The 1930 census, for example, showed four times as many married Chinese men here as married Chinese women. These separated families, called "mutilated families" by the sociologist Charles Frederick Marsden, far outnumbered "normal," united families in the Chinese American community until well after the end of World War II. A similar condition prevailed for the same basic reasons in Canada. Peter S. Li's study of the pattern of Chinese marriage in Canada is more thorough than any study done for the United States. Of 22,777 Chinese Canadian families in 1941, Li found only 1,177 "intact conjugal families" (5.2 percent); 1,459 "broken families" (6.4 percent), in which one or both partners were widowed or divorced; and 20,141 "mutilated families" (88.4 percent), with the wife outside of Canada.²¹

The data for the United States are surely similar. Because of this pattern of family life, the acculturation of many Chinese Americans, including many putative native-born citizens, was retarded. Many immigrant "bachelors" of several generations could spend most of a lifetime in American Chinatowns without learning more than a handful of English phrases. Conversely, of course, there were many thousands of second-generation Chinese Americans who broke through at least some of the ethnic barriers and achieved real acculturation.

The contrast is well-illustrated in one of the most annoying Chinese American cultural stereotypes, the Charlie Chan movies, rightly resented by most Chinese Americans today. Yet even stereotypes have their value, and the contrast between the wise, inscrutable Chinese American detective—always played by Caucasian actors—and his wisecracking, shallow number one and number two sons—played by skilled Chinese American actors such as Keye Luke and Victor Sen Yung—is not unrelated to the reality of generational conflict in the Chinese American community in the pre-World War II years. A more sophisticated treatment of the generation gap may be found in the autobiographies of Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950) and *No Chinese Stranger* (1975), and of Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943).²²

The Chinese American community was clearly undergoing great change in the years just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The rise of the native-born community, although overstated by the enumeration of paper sons, and the dying off of the older generation were pushing the community, as a whole, toward greater acculturation. But World War II, which changed the lives of most Americans, accelerated change within the Chinese and other Asian American communities even more rapidly than for most of the rest of the nation.²³

SUMMARY

There is no question that the Chinese talked, dressed, and acted differently from the "preferred" norms of the "Anglo" society, but so did members of almost every other immigrant group. More critical was that the Chinese "looked different," which ran into the rampant racism that was a part of the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It is from this background that the adaptation of the Chinese becomes understandable.

Acculturation works most readily for the young, for those who have an opportunity to go through the American school system and for those who expect to participate in the mainstream. It does not work as well for those who are isolated and denied access, who are segregated, who are older, or who expect to return to the home country. A pluralistic adaptation, it is hoped, of some degree of equality seems more appropriate.

Acculturation, integration, and participation in the mainstream are also appropriate for those who come in families. Thus, although parents may never become full participants, it is their expectation that their children will. Being American is also for those who can become citizens and for whom citizenship means access to economic, political, and social opportunities. It means justice and equality; it means a full identity. It does not mean second-class citizenship.

As we have seen, most of the early Chinese did not easily acculturate, integrate, or participate in the American society. The majority were single males. If married, their families were left behind in China. They could not become citizens; prejudice, discrimination, and segregation kept them apart from the mainstream. Jobs were largely limited to the lower part of a dual labor market; social and political opportunities were limited to their own communities. They were "outsiders"; what wealth and leadership qualities they had could only be used from the "outside looking in." They were hemmed in by their own needs and the walls erected by the dominant community. They were identified as Chinese and foreigners; they were not viewed as Americans. It was a pluralistic adaptation, less than equal and primarily involuntary. It was only with changes in their demographic structure and changes in the American society that we begin to see a break away from a segregated existence.

NOTES

1. Thomas Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: Free Press, 1983), pp. 138-139. Table V-4, on p. 139, which treats twenty-five groups, shows a high Pearson product-moment correlation of .689.

2. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1820-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). For a worldwide survey of indentured labor, see W. Klosterboer, *Involuntary Labour since the Abolition of Slavery: A Survey of Compulsory Labour throughout the World* (The Hague: Mouton, 1960).
3. The best brief description is in Kil Young Zo, "Credit Ticket System for the Chinese Emigration into the United States," *Journal of Nanyang University* 8/3 (1974-1975): 129-138.
4. Elmer C. Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939); Lucille Eaves, *A History of California Labor Legislation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1910), p. 115; *Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of California*, vol. 1 (Sacramento, 1881), p. 630.
5. Roger Daniels, ed., *Anti-Chinese Violence in America* (New York: Arno Press, 1976); David H. Stratton, "The Snake River Massacre of Chinese Coal Miners, 1887," in Duane A. Smith, ed., *A Taste of the West* (Boulder: Pruett, 1981), p. 125.
6. Sandmeyer, *Anti-Chinese Movement*, p. 65.
7. George Antony Pepper, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration before Exclusion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
8. Charles J. McClain, Jr., *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Lucy Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) analyze the legal history.
9. Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (New York: Holt, 1909); Edmund H. Worthy, Jr., "Yung Wing in America," *Pacific Historical Review* 39 (1965): 265-287.
10. Sue Fawn Chung, "Fighting for Their American Rights: A History of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance," pp. 95-129 in K. Scott Wong & Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
11. Rose Hum Lee, *The Growth and Decline of Chinese Communities in the Rocky Mountain Region* (New York: Arno Press, 1978).
12. Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960); Ching-Chao Wu, "Chinatowns: A Study in Symbiosis and Assimilation" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1928), pp. 213-214, 232.
13. Loren Chan, "Example for the Nation: Nevada's Execution of Gee Jon," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 18 (1975): 90-106.
14. Wu, "Chinatowns," p. 158. Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) is the best single book on the San Francisco Chinese.
15. Victor G. Nee and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ'ers* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), p. 22.
16. Ira M. Condit, *The Chinaman As We See Him* (Chicago: Revell, 1900), pp. 86-87. For Angel Island, see Roger Daniels, "No Lamps Were Lit for Them: Angel Island and the Historiography of Asian American Immigration," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17 (Fall 1997): 4-18.
17. As cited by Delber L. McKee, *Chinese Exclusion Versus the Open Door Policy, 1900-1906* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), p. 51.
18. Sucheng Chan, ed., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) analyzes the effects of exclusion. Quotation from Nee & Nee, *Longtime Californ'ers*, p. 63.

19. Diane Mei Lin Mark and Ginger Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1982), p. 47.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
21. Peter S. Li, "Immigration Laws and Family Patterns: Some Demographic Changes Among Chinese Families in Canada, 1885-1971," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 12, no. 1 (1980): 58-73.
22. Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950); Helen, *No Chinese Stranger* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Pardoe Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1943).
23. For a detailed look at one aspect of that change, see Renqiu Yu, *To Serve China, to Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).