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## Chinese transnationalism and the creation of a liberal public sphere

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CHINESE TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE CREATION  
OF A LIBERAL PUBLIC SPHERE

by

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Associate of Arts  
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1998

Bachelor of Arts  
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2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

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## ABSTRACT

### **Chinese Transnationalism and the Creation of a Liberal Public Sphere**

by

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Associate Professor of History  
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This thesis is a global comparative study tracing the functions and historical development of Chinese *huiguan* ["official organization"] and its leadership in China, Indochina, and San Francisco. Early Chinese immigration to America and Indochina involved the formation of *huiguan*, organizations based on dialect and native place, paralleling the functions and demography of merchant associations originating in China. The merchant elite representing its leadership were preeminent arbitrators of Chinese tradition and authority. French Indochina and America recognized their status as community leaders, further exalting the social standing of merchants and increasing their positions of authority. These organizations greatly influenced the lives of a majority of Chinese immigrants in an attempt to replicate, with varying degrees of fidelity, the social, religious, and networking environments of native-place regions. By providing material aid, financial connections, and charitable functions, *huiguan* existed within a framework of carefully-defined relationships essential to the very survival of Chinese communities.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a global comparative study tracing the functions and historical development of Chinese *huiguan* [“official organization”] and its leadership in China, Indochina, and San Francisco. Early Chinese immigration to America and Indochina involved the formation of *huiguan*, organizations based upon dialect and native place, paralleling the functions and demography of merchant associations originating in China. The merchant elite representing its leadership were preeminent arbitrators of Chinese tradition and authority. French Indochina and America recognized their status as community leaders, thus further exalting the social standing of merchants and their positions of authority. These organizations greatly influenced the lives of Chinese immigrants in an attempt to replicate, with varying degrees of fidelity, the social, religious, and networking environments of native-place regions. By providing material aid, financial connections, and charitable functions, *huiguan* existed within a framework of carefully-defined relationships essential to the very survival of Chinese communities. One cannot overemphasize the importance of Chinese *huiguan* in Indochina and the American West, their ties to one another and to their native places, and the ways in which French colonial authorities and the American government both nurtured and undermined these ties.

Placing *huiguan* within the historical context of China, Southeast Asia and the American West contributes to an awareness and understanding of the competing forces of imperialism, colonialism, and transnational ties in the lives of early Chinese immigrants. Moreover, this study raises important theoretical questions regarding the status of elites,

transnational social organizations, and identities transcending national and cultural boundaries.

The first chapter is a reassessment of the historiography of Chinese in Indochina and the American West and it illustrates how the pronounced revival of diaspora studies and the formulation of newer theoretical constructs such as transnationalism, globalization and the de-territorialized nation state continue to suggest alternate perspectives from which to approach migration and border studies. These theoretical frameworks attempt to center mobility and dispersion as a basis from which to begin analysis rather than as streams of people merely feeding into or flowing along the margins of national histories. Thus, a diasporic perspective both complements and expands upon nation-based perspectives by drawing attention to global connections, transnational networks, activities and consciousness that bridge more localized anchors of reference. The second chapter investigates the origins of Chinese global migration as well as the origins and development of *huiguan* in China, followed by investigations into the respective origins and development of *huiguan* in Indochina in the third chapter. Because of the larger accessibility to source materials on *huiguan* in San Francisco, the fourth chapter explores the organizational development of *huiguan* and its leadership in San Francisco, and the fifth chapter explores the charitable functions and services the organization provided for its membership, including legal protection and aid in the era of Chinese exclusion. This chapter also discusses the challenges made to *huiguan* from other Chinese American organizations at the turn of the twentieth century, and the concurrent rise of Chinese nationalism and its effect on traditional *huiguan* foundations of power.

While Chinese international migrations occurred for centuries, and continue to the present day, circumstances surrounding overseas migration and the political, economic, geographic, and social environments of immigrant societies prior to the mid-twentieth century were dramatically different from those in the post-1960s era. These earlier emigrants primarily were villagers from Guangdong and Fujian provinces in southern China and travelled abroad as laborers, merchants, and farmers.

Most Chinese who immigrated in the nineteenth century intended to return home wealthy enough to live a comfortable life in China. At the immigration and detention facility on Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay, a detained Chinese immigrant's poem, written on a barrack wall, characterized the dream of many early Chinese immigrants, "Wait until the day I become successful and fulfill my wish."<sup>1</sup> For many, realizing the dream took years; for others, success remained elusive. Many individuals died in coal mines or while working on railroads before they could achieve their dreams. Their final hope lay in the wish that their bones would return home to the land of their ancestors. In the process of working toward their dreams, Chinese contributed much to the economic growth and development of the regions to which they immigrated. Aspirations drove them to new lands, and even if dreams of wealth went unfulfilled, their true success lay in forging a new culture blending both Eastern and Western traditions.

Once Chinese immigrants arrived in Southeast Asia and the American West, they attempted to reconstruct the associations of their homeland. Their minority status in these new regions, however, required them to structure these organizations differently. Gradually, Chinese enclaves developed, complete with traditional hierarchical structures and familiar social support groups. They lived in homes echoing traditional households

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<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, November 11, 1990.

in China, but in the male-dominated immigrant societies of the nineteenth century, these homes took on new forms. Based on common heritage, most Chinese immigrants, though individually unique, carried with them similar cultural concepts, none stronger than the ideas of family and clan. Chinese immigrants vigorously upheld the values of clan and kin while attempting to reconstruct traditional households throughout the American West and Southeast Asia.

In several respects, Chinese immigrants created new communities similar to those left behind in China. From their inception, Chinese communities became a safe haven for immigrants. Even though environments beyond Chinese communities and enclaves provided for economic livelihoods, returning to these communities after working in mines, on railroads, or in factories meant returning to the familiar. These communities were also porous environments where immigrants possessed agency to make choices based on personal experience and opportunity.

Because of both social and economic factors, however, Chinese peasants with limited educational backgrounds encountered not only a limited range of occupational pursuits but also an increasingly racialized climate in both Indochina and the American West. In general, Euro-Americans and European immigrants carried prevailing anti-Chinese sentiments with them to the West Coast. As Chinese immigration became a heated political issue on the West Coast and across the United States during the 1870s and early 1880s, the outcries of the western congressional delegations were loud enough to persuade the federal government to suspend and then prohibit the immigration of Chinese laborers. Thus, in 1882, the Chinese became the first ethnic group legally excluded from the United States. Moreover, as discussed in the following chapter, no

first-generation immigrant of Chinese descent would be eligible to apply for naturalized citizenship before these exclusionary laws were lifted in 1943.

While Chinese immigration to Indochina long predates immigration to the American West, Chinese communities within each region are of great historic and economic significance. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, what primarily distinguished Chinese communities in Indochina from those found in the American West was the marked pattern of powerful groups competing for the allegiance of Indochina's established and emerging Chinese communities. This thesis will demonstrate how Chinese communities in Indochina differed even more significantly from the Chinese model than many of their counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries by exhibiting a far smaller degree of intercommunity segmentation than Chinese communities in Singapore, for example, where Chinese groups by the hundreds allowed intra-community division to a remarkable degree. As discussed, this homogenization was in large part due to the combined effects of regulating legislation imposed upon them from the outside, first by the Nguyen regime and later by French colonialists.

The wealth of recent scholarship focusing upon urban organizations in modern China provides unprecedented access into the structure, function, and evolution of Chinese societies, organizations, and associations in the great cities of the Chinese empire and republic. This recent scholarship also illuminates how different elements of Chinese immigrant communities interacted with one another. For example, Chinese competition and conflict between sub-ethnic groups generated ferocious rivalries and devoted partnerships long before French colonial occupation of Indochina. As this thesis illustrates, this phenomenon was most marked in the case of Cochinchina's secret



societies, where rivalry between the Trieu Chau and Phuoc Kien Chinese in the Mekong Delta was so intense that French police and local authorities spent months trying to stem the wave of violence that open conflict between these two groups spawned.

France's ever-expanding colonialism in Indochina and the politics of exclusion in the United States continued to alter Chinese immigrant communities, while the growing Chinese awareness of China's national interests eventually spawned a new kind of nationalist self-identification. For example, the heightened crescendo of Chinese nationalism, coupled with anti-foreign sentiment, permeated the activities in Saigon and Cholon sponsored either by united federations of *huiguan* or led by the Guomindang Committee for Indochina, a group boasting a leadership comprised of local Chinese from various *huiguan*. Chinese *huiguan* continued to negotiate the pathways and pitfalls of colonial or national rule and law in order to achieve their own agendas, which included maintaining multidirectional ties not only with other *huiguan* branches, but also with native place organizations in China.

In an attempt to place this thesis within the historiography of modern China as well as the historiography of Chinese in the American West and Southeast Asia, a discussion of German social theorist Jurgen Habermas' concept of public sphere is of primary importance. In the post-World War II era, scholars of state and society repeatedly confronted the issue of public sphere as Habermas conceived it. As Habermas contends, public sphere is:

A domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens...Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely.... The term 'public opinion'

refers to the functions of criticism and control of organized state authority that the public exerts.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Habermas's "public sphere" deals fundamentally with the modern notions of democracy and participatory government.

For Habermas, public sphere is not the inevitable result of history's natural evolution; rather, it is the by-product not only of a specific time and place, Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also of a specific class of citizens, the bourgeoisie. He writes:

under conditions of complete mobility of producers, products and capital, supply and demand would always be in equilibrium...under these conditions, but only under these, would each person have an equal chance...to attain the status of property owner and thus of 'man,' that is, the qualifications of a private person admitted to the public sphere – property and education.<sup>3</sup>

In this context, issues of public sphere seem singularly unsuited to Chinese history, whether in the imperial or republican era. And yet, as William Rowe summarized in his comprehensive historiographical article on the subject, public sphere is the very topic to which historians of Chinese state and society relations turn.<sup>4</sup>

From Chan Hao's study of Liang Qichao's attempts at mass-politicization to William Rowe's works on Hankou, scholars such as Mary Backus Rankin, David Strand, Keith Schoppa, Joseph Fewsmith, Philip Kuhn, Prasenjit Duara, and Kwan Mun Bun

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<sup>2</sup> Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 398-9.

<sup>3</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* tr. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 86-7.

<sup>4</sup> William Rowe, "The Public Sphere in Modern China," *Modern China* 16, no. 3, (July 1990): 323.

have all made the issue of the public sphere, or of its Chinese vocabulary, a centerpiece in the historiography of modern China.<sup>5</sup> The issue of the public sphere in China, however, is quite contentious, as evidenced by Frederic Wakeman's blistering rejection of its applicability to the Chinese case.<sup>6</sup>

In the Introduction to his edited volume, *A History of Private Life*, Philippe Ariès suggests that, in Europe, the public sphere grew most rapidly when the state's bureaucracy proved least able to back up its claims of control,<sup>7</sup> or, in the words of William Rowe, the growth "took place in precisely that early modern interval when the state's jurisdictional claims were expanding at a far greater pace than its institutional abilities to realize these claims."<sup>8</sup> While Rowe goes on to say that recent scholarship on China makes Ariès's model more applicable to late imperial and republican China, this model also raises interesting questions when applied, with additional clarification, to overseas Chinese. Public sphere, as it is described by Habermas, is a clearly defined

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<sup>5</sup> Consult Chang Hao, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: North China Villages, 1900-1942* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988); Joseph Fewsmith, "From Guild to Interest Group: The Transformation of Public and Private in Late Qing China," in *Chinese Business Enterprise: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management* ed. R. Ampalavanar Brown (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996); Philip Kuhn and Susan Mann Jones, "Introduction," in *Select Papers from the Center for Far Eastern Studies* 3 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Kwan Man Bun, *The Salt Merchants of Tianjin: State Making and Civil Society in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); William Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984) and *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); Keith R. Schoppa, *Chinese Elites and Political Change: Zhejiang Province in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); and David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City, People, and Politics in 1920's China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> For a fierce post-Tiananmen rebuttal to the existence of a Chinese public sphere, consult Frederic Wakeman, "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture" *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (April 1993): 293-328.

<sup>7</sup> Philippe Ariès, "Introduction." in *A History of Private Life: Volume III, Passions of the Renaissance* ed. Roger Chartier and tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> William Rowe, "The Public Sphere in Modern China," 323.

intellectual category, implying the rise of common space, public gatherings, and the freedom of speech provided therein. However, the strict geographical, temporal, and demographic bounds placed upon the public sphere by Habermas renders the category's direct applicability to any Chinese case a bit far-reaching. More useful, perhaps, would be an examination of public sphere from a structural perspective, the very scenario that Ariès described. To that end, this thesis removes the definition of public sphere from its original context, altering its meaning in order to describe the space between overt autocratic dominance claimed by French colonials or the United States government, whether practically or through legislation, and the extent of this authority's impact upon Chinese immigrants, embodied within the organizational structure of the *huiguan*.

To more appropriately situate these questions in a Chinese context requires a more careful examination of the public sphere debate as it pertains specifically to China. The roots of this debate are found much earlier in the works of German sociologist Max Weber.<sup>9</sup> Weber, in an exhaustive examination of the secondary sources available on China at the time, determined China's material inferiority to the West in the modern era stemmed directly from a failure to develop a "rational" organization or system of behavior, an inadequacy he attributed to China's lack of an "urban community." Weber is incorrect in his assertion, as urban communities did exist in China, but according to Weber, equality under a rational legal system represents an urban community, along with many other characteristics such as general enfranchisement, bureaucratic accountability, and a heavy emphasis on trade and commerce, forming the basis of a sort of proto-capitalism.

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<sup>9</sup> Max Weber, *The City* ed. and tr. Don Martindale and Gurtrud Neuwirth (New York: Collier Books, 1958) and Max Weber, *The Religions of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, tr. Hans Gerth (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951).

The presence of a powerful, autocratic government whose control of commercial operations and natural passages of trade (for example, rivers), worsened China's failings, according to Weber, and determined the development of the economic sector rather than the increasing autonomy of any urban commercial community. More damningly, Weber asserted that the Chinese emphasis on native-place and kinship effectively precluded the development of any urban community or urban autonomy. Weber noted, "The 'city' was...never the 'hometown' but typically a place away from home for the majority of its inhabitants."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the sojourning nature of urban-dwelling Chinese, and their strong ties with native-place communities, prevented them from developing a shared urban culture of their own that transcended particularistic ties. In other words, these particularistic groups impeded "the fusion of urban dwellers into a homogenous status group."<sup>11</sup>

These are the very notions addressed by William Rowe in his study, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City*. However, Rowe takes a rather different view of the Chinese situation. In fact, he disagrees fundamentally with Weber on several points. First, Rowe maintains that Weber's scenario ignores the possibility of the existence of different cities across China geared to different functions; for example, one city to imperial administration and another to commerce and trade. This oversight, according to Rowe, stems largely from the fact that Weber provides for only two types of settlements, cities and villages, and allows for no urban degrees in between.<sup>12</sup> As proof

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<sup>10</sup> Weber, *The Religions of China*, 90.

<sup>11</sup> Weber, *The City*, 97.

<sup>12</sup> Rowe, *Commerce and Society*, 7.

of the magnitude of this oversight, Rowe proffers G. William Skinner's "central-place" theory, which posits the increasing differentiation of China's urban structures alongside the gradual commercialization of the Chinese world.<sup>13</sup> More significant, according to Rowe, was Skinner's suggestion that different cities with different purposes also occupied different places in China's administrative and commercial hierarchies. In other words, Rowe claims that Skinner's notion allows for a more nuanced comparison of Chinese cities of roughly equivalent size. Rowe asserts, "Thus, an urban center whose position in the administrative hierarchy was disproportionately higher than its position in the marketing hierarchy would be likely to have a very different social structure from one in which the relative hierarchical rankings were reversed."<sup>14</sup>

By using Hankou as his model, Rowe strives to demonstrate how this atypical Chinese city not only deviates from Weber's autocratic model, but also emphasizes how imperial administrators actively supported the modernization of Hankou's commercial interests and operations across a broad range of commercial ventures.<sup>15</sup> In fact, in the second volume of his remarkable urban study, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City*, Rowe goes so far as to suggest that this fledgling "modernity" exhibited in Hankou constituted a form of public sphere along the lines of Habermas's European ideal.

Rowe's powerful and persuasive foray into Chinese history's civil society debate charted a path for other scholars of Chinese local rural and urban elite; however, it did

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<sup>13</sup> A more detailed explanation of Skinner's theory can be found in G. William Skinner, "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China, Parts I, II, and III," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (Nov 1964); 24, no. 2 (Feb 1965); 24, no. 3 (May 1965). Although modern urban scholarship significantly discredits the rigidity of Skinner's proposed urban hierarchy, his notion that cities of different sizes performed different economic and commercial functions remains largely unassailed.

<sup>14</sup> Rowe, *Commerce and Society*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

not go unopposed. In particular, the noted Chinese historian Frederic Wakeman took issue with a number of Rowe's assertions, a disagreement ranging from the theoretical applicability of Habermas's public sphere in the Chinese case to whether or not Hankou even constituted a city in the first place. According to Wakeman, Rowe's assertions about the existence in Hankou of a "broader urban community" with which merchant guilds "increasingly sought to identity their [own] interests"<sup>16</sup> bears no validity because the merchant guilds in question were not themselves natives of Hankou. Urban community, Wakeman suggests, is impossible when the community in question is comprised of sojourners who were not only alien to the city, but who maintained other residences in their native places during the commercial off-season.<sup>17</sup> In fact, whether unconsciously or deliberately, Wakeman's response to this phenomenon echoes the stand originally taken by Max Weber when he claimed that particularistic groups impeded "the fusion of urban dwellers into a homogenous status group."<sup>18</sup>

In the context of urban Chinese history, this thesis addresses directly the issues and enduring questions of the public sphere and civil society debates raised by prominent scholars of China. Is Max Weber correct about Chinese differing from Westerners in their failure to achieve institutional autonomy from the state? Is he correct when he attributes that failure to the unsuccessful modernization of the commercial practices of Chinese merchants and their unwillingness to relinquish kinship or other particularistic ties as a prerequisite for mercantile relationships? Is William Rowe correct in tackling the shortcomings of Weber's paradigm so directly? Did the Chinese guilds of Hankou

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Wakeman, "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate," 117-8.

<sup>18</sup> Weber, *The City*, 97.

achieve institutional autonomy from the state, as Rowe suggests, or is Frederic Wakeman justified in his skepticism? Did Rowe's evidence fail to show that Chinese guilds or any other non-state institutions attained autonomy from the state in Hankou? As Wakeman suggests, should one completely set aside Habermas' notion of public sphere as a concept for understanding Chinese history?

Historians and social scientists specializing in China continue to debate these issues widely, and a rich body of scholarship addresses these questions in various forms. However, historians have yet to raise these questions with respect to Chinese communities outside of China. Did Chinese immigrant communities devise non-state institutions that went beyond the particularism of family and native place associations? If so, did these institutions achieve autonomy from the state in countries outside of China? Did these institutions create a public sphere? This thesis attempts to directly address these questions by examining the scope and functions of *huiguan* outside of China and in doing so, illuminates the degree of autonomy accessible not only to urban overseas Chinese elite, but also to overseas Chinese communities at large.

When traditional imperial authority vanished in Indochina, to be replaced by the autocratic colonial power of the French, what happened to the Chinese? To what degree were Chinese immigrants in Indochina and America able to attain autonomy from state dominance? Did they manage to adapt the institution of the *huiguan* to meet the needs of their own communities, even if those needs went against the wishes of the state? Did they achieve some degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the respective governments, and if so, did this autonomy represent a type, or even a proto-type, of public sphere? In the final analysis, were immigrant Chinese able to create a public sphere?



In a global comparative context between the *huiguan* of Chinese immigrants in Indochina and the American West, the objective is not to address the idea of the Chinese “problem” or to examine the ways in which state power in either region constructed the “problem.” Rather, one must investigate the often ambivalent and ambiguous positions that Chinese communities occupied within the economies and societies of these two varied regions, paying particular attention to three fundamentally linked issues: first, the role of the state in creating, or closing, Chinese spaces of citizenship and economic activity; second, the shifting status of the Chinese in both areas over time; and third, the notion that Chinese existed as an excluded community.

## CHAPTER 1

### RECONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CHINESE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE AMERICAN WEST

In a provocative article, the late Australian scholar Ian Tyrrell writes: "In an era of unprecedented internationalization in historiography, the legacies of nationalism and exceptionalism still haunt the study of American history."<sup>19</sup> Although the historical experience of immigrant Chinese communities often reifies conceptions of nationalism, the theme of Americanization or Westernization predominates not only Chinese American historiography, but also the historiography of Chinese communities throughout the world. Reflected in articles published in recent periodicals, much of the scholarship specifically pertaining to Chinese communities in general areas of the American West and Southeast Asia is a product of the last three decades. This body of scholarship coincides with the emergence of Asian and Asian American studies as a discrete field.

While there are no doubt individual reasons for scholarly interest in Chinese immigrant communities, this noticeable proliferation owes much of its stimulus to the increasing awareness promulgated by Asian American studies, and the prominent role Asian Americans now occupy in the American consciousness. The historical role of the Southeast Asian Chinese, and specifically the Chinese in Indochina under French colonialism, is one of the most understudied aspects of a generally understudied sub-discipline. The reasons have to do not only with the difficulty of finding available source material but also with the persistent ethnocentrism in writing about the region in

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<sup>19</sup> Ian Tyrrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History," *The American Historical Review*, 96 (October 1991): 1031-1055.

European languages, which sees European influence as in some sense the successor to an older civilizing impulse from India, and the Chinese role as an awkward sideshow. Moreover, a more profound and enduring problem is whether it is possible or desirable to know who is and is not “Chinese” in a world now dominated by nation states.

In addition to the development of Asian American studies as a discrete field, the rapid economic growth of Asia and Southeast Asia over the last thirty years continues to draw attention to the prominent role played by approximately twenty million “Overseas Chinese” living in Southeast Asia. Individuals sometimes refer to this remarkable group of “prodigious savers and investors” as the classic case of the “marginal trading minority,” of which other cases are the Jews in Europe, Indians in East Africa, Lebanese, Armenians, and Parsees, among others.<sup>20</sup> The Southeast Asian Chinese are currently the largest and most successful of such minorities, and their role in the development of capitalism in East and Southeast Asia is crucially important. Their success has stimulated much writing, both scholarly and ephemeral, about them in recent years, seeking to unveil the secrets of their commercial success. Ambitious scholarly models of “Chinese capitalism” exist in addition to narrower studies of commercial and kinship networks, trust (*xinyong*), and family firms.<sup>21</sup> Yet very little of this writing possesses a serious

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<sup>20</sup> Population figures and quotation from *The Economist*, July 18, 1992, 21. *The Economist* estimated fifty-five million overseas Chinese in various parts of the world, including twenty-one million in Taiwan and six million in Hong Kong. On the problematical term “Overseas Chinese,” consult Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Sidney, AUS: Allen and Unwin for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1981), 249-260.

<sup>21</sup> Examples of such ambitious models include S.G. Redding, *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* (New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1988); Peter Berger and Hsin-Huong Michael Hsiao, eds. *In Search of an East Asian Development Model* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988); Gary Hamilton, ed. *Business Networks and Economic Development in East and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1991); C. Barton, “Some Observations Concerning Business Practices of Overseas Chinese Traders in South Vietnam” in Linda Lim and L.A. Peter Gosling eds. *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for South and Southeast Asian

historical dimension or takes into account the extraordinary depth and diversity of China's interactions with Southeast Asia.

The vicissitudes of Chinese immigration to Southeast Asia, and Indochina in particular, demonstrates cases of total integration into the host society and of long-term coexistence and competition with it. Chinese gravitated toward different identities at various times, including Chinese sojourners abroad, Westernized colonial subjects, loyal citizens of their adopted countries, revolutionary communists, or modern, multi-national capitalists. Numerous specialized monographs appear on their political loyalties to Beijing, Taipei, or Southeast Asian capitals, on the patterns of social and kinship organization, on their economic roles, religious beliefs, and economic experiences, but few studies offer global comparisons.<sup>22</sup>

As a comparative corollary, historian Sucheng Chan delineates four periods in the writing of Asian American history.<sup>23</sup> Works produced during the first period, between the 1870s and 1920s, were almost entirely partisan, in that writers either opposed or supported Chinese immigration.<sup>24</sup> During the second period, from the 1920s to the

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Studies, 1983); Wong Siu-lun, "The Chinese Family Firm: A Model," *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 1 (1980): 58-72.

<sup>22</sup> The most thorough treatment of this subject is provided by Jennifer Cushman and Gungwu Wang, eds., *Changing Identities of Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Sucheng Chan, "Asian American Historiography," *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 3 (1996): 363-99, in *Remapping Asian American History* ed. Sucheng Chan (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), xiv-xviii.

<sup>24</sup> Four early works by Roger Daniels are crucial to how scholars depicted Asian immigrants and their descendants: "Westerners from the East: Oriental Immigrants Reappraised," *Pacific Historical Review* 43 (1974): 449-472 reprinted with modifications in *The Asian American: The Historical Experience* ed. Norris Hundley, Jr. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Press, 1976), 1-25; "Majority Images – Minority Responses: A Perspective on Anti-Orientalism in the United States," *Prospects* 2 (1976): 209-262; "North American Scholarship and Asian Immigrants, 1974-1979," *Immigration History Newsletter* 11 (1979): 8-11.

1960s, two topics captured the attention of social scientists regarding the Chinese experience: the extent to which Chinese immigrants and their descendants assimilated to Euro-American norms and the internal organization of Chinese immigrant communities in the United States. Although written by sociologists, these studies continue to be of particular interest to contemporary historians because they reflect the prevailing worldviews and concerns of earlier decades. Moreover, such secondary writings can now be considered primary sources.<sup>25</sup>

The third period, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, is of great significance because it involved attempts to overturn earlier sociological and historical perspectives, infusing the broader field of Asian American historiography with the rhetoric of politically active students and young scholars demanding the replacement of negative stereotypes of allegedly docile and silent Asians with portraits of Asian immigrants and Asian American workers actively struggling against capitalist oppression.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, beginning in the 1960s, the resurgent immigration and social mobility of Chinese to the American West and elsewhere heightened an awareness of the need to include them centrally in the study of group processes. This historiography, however, frequently utilized Euro-American perspectives. Despite evidence of increasing structural integration, scholars concentrated on Chinese subordination through discriminatory

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<sup>25</sup> For sociological perspectives on the early experience of Chinese in American history, consult Michael Omi, "Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 5, no. 2 (June 2002): 179-182; Rose Hum Lee, *The Growth and Decline of Chinese Communities in the Rocky Mountain Region* (New York, NY: Arno Press), 1978.

<sup>26</sup> Shih-shan Henry Tsai, "Chinese Immigration through Communist Chinese Eyes: An Introduction to the Historiography," *Pacific Historic Review* 43 (1974): 395-408 reprinted in *The Asian American* ed. Norris Hundley (Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Books, 1976), 53-66.

policies and movements.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, breakthroughs occurred, leading to an approach emphasizing group life. As early as 1961, Lawrence Fuchs authored a sensitive examination of Hawai'i's Asian ethnic groups, treating them as both sources of action and perspective. Subsequently, Gunther Barth, John Modell, Edna Bonacich, Lucie Cheng and Ronald Takaki, among others, began to bring Asian Americans within the new social history framework of American ethnicity.<sup>28</sup>

In the fourth period, beginning in the 1980s, scholars studying Asian Americans began to carve out a niche in academia. According to Sucheng Chan, professional historians only began to play "a leading role in creating historical knowledge about Asian Americans" in the early 1980s.<sup>29</sup> Much of this path-breaking scholarship deconstructed and rejected racial discourses. The creation of such an intellectual space enabled scholars focusing on the Chinese in the American West to complete the painstaking archival research required to depict the Chinese and other Asian groups as agents of history, depictions based on careful analysis of extant documentary evidence.

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<sup>27</sup> Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969). Miller's work provides early racialized images of Chinese immigrants leading up to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971). Saxton's study is an early account of American labor and subsequent anti-Chinese sentiment culminating in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act; Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979); Stanford M. Lyman, *The Asian in the West* (Reno, NV: Western Studies Center, University of Nevada, 1970); Gregg Lee Carter, "Social Demography of the Chinese in Nevada, 1870-1880," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* (Summer 1975): 72-89. Carter's study provides statistical data on a small Chinese community in Nevada. He documents movement to urban centers.

<sup>28</sup> Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawai'i Pono: A Social History* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968); Gunther Barth, *A History of the Chinese in the United States 1850-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964); Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich, eds., *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawai'i, 1835-1920* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> Sucheng Chan, "Asian American Historiography," 376.

Presently, Asian American history courses across the country continue to utilize general scholarly syntheses.<sup>30</sup> These publications demonstrate convincingly how the Chinese actively participated in American social, economic, and political life. However, the most significant achievement of this body of scholarship was its revision of American history and culture to include the Chinese. While attempting to reject assimilationist viewpoints, however, scholars presented the Chinese in the American West as less a Chinese and more an American story, a tale of diverse people becoming one nation. In such writings, Chinese immigration is a linear progression from rural to urban, from traditional to modern, from alienation to Americanization. The historian's priority thus became the struggle for representation and inclusion of Chinese in American history, the challenge of the homogeneous image of American "whiteness," and conversely, the claim of Chinese "American-ness." Rooted in the context of the American West, these writings emphasized how the Chinese in America gradually became distinct from the Chinese in China.

Defining the Chinese as "settlers" rather than "sojourners," explaining how the Chinese adapted themselves to American society in the West, and describing their resistance against racism remained dominant themes in scholarship during this period. In the discussion of the process of identity formation among Chinese Americans, for example, most scholars underscored the willingness of Chinese to embrace American

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<sup>30</sup> General syntheses include Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1988); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1989); Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Florence, KY: Gale-Cengage Learning, 2001). Single-subject monographs on Chinese American history during this period also include Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986); Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Aptos, CA: Capitola Book Company, 1989); and Sucheng Chan, *This Bitter Sweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

values and their desire to be accepted as Americans. "When we write the histories of Asians in America, we add something to U.S. history," claimed K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, editors of a Chinese American anthology published in 1998.<sup>31</sup>

Unquestionably, Chinese American scholarship from the 1980s and 1990s represents a significant step forward compared with previous works either presenting the Chinese as passive victims of racial prejudice or works focused largely on how Euro-American society perceived and responded to the Chinese presence in America. Economic participation, changes within each respective Chinese community and identity formation emerged as central issues in the scholarship of this period. However, the historiography of the Chinese in America remained an American-centered and nation-based literature.

Transformations in the field as it unfolded further marginalized the history of Chinese in the American West. As new immigration swelled the numbers of first-generation Chinese, there was a shift of interest to the Chinese roots at the expense of interest in historical roots in the United States, including the community interests informing the work of earlier scholars. A class element existed as well. Unlike earlier Chinese immigrants, new generations of immigrants include, most prominently, professionals and entrepreneurs to whom histories of successful contemporary Chinese role models may be more relevant than the history of the working class in the nineteenth century.

As early as the 1980s, historians specializing in America expressed uneasiness about the emphasis in Asian American history on "railroads and concentration camps."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), viii.



Without miners and railroad workers, however, there is little in the way of early Chinese American history, especially in the region of the American West. As the current preoccupation with diasporas shifts attention to global migrations of Chinese, it is important to note that unless a study is place-grounded, the study of diaspora in its very naming “Chinese” invites the return of reified racial and cultural identifications to mark diverse populations, a “Chinese-ness” that exists independently of time and place.

While present economic success endows these markers with positive value, one should remain aware that it was these same markers that were the cause of prejudice and discrimination against the Chinese at an earlier time. National historiography for some time provided something of an antidote by substituting identity defined by the nation-state for racially- or culturally-conceived identities. But the nation-state itself, while more grounded territorially and historically, suffered from its own reifications by abolishing differences within its own spaces, and, more pertinently, by excluding populations outside of its national boundaries. For example, Chinese immigration continually presented problems to a Chinese nationalist historiography. The national history of China excluded the history of Chinese immigrants, leaving it to those specializing in regions or countries with locations of immigrant populations. The same, incidentally, was the case for foreign historians of China. So long as the nation-state provides the unit of historical analysis, its boundaries shape the study of history. Thus, the history of Chinese immigration has not been a part of Chinese historians’ training.

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Omi, “It Just Ain’t the Sixties No More: The Contemporary Dilemma of Asian American Studies,” in Gary Okihiro, et. al., eds. *Reflections in Shattered Windows: Promises and Prospects for Asian American Studies* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1988), 35.

The fifth period of Chinese American historiography, characterized by efforts to fill extant historical gaps through paradigmatic shifts, emerged in the late 1990s. Changes in substantive focus became apparent in studies examining Chinese immigrants and their descendants in regions other than the Pacific coast, in works attempting to shed light on hitherto scarcely researched periods, and through conceptual shifts reflected in the changing framework scholars used to interpret their substantive findings. Because of their complexity, migration patterns forming Chinese communities in the West required analysis transcending parochial geo-historical boundaries.

An emergent key task for scholars of Chinese in the American West is to relate community-building to historical movements, such as the contest of imperialism and nationalism, the spread of the demographic transition and capitalism to underdeveloped counties, and the establishment of overseas Chinese communities outside the United States. One can thus visualize Chinese immigration to the American West as occurring in a trans-Pacific arena that deploys both human and economic resources. Only then can one observe Chinese immigrants as simultaneously functioning in two socioeconomic settings: the system of family instrumental labor and the system of wage labor in American society.

From the perspective of the homeland, Chinese were agents for spatially extending traditional household economies. Case studies focusing specifically on Chinese communities in the American West permit previous assessments of the American frontier as an international safety valve of opportunity for non-Western peoples, as well as indigenous cultures and white settlers. From a Western perspective, the

Chinese were one of the first racial minorities to become a proletariat in the early stages of industrialization and in the development of the trans-Mississippi hinterland.<sup>33</sup>

Revisionist in nature, more recent monographs on Chinese Americans, for example, shake the historiography embedded in nationalist discourse, pushing Asian American studies in a transnational direction.<sup>34</sup> Moving between China and the United States in a discussion of Chinese American life, this scholarship reinvigorates Chinese American studies as an intersection of Chinese and American studies. In this way, it seriously challenges the American-centered and nation-based research paradigm by promoting a more transnational, trans-cultural and multilingual approach to the history of Chinese and their experience in the American West.

Although scholarship in Chinese American history has undoubtedly made significant strides in the last thirty years, much of the attention sidesteps the legacy of Chinese women. Long treated by scholars as either passive prostitutes or subservient wives, Chinese American women and their lives remained unclaimed for decades. Judy Yung's scholarship focuses on the diverse experiences of Chinese women, in which these women appear both as agents of their own transformation as well as victims of racist and

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<sup>33</sup> Michael Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979) provides a general model of migratory behavior. Also consult Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages*, 215-249; and Ping Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California, 1850-1880* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1961).

<sup>34</sup> Two such examples are Madeline Hsu's *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); and K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese-American Identities During the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998). Drawing on both English and Chinese-language sources, these works explore migration processes and the social origins of Chinese immigrants from an international perspective and reinterpret the cultural values of immigrants as fundamentally open, engaged and cosmopolitan. Moreover, they characterize the Chinese American community as a dynamic, fluid and flexible global network and place Chinese America in a larger historical context beyond that of a single nation.

patriarchal structures of power.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, her account identifies immigration as a particularly gendered process. Integrating theoretical concepts of race, class and gender throughout her work, Yung's study testifies to the human agency and diverse roles of Chinese American women during the first half of the twentieth century in San Francisco. Through the metaphor of foot binding, Yung argues that, within the lifetime of the first two immigrant generations, women shed their subordinate status in the community and mainstream society, gradually becoming independent, liberated individuals. Whether as Protestant mission-home inmates, flappers in the 1920s, labor activists of the New Deal era, or fighter pilots during World War II, Chinese American women overcame the barriers of sexism and racism and left their mark on the history of the American West.

Erika Lee's rich and evocative study of Chinese immigration during the exclusion era demonstrates how Chinese exclusion turned the United States into a gate-keeping nation, patrolling its borders and immigrant neighborhoods for individuals deemed undesirable and deporting those who somehow slipped in anyway.<sup>36</sup> Lee argues that this process had several important consequences. First, Chinese immigration and the anti-Chinese rhetoric against it became the prototype for successive nativist movements to discriminate against other ethnic populations in an attempt to prevent immigration of those groups deemed undesirable. Once they designated one group as illegal and undesirable, nativists could utilize similar arguments and attempts at racialization to either exclude or restrict the entry of other immigrant groups. Second, efforts to enforce exclusion created a large and powerful bureaucracy, the Immigration and Naturalization

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<sup>35</sup> Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995)

<sup>36</sup> Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Service, whose power went beyond guarding America's gates as it encroached into neighborhoods and targeted illegal immigrants for deportation. Third, exclusion created illegal immigration, and with the initial conflation of illegal immigration with Chinese immigration virtually ensures that the term "illegal immigrant" continues to carry a racial meaning.

Lee examines the enforcement of Chinese exclusion as experienced by immigration officials and immigrants, including prospective immigrants. Although her story is enriched by the use of local, national and transnational frameworks to explore Chinese immigration and exclusion, at heart it is a story about America's first illegal immigrants, national discrimination, and its consequences for successive immigrant groups. Moreover, it examines the development of a bureaucratic structure to control immigration and institutionalize racism in its initial pursuit of "illegal immigration" defined as "Chinese immigration." Lee's work moves steadily through four parts, from a discussion of the origins of Chinese exclusion and American gate-keeping measures, to Chinese efforts to enter and Euro-America's efforts to keep them out, and the national legacy of Chinese exclusion.

A continually daunting task faced by scholars studying Chinese in the American West is the paucity of primary sources left by the Chinese themselves; early Chinese immigrants left relatively few written documents. While historians may recognize the material contributions of Chinese to the American economy, or acknowledge the importance of the Chinese exclusion movement to the development of American nativism and xenophobia, the scarcity of Chinese sources makes it difficult to reconstruct the Chinese experience of "becoming American." K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan attempt

to examine the construction of a national identity that is both Chinese and American through seven essays investigating English-language writings of Chinese in America during the exclusion era.<sup>37</sup>

The editors concede that using the writings of those fluent in English means that the authors of the sources were not representative of the Chinese American public in general. Nevertheless, Wong and Chan suggest that the very fact that these individuals were proficient in the new language meant that they served as spokespersons for their communities. This assertion raises a perpetual problem for historiography in general: how does one know that the spokesperson really voiced the concerns of the silent? While this difficulty may be unavoidable, one must engage in some speculation and imagination in one's efforts to see American history from the Chinese perspective.

As a corollary, historian Sucheta Mazumdar raised the concern that as Asian American Studies programs became a component in mainstream academia, it weakened links with the Asian community, stripping it of much of its international characteristics.<sup>38</sup> While Mazumdar was a lone voice in the field at that time, new attempts to address the complexity of human migration emerged within immigration studies. Rejecting the well-established stereotype of immigrants as the "huddled masses," revisionist scholars like Virginia Yans-McLaughlin and Ewa Morawska illustrate the variety of social backgrounds immigrants reflect. This scholarship negates the assumption that immigrants always represent the lowest economic classes and the poorest regions.

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<sup>37</sup> Sucheng Chan and Kevin Scott Wong, eds. *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*. The essays within Part One discuss the first Chinese immigrant generation from the late nineteenth century through the 1940s. The remaining four essays within Part Two focus on American-born Chinese.

<sup>38</sup> Sucheta Mazumdar, "Asian American Studies and Asian Studies: Rethinking Roots," in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, et. al., eds. Shirley Hume (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1991), 29-44.

Immigrants tend to be highly motivated people with levels of education and labor skills often above average populations in the home country.<sup>39</sup> Few scholars in Asian American studies caught up with this transnational trend and pushed the field in this direction. Indeed, transnational research about the Chinese can be risky because the end product can be viewed as a marginal work in both Asian studies and Asian American studies.

The year 2000 proved to be a fruitful year for Chinese American scholarship from a transnational perspective.<sup>40</sup> Historian Madeline Hsu explicitly rejects an American-centered and nation-based research paradigm by documenting how Chinese immigrants and their families lived for a prolonged period of time on both sides of the Pacific. Instead of a localized history, their story is a transnational odyssey, challenging conceptions of human migration as a one-way trip. As Hsu illustrates, the United States is not always the final destination of immigrants. Economic success rather than assimilation is often the ultimate goal for immigrants. Tracing the internal migration of the Cantonese beginning in the seventh century, and the sojourning lifestyle of the Chinese during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Hsu provocatively discusses migration as a long tradition in Chinese society. Devoting a considerable portion of her book to how events in China affected immigrants and how Chinese immigration impacted China, Hsu defines her transnational scholarship as a bridge between "historically related but as yet

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<sup>39</sup> Ewa Morawska, "The Sociology and Historiography of Immigration," *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 193; and Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1991), 19.

<sup>40</sup> Consult Madeline Hsu's *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*; and Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Both are path-breaking works depicting the Chinese American experience as a transnational history.

critically unlinked fields of Asian American and Asian Studies."<sup>41</sup> This claim itself is significant as it could easily invite criticism of her work as half-hearted or as a less genuine form of Chinese American scholarship.

The rejection of an American-centered approach does not always imply a China-centered position in immigration studies. A transnational perspective focuses on the immigrants rather than the nation states between which they shuttle back and forth. The transforming power of transnationalism is its immigrant-based perspective. As Hsu contends, scholars lacking Chinese language skills must comprehend the global nature and important nuances of loyalty, achievement and relationships brought about by the immigration experience.<sup>42</sup>

Hsu's introduction contains a revisionist theoretical paradigm for a study of Chinese migration patterns. She defines Chinese migration as a trans-Pacific circular flow of people, money, information, and social relationships crossing national boundaries. Transnationalism challenges the established premise that regards migration patterns as straightforward, two-step, unidirectional movements. China did not "push out" its citizens so that other countries could "pull" them in. Having recognized the limitations of extant literature on Chinese immigration, Hsu rejects the notion of migration as a process characterized by social dislocation, adjustment, and ultimately, Americanization or Westernization. Immigrants did not simply uproot themselves from one set of social relationships in order to absorb themselves in different social relationships. To assert this notion characterizes immigrants as only being capable of maintaining involvement in one community at a time, defined by the nation-state.

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<sup>41</sup> Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



Through multiple links and orientations, Chinese immigrants constructed complex transnational and multicultural identities. As a social activity, migration developed its own momentum and self-reproducing energy to sustain the continuity of the movement. During the migration process, transplanted social networks expanded and created new possibilities for later generations of immigrants. Therefore, departure from China did not sever immigrants' ties to their past but, rather, facilitated the creation of a new life and new networks linking home to a new home away from home.

The social origin of early Chinese immigrants is one of the most important topics that Asian American historians discuss and debate. However, few scholars explore this subject as deeply as Yong Chen. Chen analyzes the dynamic economy of and social relations with Guangdong, China's southern province. "The world the California-bound immigrants left," asserts Chen, "was not a one-dimensional, stagnant and closed society. Instead, the Pearl River Delta was (and still is) one of the most dynamic areas in China."<sup>43</sup> Chen's revisionist view on the social origins of Chinese immigrants naturally leads to a reinterpretation of their lives in San Francisco. The title of his work, *Chinese San Francisco 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community*, signifies Chen's theoretical approach through his illustration of San Francisco as the capital of the Chinese transnational community in America.

The colorful life of the community leader Ah Quin supports Chen's challenge to the long-standing image of Chinese immigrants as rigid and passive peasants who took whatever jobs were available, instead characterizing them as highly motivated people aspiring to upward mobility. There is perhaps no other individual in the early history of

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<sup>43</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 14.

the Chinese in California who challenges this stereotype more than Ah Quin. Born in Guangdong Province in 1848 to farmers who sent him to an American missionary school in China, he learned to read and write in Chinese and English. Wishing for a better life for their son, his parents sent him to America and unlike most Chinese immigrants, Ah Quin's family was able to pay for his passage across the Pacific in advance. His ten-volume diary recounts his travels and his employment, and also includes the names and addresses of prominent men with whom Ah Quin had contact. He worked in Alaska as a cook and also made contact with the Chinese Christian mission upon his arrival to San Francisco. He continued his religious study there, and this experience added to his knowledge of English and helped him to develop contacts with individuals outside the Chinese community. Ah Quin remained in San Francisco for about six years, working in a variety of jobs, which included serving as a domestic laborer and cook. He became a railroad recruiter and businessman in San Diego, eventually earning the unofficial title of "Mayor of Chinatown." As a successful entrepreneur and father, he was respected by all who bridged the gap between the Chinese and Euro-American establishment. Due to his bilingual capability he continued to be a spokesman for the Chinese community, serving local courts on behalf of other Chinese immigrants.<sup>44</sup>

Chinese immigrants continue to inhabit both a geographically and culturally transnational space. The turn to the study of diasporas, while it shares much in common with earlier race- or culture-based identification, also differs from the latter because it is post-nationalist. Moreover, it questions the very notion of the nation-state as a locus of

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<sup>44</sup> In addition to Yong Chen's study, for more information on Ah Quin consult Susie Lan Cassel, "To Inscribe the Self Daily: The Discovery of the Ah Quin Diary," *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium*, ed. Susie Lan Cassel (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 54-76. Susie Lan Cassel is also currently transcribing Ah Quin's ten-volume diary through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

identity and it is globalist. Nevertheless, its very globalism tends to erase differences based on place and the different histories articulated through place. This gave rise in recent years to a concern with pitting global studies against more localized histories.<sup>45</sup> History informed by a sense of place not only resists erasure by globalist reification, but also serves as a reminder of the very concrete experiences and activities through which Chinese constructed and defined their identities.

If bringing the Chinese experience in Indochina and the American West into the larger framework of Chinese historiography presents significant conceptual consequences, the reverse is also the case. General studies of the American West suffer from blindness where Chinese populations are concerned. A perusal of state histories indicates that references to Asian populations are still rare. However, one may draw from much of the recent work about immigration to the American West a multitude of questions of interest pertinent to the Chinese experience.

It is important to underscore a few of the very prominent issues presented from the perspective of historiography about Chinese in the American West: settlement and coastal patterns; oppression, resistance and violence; the dynamics of Chinatowns; and interethnic relations. It is also important to consider the distinction between older, established Chinese communities and new settlements in the American West, which may be of more significance than the distinction of coastal and interior Chinese communities in the American West. Indeed, what primarily distinguished inland regions from the coast was its unsettledness, where tensions and violent confrontations between Euro-Americans and Chinese characterized many small settlements dotting the landscape of the nineteenth-century American West.

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Omi, "It Just Ain't the Sixties No More," 35.

Transnationalism remains an important approach to understanding the Chinese immigrant experience. It reflects both regional and international social, political and economic forces, as well as the Chinese response to these forces through the creation and maintenance of transnational networks. Racialized environments within Indochina and America, coupled with political unrest and social instability in China, prevented Chinese immigrants from developing a sense of connectedness to either society for some period of time. Therefore, transnational family and community networks became the focal point of life for early Chinese immigrants.

Through the inclusion of Chinese-language sources, an investigation of community life throughout the Pacific Rim, the search for the dialectical explanation of China's cultural roots, and an integration of larger ethnic and international studies are key components in transnational scholarship. Contrary to misconceptions about this approach, transnationalism continues to advocate socially-embedded, community-based and immigrant-centered scholarly research. From the perspective of Chinese immigrants, migration is not about relocating their homes from one country to another, but rather it is about exploring economic opportunities beyond national boundaries and creating alternative social spaces away from home. A transnational journey thus begins in China, follows a pattern of circulation, and may end, for some returning immigrants, back to China as well. In this study, Chinese immigration did not begin nor necessarily end in Indochina or America. By transcending assimilationist paradigms, one can begin to fully comprehend the difficult realities of immigration and the transnationality of the Chinese experience.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM *ZHONGGUO*, 'CHINA' TO 'BIG CITY' AND 'BIG MARKET':

#### *HUIGUAN* DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Nowhere were the effects of imperialism, colonialism and industrialization more pronounced than around the Pacific Rim in the nineteenth century. This region shared a precarious position along the edges of an industrial frontier,<sup>46</sup> and even though many areas possessed economies based on long-standing traditions of overseas commerce, forces from the West created new social dynamics within these regions.<sup>47</sup> An examination of Chinese immigration during the nineteenth century requires one to investigate myriad social, political, and economic changes occurring within China, and in doing so, it thus becomes easier to see the entire Pacific Rim as a region in transition. Moreover, one must analyze how Chinese society depended on tradition and family to sustain its culture at home and abroad during this transition.

Describing the process of immigration explains how the intertwining of Pacific Rim economies and cultures linked China, Indochina and America. The vast Pacific Ocean separated distinct land masses and cultures. Over its waters, new ideas and cultures traveled, and during the nineteenth century, the ocean barrier, so intriguing to

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<sup>46</sup> A.B. Stout, "The Commerce of Asia and Oceania," *Overland Monthly* 8 (February 1872): 173. Although the editorial contains racist concepts and ideas regarding Chinese and Japanese labor, the writer clearly recognizes that: "The commercial relations of California, now rapidly increasing in value and extension, are more dependent upon the coasts of the Pacific than that of the Atlantic." Even though Stout's views typify racist notions of Asians, he correctly notes: "How shall...commercial relations be established if the people of Asia are scorned...?" Stout adds that in terms of commerce, "The east looks to the Atlantic the west to the Pacific...."

<sup>47</sup> Yong Chen, "The Internal Origins of Chinese Emigration to California Reconsidered," *Western Historical Quarterly* 28 (Winter 1997): 535. According to Yong Chen, commercialization appears in Guangdong Province as early as the Song Dynasty (690-1279), but the beginning of a modern industrial economy had its roots in the nineteenth century.

early Chinese philosophers, slowly lost its much of its mystery when Chinese immigrants sailed to new lands. The Pacific Rim economies of the twentieth century largely developed from this cultural exchange, whereby one today can still observe the vestiges of a vibrant, albeit dependent, economy of nations.<sup>48</sup>

Industrialization arrived around the Pacific Rim at uneven times up until the end of World War II. It arrived in the American West in the form of mining and railroad construction between 1860 and 1885, and it arrived in East and Southeast Asia on the heels of Western imperialism. Japan's desire to modernize fueled changes altering the course of the nation's history.<sup>49</sup> In China, this industrialization took root slowly. It grew out of the necessity to modernize China's military but soon encompassed a broader range of economic initiatives, including the production of consumer goods.<sup>50</sup>

While social change in China reflected its pace in modernization, Japan's arrived with a rapidity that astounded the rest of the world. Economic development in both countries, however, occurred in cities and seemingly skipped over the countryside, unless one listened to the whistle of steamboats traveling along the rivers of Guangdong Province or plying the coastal waters of Japan.<sup>51</sup> Southern China, throughout much of its

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<sup>48</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 229. Takaki illustrates this concept differently but notes: "The Chinese were...present everywhere in the industrial development of the West."

<sup>49</sup> For more information on Japan's modernization, consult Paul A. Kamatsu, *Meiji, 1868: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Japan* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1972), 240-59.

<sup>50</sup> Albert Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization: Sheng Hsuan-Huai (1844-1916) and Mandarin Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Daily Alta California*, January 10, 1867, 1. Steamships mingled freely with sailing ships in Hong Kong by the late 1860s. However, traditional agriculture continued to dominate China's economy in the nineteenth century.

history and up to the present day, remains predominantly rural, a place where life historically centered around family and small farming villages.<sup>52</sup>

According to Confucian principles, a well-ordered family provided the foundation for a well-ordered society.<sup>53</sup> Chinese households extended beyond the walls of the family house to include clans and extended relatives outside the home. The size of a Chinese family varied, and although households and nuclear families remained small, extended relationships nonetheless opened families to a wider world. Chinese related through lineal descent and marriage bound themselves together by kinship rights and duties.<sup>54</sup>

In southern China, relatives belonging to one lineage group often comprised entire villages and sometimes even larger towns.<sup>55</sup> Lineage groups or clans extended to people sharing the same family name. Even if blood relationships proved sketchy, the family name bound the lineage group. Most lineage groups lived like a large family, with an elderly patriarchal member at its head. For example, in some villages everyone in the village had the family name of Ma (in Cantonese, Mah) and, according to tradition, all descended from one man bearing the same name. Generally, the eldest male led the village. Mas in other villages, theoretically, also belonged to this same lineage group or clan, thus relating all Mas, wherever they lived, together.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Louis Patterman, *Continuity and Change in China's Rural Development: Collective and Reform Eras in Perspective* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9-10; Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1972), 3, 9, 10, 14.

<sup>53</sup> D.C. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1988), 17-19.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>56</sup> Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* (London, UK: Athlone Press, 1970), 1-5.

In villages, houses and “halls” lay close together.<sup>57</sup> In these compact villages, Chinese shared a common history linking their pasts and their futures. In the village of Nanqing near Guangzhou (Canton), for example, ancestor tablets for the village describe its establishment in 1091. Forty-two generations of villagers tied to one patriarch lived in this community. As a result, the family and the lineage clan shaped and governed the southern Chinese village for centuries.<sup>58</sup>

Communities could be comprised of more than one family lineage group, but the ability to trace one’s family back to the inception of a village meant Chinese lived in a society bound by a depth of tradition and custom, and these deep-seated traditions and customs traveled with Chinese abroad.<sup>59</sup> So entrenched were these cultural roots that once abroad, Chinese structured their lives similar to the villages they left behind. While villages in southern China formed the core of rural society, they also formed the initial model for many Chinese communities outside of China.<sup>60</sup>

Except in a few isolated cases where the topography did not permit it, rural Chinese distributed themselves in villages and towns. As Kung-Chuan Hsiao notes, “The village was in fact the basic unit of Chinese rural life, as the family constituted the

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<sup>57</sup> Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London, UK: Athlone Press, 1971), 1.

<sup>58</sup> Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society*, 4; Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *Rural China*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Yanwen Xia, “The Sojourner Myth and Chinese Immigrants in the United States,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 1993), 3.

<sup>60</sup> David Chenyuan Lai, “Home Country and Clan Origins of Overseas Chinese in Canada in the Early 1880s,” *B.C. Studies* 27 (Fall 1975): 3-29. Lai provides an excellent discussion of clans (*zong*) and lineage (*zu*) and their role in North America.



primary unit of Chinese social life.”<sup>61</sup> While the average size of a rural family household was 6.5 persons,<sup>62</sup> the number of families representing a village varied greatly.<sup>63</sup>

Changes to traditional Chinese society would be inevitable, however, and these changes had roots in China’s historic past. During the Tang (618-907), Song (960-1279), and Yuan Dynasties (1279-1368), Guangdong Province, the southernmost of China’s provinces, underwent rapid growth in river and oceanic trade.<sup>64</sup> Only the island of Hainan lies farther south than Guangdong, and like this island province, Guangdong borders the South China Sea, a body of water that opened to Southeast Asia, eastward to the Philippine Islands and, ultimately, to the wider Pacific Ocean. It was along the river systems of warm and subtropical Guangdong Province where China’s merchant class, dependent on foreign trade, emerged.

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<sup>61</sup> Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *Rural China*, 11.

<sup>62</sup> Martin C. Yan, *A Chinese Village: Taitou, Shantung Province* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1947), 9; David Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China: Trade Increase and Peasant Livelihood in Jiangsu and Guangdong, 1870 to 1937* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 90, 196-97. Household sizes varied from place to place and over time. This is an average figure. The most concrete analysis of rural household size occurs in the early twentieth century, but even as late as 1941 household size on Mulberry farms ranged from 3.67 to 7.5 persons and households on farms throughout Guangdong ranged from 2.9 to 6.2 persons as late as 1930. It should be noted that 2.9 and 6.2 are extremes. Most households ranged from 3.8 to 5.4 in number.

<sup>63</sup> Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *Rural China*, 14, 323.

<sup>64</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, eds., *Guangdong: Survey of a Province Undergoing Rapid Change* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994), 431.



Figure 1. Pearl River Delta Region<sup>65</sup>

On the banks of rivers emptying into the South China Sea, market towns and sizeable cities based on commerce and industry developed in Guangdong Province. While these urban areas developed along the region's waterways, villages, more numerous than cities, provided food and markets for larger cities. Waterways now connected them to growing towns downriver and along the coast.

The region's prosperity from the beginning of the Tang (619-907) and into the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) grew out of its maritime trade system. Along with the construction of port facilities and canals during the Ming Dynasty, knowledge of navigation and shipbuilding improved. Ultimately, the shipbuilders of Guangdong

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.actionla.org/Reports/JourneytoHome/Maps/Pearl%20River%20Delta%20Map.jpg>, (accessed, January 26, 2009).

Province constructed oceangoing vessels capable of crossing not only the South China Sea but also the Pacific Ocean. As a result, the number of passengers and the volume of goods the oceangoing vessels held increased dramatically. By the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), a sophisticated water transportation network with the Pearl River as its main artery was in place. The Pearl River, with its numerous river and sea ports, allowed Chinese traders to move into the interiors of China and out onto the open sea with ease.<sup>66</sup>

During the Qing Empire, ships from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province, traveled the coastlines of China or sailed out to sea to Southeast Asia and beyond.<sup>67</sup> With one of the longest coastlines in China, and with its excellent water transportation system into the interior, Guangdong Province, with Guangzhou as its economic center, enjoyed a booming foreign trade during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>68</sup> In addition to its natural benefits, a change in imperial policies in the mid-eighteenth century further contributed to the region's importance and economic success. In 1757 Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795) restricted all foreign trade in China to the ports of Guangzhou.<sup>69</sup> Restricted foreign trade to Guangzhou from 1757 to the end of the Opium War in 1842 allowed the city to enjoy a trade monopoly that enriched the entire province. Chinese in Guangdong held the tradition of overseas commerce in Guangdong firmly in place by the time of China's defeat in the Opium War and the subsequent onset

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 432-33.

<sup>67</sup> Yong Chen, "Origins of Chinese Emigration," 534, 529-30.

<sup>68</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 433.

<sup>69</sup> Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton Company, 1990), 120-21. Spence notes the monopoly restrictions took hold after 1760; Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 433.

of Western imperialist ambition in the region. This long tradition of outward-looking commerce helped launch the nineteenth-century Chinese immigration that followed China's war with England.<sup>70</sup>

The Opium War, lasting from 1839 to 1842, ended with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842. This agreement, the first of what China would refer to as "unequal treaties" with foreign powers, demanded the opening of Chinese ports to foreign trade and signified virtual occupation. Two years later, the Americans and French, modeling England's success, signed treaties allowing them access to Chinese ports.<sup>71</sup> From the arrival of foreigners with gunboats in 1842 until 1911, with the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the formation of the Chinese Republic, southern China continued to undergo profound change.

The larger cities of the Pearl River and Han River delta regions in Guangdong Province prospered while other Chinese areas experienced economic depression. However, economic development in the area proved uneven; portions of the province prospered through expanded foreign commerce, while other areas lagged behind the cities economically.<sup>72</sup> This uneven economic development was evident as early as the late eighteenth century.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 433.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.; Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 152-64; John King Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992), 200-203.

<sup>72</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 433.

<sup>73</sup> Fei-Ling Davis, *Primitive Revolutionaries of China: A Study of Secret Societies in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1977), 55.

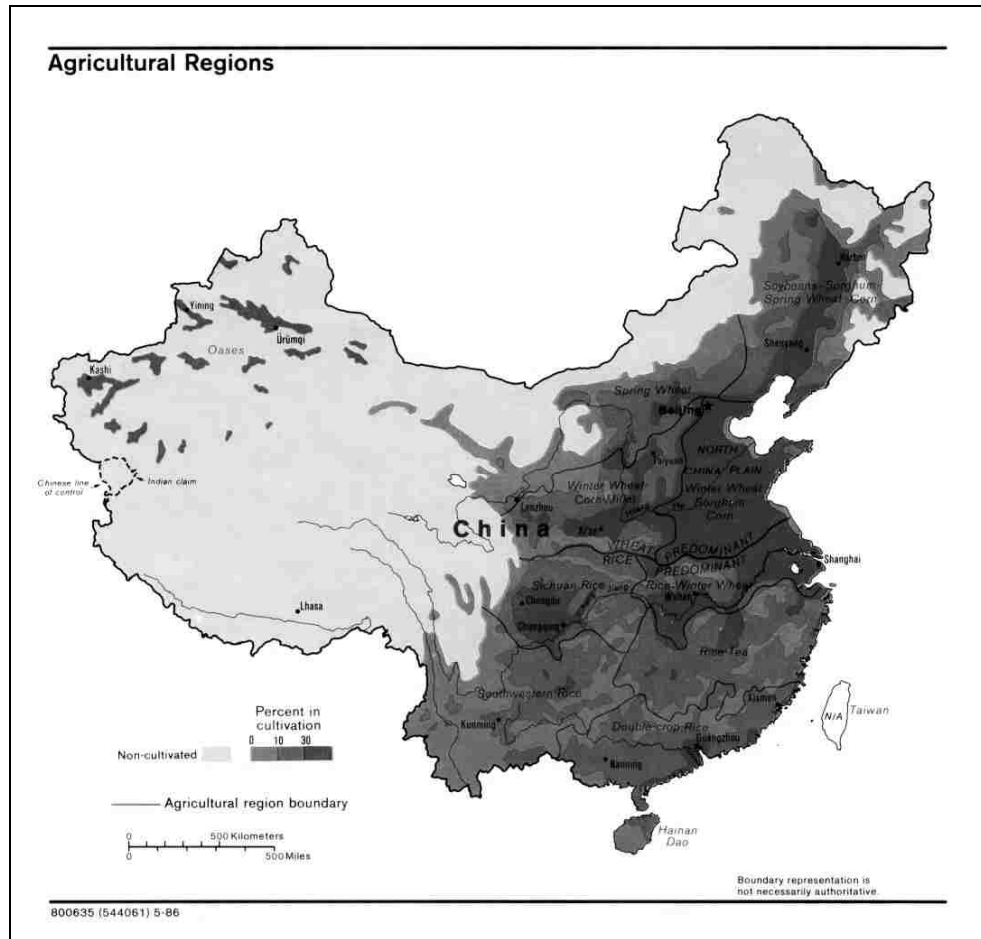


Figure 2. China's Agricultural Regions, 1986<sup>74</sup>

In spite of this uneven economic development, Guangdong's population grew from 6.8 million to 21.1 million people between 1762 and 1820. By comparison, the United States grew from about 3.9 million people in 1790 to 9.6 million in 1820. Guangdong, comprising about 130,000 square kilometers, is approximately the size of

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_agricultural\\_86.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_agricultural_86.jpg), (accessed January 26, 2009).

Oregon. Although the province's population stood at sixteen million in 1787, Oregon's numbered only about 2.8 million in 1990.<sup>75</sup>

The steady growth of Guangdong's population resulted primarily from a steady increase in agricultural production, as well as the development of industry, commerce, and trade expansion into foreign markets. Chinese labor in the form of packaging tea, weaving and sewing garments, and firing ceramics further powered industrial and commercial growth. Moreover, Guangdong's flourishing production of Chinese ceramics, silks, and teas, was legendary and Europeans greatly desired all three commodities. Steel manufacturing, ship building, sugar refining, and the manufacturing of porcelain ware were additional staples of the southern Chinese commercial economy, and Guangdong merchants carried these goods far and wide.<sup>76</sup>

As a result of its international trade, Guangdong became a province where entrepreneurs and laborers looked beyond China for resources and revenue. The Chinese success at attracting capital and Guangdong's potentially large market for goods manufactured in Europe made the region extremely alluring. Although European traders desired exclusive access to this lucrative market,<sup>77</sup> the means to enter southern Chinese markets required extensive investment dollars, and capital, in the form of silver, flowed

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<sup>75</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 116; *Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1990* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1990), 7; Comparison for Oregon came from 1990 Census, Database: C90STFIC, Summary Level State, <http://venus.census.gov.1>. The United States Census Database lists Oregon's population in 1990 at 2,842,321.

<sup>76</sup> *The British Colonist*, June 26, 1860, 1. Newspapers of the period reported Chinese goods for sale. The *Daily Alta California* in the 1860s commonly ran ads for "China tea and sugar." *The Colonist* consistently advertised "China sugar" and "choice...black or green tea" for sale in the grocery advertisements. Consult Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 473, for a discussion of porcelain and steel exports. Steel manufacturing, in this case, means a highly advanced iron industry producing metal similar to Damascus Steel.

<sup>77</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 437-38; Jonathan Spence, *In Search of Modern China*, 120-23.

into the province. A banking industry would also emerge, fueled by British and then Chinese capital investments, centered first in Guangzhou and later Hong Kong.<sup>78</sup>

In many ways, capitalist trade systems and feudal land-use patterns coexisted in Guangdong Province. During the end of the nineteenth century, Western imperial capitalism dominated the region and the world. Because Guangdong long held an important position in international trade, the transition to a Western capitalist system proved more fluid than in the northern interior provinces of China. As historian Yong Chen illustrates: “As early as 1730 the Emperor Yongzheng noted: ‘East Guangdong is surrounded by the ocean on three sides, where merchants arrive from various provinces and foreign barbarians come with money to purchase goods. Trade is very heavy....’”<sup>79</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, ties to Western commerce and banking placed Guangdong in a unique position in China.

In 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing also opened four new Chinese ports of trade to Europeans.<sup>80</sup> The new port cities of Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and especially Shanghai, competed directly with Guangzhou for foreign trade. Guangzhou long held a monopoly on foreign trade, but it quickly felt the effect of new competition from the other port cities, all vying for access to European goods and markets. Chinese merchants had to compete with European traders as well as their own countrymen for a strategic role in foreign trade. Moreover, Guangzhou competed with the newly-established British port

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<sup>78</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 441.

<sup>79</sup> Yong Chen, “Origins of Chinese Emigration,” 534.

<sup>80</sup> Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 221. Specifically, Article Two of the Treaty states Canton, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Shanghai were open to residence by British subjects and their families “for the purpose of carrying on their mercantile pursuits”; Jonathan Spence, *In Search of Modern China*, 159.

city of Hong Kong for economic dominance in Guangdong Province.<sup>81</sup> Not surprisingly, this rapid change led to increased uncertainty for Chinese merchants. To understand why Chinese laborers left China to seek new fortunes is inevitably linked to the profound economic changes China underwent following the Treaty of Nanjing.

In the hopes of making a better living abroad, Chinese workers and merchants sailed from the South China Sea to Southeast Asia and later traveled east. The years between 1840 and 1930 saw over eight million people leave *Zhongguo* (“middle country” or the “Middle Kingdom”), or China, for residence abroad. Roughly six million Chinese settled in the East Indies, Taiwan, and Thailand, but immigration spanned the entire globe, with Chinese men and women immigrating to British, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch colonies.<sup>82</sup> Chinese also sailed to Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, and Latin America. Those choosing to sail to the American West and Indochina, like fellow countrymen headed for destinations around the world, left China hoping to improve their lives.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Yue-man Yeung and David K.Y. Chu, *Guangdong*, 441.

<sup>82</sup> Pierre-Etienne Will, *Bureaucracy and Famine in Eighteenth Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 41-42. Will notes that in previous crises people in China fled areas of famine for areas of plentiful harvests. Internal “crisis migration” occurred in China prior to the nineteenth-century outward migration of Chinese sojourners.

<sup>83</sup> Chen, “Origins of Chinese Emigration,” 525-28. Yong Chen argues that many of those emigrating from China during the diaspora of the nineteenth century left to improve their lives as an active choice. Chen also illustrates the classic discussion of push/pull factors as they relate to Chinese immigration. One may view the “pull” factors as essentially internal choices. Internal choices would involve an improvement in economic or social status as primary factors of motivation. The “push” factors are essentially external pressures exerted on society as a whole. While emigrants might or might not be starving when they choose to leave, they might fear starvation. These external fears, like the fear of crop failures, economic downturns, or foreign invasion, tended to “push” people out of their homeland. This generally oversimplified viewpoint does not give Chinese agency or assume Chinese made active decisions to immigrate. Recent scholarly accounts provide Chinese with agency and emphasize that Chinese chose to immigrate to a new country; they did not flee the old.



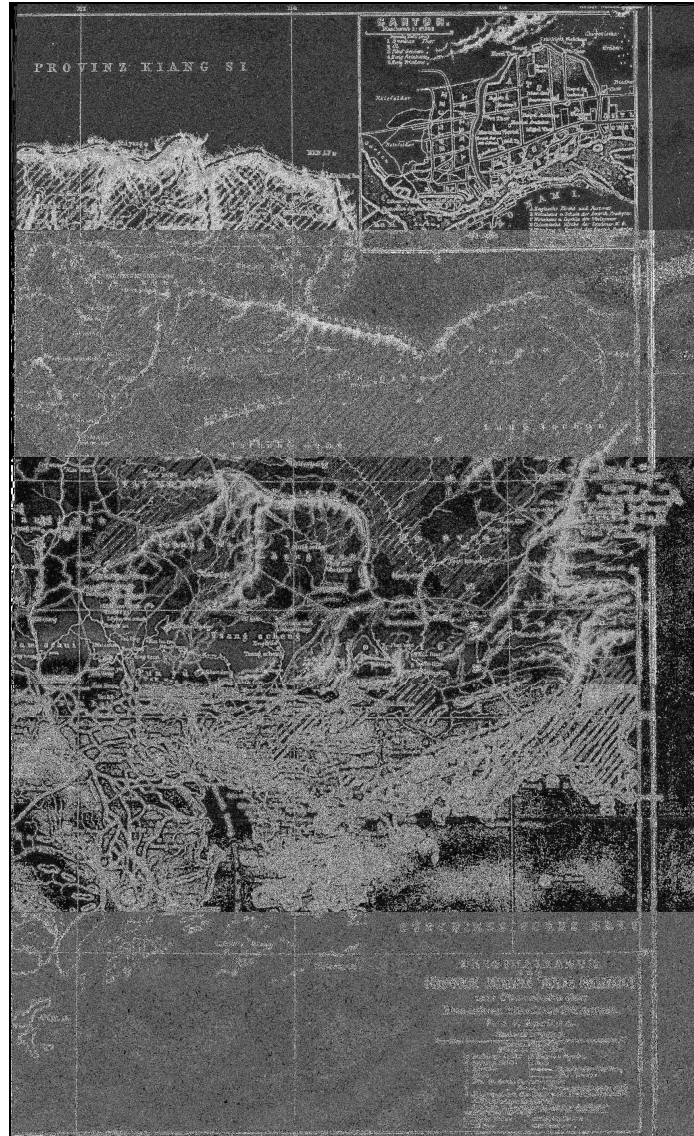


Figure 3. Historical Map of Guangzhou (Canton) and Town Plan, 1878<sup>84</sup>

Along with traditional family and kinship networks that are essential to understanding the Chinese world, as well as the economic conditions in southern China that catalyzed large numbers of Chinese to immigrate, the origins and development of merchant associations within China are crucial to understanding *huiguan* as they developed in Indochina and America. Moreover, one must underscore their importance

<sup>84</sup> [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history\\_china.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_china.html), (accessed January 26, 2009).

to the history of urban life in late-imperial China. Extant historical literature focuses on two aspects of *huiguan* development: namely, the various principles of organizational structure such as common native place, surname, occupation, new location identity, interactions with other *huiguan*, and their relationship to the formation of other community structures. This scholarship further illustrates the functional relevance of *huiguan* first to the various needs of Chinese immigrant societies and the local elite, and secondly to the overriding concerns of the ruling authority, be it the Chinese imperial bureaucracy or governing authorities in a foreign settlement.<sup>85</sup>

Merchant associations in China, *huiguan* or *gongsuo*, are generically translated as “guild” or “associations.” This translation takes into account the services and function of European guilds, beginning in the late Middle Ages, including protectionism and exclusiveness. Chinese merchant associations, emerging by the eighteenth century, were protectionist and exclusive, but their precise forms differed. European guild members formed a component of the municipal government and operated in a fairly dependable order.<sup>86</sup> From the standpoint of institutional legality or political authority, Chinese merchant associations differed dramatically.

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<sup>85</sup> There is a tremendous breadth and depth of existing literature on this topic. Particular studies on the ethnic Chinese in Thailand and Singapore provide scholarly comparisons with Chinese communities in Indochina and the American West. Consult G.W. Skinner, *Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community in Thailand* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958); Maurice Freedman, “Immigrants and Association: Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Singapore,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (October 1960): 25-48; and Wing Chung Ng, “Urban Chinese Social Organization: Some Unexplored Aspects in Huiguan Development in Singapore, 1900-1941,” *Modern Asian Studies* 26, no. 3: 469-494. Compared to overseas Chinese, literature on the *huiguan* in urban China is more modest but still considerable. G.W. Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977); William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City 1796-1889* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984) and *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City 1796-1895* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989).

<sup>86</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, “Chinese Merchant Guilds: An Historical Inquiry,” *The Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 57, no. 1 (February 1988), 4.

To illustrate this difference, it is necessary to explore earlier Chinese history during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.). As in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century China, a remarkable degree of urbanization and commercial growth occurred during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. Moreover, there occurred enduring institutional and cultural developments, including a centralized government structure under unquestioned imperial authority. China developed its examination system to recruit civil service officials, and an ethos of the elite literati (*shi daifu*) class also developed. Daily administration of the imperial government was largely in the hands of a sub-bureaucracy.<sup>87</sup>

China's civil service, which emerged from the examination system, and to which the local elite primarily had access, largely replaced the aristocratic ruling class of medieval China. This further encouraged the ethos of the Chinese literati-official class. Largely owing initial opportunities to economic advantage, this class's dominant concerns were service to the state as well as personal cultural achievement.<sup>88</sup> As officials, they were supposed to attend to the needs of their families as well as their communities. Yet they did not directly rule, even as *paterfamilias* of the county, which was the lowest division of the administration. As population grew within counties, the number of civil

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<sup>87</sup> G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China*, 23-31; Also consult Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250-1276* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); Shiba Yoshinobu, *Commerce and Society in Sung China* Mark Elvin tr. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 1970).

<sup>88</sup> Scholarly research indicates that members of the civil service created by the examination system did not dominate the civil service until the late eleventh century. It also emphasizes the local elite's control of access to the examinations. Consult Robert M. Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750-1550," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XLII (1982): 365-442, particularly 405-425.

officials at this low level did not increase.<sup>89</sup> Instead, growing members of the sub-bureaucracy who did not possess the benefits of civil service status handled increasing numbers of affairs. Members of the sub-bureaucracy included yamen clerks and runners; yamen clerks were managers and scribes in charge of taxes and of general administration and yamen runners were agents and policemen. They most likely originated from bailiffs, estate-managers, and servants to the aristocratic families of the past. At this time, however, they handled the details of government, and under their supervision were service organizations, created at the village or city borough level, responsible for the collection of taxes and requisitions.<sup>90</sup>

Garrisoned by the dynasty's loyal forces, China's large cities and towns were under imperial authority, as represented by civil officials; however, they were actually administered by clerks and runners. Sections of large cities recognized local "headmen" (*hangtou* or *hanglao*) of each business or occupation group. Chinese described each specific group as *hang* (literally meaning "line"), according to its trade or the kind of service it provided. Historians also translate this term as "guild."<sup>91</sup>

Headmen of the trade or craft association in the Song era were essentially passive, primarily serving brokerage functions in service trades, such as employing servants. The headmen of urban trade associations (*hang* or *tuanhang*) controlled prices of merchandise such as tea. They achieved their positions mainly in response to the government's purchase or requisitioning of goods and services. The *hang* or *tuanhang* were primarily

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<sup>89</sup> Historians note this fact often, but its implications were most forcefully asserted by Skinner, *City in Late Imperial China*, 17-23.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 5.

associations in the service of the government, although their headmen would make the best of an opportunity to bargain with functionaries. Such associations for government service lasted through the urban prosperity of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and continued into the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).<sup>92</sup>

The major social, political, and economic patterns characterizing Chinese society during these dynasties are also an important historical context. Geographical circumstances partly explain the domination of militarily-backed autocracy in the Chinese tradition. Vulnerability to attack from inner Asian nomads created the need for a large army, while the unreliable rainfall in North China periodically resulted in famine and consequent rebellion.<sup>93</sup>

Added to this milieu was the socio-ethical orthodoxy of China's Confucian tradition, a philosophical doctrine weaved into the institutional fabric of monarchy, family, and patriarchy. Under the Song, Yuan and Ming emperors, China adopted a Neo-Confucian curriculum for the civil service examination system that reinforced Confucian social ethics through self-cultivation reminiscent of Buddhist ideals.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, through rituals and popular religions, Confucian ideals of goodness and success affected the society at large, contributing to a widely-shared respect for order and stability. This system of orthodox ritual and ethics largely contributed to the success of the Manchus who, with less than a million conquerors, ruled China after they captured Peking (Beijing)

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Needham and Ray Huang (Huang Jen-yu), "The Nature of Chinese Society – A Technical Interpretation," *Journal of Oriental Studies*, XII (1974): 1-8; Ray Huang, "The History of the Ming Dynasty and Today's World," *Chinese Studies in History*, XIX (1986): 3-8.

<sup>94</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, ed., "Socio-ethics as Orthodoxy," in *Orthodoxy in Late Imperial China, Studies on China, No. 10* (Stanford, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 223-225.

in 1644 and established the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). They declared their public policy of abiding by Confucian principles, thus justifying the new mandate of heaven.<sup>95</sup>

As previously discussed, in the long periods of stability under the Ming and the Qing, there was exponential population growth in China, and with it, expansion of the commercial economy. The Ming inherited a population estimated at sixty-five million, which rose to 150 million by the sixteenth century before temporarily declining during crises of the seventeenth century. From 1700 on, however, there was rapid population growth, reaching 250 million by 1750 and 400 million by 1850. By the early nineteenth century, the population of China's largest cities was perhaps no higher than that of the imperial capitals of the Song dynasty, but there were more large cities. At least five of them – Beijing, Suzhou, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and the Wuhan region – had a population of more than 575,000, with some cities approaching a million.<sup>96</sup>

The Ming-Qing period also witnessed the development of rural market towns. By the mid-nineteenth century there were approximately 1,650 market towns in all of China (except Manchuria and Taiwan) with populations of 2,000 or more.<sup>97</sup> Yet the major aspect of trading within these rural market towns was the exchange of farm products and handicrafts among peasants. At periodic markets and fairs, Chinese merchants offered the few necessities that could not be supplied locally, including salt and metal goods. Merchants also met the demand in cities and towns for grain, for other kinds of food, and for clothing materials. Rural-urban trade was substantially one-directional, from country

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>96</sup> Skinner, *City in Late Imperial China*, 228-229.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. These figures are for “urban central places” in Skinner’s terminology.

to city, based on taxes and rent. This system, operating through a market economy, moved peasants' grain and sideline products to towns.<sup>98</sup>

Instead of advancements in technology, the economic history of the Ming-Qing period is essentially the story of an expansion of production accompanying an increase in population. There was expansion in commercial goods such as cotton, silk, salt, tea, sugar, and tobacco. As previously discussed, the peasants' cottage industries, subsidiary to farming, largely completed the production of these goods. Beginning in the late-Ming period, and into the Qing Dynasty, along with systems of silk-weaving in the cities and towns of the lower Yangtze River, small workshops in peasant households employing approximately fifteen people developed in some lower Yangtze cities for the dyeing, calendaring, and printing of cotton cloth collected at local markets. The production of the cotton cloth continued entirely as a peasant cottage industry.<sup>99</sup>

Recent scholarship emphasizes that by the Ming Dynasty, the major Chinese institution of officially sanctioned brokerage that came to exist in every city and rural market facilitated economic development. While required to hold licenses, brokers were responsible to the government for the behavior of traveling merchants and for taxes on their transactions. Through government-provided registration books, brokers entered facts about each traveling merchant. They provided hostelry, dockage, and storage facilities to long-distance merchants and arranged to collect local produce ordered. Such services included the guarantee of security for the traveling merchant and entailed the

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<sup>98</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 7.

<sup>99</sup> Albert Feuerwerker, "Proto-industrialization, ca. 1550-1850," in Robert M. Hartwell, Albert Feuerwerker and Robert F. Dernberger, eds. *Region, State and Enterprise in Chinese Economic History, 980-1980* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 216-217.

cooperation of local officials, including the clerks and runners. Eventually, custom sufficiently regularized business practices to encourage long-distance merchants to return again.<sup>100</sup> The clerks and runners received commissions, ensuring a degree of stability in the marketplace. Yet, as Kwang-Ching Liu contends, there was enough potentiality for arbitrariness in the arrangement to discourage long-term investment in the improvement of production. The cities represented the largest concentration of licensed brokers. For example, in a city like Suzhou, hundreds of them existed and covered all major wholesale businesses.<sup>101</sup>

It is in this context that one must view Chinese merchant associations, for the guilds that arose in the late-Ming and early-Qing periods took over the functions of officially-licensed brokers in some trades, though not in all of them. The new kind of Chinese merchant associations represented a trend toward the privatization of certain commercial functions. When they first appeared, these Chinese guilds were identified as *huiguan*. Merchants, whose native place was different and usually far away from the city in which they were sojourning, formed *huiguan*.<sup>102</sup>

In this fundamental respect, they were not like European guilds. The term *huiguan* is often correlated with the term *Landsmannschaft*, defined as an association of persons of common geographic background in a place away from their home territory.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Consult Susan Mann, *Local Merchants and the Chinese Bureaucracy, 1750-1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

<sup>101</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 8.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-21.

<sup>103</sup> *Landsmannschaft* was first used to describe Chinese guilds by D.J. MacGowan, "Chinese Guilds or Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXI (1888-1889): 133-192, with particular emphasis on page 144. L. Eve Armentrout-Ma



*Huiguan*, however, also referred to the hostels existing under the Ming dynasty in Beijing for qualified degree-holders who came to the capital to await imperial audience and appointment, and in some provincial cities that provided lodging for candidates from the same native place taking the civil service examination. *Huiguan* also provided a location for feasts and gatherings for officials of the same native-place origin.<sup>104</sup>

In Him Mark Lai's research on the origin and development of *huiguan* in America, he underscores the connection between overseas trade and the development of the *huiguan*. Chinese established some of the earliest *huiguan* in present-day Vietnam in the late-Ming or early-Qing dynastic periods. They were associated with temples dedicated to *Tianhou* or the Queen of Heaven, protector of seafarers.<sup>105</sup> Merchants adopted the phrase *huiguan*, however, by at least the eighteenth century for their own associations in Peking (Beijing) and other Chinese cities. In each case, *huiguan* represented men from the same native place who also happened to be engaged in the same trade. Historians attest to the dating and nature of these associations by the stone steles that still mark sites of *huiguan* temples or meeting halls.<sup>106</sup>

The identity conferred by common geographical heritage was the major bond – whether it was that of the same county, same group of counties, or same province. Common geographic origin was second in importance only to family and kinship. Yet Chinese merchants also formed *huiguan* on the basis of the businesses which its members

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also uses this nomenclature in *Revolutionaries, Monarchists, and Chinatowns: Chinese Politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 14.

<sup>104</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 18.

<sup>105</sup> Him Mark Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/*Huiguan* System," in *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 69.

<sup>106</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 9.

represented and attempted to legitimize through the institution. Chinese merchants, once they ventured outside family and lineage relationships, found common ground in religion and ritual. *Huiguan* were usually not the place to worship one's ancestors, and of course one could not worship other people's ancestors. Yet *huiguan* did not represent the state. Imperial authority and all properly-authorized officials monopolized the worship of Confucius; *huiguan* could not perform sacrifices to Confucius. They had to worship deities of their own, and these were primarily folk deities, most commonly the martial god, the Lord of Guan (also known as Guanyu), an historical figure of the third century C.E., well known for his loyalty to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) as well as to sworn brotherhood. *Huiguan* often represented this martial god, still enshrined in many Chinatowns around the world, as the god of prosperity.<sup>107</sup>

Although it was with the worship of popular deities that *huiguan* often identified themselves, they did not lose touch with the major institutions of family and bureaucracy in Chinese society. *Huiguan* members' family-mindedness was only in temporary abeyance when the individual worshipped or watched opera at the *huiguan* temple or met with other members on business. Each member had his own family, of course, and they often returned to live amongst their kinsmen in their home county, although not everybody could afford to do so. One of the *huiguan*'s most common and important functions was to found and manage a temporary or permanent "charitable burying ground," or *yizhong*, especially for fellow-provincials who died in the city of their

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 10.

sojourn and whose families found it beyond their means to have their remains shipped home to their native place.<sup>108</sup>

*Huiguan* were not, however, simply ritual associations. Chinese merchants established them in order to meet the needs of fellow provincial merchants in a specific trade. In some cases, this also involved setting prices for their merchandise, so that profit could be secured despite manipulation of the market by government-licensed brokers.<sup>109</sup> Not all *huiguan* established in the eighteenth century set prices for their commodities. They all, however, contended with officially-licensed brokers and shared the common purpose of gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the bureaucracy and the community at large. The pattern of merchants depending on officials for legitimacy remained true throughout the eighteenth century, but there were also signs of merchant initiative. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Chinese merchants referred to new *huiguan* as *gongsuo* (“gong” meaning “public,” and “suo” meaning “meeting place”), rather than *huiguan* (“hui” meaning “association,” and “guan” meaning “official”). Although this name change suggests an emphasis on common trade rather than common geographic origin, Chinese used these terms interchangeably, and protection still largely depended on common native-place relationships as well as rapport with government officials.<sup>110</sup> Despite the

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1749-1889*, particularly chapters 7-10. William Rowe, on the basis of his study of Hankou's *huiguan* (or guilds) in the nineteenth century, advanced the thesis that the common-place principle in the organization of Chinese *huiguan* increasingly gave way to the common-trade principle. Also consult Kwang-Ching Liu, “Chinese Merchant Guilds,” 15. One must also emphasize that many *gongsuo* were actually native-place associations.

increasing initiative taken by merchants, they did not become independent in the social, cultural, or political sense.<sup>111</sup>

Historian Kwang-Ching Liu also addresses the creation of two new Chinese *huiguan*, or guilds, emerging in the early nineteenth century, namely the craft and service guilds in China's large cities. Although craft guild members were usually persons of common geographic origin, persons of different origin were not explicitly barred from membership. The *huiguan* demanded sizeable fees for those new to the trade, however, and for apprentices recruited locally. An apprentice's terms of service were usually from three to five years.<sup>112</sup>

The craft as well as the merchant *huiguan* grew exponentially in the last seventy years of the Qing Dynasty, after the Opium War of 1840. Europeans in China's treaty ports, Japanese scholars travelling to China, and Chinese historians themselves, including historians of the People's Republic particularly interested in the foreshadowing of Chinese capitalism, collected numerous Chinese guild regulations, or *hanggui*, dated after 1850.<sup>113</sup> Ultimately, stability in processing industries depended on the coercive power of the government, which periodically suppressed the workmen's trade-union like actions. During these infrequent outbreaks, workers sometimes claimed to belong to a society, or *tang*, to use the Chinese term suggesting "sworn brotherhood." Such a combination of workers was regarded by the imperial government as illegal and dutifully suppressed.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 15.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>113</sup> Regarding the late imperial period (up to 1911) Chinese guild regulations are cited in D.J. MacGowan, "Chinese Guilds or Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions"; and Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 17.

<sup>114</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 19.

From the mid-nineteenth century on, *huiguan* in other trades also multiplied but were still substantially based on fellow-provincial connections. An increasing number of *huiguan*, based on common trades, did include members from more than one place of origin. To facilitate negotiations with government officials, *huiguan* adopted the practice of appointing a principle secretary of the guild, chosen among degree-holders who understood the language of both officials and merchants. This was now a more common practice than in the eighteenth century. *Huiguan* were supposed to elect managers or the groups of managers that served alternately. However, fellow-provincial groups dominating the trade or sector of the trade with which the *huiguan* was affiliated most often chose these individuals.<sup>115</sup> In terms of resources and power, trade *huiguan* thus overlapped considerably with fellow-provincial *huiguan*.

By the late seventeenth century, the rise of commercial *huiguan* and *gongsuo* reflected Chinese society's trend toward privatization. As voluntary associations, increasing numbers of *huiguan* were established on merchant, not official, initiative. By the late eighteenth century on, there were also an increasing number of craft associations not in government service. Both the merchant guilds emerging in the eighteenth century and the craft guilds appearing in the early nineteenth century devoted themselves to the purposes of protectionism and mutual aid and served to regulate the conditions of trade, at least to some extent.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Wellington K.K. Chan, "Merchant Organizations in Late Imperial China: Patterns of Change and Development," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XIV (1975): 28-42; and Gary G. Hamilton, "Regional Associations in the Chinese City: A Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XXI (1979): 346-361.

<sup>116</sup> Gary G. Hamilton, "Regional Associations in the Chinese City," 357.

The *huiguan*'s socio-economic as well as political contexts were unique to China. The numerous *huiguan* and *gongsuo*, founded by merchants in order to protect the interests of merchants engaged in long-distance trade, essentially involved exchanges of grain, on the one hand, and handicraft products on the other. They served primarily domestic markets at a time when foreign trade was as yet of uncertain importance, and represented the interests of the merchants themselves, not the producers of their merchandise. Nor were the craft guilds that became important in the nineteenth century concerned with the initial manufacturing of the basic commodity of rural-urban exchange, cotton cloth. They were associations principally engaged in providing urban services or in processing luxury products.<sup>117</sup>

With the increase of the import-export trade in the mid-nineteenth century, *huiguan* multiplied, and their geographical reach within each province expanded. Yet many economic historians agree that traditional patterns of the Chinese economy, including handicraft production, continued to persist, along with traditional patterns of prestige and power. From the eleventh through the nineteenth centuries, there was no development of merchant-controlled municipal government. There was, however, a continued domination of the imperial bureaucracy and the examination system, even though there was also expansion of the tax-farming system.<sup>118</sup>

This basic political framework survived the Opium War into an era that saw the accelerated development of the Chinese merchant and craft *huiguan*. It was especially after 1860 that the exclusive and collective aspects of the *huiguan* became pronounced.

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<sup>117</sup> Gary G. Hamilton, "Regional Associations in the Chinese City," *Comparative Studies in Society*, 357-58; Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds: An Historical Inquiry," 20.

<sup>118</sup> Kwang-Ching Liu, "Chinese Merchant Guilds," 22.

This was due in large part to merchant tax-farming procedures, beginning with the likin tax of the 1850s, and also due in part as a response to Western encroachment. Foreigners in the treaty ports found *huiguan* acting effectively to ensure monopoly in a manner reminiscent of European guilds. Time and again, Chinese merchants adopted uniform prices for such major commodities as silk, and took common action in boycotting European firms on issues of trade practice and out of concern for fellow-provincial burial grounds. The concerns of Chinese *huiguan* were, however, essentially conservative.<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless, there is evidence that *huiguan* in some treaty ports began to fulfill some civic functions, including developing firefighting facilities and hospitals. With the encouragement of the Qing government, *huiguan* sponsored chambers of commerce in the early years of the twentieth century. Moreover, and for a brief period in at least some Chinese cities, *huiguan* also participated in municipal affairs. To fulfill public functions was, however, not the same as to exercise control in them.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, *huiguan* continued to fulfill the functions of protecting and providing for the general welfare of its members.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, while both *huiguan* and chambers of commerce existed within China and while wealthy merchants were able, as individuals, to exert influence there still existed a bourgeois class of significance.<sup>121</sup> Personal access to government officials and, ultimately, to the military remained the principal channel of power. There remains little question that there was extensive domestic commerce in late

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Wellington K.K. Chan notes the pattern of merchant guilds acquiring some municipal functions and then losing them to local officialdom in *Merchants, Mandarins, and Modern Enterprise in Late Ch'ing China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 214-216, 241-243.

<sup>121</sup> Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1749-1889*, 344-346.

imperial China and that association of merchants based on common native place played an important part in this trade. However, one should not deduce from the existence of *huiguan* any basic change in the structure of Chinese society. One must instead view *huiguan* in China in the context of an agrarian society bureaucratically governed and legitimated by a long-established system of traditional Chinese social values.

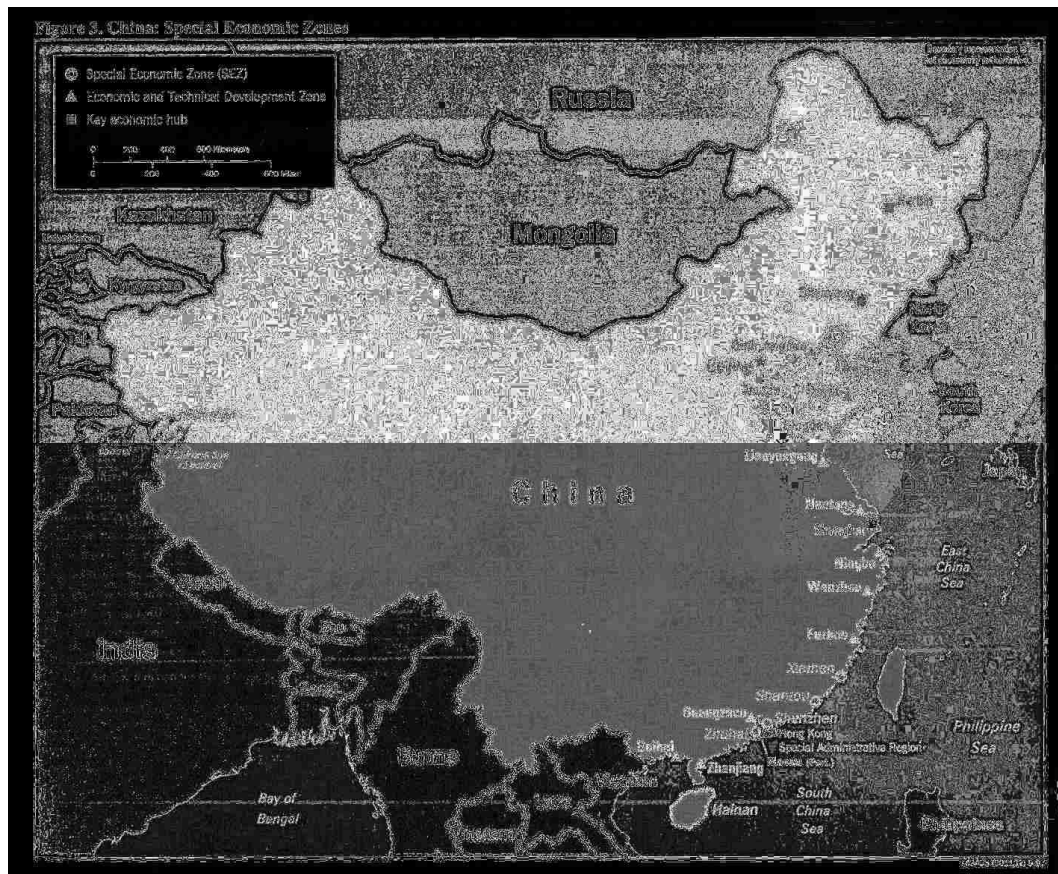


Figure 4. China's Special Economic Zones, 1997<sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup> [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_specialec\\_97.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_specialec_97.jpg), (accessed January 26, 2009).



## CHAPTER 3

### FROM *ZHONGGUO* TO *BAZAR CHINOIS*, *CHOLON*, ‘*BIG MARKET*’: *HUIGUAN* DEVELOPMENT IN INDOCHINA

The relationship between Chinese communities in Indochina and the French is primarily characterized by legislative procedures enacted by French authorities with the intent to solidify authoritative control over resident Chinese. The legislative interference of the French vis-à-vis the membership, scale, and responsibilities of Chinese associations and organizations influenced the scope and function of these institutions to a considerable degree. Thus, the *huiguan* of Indochina differ from *huiguan* in China and America in one significant respect: French law mandated their existence, their organizational and leadership structures, and their official roles within colonial society.

*Huiguan* are crucial to understanding Chinese politics and society in French-controlled Indochina. This institution attained its final official form throughout Indochina on October, 5, 1871, when French authorities passed a law requiring every Chinese individual to belong to a *huiguan*, or what the French would term “congregations,” and it continued to be the focus of interactions between the French and the Chinese for the next seventy-five years – until 1954 when French colonial rule in Indochina came to an end.<sup>123</sup> During this period, Chinese made many uses of *huiguan*, and their appropriations and reinterpretations of them are the primary subject of this chapter. Before considering how Chinese used the *huiguan* system to their own advantage, it is important to understand why the French initially adopted the

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<sup>123</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations in French Indochina* tr. Claude Reed (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, 1972), 45.

congregation system and how they relied upon *huiguan* to extend their colonial rule throughout Indochina.

The French began promulgating laws concerning the Chinese in Cochinchina within months of their assumption of power in the provinces surrounding Saigon and Cholon. On April 14, 1863, the Annamite Emperor Tu Duc attempted to preserve the sovereignty of Annam by placating the French, ceding to France the provinces of Bien-hoa, Gia-dinh, and Mytho, as well as the Paulo Condore islands. The French-educated, Vietnamese legal scholar Nguyen Quoc Dinh asserts that four months after they became custodians of the three provinces, on August 11, 1863, the French administration passed the first colonial law ever to concern Chinese *huiguan* in the newly acquired territory, and three more laws joined this law on the books over the next two years.<sup>124</sup> According to Nguyen Quoc Dinh's contemporaries, who were legal scholars in France, the rationale behind French restrictions placed on Chinese was primarily socioeconomic. Nguyen Quoc Dinh wrote extensively on the questions of Chinese suffrage within the congregations, discussed later in this chapter. His work *Les Congregations Chinoises en Indochine Francaise*, originally published in 1941, and based on research compiled in the late 1920's, serves as a primary source for this study.

Although the French took possession of three provinces of Cochinchina, another three provinces along the southern coast and the Cambodian border remained nominally in Annamite hands. However, because of the cession of territory to the French, these territories, comprised of the provinces of Vinh-long, Chau-Doc, and Ha-tien, remained completely cut off from the Annamite kingdom. Within three years of acquiring their

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 45. The dating of the four laws concerning Chinese congregations were: August 11, 1863, February 4, 1863, November 1, 1863, and April 12, 1865.

first territorial foothold in Cochinchina, the French extended their control across the entire territory when they used the excuse of social disorder to occupy the remaining three provinces of Cochinchina. In the case of Vinh-long, Bien-hoa, and Chau-Doc, the French did not wait to acquire legal possession of the region to begin legislating the affairs of the provinces. The French military asserted control over the provinces in 1867 and retained their *de facto* influence until France officially gained power over the three provinces in 1874.<sup>125</sup>

In the years prior to 1871, the French debated their colonial position with regard to Chinese *huiguan* membership and had even enacted some preliminary regulations, but had yet to formalize their ultimate approach to managing the Chinese community. As early as 1862 and 1863, early Cochinchinese laws of French design summarily abolished the former imperial practice of requiring *huiguan* membership.<sup>126</sup> Whether unintentionally or deliberately, France actually removed the social and organizational restrictions mandated by the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), essentially allowing the Chinese unfettered access to the mercantile spoils of the new colonial order. But French magnanimity quickly succumbed to Sino-French competition on local economic and administrative fronts. Thus, the French began first to examine their options for control and then to apply this control to the Chinese residing in their territories.

In 1871, three years before the French consolidated their control over the colony, French extended laws regarding *huiguan* to include Chinese living in all six provinces of

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Upon signing the Treaty of Saigon on March 15, 1874, France gained control of the provinces of Bien-hoa, Vinh-long, and Chau Doc.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

French-controlled Cochinchina.<sup>127</sup> The passing of this law on October 5, 1871 represents the formal birth of the French congregation system, extending the system's reach across French-controlled Cochinchina, and formally launching the two most fundamental components of the colonial congregation system. First, it officially recognized seven Chinese *huiguan* based upon regional identity, or congregations as the French translated the term: Canton, Fukien, Hakka, Hainan, Trieu-chau, Phuoc-chau, and Quinh-chau.<sup>128</sup> Second, it required all Chinese nationals residing in Cochinchina by law to belong to one of the seven *huiguan* if they desired to remain in the country. Chinese citizens employed by European firms were the only exception to this law.<sup>129</sup> Although a number of other laws in later years developed and refined the French system of monitoring and controlling Chinese communities in Indochina,<sup>130</sup> the 1871 law created the very first example of how Sino-French relations would play out within Indochina during the colonial period. As the fundamental organizational component of Indochina's Chinese community, the congregational system was unique to Indochina, though as discussed in the previous and following chapters, *huiguan* emerged wherever large native-place communities settled outside of China.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. France reduced the seven official congregations to five by removing the Phuoc-chau and Quinh-chau *Huiguan* from the list.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. A second law governing Chinese congregations in Indochina, also quite notable, was the declaration made on January 23, 1885 by the Governor of Cochinchina within which no less than seven articles exclusively addressed the regulation of Chinese *huiguan*, or congregations.

<sup>131</sup> In Southeast Asian cities the divisions between subethnic places tended to be less refined than within China proper. Whereas, for example, Cantonese *huiguan* in a city like Shanghai might divide along lines as specific as a village, county or occupation, in Southeast Asia, the population of overseas Chinese generally did not support such precise segmentation. In terms of occupational segmentation, miners comprised almost entire communities, like the Hakka of West Borneo. Consult Yuan Bingling, *Chinese*

The establishment of the 1871 law represents a watershed moment for French laws governing the Chinese. Some French sources attribute this revision of policy as a French attempt to encourage Chinese immigration in order to meet the urgent demand for manual labor in Cochinchina.<sup>132</sup> This notion seems somehow insufficient. The basic economic situation of Cochinchina and the financial networks exploited by many of the Chinese living there meant, essentially, that hiring indigenous laborers proved far more economical than hiring Chinese laborers for any given task. Although early French investors and colonials could prefer to rely on more expensive but better connected Chinese labor to establish their colonial infrastructure, it seems unlikely that it would take the French nearly ten years to see the economic realities of Cochinchinese labor.

It is, perhaps, more likely that the fledgling colonial administration sought to depart from the long-established Nguyen imperial policy to forge its own relationship with the powerful and well-connected Chinese merchants and businessmen. Chinese businesses and networks were, to varying degrees, a critical component of the economic stability of the Mekong Delta. In any case, according to Nguyen's account, when the number of Chinese immigrants increased considerably and began to include individuals labeled as "dangerous" and "troublemakers," French reworked the original Annamite law

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*Democracies: A Study of the Kongsis of West Borneo, 1776-1884* (Leiden: Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, Universiteit Leiden, 2000) for more on these Chinese settlers. Also consult studies on the Singapore Chinese: Maurice Freedman, "Immigrants and Association: Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Singapore," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (October 1960): 25-48; and Wing Chung Ng, "Urban Chinese Social Organization: Some Unexplored Aspects in Huiguan Development in Singapore, 1900-1941," *Modern Asian Studies* 26, no. 3: 469-494. The bricklayers of Taishan County also occasionally divided themselves along occupational lines. However, strict French control over the Chinese population in Indochina limited professional segmentation as a category. It existed inside the structure of the congregation but never equaled or superseded it.

<sup>132</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 56.

and reinstated it to require *huiguan* or congregational affiliation.<sup>133</sup> Mandatory affiliation also tacitly removed the *huiguan* of Phuoc-chau and Quinh-chau from the list of acceptable affiliations by mandating that all immigrants had to belong to one of the five remaining *huiguan* in order to continue to reside in Cochinchina.<sup>134</sup> In fact, the French actually extended the Nguyen *huiguan* model, originally intended for the Chinese, to eventually include Indians, non-indigenous Muslims, and Japanese on the list of groups requiring congregational representation.<sup>135</sup>

The law on January 23, 1885 cemented the system of mandatory congregational affiliation into place in Cochinchina., and it became the blueprint for all future Chinese legislation in the colony. As a result of this law and the 1887 establishment of the Government General of Indochina, the period between 1885 and 1887 effectively marks the true beginning of the tactical maneuverings between Indochina's Chinese community and the French. Sino-French interaction before this time illustrates an important significance, especially in the colony of Cochinchina, which acted as the proving ground for French colonial policy vis-à-vis the Chinese communities. However, early interactions represented a testing phase, whereby long-established Chinese communities interacted with newly-established French colonial administrators in an attempt to define the boundaries of their working relationship.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 57. After the promulgation of this law in 1885, the five congregations of Canton, Hainan, Hakka, Phuoc-kien, and Trieu-Chau became the standards of fulfilling membership requirements in all subsequent laws promulgated by the French with regard to requiring congregational affiliation.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Joseph Handler, "Indo-China: Eighty Years of French Rule," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 226, Southeastern Asia and the Philippines (1943): 129-136.

Providing a general overview of French history in the region is important because it reflects patterns of expansion as French asserted control over the five regions of Indochina. Furthermore, the establishment of the French administrative hierarchy provides a clear picture of the authoritative ladder to which Indochina's Chinese were subordinate. In addition, a brief outline of the geographically-based hierarchy established by French colonials raises interesting questions not only about French patterns of control, but also the Chinese response to those patterns.

France's relationship with Indochina developed as much by serendipity as colonial design. In France, popular sentiments toward colonial expansion were generally indifferent at best, and often downright antipathetical. The occupation and annexation of large tracts of Tonkin and Cochinchina were more representative of reaction than of action. This was primarily due to the result of fierce colonial competition with the British across the globe, particularly in Asia, and the ever-present evangelical influence of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the Church itself eventually ensured France's colonial foothold in Indochina. Colonialism was motivated by trade but justified by the need to protect Catholic missionaries.<sup>137</sup>

The British occupation of Hong Kong and the persecution of French missionaries in China caused a waxing of French interest in Asia, a circumstance that coincided directly with new aggressively anti-Catholic policies undertaken by the Nguyen regime. Whether their concern was legitimate or pretextual, the French used the protection of missionaries as the justification for attacking Indochina. In the summer of 1858, a French fleet led by Admiral Rigault de Genouilly occupied Tourane, present-day Da Nang, but disease plagued his troops and he moved south to Saigon early the following year. More

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

pressing events in Europe, Africa, and China diverted the attention of Napoleon III for a few years, but in 1862, the Nguyen regime ceded Saigon and three of Cochinchina's provinces to the French. In 1867, acting on his own recognizance, the French commander at Saigon occupied the other three provinces, bringing all of Cochinchina under French control. During this time, the French expansion into Tonkin also began in earnest, first with the ill-fated occupation of Hanoi by Francis Garnier in 1872. In 1883, Henri de Riviere led a more serious attempt to capture Hanoi, and although he met with more military success, Chinese Black Flag soldiers killed him and Garnier before him.<sup>138</sup> Disgraced yet again in the quest for control in Tonkin, the French then turned their full military attention to the area. The final result of the full-fledged French invasion was the establishment of the protectorates, lasting into the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>139</sup> The following map provides a more comprehensive overview of the patterns and timeline of French control over Indochina, as well as their periodic assertions of control over Chinese communities in Indochina.

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<sup>138</sup> For a history of the Chinese Black Flags, consult Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam: The Story of a Chinese Intervention* (London, UK: Allen & Unwin, 1968).

<sup>139</sup> For additional histories of the French invasion of Indochina, consult John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); Norman G. Owen, *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005); Herbert Priestley, *France Overseas: A Study of Modern Imperialism* (New York, NY: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939); Stephen H. Roberts, *The History of French Colonial Policy, 1870-1925* (London, UK: Cass & Co., Ltd., 1963).



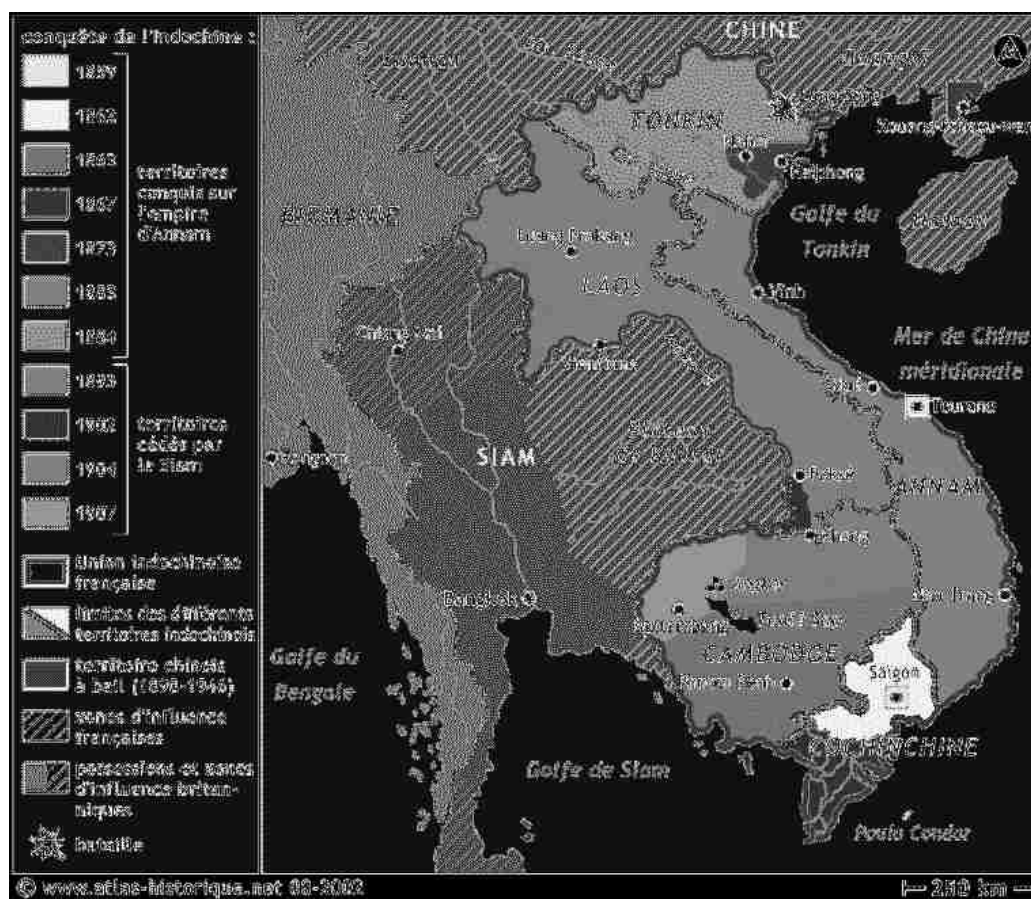


Figure 5. French-Controlled Indochina and Chinese Communities<sup>140</sup>

To achieve a clearer understanding of the intricate interplay between French colonialists and Chinese *huiguan*, geography and the colonial administrative hierarchy are just as important as chronology. Whether intentional or inadvertent, the Government General constructed a vast pyramid of geographic and administrative authority in order to administer to colonial matters. In order to convey a clearer idea of the territories with regard to Chinese-French interactions, one must also address the issues of demography, geography, and colonial personnel.

<sup>140</sup> [http://www.atlas-historique.net/18151914/cartes\\_popups/IndochineConqueteGF.html](http://www.atlas-historique.net/18151914/cartes_popups/IndochineConqueteGF.html), (accessed January 26, 2009).

As evidenced by the preceding map, the French exercised control over the various regions of Indochina gradually over a rather extended period of time. Administratively speaking, the French colonial apparatus was complex and hierarchical, but also occasionally internally oppositional regarding interactions with local Chinese communities. Directives from Paris carried the most weight in the colonies, although typically, the Governor General easily persuaded the French government into specific courses of action. When governor Le Myre de Vilers assumed colonial control of Cochinchina at the start of the Third Republic, he instituted the Colonial Council to act as a check upon the possible future irresponsibility of the Governor General.<sup>141</sup> While the success of his attempt at creating checks and balances remains open to debate, the Colonial Council became a significant player in directing the governance of French territories in Indochina.<sup>142</sup>

The Governor General was master of the territories, while the Lieutenant Governor of Cochinchina and the Residents Superior of Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos were direct subordinates. In practice, and perhaps in theory as well, the Lieutenant Governor of Cochinchina wielded greater power and influence than the Residents Superior because Cochinchina, unlike the other four regions, was a direct colony rather than a protectorate. Moreover, Cochinchina was integral to the financial health of the colony in a way that other regions were not, not only because of its production capacities, but also because of its role as a major Southeast Asian regional entrepôt.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Co., 1942), 59.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Joseph Handler, "Indo-China: Eighty Years of French Rule," 136.

Provincial Administrators were beneath the Governors and Residents on the colonial hierarchy, and they were the direct representatives of the French government in the provinces. In some areas, as was the case with northern Tonkin after the establishment of the Government General prior to “pacification” of the area, Military Commanders ruled individual provinces, wielding both civil and military authority in their jurisdictions.<sup>144</sup> The task of governing large cities fell to each city’s mayor and to the Municipal Councils. Only the largest cities had mayors, among them Saigon, Cholon, Hanoi and Haiphong. While the mayors were always French, the Municipal Councils enjoyed a more diverse membership, including Frenchmen, indigenous peoples, and, when urban demographics warranted it, overseas Chinese.

On the city level, powerful tensions between the colonial administration and local representatives were most apparent. Particularly in the case of Cholon, city mayors tended to view the Chinese far more sympathetically than did their counterparts in the Government General.<sup>145</sup> This phenomenon was due, no doubt, to the fact that the Chinese community played such a socially significant role in ensuring the welfare of the urban community. As described in this chapter, *huiguan* continued to perform their usual charitable and mutual aid activities in Indochina, including building hospitals, tending to the poor, building schools and contributing to a number of French projects. Accordingly, prominent Chinese individuals developed close working relationships with French municipal administrators.

Prior to the establishment of the Government General in 1887, French governed interests in Indochina from Saigon, where the French Governor of Cochinchina also

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<sup>144</sup> Thompson, *French Indo-China*, 64.

<sup>145</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 57.

resided.<sup>146</sup> However, after 1887, when Tonkin and Annam became part of the colonial fold, the French moved their headquarters to Hanoi, built a new governor's palace there, and reduced stewardship over Cochinchina to a Lieutenant Governor's position.<sup>147</sup> While this transfer of authority to the north ostensibly meant that Hanoi took precedence over Saigon, the distance of over one thousand kilometers between the two cities meant that the Lieutenant Governor, despite resting under the authority of Hanoi's Governor, still controlled an area of tremendous value in terms of trade and agriculture. More to the point, Saigon lay just downriver from a city that early French explorers referred to as the *Bazar Chinois*. This city, known in Vietnamese as Cholon or, literally, "Big Market" and known in Cantonese as *Tai-Ngon*, meaning "embankment," laid claim to a vibrant and energetic trade, as well as the largest established population of Chinese in the five territories of Indochina.<sup>148</sup> The following map is a 1795 representation of Saigon and the *Bazar Chinois*, giving some idea as to the proximity and locations along local waterways.

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<sup>146</sup> Thompson, *French Indo-China*, 72.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>148</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 57.

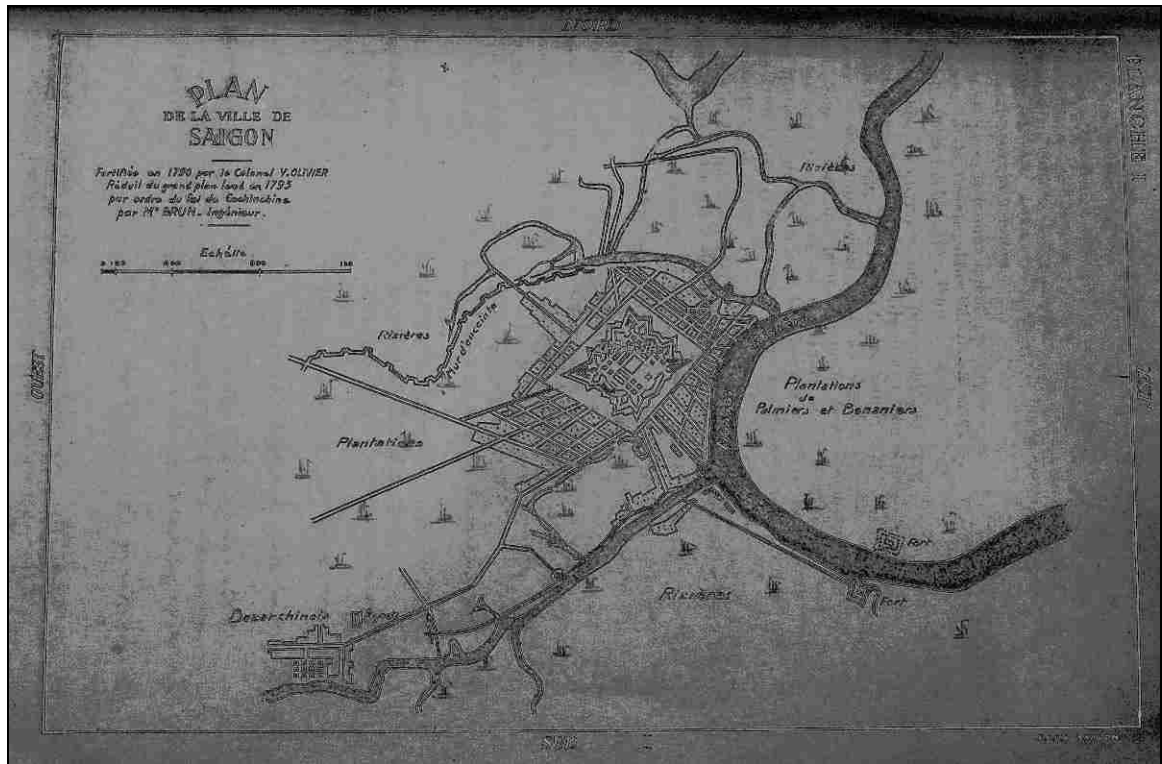


Figure 6. Map of Saigon and the Bazar Chinois, 1795 <sup>149</sup>

Eventually, as urban sprawl caused Saigon and Cholon to meet, they became collectively incorporated as Saigon-Cholon, although each had its own mayor and municipal councils until well into the twentieth century.<sup>150</sup> Just as the establishment of the Governor General favored Hanoi over Saigon, from a French perspective, the colonial administration of Cochinchina gave preference to Saigon over Cholon. However, from the perspective of Chinese demographics, exactly the opposite was true. The French selection of Saigon as their center of power in the area may also be attributable to French desire to avoid the Chinese domain.

<sup>149</sup> <http://belleindochine.free.fr/images/Plan/9411.JPG>, (accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>150</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 57.

Such reluctance likely had its origins in two discriminatory phenomena. The first is the overt racism expressed by the French for areas settled or controlled by Chinese communities. This prejudice had its roots in French stereotypes depicting the Chinese as plague-ridden and unclean. French racial typing also informed the second phenomenon characterizing French avoidance of Chinese-dominated areas. The perception of Chinese as greedy and possessed of pecuniary cunning perhaps also led the French to stake claim to territory outside the traditional bailiwick of the Cholon Chinese. In either case, it is certain that the French viewed Indochina's Chinese as a force to be reckoned with.<sup>151</sup>

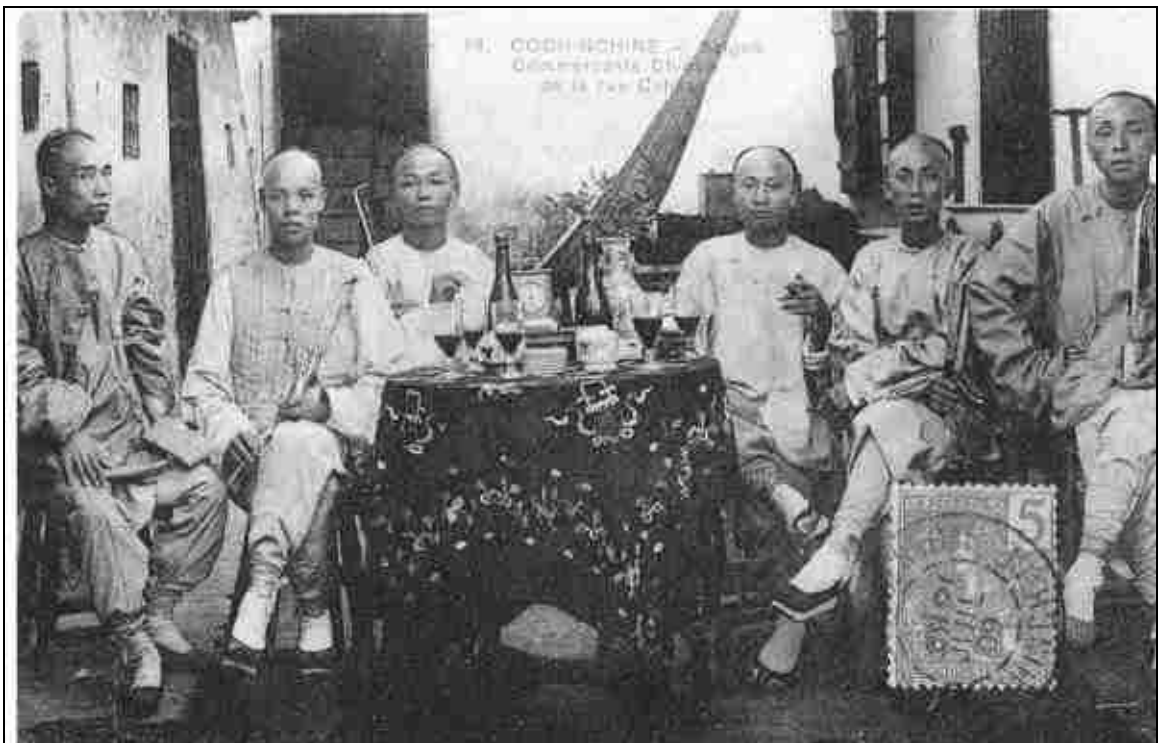


Figure 7. Chinese in Cochinchina, ca. 1909<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 95-6.

<sup>152</sup> <http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/tau4.jpg>, (accessed August 14, 2009).

In 1901, French censuses<sup>153</sup> estimated the Chinese population of Cochinchina at 91,727 people. In comparison, Liang Qichao, an important Chinese intellectual who visited America at about the same time period, reported there were approximately 120,000 Chinese in America in 1900, a figure larger than the United State census figure of 89,693.<sup>154</sup> While records indicate the Chinese population in America was larger than in Cochinchina at this time, French statistics did not account for another 40,632 people who were of mixed Chinese and Vietnamese heritage. In February 1902, the city of Hanoi boasted 1,900 Chinese residents in a total population of 127,114. By 1926, the Chinese population exploded in all regions of the colonies. In Cochinchina, the numbers of Chinese increased by 150%, resulting in a Chinese population of around 250,000. With 95,000 Chinese in Cambodia and 48,000 in Tonkin, the Chinese were a significant presence in the colonies. The total Chinese population of the five French controlled regions numbered 405,000 and Chinese continued to enter the colony in great numbers. 33,800 Chinese immigrated to Cochinchina in 1926 alone.<sup>155</sup>

For the French, the resident Chinese were a bit of a two-edged sword. On the one hand, they established pre-existing trade networks and relationships throughout Indochina and possessed a long-standing tradition of competition with the indigenous population for economic supremacy. The existence of a substantial Chinese population concerned

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<sup>153</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 95-6.

<sup>154</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957*, Prepared by the Bureau of the Census with the cooperation of the Social Science Research Council (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 9. The census figures for the Chinese population are 105,465 for the year 1880, 107,488 for 1890, and 89,963 for 1900. Also consult Joseph Richard Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 394, 386-396. Liang Qichao was an important intellectual and political figure in modern Chinese history. At this time, Liang was in political exile. Numerous studies in both Chinese and English document his life.

<sup>155</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 34-39; Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 6-7.

primarily with its own economic interests gave the French immediate, if limited, access to trading routes and markets that they would find greatly difficult accessing so quickly on their own. When it came to rice production, fisheries, and other staple industries, major Chinese firms dispatched agents into the countryside at harvest time to buy the entire rice crop of rural villages. After returning to Cholon or other cities with their purchase, the firms proceeded to sell the rice in Indochina or on the world market, achieving a form of vertical integration by means of monopolizing responsibility for every task but the actual farming.<sup>156</sup> On the other hand, the Chinese population enjoyed numbers large enough to make it a significant threat to French economic and political authority, a dilemma that became increasingly apparent as the twentieth century progressed.

Only three out of the five territories in Indochina possessed a Chinese population of significant magnitude to make it of serious concern to the French: Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Tonkin. The Chinese of Cambodia, while self-governing and ruled independently by the French under the standard congregation system, were largely subordinates to the Chinese of Cochinchina when matters of international or community-wide politics came to the fore. In fact, in many respects, the overseas Chinese of Cochinchina and Cambodia were easier to govern; access to those territories was primarily by sea and could be more strictly controlled. Many of Indochina's wealthiest and most respected businessmen made their profits from dealings in Cochinchina and

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<sup>156</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 97-100.



Cambodia and, therefore, had a vested interest in law and order as it pertained to the local Cochinchinese communities of overseas Chinese.<sup>157</sup>

Tonkin's situation was much more complicated. The immense border with China stretches more than six hundred miles along the southern Chinese province of Guangxi alone, a circumstance that made controlling Chinese migration into the protectorate nearly impossible. The dense alpine terrain made a perfect safe haven for smugglers, criminals fleeing Chinese officials, criminals fleeing French retribution, or the less nefarious vagrant wanderers populating the region. Large bands of anti-Qing revolutionaries found refuge in Tonkin's mountains in the early-twentieth century, a circumstance that frequently aggravated relations between France and China.<sup>158</sup> Wealthy Chinese merchants in Hanoi and Haiphong refused to take responsibility for the actions of Chinese elsewhere in the region and the French had no choice but to accept their reluctance. After all, it took French authorities well over a decade to achieve control over far north Tonkin's villages and highways.<sup>159</sup> As the following map demonstrates, the long and winding Sino-Tonkin border rests entirely in the mountains and is sparsely populated, settled only in the form of small towns and villages from Laos all the way to the South China Sea.

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<sup>157</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 34-39; Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 95-6.

<sup>158</sup> Alexander Woodside, "The Development of Social Organisations in Vietnamese Cities in the Late Colonial Period, *Pacific Affairs* 44, no. 1 (1971): 57-58.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

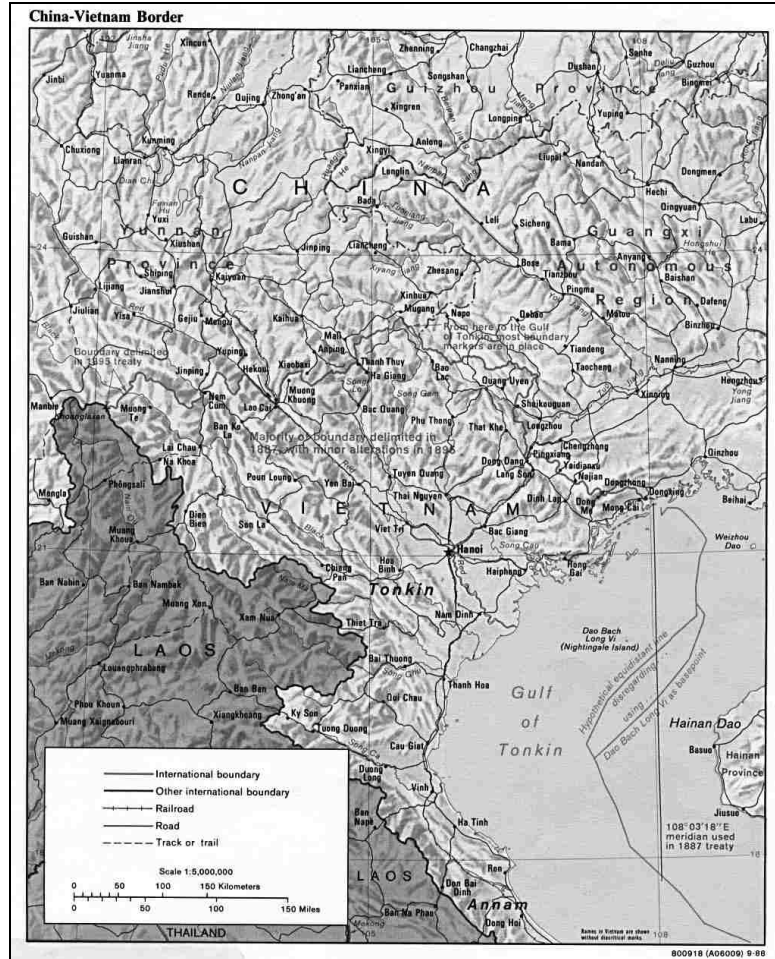


Figure 8. China-Vietnam Border<sup>160</sup>

Arguably, the porous character of the border region remains to this day. In the high country of far northern Vietnam, along the Chinese border, Hmong and Dzao women sold traditional fabrics adorned with Chinese coins and baubles. Later in the twentieth century, one watching the bridge between Lao Cai in Vietnam and Hekou in China revealed a ceaseless stream of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, where individuals

<sup>160</sup> [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_vietnam\\_border\\_88.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_vietnam_border_88.jpg), (accessed January 28, 2009).

laden with refrigerators, air-conditioners, or washing machines headed into Vietnam to villages unknown.<sup>161</sup>

As French colonialism developed its course, each component of the Indochinese colony established its own specific regulations intended to govern the Chinese in individual territories. Laws controlling all aspects of the membership and institutional lives of the *huiguan* emerged gradually as each region succumbed to French colonial ambition. After the French gained complete colonial control, initial, regionally-specific regulations were adopted in Cochinchina on October 16, 1906, in Tonkin on December 12, 1913, in Laos on January 7, 1919, in Cambodia on November 15, 1919, and in Annam on September 25, 1928.<sup>162</sup> Not until 1935 did the French use the excuse of the establishment of the Union of Indochina to promulgate one law intended to govern all Chinese in French-controlled Indochina, irrespective of the individual extant legal differences.<sup>163</sup>

Ultimately, the texts of each region's laws underwent little revision when the law of 1935 superseded them, but the basic requirements of *huiguan* membership, intended as an extra measure of control over what the French considered to be an otherwise suspicious population, found expression in language redolent with contractual implications:

In order to gain admission into Indochina, the Chinese immigrants must be accepted into a congregation which agrees to be responsible for their personal tax, and for any fines which may be due for any reason, and which further agrees to foot the expenses of repatriation to China in case

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<sup>161</sup> Gontran de Poncins, *From a Chinese City: In the Heart of Peacetime Vietnam*, translated by Bernard Frechtman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 62.

<sup>162</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 52-3.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

they are expelled, or in the case that the congregation no longer wishes to be responsible for them. By admitting them to membership the congregation agrees to accept these responsibilities.<sup>164</sup>

The 1935 law gave the *huiguan*, as represented, ultimately, by its elected president, the unenviable task of vouching for the moral integrity of its members, a statement of trust on the part of the *huiguan* made much more dramatic because of the stiff penalties applied if its trust proved ill-advised. The risk to the *huiguan* did not end with the behavior of its members. This law obligated *huiguan* to accept, essentially without recourse, the decisions made by French colonial authorities with regard to any malfeasance or dishonesty on the part of Chinese in Indochina. It is a law written in strong language, expressing expectations and consequences with great clarity, and it served as the keystone for Sino-French interactions in Indochina until the departure of the French in 1954.<sup>165</sup>

Practically and logistically speaking, the French strategy of controlling the Chinese affected them in several significant ways. Not only did it have the obvious consequence of limiting Chinese immigration to those individuals able to find sponsorship through a *huiguan*, it also meant that if a Chinese immigrant came in conflict with his *huiguan* or choose to disassociate from it, he was required by law to either leave Indochina or accept membership in another *huiguan* which, with very few exceptions, meant transferring his place of residence to an entirely different city or region. Furthermore, mandatory affiliation found reinforcement with the policy of requiring all Chinese residents of Indochina to carry identification cards, known as *cartes de sejour* or

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<sup>164</sup> “GGI Arrete, December 6, 1935: Article 27,” as it appears in Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 54.

<sup>165</sup> Thompson, *French Indo-China*, 229-231.

residence permits, on their person at all times. French authorities could demand that an immigrant produce his residence card at any time and without specific cause, and failure to comply with this regulation could result in an individual's imprisonment until the congregational leader or the Bureau of Immigration vouched for him. If no one vouched for him, the penalty was deportation.<sup>166</sup>

Exceptions to the strict, geographically-defined *huiguan* system existed in Tonkin. Chinese coolie labor made for mobile populations of insufficient numbers to warrant multiple *huiguan* based on native place, but comprised numbers too great, in the minds of the French administration, to be left without supervision. This special statutory included Chinese employed by Tonkin's public works, agricultural, and mining enterprises, designed primarily to account for the many Chinese employed in the Tonkinese mining enterprises of Hongay and Cong-trieu. For Tonkin-based Chinese laborers, single corporate *huiguan* not differentiated by native-place fulfilled all the roles and responsibilities required of typical, sub-ethnically defined *huiguan* throughout the rest of Indochina.<sup>167</sup>

French designed everything about the colonial apparatus, from the administrative structures to the geographic divisions of the provinces, to enhance and enable greater French control over the five territories of Indochina. In particular, by using Nguyen codes as a legislative base, French law forced long-established Chinese communities into a colonial cast from which deviation would be punishable by financial penalty or even expulsion from French territory. From the perspective of Chinese, the French-imposed

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<sup>166</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 62-4.

<sup>167</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *Ibid.*, 60-1.

congregational system was essentially of foreign design. Conceived of by Vietnam's Nguyen dynasty and transformed by the interests and mores of the French, the burden of this alien system of organization and control informed the social, economic, and political operations of Chinese communities in ways both minor and significant.<sup>168</sup>

The interplay between Chinese and French ideas about voting eligibility also highlights several significant points of contention between the French administration and the Chinese community over the necessity for or limitations of democratization within *huiguan*. The electoral process further highlights the conflict over sovereignty within the Chinese community and the willingness of the French administration to intervene in the electoral process when they disapproved of the direction taken by *huiguan*. For local and regional administrative purposes, French-colonial law mandated and carefully delineated the elections of *huiguan* presidents and vice-presidents. During the colonial period, voting eligibility differed from province to province according to the size and prosperity of Chinese communities in any given region. In small towns and outlying provinces outside of Cochinchina, universal male suffrage enabled all Chinese men over the age of eighteen to participate in the presidential and vice-presidential elections of their affiliated *huiguan*. Different electoral standards determined voting eligibility in certain special zones, including Cochinchina, Cambodia's entire Phnom Penh district, and the cities of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Nam Dinh in Tonkin. In these areas, only prosperous Chinese or property owners enjoyed the right to vote.<sup>169</sup> Despite broader similarities consisting primarily of financial requirements, Indochinese electoral policies differed considerably

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<sup>168</sup> Tracy Christianne Barrett, *Transnational Webs: Overseas Chinese Economic and Political Networks in Colonial Vietnam, 1870-1945*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Cornell University, 2007), 44.

<sup>169</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 97-99.

from region to region. Chinese themselves had input into the development of colonial policy in this regard.<sup>170</sup>

Overseas Chinese residing in Cochinchina enjoyed universal male suffrage in the early days of French colonization. Of the four earliest laws addressing the issue of *huiguan* elections, the first three outline no minimum requirements for voting eligibility, and the fourth law, promulgated on January 23, 1885, actually confirms universal suffrage for Cochinchina when it states, in Article Sixteen, that each congregational president is to be elected by all of the Chinese “living in the neighborhood and belonging to the congregation.”<sup>171</sup> Not until twenty-seven years after the establishment of the colony did the first laws appear limiting voting eligibility for the Chinese. In this law, Article Twenty-Five decrees, “all those who are for any reason exempt from the poll tax shall not be voters.”<sup>172</sup> This law prevented a small percentage of Chinese from voting, namely disabled or elderly people and immigrant workers, primarily agricultural laborers, residing in Cochinchina for less than one year. It was the first step down a slippery slope leading to the effective abolition of universal suffrage for Chinese residing in Indochina. However, the impetus behind this change was not, as one might expect, the French administration. It was *huiguan* leaders that requested stricter limits on eligibility to vote in these elections.<sup>173</sup>

Indochina’s collective Chinese community actively protested colonial laws they believed infringed upon their rights or dignity from the very beginning of French

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 53-4.

occupation. Not only were these protests handed directly to French officials in the form of formal petitions and complaints, but they were also often forwarded to Chinese officials in the *huiguan*'s native place or even to the Chinese ambassador in Paris. In 1866, the Imperial Ambassador in Paris began to present formal petitions to the French Department of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Chinese residing in Indochina. These early petitions generally dealt with one of two subjects: the poll tax, which increased significantly under French rule; and the system of immigration, which required Chinese to carry identification cards listing, among other things, their personal measurements, a policy from which residents of other nationalities were exempt, and one which the Chinese found particularly degrading. When Paris failed to respond to the 1866 requests, the Chinese ambassador tried again, submitting further petitions in 1892, 1893, and finally, in 1903.<sup>174</sup>

As nationals comprised a large percentage of Chinese communities in Cochinchina, the French Immigration Service bore responsibility for enacting and enforcing legislation pertaining to *huiguan*. When the question of electing *huiguan* officers arose, the Immigration Service referred back to the large number of Chinese complaints they received spanning years concerning the electoral process. The bulk of these complaints originated from prosperous and prominent Chinese merchants and businessmen who resented the breadth of Chinese suffrage because "it allowed many Chinese to vote who did not merit the privilege."<sup>175</sup> Thus, monied elements within Chinese communities were one of the primary motivating factors behind French suffrage

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 47-8.

<sup>175</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 98.



restrictions placed upon the Chinese. Vestiges of the importance of these wealthy Chinese can be seen in Vietnam's Chinese temples today, where pictures of *huiguan* leaders still adorn the temple walls.<sup>176</sup>

The complexity of regulating Tonkin's Chinese community was due in large part to the financial realities of the region. Unlike other regions in Indochina, Tonkin was home to a large population of Chinese laborers and coolies. Despite the distance at which Tonkin lagged behind Cochinchina and Cambodia with respect to the size of its Chinese population, Tonkin's mines attracted a significant population of Chinese coolies unmatched by either Cochinchina or Cambodia.<sup>177</sup> In the two southern regions, the Chinese population was associated predominately with trade and pan-Southeast Asian mercantilism. Although one could find Chinese coolie labor in the primarily Chinese-owned pepper plantations of Cochinchina's southernmost provinces, such as Ha Tien, indigenous laborers generally proved to be more cost effective in those areas. Plantation owners accordingly hired Cochinchinese or Annamite workers to fill positions more typically occupied by Chinese coolies in Tonkin.<sup>178</sup> These workers found employment in some agricultural ventures, but, as a general rule, worked in the many mines and mineral concessions scattered across Tonkin's mountainous north. This area not only possessed the mineral richness necessary to create a demand for manual labor, but enjoyed the added condition of being geographically close to China. Thus, Tonkin provided a

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<sup>176</sup> Tracy Christianne Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 115.

<sup>177</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 96-98.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

welcome source of employment for manual laborers from China's southern provinces and, in particular, the devastatingly poor provinces of Guangxi and Yunnan.<sup>179</sup>



Figure 9. Chinese from Guangxi (Quang-Si) in Tonkin<sup>180</sup>

Despite labor patterns virtually assuring the presence of Chinese workers from most, if not all, of China's southern provinces, laws governing *huiguan* in Tonkin made specific provisions only for *huiguan* composed of members from Cantonese and Fujianese communities. This provision resulted from a law determining only homogenous groups with populations exceeding one-hundred eligible men could form

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<sup>179</sup> Ann Maxwell Hill, *Merchants and Migrants: Ethnicity and Trade Among Yunnanese Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Monograph 47 (New Haven, CT: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1998), 142.

<sup>180</sup> [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon\\_la\\_procession\\_du\\_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo\\_chinois\\_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tbnid=BguALWOgyy..](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon_la_procession_du_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo_chinois_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tbnid=BguALWOgyy..), (accessed May 2, 2009).

independent *huiguan* based on respective ethnic sub-regions. Inevitably, this law, combined with existing laws on suffrage and property ownership, applied to privileged Chinese communities of established merchants and skilled workers based in Tonkin's large urban centers. This effectively excluded migratory laborers in the north.<sup>181</sup>

Despite the careful detail with which they attempted to regulate Chinese communities in Tonkin, early colonial statutes failed to provide for the large numbers of Chinese coolies working in the region. Accordingly, the law of 1910 itemized specific provisions for the large community of Chinese miners, declaring that any Tonkinese mining, agricultural, or engineering company employing fifty or more Chinese laborers would organize a single *huiguan* specific to the individual company. Thus, all Chinese workers, irrespective of native-place, would belong. No financial requirement limited voting eligibility for members of Tonkin's corporate *huiguan*.<sup>182</sup>

From the Chinese perspective, a dominant economically-based social hierarchy found reinforcement in a system where only community members of economic means could participate in the leadership process. As wealthier Chinese members bore the brunt of expense for *huiguan*'s programs and institutions, they staked a logical claim to a greater share of the organization's decision-making processes. Moreover, wealth as a prerequisite for leadership enjoyed nearly unrivaled prominence as a determinant for status in Chinese communities in Singapore, Malaya, Dutch Indonesia, as well as the Americas.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 98.

<sup>182</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 107.

<sup>183</sup> Mary Somers Heidhues, *Southeast Asia's Chinese Minorities* (Hawthorn, VIC, Aus: Longman, 1974), 78-82.

From the French perspective, Chinese resistance to the ideal of universal suffrage perhaps bore some weight, but not as much as the notion of appointing Chinese who could be held financially responsible for the misdeeds of *huiguan* members. The importance of selecting solid, respectable individuals to lead Tonkin's Chinese community was a paramount concern to the French provincial administrators for several practical reasons.<sup>184</sup> Wealthy leaders possessed the resources to reimburse the French government for any expenses incurred as a result of Chinese misconduct, but more importantly, French viewed Chinese leaders with long histories in the region as more likely to support the goals of the regime than to risk the loss of their livelihoods. Additionally, general experience indicated that those with a vested interest in the system governed more responsibly than those with nothing to lose. However, in the case of the corporate *huiguan* of Tonkin, these rules did not apply.<sup>185</sup>

The membership comprising corporate *huiguan* largely slipped between the cracks of the traditional urban-centered Chinese social structure. These Chinese laborers were nearly always poor and quite frequently illiterate. Therefore, it is unlikely that any of them qualified to vote under the suffrage laws existing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Additionally, companies tended to hire people from an assortment of native places in China so the formulation of a corporate sub-ethnic place identity proved problematic.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Thompson, *French Indo-China*, 247.

<sup>185</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 94-5.

<sup>186</sup> Tracy Christianne Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 176.

A typical *huiguan* was reluctant to vouch for people about whom it knew nothing, fearful they would have to bear the financial brunt of any malfeasance committed by the person or disappearance of the individual from his workplace.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, in the case of engineering companies, such as those constructing the railway lines across northern Tonkin into China, the workplace was highly mobile and could shift from province to province in very short periods of time.<sup>188</sup> This doubtless exacerbated the reluctance of a standard *huiguan* to accept responsibility for these coolies. On the other hand, French administrators were quite displeased by the lack of traditional structures of social regulation within these labor communities. To solve these problems without forcing other more orthodox Chinese *huiguan* to accept new members at random, the French elected to create a special system that provided these corporate communities with a strict structure of social governance without interfering with the basic scheme they established and extrapolated to apply to all other regions in Indochina.<sup>189</sup>

Apart from the issues of suffrage, strict rules governed both an individual's eligibility for leadership candidacy in the *huiguan*, as well as the actual mechanics of the voting process. As with suffrage, laws governing eligibility for candidacy instituted much stricter criteria in Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Tonkin than they did in Annam and Laos.<sup>190</sup> This standard justification for inequity appears to be that the small number of Chinese in Laos and Annam prevented them from enacting stringent financial requirements. After all, the absence of any eligible candidates would surely throw a kink

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<sup>187</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 95.

<sup>188</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 137.

<sup>189</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 107.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

in the electoral process. Despite these differences, a number of the minimum requirements for eligibility remained the same in all five regions.<sup>191</sup>

As established by the French administration, the eligibility requirements for candidacy for the office of *huiguan* president read much like the requirements for any contemporary political office. To begin with, a prospective president was at least thirty years of age. Although there were no requirements dictating a minimum duration for a candidate's membership in the *huiguan* for which he sought the presidency, the French administration did require the candidate to reside in the territory of the *huiguan* for at least two years. Additionally, eligibility depended on satisfaction of a morality clause: any criminal convictions, or any civil convictions in which a judge administered the penalty, permanently excluded individuals from seeking *huiguan* office.<sup>192</sup> According to Nguyen, commercial law excluded a Chinese resident from candidacy for one further offense:

Since the individuals who have been declared bankrupt by the courts are not eligible to hold offices, it would seem, though there are no specific statements to that effect in the law, that, by extension of this general rule, Chinese shopkeepers who have been declared bankrupt are not eligible for the office of the president of the congregation.<sup>193</sup>

Although these rules appear to reflect a colonial legislative bias, one may hear the echoes of common Chinese patterns of leadership selection in the French-mandated system.

Ch'ing-hwang Yen suggests that the Chinese model highlights three basic characteristics determining an individual's eligibility to lead a clan: "seniority in

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 108-9.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 101-103.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

generation and age, social standing, and integrity.”<sup>194</sup> Wealth, or lack thereof, was an ever-present issue in Chinese *huiguan* throughout Indochina and, as discussed in the following chapter, America, permanently solidifying its place as the premier qualification for leadership. Colonial biases merely required a financial scapegoat in case of expensive wrongdoing on the part of *huiguan* members. Chinese motivations were a bit more complex. Unlike in China, where scholar-officials stood at the peak of the social hierarchy until the twentieth century, wealthy merchants and entrepreneurs formed the core of the social aristocracy. Typically, truly talented intellectuals stayed in China because these skills were highly valued.<sup>195</sup> In the Nanyang network of businessmen and high finance, money and extravagance became the best measure of a man’s success. In his study of Singapore and Malaya, Ch’ing-hwang Yen observes, “wealth was the main determinant of social mobility; those who possessed it moved up to the apex of the class hierarchy, and those who lost it descended even down to the bottom.”<sup>196</sup>

Extensive scholarship addresses native place organizations and their hierarchies of leadership in mainland China. Some also examine these institutions in Southeast Asia, most notably in Singapore, Malaya, and Indonesia, and a third useful avenue for contextualizing issues of leadership in Chinese communities are found in the many studies of local elites in mainland China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scholarship most conceptually relevant to *huiguan* in Indochina involves an examination

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<sup>194</sup> Ching-hwang Yen, *Community and Politics: The Chinese in Colonial Singapore and Malaya*, (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1995), 41.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 204. Yen argues that only second-rate intellectuals traveled to Southeast Asia, resulting in a dearth of people able or willing to ensure the proper maintenance of Chinese social and cultural patterns in colonial territories. Merchants, according to Yen, were too busy to see this issue and the intellectuals remained too unskilled and handicapped by their low prestige.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 5.

of leadership, whether based in China or in Southeast Asia. This historiography best approaches the concept of leadership from one of two perspectives: either by studying the activities and careers of local gentry and elites, or by pursuing a more institutional approach. In their edited volume,<sup>197</sup> historians Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin choose the first approach, seeking to define the nature and power of local gentry in China by studying numerous local individual elite families and their response to both the Chinese imperial state and to peasant society. Esherick and Rankin readily accede to the inevitability of hierarchy in state-society relations. However, they ascribe the prevailing scholarly assumptions about Chinese elite and the attributes characterizing them to European prejudice, namely Max Weber's assumption that merit superseded wealth as a prerequisite for elite rule in China.<sup>198</sup> In fact, Esherick and Rankin point out that tension and competition between local elites on the one hand and the state, as represented by imperial officials, on the other signifies "a 'dynamic oscillation' between integration into the imperial system and autonomy from it."<sup>199</sup>

Scholarship supports such a wide variety of interpretations about the issue that clarifying local elite status is daunting. In his study of Chinese rebellions, historian Philip Kuhn discusses the militarization of local elites, a phenomenon he argues increased gentry power vis-à-vis the state and left local elites supreme in the face of the

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<sup>197</sup> Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin, "Introduction," in *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* ed. Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 1-26.

<sup>198</sup> Esherick and Rankin, *Chinese Local Elites*, 1.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 5-7. The term "dynamic oscillation" is borrowed from Frederic Wakeman.



power vacuum created after the 1911 revolution.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, in her work on Taiwan's Lin family, Joanna Meskill emphasizes the endurance of a local gentry family as a result of their willingness to enforce control over the local population and over local watering rights.<sup>201</sup> Historian Hilary Beattie's study of Anhui province also emphasizes the endurance of elite status over generations, although she attributes this longevity more to land acquisition, investment in family education, and careful stewardship of acquired assets than to any martial prowess.<sup>202</sup> These depictions of local gentry as a relatively static category do not go uncontested. Historian Bingde He describes a very different phenomenon in his book.<sup>203</sup> Using the framework outlined by Chang Chung-li as his foundation,<sup>204</sup> Bingde He emphasizes the probable existence of a great degree of social mobility for Chinese elite. According to He, this social mobility and ability to rise to the status of local elite diminished concerns over the inequality of China's social hierarchy, which thus allowed it to continue.<sup>205</sup>

For the purposes of an evaluation of Chinese communities outside of China, however, historian Keith Schoppa offers the most useful explanation of local elite status

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<sup>200</sup> Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1769-1864* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>201</sup> Joanna Meskill, *A Chinese Pioneer Family: The Lins of Wu-feng, Taiwan, 1729-1895* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

<sup>202</sup> Hilary Beattie, "The Alternative to Resistance: The Case of T'ung-ch'eng, Anhui," in *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, Region and Continuity in 17<sup>th</sup> Century China* ed. Jonathan Spence and John Wills, Jr. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).

<sup>203</sup> Bingde He, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911* (New York, NY: Science Editions, 1964).

<sup>204</sup> Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Society* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1955).

<sup>205</sup> Bingde He, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China*, 43.

in his study of China's Zhejiang Province. Schoppa emphasizes the varying and specialized nature of Chinese elites, suggesting that different types of elites emerged to meet the requirements of different areas of Zhejiang. This variation resulted in the existence of highly commercialized and politicized elite in thriving, populated areas of the province.<sup>206</sup> Mary Backus Rankin adds to Schoppa's conclusions in her study of Zhejiang elite.<sup>207</sup> Rankin reveals the "elite's readiness to adopt new associational forms – chambers of commerce, educational associations, and a host of other professional associations and special interest organizations – following the removal of long-standing Qing prohibitions during the first decade of the twentieth century."<sup>208</sup>

Thus, one can understand the emerging portrait of local elites in China, and this portrait mirrors Chinese local elite in communities outside of China, including Indochina and America: a community enjoying a considerable degree of social mobility; accepting of new entrants into the privileged class; possessed of great flexibility in terms of the establishment of and membership in new forms of social and professional organizations; and a community in which membership criteria differed according to the characteristics of the groups' local political, social, and economic environments. What does this complex picture of elites contribute to one's understanding of *huiguan* leadership? Although very few, if any, sources speak directly to issues of leadership in Indochina's Chinese *huiguan*, scholars take an institutional approach in the study of leadership criteria in Chinese organizations in general, particularly in Southeast Asia and China.

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<sup>206</sup> Keith R. Schoppa, *Chinese Elites and Political Change: Zhejiang Province in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>207</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).

<sup>208</sup> Escherick and Rankin, "Introduction," *Chinese Local Elites*, 9.

Most notably, Ching-hwang Yen points out that social relations determined by kinship and dialect ties composed only part of the Chinese social milieu, opining that class status and class affiliations also had great significance in ordering the Chinese world outside of China. He bases his fundamental analysis on two platforms: firstly, overseas communities were immigrant communities, subordinate in terms of local government, and largely an urban community; secondly, Chinese society divided itself into a three-class paradigm<sup>209</sup> which consisted of, from the top down, *shang* or merchants, *shi* or educated elite, and *gong* or workers. He further suggests, as Bingde He, Keith Schoppa, and Mary Rankin did in the case of local gentry in mainland China, that great mobility and fluidity existed in this social structure, especially between the upper *gong* class and the lower *shang* class.<sup>210</sup>

In addition to profession, wealth and property ownership also served as a measure for social class and as an entrepôt into an entirely different lifestyle of leisure and plenty enjoyed only by the wealthiest echelons of the merchant class.<sup>211</sup> According to Yen, this wealth-based class distinction proved important not only within the Chinese community, but also to colonial authorities. Speaking of the British in the Straits Settlements, he writes,

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<sup>209</sup> Yen presents a modified version of the social structure originally described by Gungwu Wang, “Traditional Leadership in a New Nation: The Chinese in Malaya and Singapore” in *Leadership and Authority: A Symposium*, ed. G. Wijeyawardene (Singapore: Center of Southeast Asian Studies in the Social Sciences, University of Singapore, University of Malaya Press, 1968), 210; and Gungwu Wang, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Asian Studies Association of Australia, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1981), 162.

<sup>210</sup> Yen, *Community and Politics*, 3-5. Unlike the *shang* and *gong* classes, the *shi* classification was largely an issue of training and education; therefore, it was less freely accessible to those striving for upward social or economic mobility.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9.

As wealth was an important prerequisite for Chinese community leadership, the wealthy capitalists were given leadership status, and those among them who were able, charitable, and with ambition would become the leaders of the whole community. In the choice of leadership for the dialect and clan organizations, the wealthy were readily accepted as leaders because they commanded high status and prestige in society and were able to make substantial donations when required.<sup>212</sup>

For the wealthy, native place organizations also offered opportunities for leadership leading to increased visibility and greater prestige, not only within one's own dialect or kinship group, but also in the overseas Chinese communities at large. In terms of the leaders themselves, Yen names seniority, social standing, and integrity as the three most important criteria for choice of leadership.<sup>213</sup>

In his epic study of Hankou, William Rowe also reluctantly acknowledges the importance of wealth in determining eligibility for leadership in the guilds of Hankou, writing that for *huiguan* seeking leaders, "personal wealth and professional success constituted the best evidence of the financial capability needed to manage the collective accounts."<sup>214</sup> But despite admitting the interrelationship of wealth and local power, Rowe treats the notion of wealth as a golden ticket into *huiguan* aristocracy with some suspicion. Rowe adeptly communicates the idea of a changing economic environment and its socioeconomic repercussions within Chinese native place organizations. While this notion accurately reflects aspects of Indochina's *huiguan*, the model is not a perfect fit for colonial Southeast Asia.

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 41-2.

<sup>214</sup> Rowe, *Commerce and Society*, 325-6.

Some scholars portray wealth in overseas Chinese communities as a three- to four-generation parabolic arch, where wealth accrues and vanishes, sometimes in less than a hundred years. In this paradigm, familial ties could be extremely significant in the short term but were unlikely to endure for a dozen or more generations. Additionally, the goal for many overseas Chinese was to return to their native place to live out their retirements in familiar and comfortable surroundings. Moreover, in the case of Indochina, trouble with French authorities encouraged or even forced some powerful Chinese to leave their positions of authority and make new beginnings elsewhere.<sup>215</sup>

The notion of wealth and status determining eligibility for leadership within the Chinese community also finds support in the writings of anthropologist Lawrence Crissman. Crissman maintains the fundamental criterion for leadership is wealth. If this wealth is combined with a foreign education that allows the leader to communicate freely with the government in charge, the community only benefits from that knowledge. For an organization to wield any power in a local system, the leaders must have the money to gain access to positions of power. This leads nicely to Crissman's second assertion, which is that leadership in overseas Chinese communities typically overlapped with close interrelations. Wealthy leaders quite simply had greater access to membership on committees and on governing bodies of high-level organizations representing the Chinese community as a whole.<sup>216</sup>

In Indochina, overseas Chinese themselves acknowledged wealth as a primary factor in determining eligibility for *huiguan* president, as well as the president's potential

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<sup>215</sup> Nguyen, *The Chinese Congregations*, 94.

<sup>216</sup> Lawrence W. Crissman, "The Segmentary Structure of Urban Overseas Chinese Communities" *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (New Series)* 2, no. 2 (June 1967): 199-200.

for success.<sup>217</sup> It seems unlikely that large numbers of *huiguan* officers enjoyed literati status back in their native places. However, the inclusion of education and social standing as primary factors in assessing an individual's suitability for leadership certainly applied to the Indochinese case as well. Arguably, the imposition of colonial systems in mainland and maritime Southeast Asia resulted in the redefinition of the *shi* ideal among members of overseas Chinese communities. This is also likely in Chinese communities in the Americas, though without the colonial component. Familiarity with Confucian classics fell behind knowledge of French, English and Dutch in terms of practical benefits to everyday life.<sup>218</sup>

Historian Ann Stoler also addresses the issues of colonial hegemony and indigenous resistance to the colonial-imposed labor paradigm, citing the phenomenon of avoidance as a primary means of labor resistance to colonial control.<sup>219</sup> Historian Michael Adas makes a similar point in his study of colonial Burma and Java.<sup>220</sup> Although Stoler and Adas are interested in avoidance as practiced by the most subaltern populations of Southeast Asia, within the paradigm of colonialism, colonial will subordinated overseas Chinese, making the question of confrontation or avoidance equally applicable to them.

Although overseas Chinese leadership typically enjoyed elite status in French Indochina, Indochina's most powerful Chinese often avoided presidential office, and

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<sup>217</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 95.

<sup>218</sup> Ann Maxwell Hill, *Merchants and Migrants*, 34.

<sup>219</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 6-13.

<sup>220</sup> Michael Adas, "From Avoidance to Confrontation," in *Colonialism and Culture* ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 89-126.

thereby colonial entanglements, as well, because they were unwilling to burden themselves with the many inconveniences the presidential office entailed. In this way, Indochina's most powerful Chinese avoided French control by ostensibly remaining outside official *huiguan* leadership. In fact, the distance from community control was somewhat imaginary. One knew that wealthy and powerful *huiguan* members treated their *huiguan* presidents like lackeys, convinced that they ruled by sufferance of their social and economic betters. Colonial authorities attempted to mitigate this problem by requiring that the *huiguan* president be direct representative of the French, with direct access to the colonial hierarchy, a commission that included the right to levy fines upon recalcitrant *huiguan* members. However, the very existence of this authority likely created more problems for the hapless president than it solved. After all, pulled between French colonial authorities and the Chinese elite within one's *huiguan*, the life of the president had little to recommend it.<sup>221</sup>

Much of the existing scholarship on Chinese business also emphasizes the uniqueness of the network-based Chinese business and leadership model, particularly in comparison to the hierarchical models presented by Western firms in China. As historian Siu-lun Wong writes, "In the Chinese case, entrepreneurs tend to dominate the market by activating particularistic ties such as regional networks rather than by building up large, impersonal corporations."<sup>222</sup> Historian William Kirby also asserts this notion, claiming that "with its own organizational structures and values rooted in networks of family and

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<sup>221</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 67-69.

<sup>222</sup> Siu-lun Wong, "Chinese Entrepreneurs and Business Trust," in *Business Networks and Economic Development in East and Southeast Asia* ed. Gary Hamilton (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1991), 24.

regional ties, what we may call a ‘capitalism with Chinese characteristics’ resisted the corporate structure.”<sup>223</sup> While the importance of *huiguan* networks must be underscored, it is a mistake to assume that they did not represent a formal business structure with its own firmly established hierarchy. *Huiguan* embedded this formal hierarchy within their very structure as an organization where wealth and seniority determined social prominence and thereby decided leadership matters as well.

While scholars of business in China typically couch their arguments in terms of hierarchies or firms, which are considered “Western” by nature, and networks, which are considered “Chinese” by nature, one may pose the question of whether these notions also apply to *huiguan* in Southeast Asia and the Americas. Sherman Cochran problematizes these categories:

By drawing a seemingly timeless distinction between Western businesses with hierarchies and Chinese business with networks, they have run the risk of essentializing Western and Chinese businesses...it does not allow the possibility that a corporation (regardless of whether it was owned by Westerners, Japanese, or Chinese) learned to deal with and make use of both hierarchies and networks.<sup>224</sup>

The connections emerging from the institution of the *huiguan* were multifaceted. These connections ranged in scope and scale from small, personal connections between local businessmen in Cholon to relationships between merchants across the five territories of Indochina. From these businesses and political contacts, relationships back to native cities in China evolved, and all of these relationships functioned within the context of *huiguan*-based systems of status and prestige. Some of these systems resemble

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<sup>223</sup> William Kirby, “China Unincorporated: Company Law and Business Enterprise in 20<sup>th</sup> Century China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 1 (Feb 1995): 51.

<sup>224</sup> Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-1937* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 6.



*huiguan* in other overseas Chinese communities quite closely, while others, because of the long tenure of Chinese merchants and settlers in Indochina, as well as the vagaries of French colonial rule, were unique to Indochina's Chinese populations.

*Huiguan* possessed great significance in several respects. As the cornerstone of Chinese social, cultural, religious, political and economic life in Indochina, *huiguan* membership allowed Chinese members to tap into a vast network of personal connections that could assist them in any aspect of their legal, professional, or personal lives. Intra-*huiguan* contacts assisted Chinese with such things as character references for the colonial government, capital accumulation for local land and real estate deals, and all sides of labor issues, from helping a new arrival find employment to assisting a wealthy business owner acquire a workforce for his factory or corporation. Inter-*huiguan* contacts, for example, between Cantonese *huiguan* in Tonkin and Cochinchina, not only assisted members with capital acquisition for business ventures, but also allowed increased access to regional markets by providing a reliable conduit for the collection of raw materials or the distribution of goods.<sup>225</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned roles, *huiguan* fulfilled two additional functions, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. First, as Chinese organizations formally sanctioned and mandated by the French colonial government, *huiguan* legitimized their membership in colonial eyes and ensured that matters important to the *huiguan* received, at the very least, a hearing by colonial officials. Secondly, *huiguan* served as direct conduits for contacts with native places. *Huiguan* did not just have a personal connection to native place, but also enjoyed the backing of the respective

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<sup>225</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 107-111; Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 143-5; Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 94.

province through political and economic authority. Despite the common assumption that overseas Chinese funneled money back to their native places in the form of unidirectional remittances to help the locality prosper, private interests based in Chinese native places in Indochina occasionally contributed capital directly to Indochinese business ventures. More to the point, companies based in Indochina and sister companies in Canton or Hong Kong frequently shared ownership among the same handful of Chinese businessmen, some of whom resided permanently in China.<sup>226</sup>

Some of the most prominent members of Chinese *huiguan* also involved themselves in secret society activities, and often, these upper-echelon members also enjoyed powerful roles in both the secret societies and their affiliated *huiguan*. In these instances, *huiguan* leaders wielded public and private authority solidifying their place in colonial, indigenous, and Chinese politics. Wealth and standing within a *huiguan* often translated to prominence or even dominance of a Chinese secret society, granting depth as well as breadth to the authority wielded by a prominent individual.<sup>227</sup>

Overseas Chinese lived lives fraught with danger and uncertainty. The natural disasters that destroyed crops and leveled factories also took lives, and in Indochina, injury, plague and death felt impending. For Chinese expatriates who left their native places in search of profit, fortune was a fickle friend. Despite the proximity to China, many overseas Chinese in Indochina never made it back to their native villages and homes. Even for those who survived colonial life, financial misfortune could strike unexpectedly. No one could predict when bankruptcy or illness, fire or death, might

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<sup>226</sup> Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 94.

<sup>227</sup> Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam*, 119; Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 174-177.

leave an individual in desperate need of material assistance. In these times, Chinese *huiguan* assumed their mutual aid functions, acting as social insurance for members. *Huiguan* charitable functions also provide insight into areas of cooperation and conflict between the Chinese and the French. *Huiguan* participated in local and international disaster relief, supported Chinese hospitals, and dealt with all of the issues surrounding death, including cemetery operation, burial, and the repatriation of bones.<sup>228</sup>

While *huiguan* concerned themselves with events in China, they also provided relief to victims of “backyard” disasters. Floods and epidemics were commonplace, and even more frequent and frightening were the fires raging across Cholon’s quays on a regular basis. In these situations, whether they affected the *huiguan* specifically or larger Chinese communities, *huiguan* often intervened to help countrymen in need. Most often, this assistance came in the form of donated goods or community fundraising, but occasionally they contributed labor or other additional services as well.<sup>229</sup>

*Huiguan* responsibilities extended well beyond events in the cities or throughout Indochina. *Huiguan* status depended not only upon its political and economic equity within Indochina, but also upon the way in which the native place viewed it. Wealthy Chinese individuals enhanced *huiguan* prestige by pursuing such tasks as building schools or larger houses in their hometowns.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, the surest way to foster goodwill in one’s native place was to rise to the occasion during times of need.

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<sup>228</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 112-3.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Consult Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Hsu tells the story of a Cantonese businessman who, upon making his fortune on the West Coast of the United States, returns to his native county to build seven identical townhouses, all in a row, for his seven wives in China.

Therefore, one regarded remittances catalyzed by disaster as acts of necessity more than generosity; these remittances, however, alleviated the grim conditions caused by plagues, famine, flooding, or other unpredictable catastrophes.<sup>231</sup>

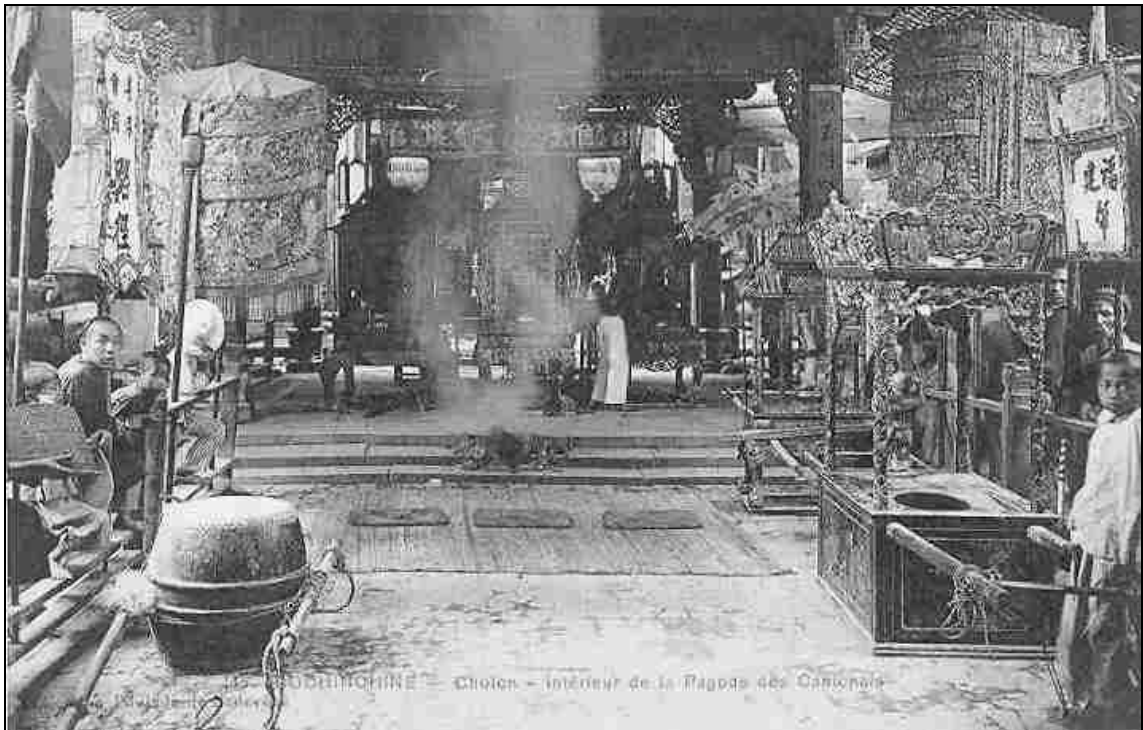


Figure 10. Inside a Chinese Temple in Cholon<sup>232</sup>

For Indochina's overseas Chinese population, illness and hospitalization were also matters that fell into the bailiwick of the *huiguan*. *Huiguan*-specific hospitals provided financial benefit to their members by giving them access to reasonable and recognizable health care, but the benefits of culture and morale were even greater. For the Chinese in

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<sup>231</sup>Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 123.

<sup>232</sup>[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon\\_la\\_procession\\_du\\_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo\\_chinois\\_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tbid=BguALWOgyy](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon_la_procession_du_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo_chinois_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tbid=BguALWOgyy), (accessed May 2, 2009).

general, treatment at an institution whose medical practices resembled those with which they were most familiar had to be comforting. The added benefits of health practitioners speaking an individual's own dialect would not only be comforting, but also perhaps reduced the potential for misunderstanding and serious mistakes regarding diagnosis and treatment. Cultural benefits aside, however, the realm of health care was openly contested by Chinese practitioners and patients, as well as the French, who viewed public health as a matter of critical concern to the colonial apparatus. Major *huiguan* often sought to construct hospitals of their own to deal with the growing demands of communities in their area.

Apart from the French belief in Chinese susceptibility to plague, death, and general contagion, the colonial administration begrudged every penny it spent on behalf of people for whom other guarantors could be found.<sup>233</sup> In other words, paying healthcare costs for an indigenous immigrant was one thing, but paying for a Chinese resident of Indochina was quite another. For any Chinese resident, businessman, or worker, one of two circumstances had to be true, according to the French: either the individual resided in Indochina legally, in which the relevant *huiguan* was responsible for all matters concerning his residency, activities, and state of moral and physical well-being; or he resided in Indochina illegally, in which he still belonged to a specific Chinese sub-ethnic group, which had legal representation in the form of a *huiguan*, and which could be held responsible for all matters concerning his residency, activities and his state of moral and physical well-being. In either case, it became clear during their early years of colonial tenure that the French Administration would refuse to pay if someone – anyone – else could be found to fit the bill.

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<sup>233</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 114.

For Chinese in Indochina, funerary and burial services possessed an almost mythical importance in their concern for the dead, one of the most fundamental aspects of Chinese religion and custom. One of the most essential functions of *huiguan* in Indochina was their ability to manage logistics for members who died far from their native soil. *Huiguan* provided, in essence, burial insurance for their members. A major benefit of membership was that *huiguan* either arranged for the repatriation of deceased members or granted them access to local burial grounds specific to each sub-ethnic group.<sup>234</sup> In other words, if a Chinese resident could not be buried back in his native place, at least he rested among his compatriots. Despite the ultimate goal of returning to one's native place, the realities of colonial life and death meant that burial, whether temporary or permanent, on Indochinese ground was often inevitable.

Just as *huiguan* oversaw the arrivals of Chinese citizens into Indochina, they also bore responsibility for their departures, whether as immigrants or deceased spirits. The nearly universal desire of overseas Chinese to be buried on their native soil assumed major proportions in Indochina where disease, poverty, and backbreaking labor caused the demise of many Chinese too poor to return to China prior to death or to afford the repatriation of their remains in the event of their passing. Not surprisingly, this desire to return home extended out from the major market centers of Cholon, Saigon, and Hanoi into the rural provinces.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 135-6.

<sup>235</sup> Barrett, *Transnational Webs*, 146.



Figure 11. Chinese Funeral Procession in Haiphong<sup>236</sup>

Whether the issue was disaster, death, or illness, *huiguan* worked closely with membership and with the French to find solutions most beneficial to their communities. Additionally, *huiguan* sought to share the burden of cost with the French, a matter that gained importance as the expense of French requirements grew. For reasons of public health, French authorities meticulously regulated all aspects of sickness and death.<sup>237</sup> The French then passed on the added costs of these regulations was to *huiguan*.<sup>238</sup> This inevitably created friction between the Chinese and the French, a friction that was also resolved through *huiguan* mediation. By investigating Chinese desires, French

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<sup>236</sup>[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon\\_la\\_procession\\_du\\_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo\\_chinois\\_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tnid=BguALWOgyy](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon_la_procession_du_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo_chinois_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tnid=BguALWOgyy), (accessed May 2, 2009).

<sup>237</sup> Alain G. Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam Under the French* (San Francisco, CA: EmText, 1993), 323.

<sup>238</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 179.

requirements, and the final resolutions, Chinese success at wringing concessions from the French becomes apparent. *Huiguan* mutual aid functions were at once troublesome and essential. By essentially providing a social security net that prevented total disaster from befalling their members, *huiguan* truly proved their worth to Chinese communities in Indochina.

While *huiguan* performed mutual aid functions that assisted overseas Chinese through the most critical periods of their lives, they also enjoyed social responsibilities, nurturing the very souls of their communities by taking responsibility for religious and secular festivals, political commemorations, and the education of young Chinese students in Indochina. The first and foremost obligation of any *huiguan* in Indochina was to provide a meeting place for its members. Thus, Chinese *huiguan* were responsible for constructing and maintaining temples and other cultural sites for their memberships. In keeping with this particular obligation, it was the *huiguan*'s responsibility to organize the celebration of native-place holidays and ensure the observance of local religious festivals. As the colonial period progressed, locally-oriented cultural responsibilities began to assume a more nationalistic flavor as *huiguan* took on the task of collecting remittances, first for Qing or anti-Qing activities, and later for the new Chinese Republic.<sup>239</sup>

A final social arena in which *huiguan* involved themselves was education. Because of the vast cultural differences between each *huiguan*, Chinese memberships shared a nationality, but for the most part, they did not share a spoken language. The values and concerns of each dialect group differed, as did the gods they worshipped and the professions they tended to pursue. For this reason, the establishment of schools

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<sup>239</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 112-4; Alain G. Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam Under the French*, 223-5.



unique to each native place or dialect represents a concerted effort to indoctrinate young Chinese students in the ways of their native place. This indoctrination occurred in spite of the cultural confusion engendered by living overseas and at a time of great susceptibility in the students' lives.<sup>240</sup> The French also acknowledged the significance of Chinese youth and the importance of education, as evidenced by their own intense concern for Chinese instruction.<sup>241</sup>

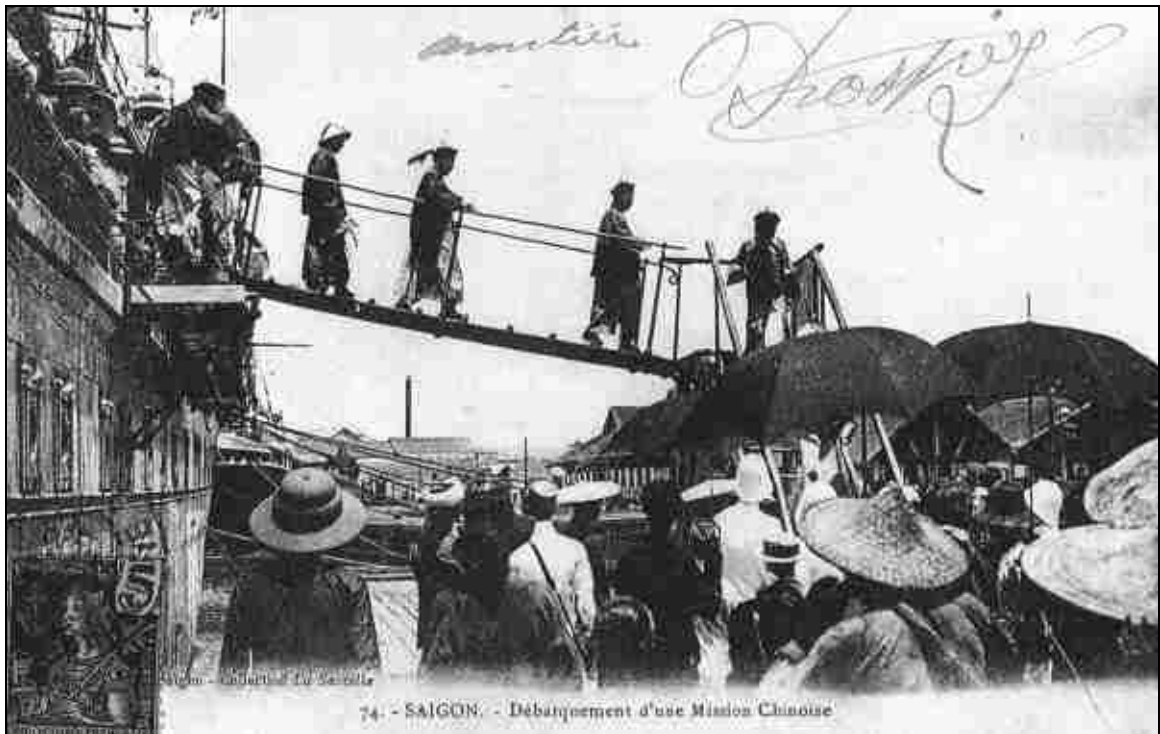


Figure 12. Chinese Imperial Mission Arriving in Saigon<sup>242</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 136; Alain G. Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French*, 127-9.

<sup>241</sup> E.S. Ungar, "The Struggle Over the Chinese Community in Vietnam," 611-2; See also Lauriston Sharp, "Colonial Regimes in Southeast Asia," *Far Eastern Survey* 15, no. 4 (1946): 49-53.

<sup>242</sup> [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon\\_la\\_procession\\_du\\_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo\\_chinois\\_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tbid=BguALWOgyy](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon_la_procession_du_dragon.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/photo_chinois_vn.htm&h=457&w=719&sz=97&tbid=BguALWOgyy), (accessed May 2, 2009).

One of the most interesting aspects of *huiguan* in general is the concerted effort they directed towards maintaining the social and cultural integrity of their settlements abroad. Overseas Chinese connections to native place did not freely give overseas Chinese a base of support for business ventures and a place of retreat in the event of disaster. In returning for this nurturing, these ties implicitly required that overseas Chinese communities retain as many as possible the linguistic, cultural, and social practices of the native place. One of the most efficient ways to achieve this cultural continuity was through the establishment of Chinese schools. Not only did schools provide the fundamental language training required to keep young Chinese students living abroad functionally literate in Chinese and fluent in their native tongues, but, as schools were typically affiliated with specific *huiguan*, this ensured the transmission of many cultural and religious practices as well.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 124.



Figure 13. Chinese Dragon Procession in Cholon<sup>244</sup>

As the only officially-recognized representative of Indochina's Chinese communities, *huiguan* assumed a prominent role as mediators for their members. This mediation took multiple forms. *Huiguan* interceded on behalf of their members with French authorities, local indigenous administrators, as well as other *huiguan*. This intercession might occur in a Vietnamese village, in the capital of the Chinese province from which the supplicant hailed, or even the halls of Paris's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Wherever arbitration occurred, it was likely to concern one of two matters: immigration or commerce.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>244</sup> [http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon\\_la\\_procession\\_du\\_dragon.jpg](http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/Cholon_la_procession_du_dragon.jpg), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 126-133.

For colonial authorities, the Chinese residing in Indochina in general, and in Cochinchina in particular, represented a significant proportion of the total population. In many respects, this situation empowered Cochinchina's Chinese by requiring the French to carefully consider any drastic changes to immigration or police policies in order to avoid serious economic and political repercussions, both in the colonies and internationally.<sup>246</sup> Policing the enormous Chinese community in Indochina, not just for overt criminal activities but for immigration violations as well, proved to be the most difficult task undertaken by the French with regard to the Chinese. *Huiguan* mitigated this to some degree by placing final responsibility for unlawful Chinese activities in the hands of the Chinese themselves. Not only did this ensure some small degree of self-policing within the Chinese community, but it also guaranteed that the French could recoup any costs related to the suppression of crimes committed by Chinese or the deportation of illegal immigrants from the colony. In return, the colonial administration granted each *huiguan* the right to refuse membership to any immigrant, or to repudiate current members at any time based on their unwillingness to vouch for the moral character of other said members.<sup>247</sup>

Two of the most difficult issues confronting *huiguan* in Indochina were immigration and head taxes. As in other countries in Southeast Asia as well as in the Americas, Chinese usually opposed tax increases that applied to them, but despite the images of massive strikes and boycotts that caused many urban centers to grind to a halt, most of these protests were far more genteel. In Indochina, *huiguan* usually stood at the

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<sup>246</sup> Stephen H. Roberts, *The History of French Colonial Policy, 1870-1925* (London, UK: Frank Cass & Company, Limited, 1963), 58-59.

<sup>247</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 115-116.

vanguard of attempts to defend the interests of their communities, and the carefully-worded petitions they periodically forwarded to the Cochinchinese administration revealed not only a true concern for the welfare of their less powerful constituents, but also an awareness of international politics and a desire to find middle ground for both sides of an argument.<sup>248</sup>

The realities of community demographics require any study of overseas Chinese in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to focus upon the lives and endeavors of men, while almost completely ignoring women and children in the process. This omission is essentially unavoidable. Women and children comprised a very tiny percentage of Indochina's population and rarely appear in any documents except, perhaps, colonial pictures, where colonial visitors and scholars recorded them faithfully, along with all of the other ethnicities and indigenous curiosities capturing their attention.<sup>249</sup> The one documentary exception to this rule concerns immigration, when the legal status of wives or families became an issue for government officials, but they only rarely surfaced in immigration-related documents,<sup>250</sup> leaving one to wonder what, exactly, the lives of Chinese wives were like in Indochina.

A critical point to consider when one investigates the wives of Chinese in Indochina is that these wives were not always Chinese. Although it is unclear whether or not data detailing exact statistics exists, overseas Chinese did marry Vietnamese

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<sup>248</sup> Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 117-123; Alain G. Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French*, 78-80.

<sup>249</sup> Alain G. Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French*, 112-113.

<sup>250</sup> "French Indo-China: Demographic Imbalance and Colonial Policy," *Population Index* 11, no. 2 (1945): 68-81.

women.<sup>251</sup> Paradoxically, the French were quite protective of indigenous women when it came to relationships with Chinese men, preoccupied by the notion that cunning Chinese who would not attend to their welfare kidnapped them and shipped them to China against their will.<sup>252</sup> While conflicts over the status of women typically revolved around whether they should be allowed to leave the country, disputes involving Chinese women most often centered around whether they were allowed to stay.<sup>253</sup> Incidents of Chinese women fleeing abusive or unhappy relationships by crossing into Tonkin pepper colonial documents. Some of these cases seem straightforward, but others reveal the complicated cultural milieu of the Sino-Vietnamese border region at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>254</sup>

In Indochina, the *huiguan* narrative is a story of ascendancy set upon a backdrop of decline. In the twilight of empire, while China also descended into chaos and disorder, *huiguan* consolidated economic and political power on the periphery, offering succor during disaster to brothers in need. They also involved themselves for the very first time in national Chinese politics through material contributions and moral support for efforts to rejuvenate the country and end Qing hegemony.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Agnes Murphy, *The Ideology of French Imperialism, 1871-1881* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1968), 87.

<sup>253</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, ed., *Other Pasts: Women, Gender, and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, HI: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 94.

<sup>254</sup> Consult Grant Evans, Christopher Hutton, and Kuah Khun Eng, *Where China Meets Southeast Asia: Social and Cultural Change in the Border Regions* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000); Paul Neis, *The Sino-Vietnamese Border Demarcation, 1885-1887* tr. Walter E.J. Tips (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998); B.G. Tours, "Notes on an Overland Journey from Chungking to Haiphong," *Geographical Journal* 62, no. 2 (1923): 117-132.

<sup>255</sup> Nguyen, *The Chinese Congregations*, 110; See also Kenneth Perry Landon, "Nationalism in Southeastern Asia," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1943): 139-152

As discussed in the following chapter, when Republican China later rose from the ashes of empire only to be broken yet again by foreign invasion and civil war, *huiguan* suppressed the competition characterizing their intercommunity relationships for a number of years in order to support two fundamentally important causes threatening the very existence of the institution: Chinese civil rights abroad and China's territorial integrity and sovereign rights. In this way, when China was brought to its weakest, *huiguan* became one of the vanguards of an international effort to mobilize for the defense and relief of China's citizens. *Huiguan* also became international spokespersons for China, agitating and propagandizing for its support on an international stage. While the power and splendor of China declined, *huiguan* internationally ascended, in economic power, in political influence, and in cultural significance.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Alexander Woodside, "The Development of Social Organisations in Vietnamese Cities in the Late Colonial Period," *Pacific Affairs* 44, no. 1 (1971): 39-64; Khanh Tran, *The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 24-27; Nguyen Quoc Dinh, *The Chinese Congregations*, 103-105.



Figure 14. *Bazar Chinois, Di'an, Cholon, 'Big Market'*<sup>257</sup>

<sup>257</sup> <http://hinhxua.free.fr/autrefois/chinois/cholon.jpg>, (accessed May 2, 2009).



## CHAPTER 4

### FROM *ZHONGGUO* TO *DADU*, 'BIG CITY': *HUIGUAN*

#### DEVELOPMENT IN SAN FRANCISCO

For many years and up to the present day, San Francisco remains a vital social and cultural center of Chinese America. As the first major physical space that a mobile Chinese population created for itself, San Francisco offered early immigrants economic opportunities and a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar and often antagonistic society. This chapter traces the origins and development of *huiguan* and its leadership in San Francisco, and emphasizes the organization's political functions and vicissitudes of power and authority from the 1850s to the first decades of the nineteenth century.

As early as 1849, merchants began to form *huiguan* in San Francisco's nascent Chinese community primarily to maintain internal order and negotiate within and among the larger Euro-American society. Traditionally delineated by dialect and native-place, *huiguan* underwent profound change in the nineteenth century. Unlike Indochina's *huiguan*, inter-*huiguan* conflict in San Francisco began during their earliest years of development and continued into the twentieth century. The power and prestige of the organization and its success in creating a unified front against anti-Chinese discrimination, as well as the challenges to its traditional authority made by Chinese American organizations, depended on the outcome of these rival power struggles. While remaining the pillar of Chinese Confucian tradition and the symbol of the conservative merchant elite, these forces converged on San Francisco's Chinese community, while Chinese nationalism, revolutionary fervor, and calls to modernize the Chinese nation also forced the organization to reassess its traditional role in the Chinese community.

The fifth and final chapter discusses how, through the formation of *huiguan* in San Francisco, Chinese attempted to form a familiar, coherent community serving to transplant Chinese tradition that united as well as divided its members. Mirroring many of the activities of *huiguan* in China and Indochina, these organizations provided economic assistance, including employment connections and loan opportunities, while successfully raising funds to establish community services, including the development of hospitals and schools. Arguably, the most successful outcome of *huiguan* fundraising efforts was the retention of America's top lawyers to challenge legislative exclusion individually and collectively. As in Indochina, *huiguan* also utilized these funds to assist Chinese members to return home to China, if not in life then in death. *Huiguan* continued its tradition functions of mutual aid and charity in San Francisco while participating extensively in efforts to preserve Chinese culture and tradition.

The origins of San Francisco's *Jinshan Zhonghua Huiguan* (or "Gold Mountain Chinese Association"), which would formally adopt the English name Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), more popularly referred to as the Chinese Six Companies, dates from the early 1850s. As a united federation of *huiguan*, it became the most powerful and influential Chinese organization in America. As historian L. Eve Armentrout-Ma illustrates, the early social organizations emerging in San Francisco's Chinatown had a profound influence upon nascent Chinese political parties, helping to define the constituencies of these parties, their organizational alternatives, and their political goals.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> See L. Eve Armentrout, "Conflict and Contact between the Chinese and Indigenous Communities in San Francisco, 1900-1911," in Chinese Historical Society of America eds. *The Life, Influence and Role of the Chinese in the United States, 1776-1960* (San Francisco, CA: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1976), 55-70; L. Eve Armentrout-Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns:*

While Chinese in San Francisco did not represent a static or monolithic social structure, *huiguan* competed for leadership within the community long before the formation of Chinese political parties, and this competition engendered an increase in the number of *huiguan* as well as periodic changes within their social balance. The CCBA was but the top layer of a well-defined hierarchical organizational structure evolving in San Francisco over many decades during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A number of Chinese associations organized on the basis of surname or regional groupings also eventually evolved under the umbrella of the CCBA.

*Huiguan* helped to establish a transnational and trans-Pacific foundation for San Francisco's ever-evolving Chinese community. Long emphasized yet largely misunderstood by Euro-American society, scholars' translations of crucial Chinese historical sources continue to dismantle linguistic and cultural barriers in an effort to objectively analyze the history of *huiguan* and their importance to Chinese communities throughout America.<sup>259</sup> By illuminating the many facets of San Francisco's *huiguan*, one can begin to understand how this important social and cultural pillar of Chinese tradition constituted vital resources for its community. By dispelling myriad ethnocentric

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*Chinese Politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990); "Urban Chinese at the Sinitic Frontier: Social Organizations in United States Chinatowns, 1849-1898," *Modern Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (February 1983): 107-35.

<sup>259</sup> Critical to this new understanding is the important scholarship of Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Him Mark Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/*Huiguan* System," in *Chinese America: History and Perspectives, 1987* (San Francisco, CA: Chinese Historical Society of America), updated in 2003 and published in Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004). Yong Chen utilizes Chinese-language sources to develop a clearer understanding of Chinese history in San Francisco. This chapter also relies on Him Mark Lai's monumental scholarship on Chinese communities and institutions. He traces the origins of the CCBA and other Chinese social institutions through his utilization of Chinese-language sources.

myths and stereotypes about *huiguan*, one may truly appreciate their meaning and significance to the cultural, social, and political history of Chinese in America.

While *huiguan* remained symbols of Chinese community and tradition, anti-Chinese agitators attacked them vigorously, believing both the organization and Chinese merchants profited by the overwhelming numbers of Chinese arriving to America,<sup>260</sup> while still other Euro-American perceptions exoticized them. An analysis of Euro-American public perceptions about *huiguan* in San Francisco is also an attempt to locate San Francisco's Chinese in the Euro-American consciousness. Through this analysis one observes the tenuous effort it took Chinese to build and sustain a community of their own. Utilizing English-language sources, as well as relying on the research of scholars who delved into Chinese-language sources, this chapter is, most importantly, an attempt to connect the development of the CCBA in San Francisco to the transnational development of *huiguan* in China and Indochina.

This chapter mentions but does not considerably emphasize other Chinese associations in San Francisco outside the organizational structure of the *huiguan*, including Chinese secret societies (tang) or the multitude of specific trade and workers guilds, which are all subjects worthy of individual scholarly investigation. Standing as the pillar of Chinese tradition, *huiguan* remained largely patriarchal and therefore this chapter does not explore the rich history of Chinese women in San Francisco.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> "Increased Chinese Immigration: Arrival of Laborers for the Pacific Coast Railroads – Speculation as to their Future," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1881.

<sup>261</sup> For histories of Chinese women in San Francisco, consult Judy Yung, "The Social Awakening of Chinese American Women as Reported in *Chung Sai Yat Po*, 1900-1911," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 195-207; *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870-1943," in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese in America, 1882-1943* ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991);

*Dadu*, meaning “Big City” or “First City,” was the name Chinese immigrants gave to San Francisco. They referred to Sacramento as “Second City,” and Stockton as “Third City.”<sup>262</sup> Such names illustrate the central importance of San Francisco in the lives of Chinese from the beginning of their immigration to the American West. As the major hub of cross-Pacific transit, hundreds of thousands of Chinese immigrants, along with goods and letters, traveled through the city from southern China to regions across America. According to customs records, from 1848 to 1876, 233,136 Chinese arrived in San Francisco, while 92,273 left from the same port.<sup>263</sup> Chen Lanbin, the first Chinese Minister to America, noted in 1879 that almost all Chinese in America used *Jinshan*, or “Gold Mountain,” as a gateway to trans-Pacific travels.<sup>264</sup> Chinese continued to use *Jinshan* to refer to both California and the United States.

On December 12, 1878, a Chinese crowd gathered on Clay Street to celebrate the opening of the Chinese Consulate, later referred to as the consulate general in San Francisco. As the first diplomatic office for Chinese outside of Washington, D.C., it seemed timely, for the rising tide of anti-Chinese sentiment during this decade became a formidable political force in San Francisco and throughout the American West. As San Francisco’s Chinatown stood at the epicenter of the Chinese American community in the United States, it was the most prominent target of attack. On the same day, in the state capital of Sacramento, delegates at the second constitutional convention, one third of

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and Jacqueline Baker Barnhart, *The Fair But Frail: Prostitution in San Francisco* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1986).

<sup>262</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 2, 50.

<sup>263</sup> U.S. Congress, Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration, *Report of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration*, 44<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1196.

<sup>264</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 50.

them representatives of the Workingmen's Party of California, denounced Chinese immigration during deliberations about the "Chinese question." Announcing his hope of driving the Chinese out of the city and out of the country, a San Francisco delegate claimed, "The trouble is how to get the guest out of the house."<sup>265</sup>

The hostile stance taken by the delegates typified the belief of the larger Euro-American community, who viewed the Chinese with both fear and anxiety. Many supported efforts to deny the Chinese rights to naturalize and thereby vote because they believed that, given such rights, the Chinese would become a great political threat "with most dangerous results to the State."<sup>266</sup> Like the French colonial government in Indochina, many Euro-Americans also viewed San Francisco's Chinatown as the worst source of filth and disease. A week prior to the opening of the consulate, Denis Kearney, head of the Workingman's Party, raided Chinatown in search of lepers and other "nauseating things." Accompanying him were people representing the whole spectrum of the Euro-American power structure: a judge, a prosecutor, a reporter, and a police officer.<sup>267</sup>

Following the discovery of gold in 1848, the Chinese population in California increased rapidly, though Euro-Americans deliberately inflated the Chinese presence in an effort to depict it as a threat. On the eve of legislative exclusion one article noted that the large influx of Chinese to California and British Columbia was primarily due to "Celestials" attempting to take advantage of the congressional recess in 1881 and "bring

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<sup>265</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 13, 1878.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 9, 1878.

coolies from the Flowery Land.” Because the recent arrivals were “the lower grade of Chinese laborers accustomed to field and general work,” they were “not the class that serve[d] as recruits for the factories.” In hypothesizing about what Chinese workers would do once the rail lines were complete, the article contradictorily quipped: “But stupid and stolid as they are, they would, with the characteristic intuitiveness of their countrymen, speedily acquire knowledge of the branches of manufactures in which the Chinese are engaged.”<sup>268</sup>

With the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1869 and the subsequent economic recession of the 1880s, reports flooded the press which called for the expulsion of the Chinese who threatened scarce employment opportunities for Euro-American laborers. What this report and others failed to acknowledge, however, was that the earliest Chinese immigrants were from Sanyi and Zhongshan (or Heungshan), a more wealthy and urban part of Guangdong province than the poorer, rural areas of China. The article further surmised that merchants would also take advantage of the “period elapsing” to import large quantities of opium from Hong Kong for future use. Although the article conceded Chinese workers would more than likely return to China once their two-year labor contracts expired, it concluded there were “sufficient Chinese in the state to meet any demand for their services” and enunciated virulently a call for “speedy legislation on the subject.”<sup>269</sup> According to *Harper’s Monthly*, Chinese continually

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<sup>268</sup> “Increased Chinese Immigration,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1881.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

“leaked” in from the northern and southern borders of America, and others arrived with forged papers.<sup>270</sup>

Chinese residing in San Francisco strongly hesitated offering any information about themselves to outside authorities. While attempting to gather data in Chinatown in 1876, San Francisco’s county assessor realized that “the Chinese were loath to impart information.”<sup>271</sup> In a visit to Chinatown, a reporter from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, also noted the “reticence” and “imperturbability” of those interviewed as “remarkable”:

No sooner had the reporter, after passing some casual remarks, endeavored to bring the conversation to bear upon the immigration question than the Mongolians would become suddenly silent. At length by dint of perseverance, it was learned that the Chinese themselves would never have dreamed of introducing such a large number of their countrymen had it not been for the demand made by the various corporations engaged in the construction of railroads on the Pacific coast and the British Territories.<sup>272</sup>

While the views of those interviewed seem to match the article’s argument that “there were and are sufficient laborers here to supply all requirements,” individual Chinese had sufficient reason not to trust Euro-American authorities, whose discriminatory policies and practices frequently breached legal principles and abrogated treaty agreements with China.

In order to understand and appreciate the demographic significance of the Chinese population in San Francisco, as well as observe Euro-American reactions to it, one must investigate the Chinese American population in California during this historical epoch.

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<sup>270</sup> Julian Ralph, “The Chinese Leak,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (March 1891): 515-25.

<sup>271</sup> *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 253.

<sup>272</sup> “Increased Chinese Immigration,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1881.



In 1876, explaining his earlier interest in the subject, Alfred Wheeler acknowledged: “It has been alleged then that there was a very large number of Chinese in the state.”<sup>273</sup> Although more objective and reliable than the popular media’s fear- and racially-based perceptions and allegations, figures furnished by American governmental agencies were often inconsistent and tended to underestimate the Chinese population.

Mary Roberts Coolidge made one of the earliest scholarly attempts to estimate the Chinese American population.<sup>274</sup> Her figures suggest that by 1851 the West Coast Chinese population stood at 7,370.<sup>275</sup> In the next three decades the Chinese population grew steadily, increasing in number from 25,116 in 1852 to 46,897 in 1860, to 71,083 in 1870, to 104,991 in 1880. It reached 132,300 in 1882, when Congress passed the first Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and when the population of Chinese thereafter would continue to decline. It must be noted that Coolidge’s estimates are higher than the census figures for the entire Chinese American population in America for 1860 and 1870, which were 34,933 and 63,199, respectively. The 1880 census figure for the Chinese American population was 105,465, higher than Coolidge’s estimate of the West Coast population for the same year but lower than her number for 1882.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 513.

<sup>274</sup> Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1909), 498-503. Coolidge provides an explanation for her population figures and her computations. Coolidge’s population estimates are based on wide-ranging sources.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 498, and note 3, 499; *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 513 and 1196. Alfred Wheeler estimated Chinese arrivals at ten thousand before 1852. This figure is similar to figures cited by Coolidge. His number was based on research of customs-house records. As he testified before the 1876 Congressional Committee on Chinese Immigration, he published his research results in articles.

<sup>276</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957*, Prepared by the Bureau of the Census with the cooperation of the Social Science Research Council (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 9. The census figures for the Chinese population are 105,465 for the year 1880, 107,488 for 1890, and 89,963 for 1900.

Coolidge's numbers are based on official and unofficial English-language documents. In 1854 *The Golden Hills' News*, a San Francisco-based bilingual paper, estimated the total number of Chinese "who have arrived in the Gold Mountain [from China] is no less than 40,000 to 50,000."<sup>277</sup> In 1855, Chinese *huiguan* in San Francisco declared a collective membership of 36,687 (about 1,000 Chinese remained non-members).<sup>278</sup> Coolidge's figures for the same two years are lower, 37,447 and 36,557, respectively.<sup>279</sup> During a trip to the United States in 1876 Chinese intellectual Li Gui stated that the Chinese American population was about 160,000,<sup>280</sup> and in 1878 San Francisco's *huiguan* declared a collective membership of 148,600,<sup>281</sup> which is very close to Chen Lanbin's figure for 1879.<sup>282</sup> Toward the end of this period another important Chinese visitor, Liang Qichao, wrote that there were 120,000 Chinese in America, a figure larger than the census figure of 89,693 for 1900. Coolidge did not have an estimate for that year.<sup>283</sup> Coolidge's figures do, however, suggest the decline in the Chinese population during this period.

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<sup>277</sup> *The Golden Hills' News*, July 29, 1854. English Section.

<sup>278</sup> *The Oriental*, January 25, 1855. English Section.

<sup>279</sup> Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration*, 498.

<sup>280</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 52. As Yong Chen explains, Li was en route to Philadelphia for the 1876 exposition in celebration of the centennial of independence, to which China sent him as an observer. The figure is from his diary.

<sup>281</sup> The figures are from the testimonies of *huiguan* presidents before the California Senate Committee. Consult California State Legislature, Senate, Special Committee on Chinese Immigration, *Chinese Immigration: The Social, Moral and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration* (1876): 44.

<sup>282</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 52, 282

<sup>283</sup> Joseph Richard Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, 394, 386-396. Liang Qichao was an important intellectual and political figure in modern Chinese history. At this time, Liang was in political exile. Numerous studies in both Chinese and English document his life.

While American governmental records largely underestimated the Chinese American population, its precise size remains an enigma. In 1876, the Congressional Committee on Chinese Immigration stated statistics “cannot be definitely ascertained.”<sup>284</sup> An overt anti-Chinese agenda provided the primary impetus for committee investigations on Chinese immigration rather than a desire to gather facts. Chinese figures were not based on subjective guesswork but rather on firsthand data that *huiguan* and individual Chinese writers went to great efforts to collect.<sup>285</sup> In its official report, the 1876 Congressional Committee concluded that “there is not sufficient brain capacity in the Chinese race to furnish motive power for self-government.”<sup>286</sup> Similarly, San Francisco’s Special Committee asserted in 1885 that the alleged filth and morality of Chinatown was “inseparable from the very nature of the race.”<sup>287</sup> Anti-Chinese bias contributed significantly to the limitations of government record-keeping.

While a majority of Chinese immigrants spent some time in San Francisco, a significant number of them stayed and worked in the city. While it is not the primary focus of this chapter to address government population records nor Euro-American common perceptions about the Chinese in general, it is important not only to locate the space Chinese occupied physically in the city and culturally in the minds of its Euro-American residents, but also to illustrate the central importance of San Francisco in Chinese American history.

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<sup>284</sup> *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 12.

<sup>285</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 53.

<sup>286</sup> *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, vi.

<sup>287</sup> Willard B. Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad, Together with the Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco on the Condition of the Chinese Quarter of that City* (San Francisco, CA: A.L. Bancroft, 1885).

Myriad Chinese organizations blossomed in San Francisco's Chinatown, providing the social fabric connecting Chinese immigrants to one another. One may divide these social organizations generally into two categories, distinguished primarily on the basis of membership eligibility. Organizations determining membership eligibility by birth and possessing restrictive entrance requirements were primarily the surname or family associations, *huiguan* or regional associations, as well as *huiguan* federations. Organizations based on occupation or personal choice generally possessed open membership requirements and included Chinese Christians, merchant guilds, and the Triad secret societies, discussed in further detail in the following chapter. All groups, regardless of open or restrictive membership requirements, represented variations of organizations originating in China.<sup>288</sup> While *huiguan* structures were not exact replicas of those found in China, they nevertheless followed the basic organizational principle of traditional native-place and kinship organizations. By the 1890s, approximately ninety-five percent of the Chinese in America were members of *huiguan*. Moreover, throughout the Americas, in major centers of Chinese populations, *huiguan* organized federations.<sup>289</sup>

In their most basic form, San Francisco's *huiguan* were collectives of men from the same village who gathered for friendship and mutual support. Since their association usually revolved around a store or shared rented rooms, Chinese referred to these early organizations as *fong*, literally translated as "house" or "room." They provided newcomers a place to stay, established members in the community a place to receive mail, and all community members a place to purchase supplies, exchange news from China,

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<sup>288</sup> L. Eve Armentrout-Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns*, 14.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

and gossip.<sup>290</sup> *Huiguan* also helped members find jobs, extended them credit when money was available, and maintained hostels where transient members could stay for a nominal fee.<sup>291</sup> The popular press remained largely ignorant of the purposes of these hostels: “Strange as it may seem, and contrary to expectation, an extended tour of the various lodging-houses in the Chinese quarter revealed there but [*sic*] few of the recent arrivals in the city . . . The lodging-housekeepers’ harvest has proved a remunerative one during the influx.”<sup>292</sup>

As increasing numbers of Chinese arrived to the West Coast, a more formal version of the village or surname *huiguan* with officers and charters emerged, called the *tongxianghui*. The *tongxianghui* provided Chinese residents from the same village or of the same clan or family name with help caring for the sick or infirmed. Services also extended to relatives who remained in China through the efforts to raise funds for famine relief and the purchasing of weapons for defense against bandits. These more structured organizations, managed by store owners and labor contractors who could provide jobs and loans, also ran credit unions based on the rotating credit principle.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Peter Kwong and Dusanka Miscevik, *Chinese America: The Untold Story of America’s Oldest New Community* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>291</sup> L. Eve Armentrout-Ma, “Urban Chinese at the Sinitic Frontier,” 107-111.

<sup>292</sup> “Increased Chinese Immigration,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1881.

<sup>293</sup> Kwong and Miscevik, *Chinese America: The Untold Story of America’s Oldest New Community*, 83.



Figure 15. “Marketing,” Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906 <sup>294</sup>

*Huiguan* offered protective services for its members, defending them against Euro-Americans as well as members of other *huiguan*. Chinese remained distrustful of immigrants from other regions in China and continued to regard them as potential enemies. Significant dialect differences further underscored these regional distinctions and exacerbated this mistrust. China’s southern “regions” themselves were generally very small in the geographic sense, and the largest percentage of Chinese in San Francisco arrived from Guangzhou and its surrounding areas. However, *huiguan* in San

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<sup>294</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/index.html](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/index.html). (accessed August 14, 2009).



than eighty in their variations, could exist outside of China.<sup>298</sup> As the earliest Chinese formal organization in San Francisco, *huiguan* existed for decades as the most significant Chinese American social institution, joining an overwhelming majority of Chinese in the United States for social, political, and economic reasons.

Similar to *huiguan* originating in China and Indochina, the merchant class governed the *huiguan* of San Francisco, exercising both economic power and social control over its members. Him Mark Lai also explores the term *gongsi*, which Chinese did not use to describe *huiguan* in China. When Chinese first began immigrating to the West Coast, they found themselves in a frontier region where America had yet to fully develop its governmental administrative apparatus. Although Chinese immigrants to America perhaps borrowed the concept of *gongsi* from their compatriots in Southeast Asia, the term's modern Chinese meaning is synonymous with "company." This may be an important reason why the latter became the accepted English translation of *huiguan* in the United States. However, the link between the original meaning of *gongsi* and *huiguan* in America remains uncertain.<sup>299</sup>

Euro-American observers continued to refer to *huiguan* as "companies," as this description of a "company house" in *Harper's* illustrates:

The smaller apartments below are occupied by the managers and servants of the Company. The largest room or hall is pasted over with sheets of red paper covered with

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<sup>298</sup> Joseph Richard Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, 394, 386-396.

<sup>299</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 40, 69. According to Him Mark Lai, Triad settlers developed the earliest *gongsi*, organized in the late-eighteenth century, by developing the frontier regions of Borneo under the nominal rule of a native sultan. The colony enjoyed a great measure of autonomy, with the *gongsi* administering a self-contained political system modeled after the village system in China. The concept spread to Malaya when Chinese began to settle there in large numbers during the nineteenth century. The term was also used by early *huiguan*; for example, in 1822 a *Ningyang Gongsi* was established in Singapore.



writing. These contain a record of the names and residence of every member of the Company, and the amount of his subscription to the general fund. The upper story and the attic, with the outbuildings on the upper side, are, it may be, filled with lodgers, nearly all of whom are staying temporarily, on a visit from the mines, or on their way to or from China. A few sick persons be on their pallets around, and a group here and there discuss [matters over] a bowl of rice, or smoke and chat together. In the rear is the kitchen. All is quiet, orderly and neat.

The same article remarked on the “Masonic” character of a similar *huiguan* building in New York City:

What is apparent on the surface is an earnest of the beneficent [sic] character of its work. It furnished, in the first place, a pleasant meeting room, in which to while away a leisure hour. Chinese games are played. The Chinese orchestra practices here; and the poetical contests, which are a feature of Chinese amusement are held in its large meeting rooms.<sup>300</sup>

Despite this somewhat rosy, docile, and benevolent view, *huiguan* internal conflicts and rivalries between clans and regional groups provided the impetus for the formation of two specific types of organizations: surname associations and sub-regional, or *shantang* associations. Based on a more limited and closely related membership, these associations had functions paralleling the *huiguan*. Quite often, they constituted power blocs within *huiguan* and had rights of representation within *huiguan*’s leadership circles.<sup>301</sup>

The very number of individual *huiguan* proved especially problematic in presenting a unified front against anti-Chinese violence and rhetoric. Therefore, the earliest *huiguan* formed in San Francisco later formed the cornerstone of the much larger

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<sup>300</sup> *Harpers Weekly* (New York: October 12, 1868).

<sup>301</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 40.

organization, the *Jinshan Zhonghua Huiguan*, or the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). The CCBA represented, above all else, an example of a higher-level organization formed by a growing Chinese sense of community in San Francisco, and this sense of community would ultimately attempt to transcend traditional clan and regional ties. Since the Qing government in the late nineteenth century concerned itself primarily with domestic developments and increasing inner turmoil, it could provide little protection for Chinese in San Francisco. Thus, the CCBA in large part addressed the need for the larger Chinese community to respond to and challenge anti-Chinese racism and legislative exclusion.

*Huiguan* origins in San Francisco date as early as 1849, when Chinese merchants in San Francisco met to select an advisor, and in 1850 they organized Chinese participation in limited civic events. However, the name of this first organization in historical documents continues remains unknown.<sup>302</sup> As Chinese immigration to San Francisco increased in the early 1850s, regional rivalries catalyzed the formation of additional *huiguan* representing distinct constituencies. Given the bonds between clan and village for peasants in Guangdong, individuals from the same region in China tended to seek each other's company for mutual aid and comfort. As immigrants from one particular village were usually limited in number, the basis of organization expanded to include larger constituencies in order to function more effectively. Since speakers of the same dialect and sub-dialect generally lived in contiguous areas in China, dialect grouping became a logical criterion for organization.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

The overwhelming majority of Chinese immigrants to San Francisco were from the Pearl River Delta and the Siyi (“Four Counties”) areas of Guangdong Province. They established several *huiguan*, each enrolling as members emigrants from districts speaking closely-related Cantonese language sub-dialects. A small minority were Hakka, representing a dialect and culture different from Cantonese. They established a separate, distinct *huiguan*.<sup>304</sup> As in Indochina, the formation of *huiguan* in San Francisco occurred without the participation of Chinese gentry and scholar-officials, China’s traditional elite, since opportunities for upward mobility in China were appealing enough to prevent them from immigrating. Chinese merchants, who were more affluent and, in general, more literate than their compatriots in China, assumed leadership roles abroad.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.



Figure 17. Chinese Linguistic Groups<sup>306</sup>

The following discussion of *huiguan* names and their associated regional areas or clan affiliations in China are provided in *Pinyin* (literally “spelled sound” or “phonetics”), currently the most commonly used romanization of Mandarin Chinese, followed by the Wade-Giles romanization, the primary system of Chinese transcription for most of the

<sup>306</sup> [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_ling\\_90.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_ling_90.jpg), (accessed August 14, 2009).

20th century. Under the Wade-Giles system, Chinese Postal Map romanization for Chinese place names, established during the late-Qing dynasty, are also provided parenthetically, as well as popular *huiguan* names in English, if applicable (see Figure 18).

Chinese established the first two *huiguan* in San Francisco by 1851. Merchants from the regions of Nanhai (Namhoi), Panyu (Punyu), and Shunde (Shuntak), three cities surrounding the present city of Guangzhou (Canton) formed the *Sanyi Huiguan* (“Three Counties,” *Sam Yup* Association, or Canton Company).<sup>307</sup> The *Siyi Huiguan* (“Four Counties,” *Sze Yap* Association) was the second organization established by Chinese from the regions of Xinhui (Sunwui), Xinning (Sunning, now Taishan, or Toishan), Kaiping (Hoiphing), and Enping (Yanping). These four districts are located in the Tan (Tam) River Valley, west of the Pearl River Delta.<sup>308</sup>

Between September and October of 1852, Yuan Sheng (or Norman Assing), Cai Libi (or Lai Bik Tsoi), and Liu Zuman (or Jo Man Lau) from Xianshan (Heungshan, now Zhongshan, or Chungshan) and Zhuhai, including Doumen, became the founding leaders of the *Yanghe Huiguan* (*Yeong Wo* Association).<sup>309</sup> This association also included emigrants from adjacent Dongguan (Tungkun) and Zengcheng (Tsengshing), and later Boluo (Poklo) immigrants from Xin’an (Sunon), now Shenzhen (Shumchun), including Bao’an (Paoan). A majority of Chinese immigrants from these latter regions spoke

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<sup>307</sup> Reverend A.W. Loomis, “The Six Chinese Companies,” *Overland Monthly* (September 1868): 221-27; Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 41, 70. Loomis’s dates do not match with Him Mark Lai’s analysis of Chinese-language sources. Since the Western and Chinese sources do not match exactly, the association’s founding year could be as early as 1850.

<sup>308</sup> Loomis, “The Six Chinese Companies”; Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 41.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*.

Hakka, a contrast from the Cantonese spoken in other *huiguan*, and they separated to form the *Xin'an Huiguan* (*Sun On Association*). The *Xin'an Huiguan*'s name changed several times, and today it is known as the *Renhe Huiguan* (*Yan Wo Association*), and its members remain overwhelmingly Hakka.<sup>310</sup>

By 1853 *huiguan* in San Francisco represented four major regional dialect groupings. Popularly referred to as "houses," the associations popularly identified themselves as the *Siyi*, *Yanghe*, *Xinwui*, and *Canton Huiguan*.<sup>311</sup> The English section of *The Oriental* listed them as the *Yeung-wo*, *Canton*, *Sze-yap*, *Yan-wo*, and *Ning-yeung Huiguan* (formed in 1853), according to Cantonese pronunciation.<sup>312</sup> Changes in *huiguan* ranks continued as membership numbers increased and ambitious leaders took advantage of clan and village loyalties to form rival power centers. As leaders contended for status and power, they caused internal discord which often flared into intramural strife, and often resulted in dissidents splitting from the original *huiguan*. Conditions in the *Siyi Huiguan*, for example, with the largest *huiguan* membership numbers, fostered the development of such situations. Thus, it was the most susceptible to secession.<sup>313</sup>

In April 1853, a dispute occurred between Xinning and Siyi members of the *Siyi Huiguan*, which also possessed the largest number of Siyi immigrants. They seceded to form the *Ningyang Huiguan* (*Ning Yung Association*). Violent conflict between members

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<sup>310</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 41, 70. Him Mark Lai draws upon the diary of Li Gui, who alleges that Xin'an immigrants, a majority of whom spoke the Hakka dialect, withdrew from the *Yeong Wo Huiguan* to form the *Xin'an Huiguan*. However, other sources fail to corroborate the occurrence of such an event.

<sup>311</sup> California State Legislature, Assembly, *Majority and Minority Reports of the Committee on the Mines and Mining Interests*, 1853 Session in the Assembly, Doc. 28 (Sacramento, CA: State Printing Office, 1878), 9.

<sup>312</sup> *The Oriental*, Jan. 25, 1855. English Section.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

of each faction in front of a Chinatown theatre only served to exacerbate hostilities between the two groups. Yee Ahtye, also known as George Athei, influential leader of the *Siyi Huiguan*, persuaded fellow Yu (Yee) clansmen from Xinning not to join in the desertion.<sup>314</sup> However, this group eventually deserted with Kaiping and Enping clans when a dispute arose over the presidency of the *Siyi Huiguan* in 1862. These clans formed the *Hehe Huiguan* (*Hop Wo Association*).

Merchants from Xinhui, representing the one remaining founding group of the *Siyi Huiguan*, subsequently led its reorganization as the *Gangzhou Huiguan* (*Kong Chow Association*), which at that time also included immigrants from the Heshan (Hokshan) and Sihui (Szewui) regions of China.<sup>315</sup> Feelings of discontent remained between rival groups remained even after these secessions. Frequent news items recounted fights between adherents of the *Hehe Huiguan* and members of the *Siyi* and *Ningyang Huiguan*.<sup>316</sup> After a contentious battle over land to build a headquarters building and temple for the *Sze Yap Huiguan*,<sup>317</sup> the new *Gangzhou Huiguan* fell heir to the land and building of the *Siyi Huiguan*, including what is today known as Kong Chow Temple, later promulgating the widely held misconception that *Gangzhou Huiguan* was San Francisco's first *huiguan*.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Loomis, "Six Chinese Companies"; Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 48, 70.

<sup>315</sup> Loomis, "Six Chinese Companies."

<sup>316</sup> *Daily Alta California*, Sept. 8, 1863; Mar. 7, 1864.

<sup>317</sup> For details of the battle, consult Eng Ying Gong and Bruce Grant, *Tong War!* (New York, NY: Nicholas L. Brown, 1930), 31-32; Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 42.

<sup>318</sup> One finds this historical error in William Hoy's widely cited *The Chinese Six Companies* (San Francisco, CA: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1942), 2 and *The Story of Kong Chow Temple* (N.p., n.d.). *The Chinese Six Companies* was as a public relations document to present a positive image of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of San Francisco to the general public.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>HUIGUAN</u>	<u>REGIONS OR CLANS REPRESENTED</u>	<u>COMMON NAMES/SPELLINGS</u>
ca. 1851	<i>Sanyi**</i> “Three Counties”	Nanhai, Panyu, Shunde	<i>Sam Yup</i> Association Canton Company
	<i>Siyi</i> “Four Counties”	Xinhui, Xinning (now Taishan), Kaiping, and Enping	<i>Sze Yap</i> Association
1852	<i>Yanghe**</i>	Xianshan (now Zhongshan), Zhuhai, including Doumen, Dongguan, Zengcheng, Boluo Immigrants from Xin'an, including Bao'an (majority were Hakka)	<i>Yeong Wo</i> Association
	<i>Xin'an</i> (name changed to <i>Renhe**</i> )	Hakka Majority seceding from <i>Yanghe Huiguan</i> (remains overwhelmingly Hakka)	<i>Sun On</i> Association <i>Xinwui</i> Association <i>Yan Wo</i> Association
1853	<i>Ningyang*</i>	Seceding Siyi immigrants from <i>Siyi Huiguan</i> (originally representing largest number of <i>Siyi</i> immigrants)	<i>Ning Yung</i> Association
1862	<i>Hehe*</i>	Yu, Kaiping, Enping clans seceding from original <i>Siyi Huiguan</i>	<i>Hop Wo</i> Association
1864	<i>Gangzhou*</i>	Merchants from Xinhui (one remaining founding group of <i>Siyi Huiguan</i> ); at this time also includes immigrants from Heshan and Sihui	<i>Kong Chow</i> Association
1878	<i>Zhaoqing*</i>	Several Kaiping and Enping clans seceding from <i>Hehe Huiguan</i>	<i>Sue Hing</i> Association
1879	<i>Hehe Huiguan</i> secedes into three additional groups: <i>Yu Fengcai Tang</i> <i>Tan Yiyi Tang</i> <i>En-kai Tongxiang</i> <i>Zhaoqing*</i> (See above)		<i>Yu Fung Toy Tong</i> <i>Tom Yee Yee Tong</i> <i>Yen Hoy</i> Association <i>Sue Hing</i> Association
ca. 1883	<i>Hehe*</i> Reconstituted	Yee clan members from Taishan remain dominant in the <i>Hehe Huiguan</i> , although some Kaiping clans, notably the <i>Xie</i> , <i>Hu</i> , a large portion of the <i>Deng</i> and <i>Zheng</i> clans from Enping are also represented.	<i>Hop Wo</i> Association
	<i>Zhaoqing*</i> secedes		<i>Sue Hing</i> Association

Interviews with former officers, older San Francisco Chinese, as well as more readily-available English-language sources provided much of the information in the booklet.



once again from  
*Hehe*\*

1898	Reestablishment of <i>En-Kai Tongxiang</i>	<i>Tan (Tom, Hom)</i> , and <i>Guan (Kwan, Quan)</i> deserting with several Kaiping and Enping clans within <i>Hehe Huiguan</i>	<i>Yen Hoy Association</i>
1908	Merger of <i>En-kai Tongxiang</i> and <i>Zhaoqing</i>	Subsequently, <i>Zhaoqing Huiguan</i> accepts members from Sanshui, Sihui, <i>Tong Lak Yip Hong San Tong</i> Qingyuan, Gaoyao, and Gaoming, communities belonging to the <i>Liuyi Tonshan Tang</i> . Thirteen Enping clans led by the <i>Tang (Tong)</i> clan also secede to join the <i>Zhaoqing Huiguan</i> . The majority of <i>Zhaoqing</i> members, however, were emigrants from Kaiping. Five of the six districts belonging to the <i>Liuyi Tonshan Tang</i> secede from original <i>Sanyi Huiguan</i> (due to a dispute over presidency) and join the <i>Zaoqing Huiguan</i> (the sixth, <i>Hua Xian</i> , possibly a <i>tongxianghui</i> , remains affiliated with the <i>Sanyi Huiguan</i> ). Eventually immigrants from Yangjiang and Yangchun gain control and the organization becomes the second largest <i>huiguan</i> in membership and the <i>huiguan</i> with the greatest number of counties represented.	<i>Look Yup Tong Sen Tong</i>

\* *Siyi* immigrants continue to dominate the *Ningyang*, *Gangzhou*, *Hehe*, and *Zhaoqing Huiguan*

\*\* The *Yanghe*, *Sanyi*, and *Renhe Huiguan*, with memberships originating – represented heterogeneous populations, organized themselves by region with *shantang* (“benevolence hall”) as basic units.

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Table 1. Timeline of *Huiguan* Development in San Francisco, Chinese Clans or Regions Represented and Common *Huiguan* Names and Spellings

As member-supported organizations with paid staffers, elected officers or “agents,” and clearly defined responsibilities, the *Siyi Huiguan* leaders held positions as servants and officers, all elected to serve six-month terms. At these elections, no one expected all members to cast their votes. However, they required representation by the collective interest of each county group. The *Siyi Huiguan*, in part supported by membership dues, itemized its allocation of funds:

1. The purchase of ground and erection of the building used by us; 2. the salaries of agents and servants; 3. fuel, water, candles and oil; 4. assisting the sick to return; 5. the bestowment of medicines; 6. coffins and funeral expenses; 7. the repairs of tombs; 8. expenses of lawsuits; 9. taxes upon our frame house at Sacramento; 10. drayage, and other outlay, for passengers landing or departing, by ships.<sup>319</sup>

*Huiguan* membership numbers in San Francisco fluctuated, corresponding to demographic changes within the Chinese community. In the 1850s, and according to *The Oriental*, the *Yanghe Huiguan* was the largest, with membership of fourteen thousand individuals.<sup>320</sup> But both its membership and its clout declined by the 1870s, when the *Ningyang Huiguan* became the largest and most powerful, with seventy-five thousand members, all from Xinning County.<sup>321</sup>

In 1881, the *San Francisco Chronicle* declared the “bulk of celestials” belonged to the “Sam Yap [*Sanyi*] and Ning Yang [*Ningyang*] Companies.”<sup>322</sup> In the early-

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<sup>319</sup> *The Oriental*, January 25, 1855. English Section.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> California State Legislature, Senate, Special Committee on Chinese Immigration, *Chinese Immigration: The Social, Moral and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration* (Sacramento, CA: State Printing Office, 1876); reprint (San Francisco, CA: R and E Research Associates, 1970), 44.

<sup>322</sup> “Increased Chinese Immigration,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1881.

twentieth century the commanding presence of the *Ningyang Huiguan*'s building in Waverly Place announced its eminence. Below the massive characters in front of the building spelling *Ningyang Huiguan* was an explanation of the two characters, *ning* and *yang*: *Ningjing fada*, meaning "to peacefully prosper", and *Yangde fangheng*, meaning "masculine virtues flourish at present."<sup>323</sup>

Instability continued to persist despite the final fragmentation of the *Siyi Huiguan*. Friction soon developed within the *Hehe Huiguan* over the Yee clan's domineering presence.<sup>324</sup> On September 21, 1878, the *San Francisco Bulletin* noted the split occurring in the *Hehe Huiguan*:

For some time there has been much dissatisfaction among the Chinese belonging to the Hop Wo Company [*Hehe Huiguan*] regarding the management of the funds. About a year ago there was an opposition to the selection of officers for the year, and a crowd of disgusted Chinamen favored the new president, as he was going to the Company's house, with showers of soft cheese, liver, chow chow, etc. . . . The discontented were forced to submit, but recently they have determined to form a new company and today it begins operations.<sup>325</sup>

The newly formed *Zhaoqing Huiguan* (*Sue Hing Association*) included members of several Kaiping and Enping clans.<sup>326</sup>

Fragmentation continued when, in 1879, the original *Hehe Huiguan*, split into four new groups including the *Zhaoqing Huiguan*, *Yu Fengcai Tang* (*Yu Fung Toy Tong*), *Tan Yiyi Tang* (*Tom Yee Yee Tong*), the *En-kai Tongxiang Huiguan* (*Yen Hoy*

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<sup>323</sup> *The Oriental*, Jan. 25, 1855. English Section.

<sup>324</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 42.

<sup>325</sup> *San Francisco Bulletin*, September 21, 1878.

<sup>326</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 43.

Association). Through the mediation of Chinese Consul General Huang Zunxian, the factions reconstituted the *Hehe Huiguan* around 1883.<sup>327</sup> However, antagonisms remained and it is unclear from sources whether the *Zhaoqing Huiguan* refused to rejoin, or whether it rejoined only to secede again after a brief sojourn.<sup>328</sup> In 1898 the *Tan* (*Tom, Hom*), and *Guan* (*Kwan, Quan*) clans deserted with several Kaiping and Enping clans within the *Hehe Huiguan* to once again reestablish the *En-kai Tongxiang Huiguan*.<sup>329</sup>

In 1901, another thirteen Enping clans led by the *Tang* (*Tong*) clan also seceded, this time to join the *Zhaoqing Huiguan*.<sup>330</sup> The *En-kai Tongxiang Huiguan* and *Zhaoqing Huiguan* soon found their respective constituencies too small to be effective and initiated merger talks, successfully completed in 1909.<sup>331</sup> Subsequently, the *Zhaoqing Huiguan* accepted members from the Sanshui (Samshui), Sihui (Szewui), Qingyuan (Tsingyuen), Gaoyao (or Koyiu), and Gaoming (Koming) communities belonging to the *Liuyi Tonshan Tang* (*Look Yup Tong Sen Tong, Lak Yip Hong San Tong*). Eventually immigrants from Yangjiang (Yeungkong) and Yangchun (Yeungchun) gained control of the *Zhaoqing*, making it the second largest *huiguan* in membership and the one with the greatest number of Chinese counties represented. However, the majority of *Zhaoqing* members were

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 43, 70. These were drafts of Huang Zunxian's reports written while he was Chinese consul general in San Francisco from 1882 to 1885. They were discovered in the archives of Mei Xian, Huang's native district, in 1980. Only report nos. 18 through 37 were found, with no. 27 missing. The reports covered the period from September 5, 1882 to April 1, 1883. Huang Zunxian (also known as Huang Gongdu) was a supporter of the Reform Movement in China. As consul general, he helped to correct many *huiguan* abuses and mediated many conflicts. Years afterward, Chinese in San Francisco still remembered him and sang his praises. Him Mark Lai's translation and analysis of the writings of Huang Zunxian provide crucial insight into the Chinese view of a critical period in Chinese American history.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

emigrants from Kaiping. As for the *Hehe Huiguan*, members of the Yee clan from Taishan remained dominant in the organization, although Chinese-language histories represent some Kaiping clans, notably the *Xie (Tse, Der)*, *Hu (Woo)*, a large part of the *Deng (Teng, Dong, Ong)*, as well as the *Zheng (Chang, Jung)* clans from Enping.<sup>332</sup>

Due to the close identification of clan lineage groups from the Siyi area, the Siyi-dominated *huiguan* – the *Ningyang*, *Zhaoqing*, *Hehe*, and *Gangzhou* – were also usually part of a surname association, or *zongqinhui*, meaning “kindred club,” including members with a common surname regardless of location. The remaining three *huiguan* – the *Yanghe*, *Sanyi*, and *Renhe* – with memberships originating from areas where the population was more heterogeneous, organized themselves by region, with *shantang*, (literally, “benevolence hall”) as the basic units. Sometimes *huiguan* also continued to use the more ambiguous terms of *gongsuo* (“public hall”) and *tongxianghui* (“same villagers club”). Membership in one of these units qualified a person for membership in the associated *huiguan*. Similar to the *huiguan*, both *shantang* and surname associations provided mutual aid and charitable services to their memberships.<sup>333</sup>

*Huiguan* who did not have Siyi membership tended to have less turbulent histories. Him Mark Lai attributes this to the fact that smaller memberships precluded the growth of large rival power centers that not only fostered but sustained open conflicts and instability in larger *huiguan*.<sup>334</sup> However, in 1901 five of the six districts belonging

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 73. As Him Mark Lai illustrates, *tongxianghui* was a generic classification. The geographical area covered equaled that of a *shantang*, or subdivisions of the area covered by a *shantang*. In other cases it was equivalent to a county or group of counties covered by one *huiguan*. Regional associations also referred to themselves as *gongsuo*.

<sup>334</sup> Yuk Ow, Him Mark Lai, and Philip P. Choy, *A History of the Sam Yup Benevolent Association in the United States, 1850-1974* (San Francisco, CA: Sam Yup Association, 1975), 61.

to the *Liuyi Tonshan Tang* left the *Sanyi Huiguan* due to a dispute over the presidency. They joined the *Zaoqing Huiguan* while the sixth, *Hua Xian*, possibly a *tongxianghui*, remained affiliated with the *Sanyi Huiguan*.<sup>335</sup>

Such intergroup animosity was one of the factors justifying the very existence of the *huiguan* – namely, to protect members from external threats. The pitting of organized groups against one another tended to exacerbate these inherent antagonisms. Therefore, disputes between individuals always had the potential of evolving into group conflict because each *huiguan* felt obligated to support its member or members. In the 1850s, several disagreements escalated into violent battles, with each group backed by its respective *huiguan* with manpower and arms. One example was the “Weaverville War” of 1854, which began over a gambling quarrel and ended with *Yanghe Huiguan* members pitted against the combined forces of the *Sanyi*, *Siyi*, and *Ningyang Huiguan*.<sup>336</sup> Another open conflict occurred at a Chinese mining camp in 1856, pitting members of the *Sanyi Huiguan* against the *Renhe Huiguan* in a quarrel over a claim.<sup>337</sup>

The number and scope of such conflicts decreased in the following decades, though *huiguan* antagonisms remained. After the establishment of the Chinese consulate in San Francisco, pressure brought to bear by the office helped to resolve many *huiguan* disputes before they escalated into violent confrontation.<sup>338</sup> Moreover, according to Him

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid. As the authors contend, after World War II, when the *Hua Xian* community in California expanded in population and affluence, its leaders sought a share in the leadership role of the *Sam Yup Huiguan* and membership in the CCBA. After the CCBA rebuffed it, the *Hua Xian* people seceded and established the *Hua Xian Huiguan* (or *Fah Yuen Huiguan*) in 1955.

<sup>336</sup> *Shasta Courier*, August 12, 1854.

<sup>337</sup> *Daily Alta California*, October 31, 1856.

<sup>338</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 49.

Mark Lai, the consular office was instrumental in assuaging *huiguan* confrontations by helping to establish a system of presidential rotation within the CCBA among the various *huiguan*, as well as a system of rotating the presidency and other offices of each *huiguan* among the various affiliated *shantang*, or clans.<sup>339</sup> Even though this mechanical apportioning of the offices did not eliminate the domination of powerful individuals or groups, the institutionalized rotation of power eased tensions among contending factions.<sup>340</sup>

However, the mistrust and prejudice between dialect groups aggravated existing *huiguan* conflicts of interest and inherent rivalries. One large conflict occurred in the 1890s when the *huiguan* of Siyi immigrants backed their constituents' boycott against Sanyi businesses. According to Him Mark Lai, the boycott was in protest of the Sanyi's monopolistic domination of certain types of Chinatown businesses, especially in the import-export area.<sup>341</sup> The *Los Angeles Times*, however, claimed the trouble originated with the murder of Chang Wai, a member of the *Sanyi Huiguan*, and the resultant arrest of Mok Tai, a *Siyi Huiguan* member for the murder.<sup>342</sup>

According to the account, the *Siyi Huiguan* believed he was innocent of the charges and requested the *Sanyi Huiguan* call off the prosecution, but they refused. The Chinese consul sided with the *Sanyi Huiguan*, which was comprised of the "wealthier classes of Chinese who do a big business as butchers" while the *Siyi Huiguan* comprised

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> "The Chinese Boycott: Ruin Stares the Sam Yup Companies in the Face," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1895.

“the laboring classes, mainly customers of the Sam Yups.” Three additional *huiguan* sided with the *Siyi* against the *Sanyi*, while the *Yanghe Huiguan*, representing “the better class of merchants, holds aloof from the fray.” However, this neutrality was short-lived as the *Siyi Huiguan* threatened the *Yanghe* with war if they did not join them against the *Sanyi*. Jaw Men Sang, president of the *Yanghe Huiguan*, attempted to use diplomacy while maintaining neutrality in the quarrel, and in doing so, lost his presidential post. He was succeeded by Bow Yee, a newly-arrived *Yanghe Huiguan* member from China. The Chinese consul, generally a man “of great influence among his countrymen [was] now treated with contempt by all except the Sam Yups [*Sanyi*].”<sup>343</sup>

A week prior to reporting on the alleged background of the dispute, the *Los Angeles Times* recounted the “factional fight” occurring between the *Siyi* and *Sanyi Huiguan*, culminating in “the disruption of the Six Companies, the most powerful organization ever instituted by the Chinese in this country.” This report noted that all of the efforts of Chinese Consul General Li Yung Yew and other prominent Chinese to bring about a settlement between the two *huiguan* ended in failure. Thus, the Chinese Minister in Washington, D.C. announced his intentions to arrive in San Francisco to try his “powers as peacemaker,” though the article was quick to conclude that “leaders of this warfare” could expect to “have their heads lopped off whenever they return to China” unless they complied with the demands of the Chinese Minister. The secession of the *Siyi* from “the Six Companies” left the latter with the “small end of the organization” and a depleted treasury:

The boycott started by the See Yups has nearly ruined the Sam Yup merchants and if not ended soon it will cause the

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<sup>343</sup> “The Chinese Boycott,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1895.



retirement from business of a large number of firms. The boycott is being extended to every place in the United States where Chinese reside in any number.<sup>344</sup>

In spite of mediation efforts by several consul generals, the confrontation lasted many years before the sides reached a truce. It is difficult to ignore the class delineations represented within this feud, and indeed many *huiguan* rivalries evolved along class lines. This inter-clan and regional animosity did not subside until after the growth of nationalist sentiment in the twentieth century. The maturity of second- and third-generation Chinese Americans educated in American schools who had little or no real regional or clan affiliation also ameliorated these antagonisms.<sup>345</sup>

The *San Francisco Chronicle* also noted the subsequent removal of Consul General Li Yung Yew from his post four months after the reports of the *Siyi* and *Sanyi* factional disputes. The consul general received a dispatch from the Chinese Minister in Washington, D.C. effectively removing him from his position and appointing Fung Yung Hun, Li Yung Yew's former secretary, as his successor.

As Li Yung Yew was "extremely popular with the powers at Peking," Chinatown was abuzz in rumors about Li Yung Yew's fate. Although he was a close friend and counselor of the Chinese Minister, and was appointed minister in 1891 after serving the Chinese emperor in diplomatic visits to South America, the report assumed the removal was "but preparatory to bestowing further honors upon his head, that he is to be appointed a special agent of the Emperor to negotiate a treaty between the court of

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<sup>344</sup> "The Six Companies: The Result of a Factional Dispute among San Francisco Chinese," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1895.

<sup>345</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 49.

Peking and that of President Diaz of Mexico.” Chinese in San Francisco, however, continued to assume the change in leadership was attributable to the factional dispute.

The *Los Angeles Times* would also report on the funeral procession for Bow Yee, president of the *Yanghe Huiguan*, who arrived in San Francisco one year prior to his death to replace President Jaw Men Sang in the midst of the *huiguan* factional disputes. Bow Yee “was buried . . . with all the honors that his countrymen could bestow . . . and Chinatown has been in mourning ever since [his death occurred three days earlier].” The funeral procession further illustrates the cultural significance and importance Chinese placed on their dead, as well as associated funerary rituals:

. . . the procession to the cemetery was over a mile in length. The remains were carried in a gorgeous hearse drawn by six white horses, while a brass band played a dirge. Several Chinese bands were also in the procession, and three large trucks carried the baked meats which were to nourish Bow Yee’s soul while on its way to heaven.<sup>346</sup>

The article portrayed Bow Yee as “a big man among the Chinese” who “played an important part in their affairs here” and “was entrusted the delicate task of reconciling the quarreling Chinese.”<sup>347</sup>

San Francisco’s *huiguan* possessed a long history of working together, however, when dealing with certain matters of common concern. As early as 1853, Chinese in San Francisco formed a committee and elected merchants to act with *huiguan* presidents in all public affairs involving the Chinese community.<sup>348</sup> In succeeding years, observers

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<sup>346</sup> “Bow Yee Buried: A Gorgeous Chinese Funeral at San Francisco,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1896.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> “Report of the Committee on Mines and Mining Interests,” 1-21.

referred to “four great houses” or “five companies” in accordance with the number of *huiguan* existing at any particular time.

Around 1862, Chinese established a *gongsuo*, or public hall, consisting of *huiguan* officers and committee members.<sup>349</sup> This, however, appeared to be a loosely-organized federation of *huiguan*, which by consensus made decisions on matters affecting the general interest of the Chinese on the West Coast. It settled disputes between members of different *huiguan*, consulted on the best methods to seek relief from anti-Chinese discrimination, devised means to bar the importation of Chinese prostitutes, and entertained public figures.<sup>350</sup> Since there were six *huiguan* at the time, the *Ningyang*, *Hehe*, *Gangzhou*, *Yanghe*, *Sanyi*, and *Renhe*, many contemporaries referred to them collectively as the Six Chinese Companies, known popularly as the Chinese Six Companies. No matter how they referred to the organization, Euro-American society recognized the federation as representative of the entire Chinese community in America.

An anonymous editorial in the *New York Times* in 1878 attempted to clarify the meaning and true intentions of *huiguan* in San Francisco to the larger society. Although the editorial is anonymous, it seems probable, due to a high level of understanding about the organization, that it was written by a *huiguan* member, merchant-official, or perhaps a Euro-American scholar or missionary. It began by stating frankly that many people “who know little or nothing about [*huiguan*]” spoke much “nonsense.” Moreover, many persons “who ought to know better” also failed to represent them correctly.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 50, 72.

<sup>350</sup> Loomis, “Six Chinese Companies.”

<sup>351</sup> “The Chinese ‘Six Companies’: To the Editor of the New York Times,” *New York Times*, February 5, 1878.

In a “short and truthful account” of the ‘institutions,’ the writer began by stating the Six Companies were not ‘companies’ at all. According to the author, the ‘Six Companies’ individually or combined were not engaged in trade or business “of any kind.” The author further asserted: “The word ‘company’ is as near as we can conveniently come to a literal translation of the Chinese word (which I spare you) signifying, in this case, a voluntary association for the mutual benefit and protection of the members, and not for profit.” The primary purposes of the organization for “which every Chinaman on the Pacific coast may, with sufficient exactness, be said to belong,” were its caring for the Chinese dead and, “at the proper season, to send their remains back to China for interment” as a “well-known and vital principle of their religion.” While in China, surviving members of the family attended to the burial, “In California, where there are practically no Chinese families, the six companies are organized to perform this sacred office.” *Huiguan* thus “voluntary subscribe[d] to pay the heavy expense of embalming the body of a fellow-passenger who may happen to die at sea on the voyage between San Francisco and China than see the remains ‘confided to the deep’ beyond the hope of happiness in the Chinaman’s heaven.” While acknowledging the payments made to “his society at or before the time of his return to China,” with the “surplus of this fund,” companies took care of the sick and the poor.<sup>352</sup>

Each “society,” the anonymous writer stated, “is composed of people coming from the same village, group of villages, or district[s]...” and “the inhabitants of these different districts speak slightly different dialects.” Upon landing at San Francisco’s wharf, “the Chinaman is met by the representatives of the company composed of the

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

inhabitants of his own district in China, is taken to his ‘cousin-brothers’ or his ‘friends’ if he has any; if not, is cared for till he can find employment.” The editorial further negated the notion that the ‘Six Companies’ ‘import[ed]’ Chinese immigrants arriving to San Francisco:

As a rule, their passages are paid in China by the Chinese merchants resident there, and afterward refunded by collections, as wages are earned, through the correspondents of the same firms in California. The isolation of the Chinese, not only from the white people but from the members of all other companies, united to the high wages paid here, renders the task of making these collections comparatively easy. There are some losses by death, some by dishonesty, but the total is small and the interest is very high.<sup>353</sup>

During the height of the anti-Chinese movement, Chinese Consul General Huang Zunxian pushed for the formation of a single organization in San Francisco with more clearly delineated powers in order to provide more effective leadership in the fight against anti-Chinese discrimination. Absorbing the earlier *gongsuo*, this new organization emerged on November 19, 1882.<sup>354</sup> Zheng Zaoru, the Chinese envoy in Washington, D.C., gave the new organization its Chinese name, *Jinshan Zhonguo Huiguan*.<sup>355</sup> California later incorporated it under its state laws in 1901.<sup>356</sup> The English name, provided in California’s bylaws, is the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of the U.S.A. Other branches of the CCBA developed across America.<sup>357</sup> .

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> *San Francisco Call*, November 20, 1882.

<sup>355</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 50, 72.

<sup>356</sup> Hoy, *Chinese Six Companies*, 27.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

The first CCBA president was Chen Wenquan (or Chun Mun Chuen) of the *Gangzhou Huiguan*.<sup>358</sup>

The San Francisco *Daily Alta California* attributed the CCBA's founding to "the fiftieth anniversary of the birthday of the mother of the Emperor of China." The Empress Dowager Cixi was actually the aunt of Emperor Guangxu, and she was the *de facto* ruler of the Qing Dynasty until her death in 1908.<sup>359</sup> However, noting the rumors circling around the merger, the article stated: "the Six Companies had consolidated in order to form a more compact body, and to carry out by such a combination in a more efficient manner the aims and objects of the various associations." While the *Alta* interviewed several Chinese residents, the reporter received contradictory answers related to "the consolidation." In an interview with the Chinese Consul General, however, in which the reporter acknowledged his limited English, he

confirmed the report that the Six Companies had formed one association by the advice of the Counsel-General, and Chung Mun Chueng, of the Kong Chow Company, had been elected President. By a subsequent inquiry at the office of the Sam Yup Company, on Dupont Street, the fact was ascertained that the companies had come together merely for the purpose of forming an organization to befriend the sick, homeless, and impoverished of their race in this city. The companies in their business transactions will remain as distinct as formerly.<sup>360</sup>

*Huiguan* membership in the CCBA did not always remain at six. When the CCBA accepted the *Zhaoqing* and *En-kai Tongxiang Huiguan*, six companies were reality eight

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<sup>358</sup> *San Francisco Call*, November 20, 1882.; "The Chinese Six Companies," *Daily Alta California*, November 20, 1882.

<sup>359</sup> For additional information about the Empress Dowager Cixi, consult Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 217-18, 226, 234-35, 246-48, 277.

<sup>360</sup> "The Chinese Six Companies," *San Francisco Daily Alta*, November 20, 1882.

for a few years. However, contemporaries continued to refer to the organization as the Chinese Six Companies throughout these many permutations. The organizations incorporated earlier *huiguan* presidential provisions into the CCBA presidency.<sup>361</sup>



Figure 18. “On Dupont Street,” Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906<sup>362</sup>

*Huiguan* presidents collectively comprised the CCBA’s *shendong*, or “gentry-directors.” Up until the end of the Qing dynasty, it was also customary for the CCBA to submit to the consul general a list of candidates to choose and appoint its other board members. These board members were *shangdong*, or “merchant-directors,” a term

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<sup>361</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 51.

<sup>362</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/index.html](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/index.html). (accessed August 14, 2009).

reflecting their class origin.<sup>363</sup> Initially there was no limitation on the CCBA presidential term. However, this quickly gave rise to leadership abuses and further factional disputes. *Huiguan* set a limit of six months to each presidential term, and by 1900 the length of each term decreased to three months. Six *huiguan* rotated the CCBA presidential office among their organizations, without representation from the *Renhe Huiguan*, the smallest *huiguan* in membership.<sup>364</sup>

In addition, the Chinese consul general assumed the right to confirm the president's appointment, although during this period no fixed number of assigned directors represented each organization, a situation tending to work in favor of the *Sanyi*, *Yanghe*, and *Gangzhou Huiguan*, which had small memberships but represented a high percentage of merchants. For example, in 1907, the consul general appointed forty-one directors, out of which the *Ningyang Huiguan* had eleven, while the *Sanyi*, *Yanghe*, and *Gangzhou Huiguan*, whose combined memberships numbered less than that of the *Ningyang Huiguan*, each had six directors, or a total of eighteen.<sup>365</sup> This situation did not sit well with the leaders of the *Ningyang Huiguan*, the *huiguan* with the largest membership, who felt that they should obviously have a greater voice. But when the CCBA drafted a revision to its bylaws in 1925, out of a total of eighty directors, it only assigned the *Ningyang Huiguan* twenty-two, while the *Sanyi*, *Yanghe*, and *Gangzhou Huiguan* each had twelve, or a total of thirty-six.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 51, 72.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.





Figure 19. Officers of the CCBA in 1890, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA<sup>367</sup>

In 1928 the *Ningyang Huiguan* began a national boycott of the newspaper *Young China* over published articles alleged to be insulting to the *huiguan* and its role in the CCBA. Using this as a pretext, the *Ningyang Huiguan* withdrew from further participation in CCBA meetings and demanded rights commensurate with the size of its membership. In the meantime, it withheld the exit permit assessments that normally passed to the CCBA as part of its contribution to the general operating fund. As this amount constituted about half the budget, it had a serious financial impact on the remaining *huiguan*, forcing them to compensate for the deficit. The CCBA board finally succumbed to the pressure, agreed to most of the *Ningyang Huiguan*'s demands, and incorporated it into its revised bylaws in 1930.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> [http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=The\\_Six\\_Companies.](http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Six_Companies.), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

The new bylaws set the board at fifty-five members, with the number redistributed to each *huiguan* in proportion to the number of registered members in 1926. Accordingly, the *Ningyang Huiguan*, having 48.5 percent of 26,676 registrants, entitled it to twenty-seven directors, one less than half the board total. This pared the number of directors for the *Sanyi*, *Yanghe*, and *Gangzhou Huiguan* drastically to a total of thirteen. The revised bylaws also set the CCBA presidential term to two months, with the *Ningyang Huiguan* president filling the office every other term, while each of the other *huiguan* presidents, with the exception of the *Renhe*, rotated to fill the remaining terms. It was not until 1988 when the CCBA finally admitted the *Renhe Huiguan* into the presidential rotational scheme when it passed a resolution to add it in 1989. However, the *Renhe Huiguan* did not have a presidential turn until November 2, 1990, when Li Kaiming (or Hoi Ming Lee) became the first *Renhe Huiguan* president to fill the CCBA presidency.<sup>369</sup>

These changes mark a significant shift in the CCBA's distribution of power. Population became the sole determinant for apportioning the number of directors instead of previously used criterion, which favored *huiguan* representing a higher proportion of merchants among their memberships. The *Ningyang Huiguan* became the dominant voice on the CCBA board. Since there was little chance that the remaining *huiguan* could work together to thwart the domination of the *Ningyang Huiguan*, a decision on any question by the *Ningyang Huiguan* would determine the fate of other *huiguan* within

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 52.

the CCBA. Since this important change, no revision of the bylaws occurred, nor did the CCBA admit any new *huiguan* to its ranks.<sup>370</sup>

After the establishments of the Chinese legation in Washington, D.C., and the Chinese consul general in San Francisco, the Qing government attempted to bring the powerful and virtually autonomous *huiguan* under control, pressuring the *huiguan* into correcting some of their more obvious abuses. In the early 1880s, *huiguan* began recruiting titled scholars from China to serve as presidents.<sup>371</sup> The practice, according to William Hoy, began as early as the 1850s.<sup>372</sup> It gradually became a custom by the late-nineteenth century. In the 1870s the presidents of all *huiguan* remained in San Francisco after their tenure, at least according to their testimony before the 1876 California Senate Committee.<sup>373</sup> Some leaders engaged in other business activities simultaneously.<sup>374</sup> In subsequent years, the CCBA institutionalized the custom of selecting *huiguan* presidents by writing it into the CCBA constitution. From 1881 on, for example, all fourteen presidents of the *Ningyang Huiguan* were such scholars, and thirteen of them earned high-level scholarly titles.<sup>375</sup> However, most selected scholars arrived to serve as president and then returned to China afterwards.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ow, Lai, and Choy, *A History of the Sam Yup Benevolent Association in the United States*, 150. According to the authors and the existing records of the *Sam Yup Huiguan*, the earliest titled scholar to fill its presidency arrived in 1882.

<sup>372</sup> Hoy, *The Chinese Six Companies*, 11.

<sup>373</sup> *The Social, Moral, and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration*, 63, 70, 94-95, 97- 98.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>375</sup> *The Oriental*, April 27, 1888. English Section.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

In 1887 the Qing envoy to the United States issued orders requiring the provincial governor-general, who had jurisdiction over the *huiguan* district of origin in China, to validate the credentials of the president-elect. The Chinese government then issued a diplomatic passport for the president-elect and one *suiyuan*, or personal staff member, to arrive as members of the consular staff.<sup>377</sup> While the CCBA had to report the name of each *huiguan* president to the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., and to the governor of Guangdong in China, the Chinese government did not have sole authority over the CCBA in San Francisco. It was, rather, an expedient measure providing *huiguan* presidents diplomatic status for travel purposes in order to prevent hampering of their arrival by exclusion laws. Moreover, each *huiguan* continued to select its president.<sup>378</sup>

The intent for importing titled scholars as president ensured that the individual would not involve themselves in local factional politics. However, the inevitable result was also a president who was unfamiliar with the condition of the Chinese community in San Francisco, at least at the beginning of his presidential term. Moreover, the arrangement also made the *huiguan* an extension of the Chinese diplomatic service, serving as a channel between the Chinese government and the Chinese in the United States. *Huiguan* continued to use this method to fill presidential offices until 1925, when the U.S. State Department objected to providing *huiguan* presidents diplomatic status because it was not in accordance with accepted international protocol. In 1926 China acquiesced, issuing tourist passports only to the presidents-elect, and no longer allowing accompanying staff members to join *huiguan* presidents. Because of this immigration

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<sup>377</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 48, 71.

<sup>378</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 109.

restriction, *huiguan* gradually began to fill the office of president with local candidates; the earliest was Chen Jingshan of the *Yanghe Huiguan* in 1926.<sup>379</sup>

*Huiguan* leaders who arrived directly from China held the highest power in San Francisco. Scholars chosen by home districts in China who passed civil service examinations at different levels represented the *huiguan* presidency. As a voluntary adoption of China's centuries-old method of selecting officials, this practice powerfully illustrates how Chinese tradition served as the mandate legitimating power in San Francisco's *huiguan*.

In 1903 Liang Qichao found this custom highly disturbing, viewing it as an obstacle to reform and progress. Liang commented on Chinese leaders' ignorance of American customs and language, and criticized the cruelty and oppression of a generally passive Chinese community. While Liang perhaps correctly assumed the presidents' ignorance of American customs and language, his preoccupation with Western notions of progress explains his disdain for Chinese desire and respect for tradition in San Francisco. By possessing scholarly titles as official acknowledgement of classical Confucian learning, *huiguan* presidents embodied traditional Chinese cultural heritage. In San Francisco, association with that heritage carried more weight than did familiarity with Western culture.<sup>380</sup>

China's government did not dispatch all consular officials, however. Sometimes the consulate employed former *huiguan* leaders, which enhanced its effectiveness in dealing with community affairs. In 1888, for instance, two such officials worked for the

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<sup>379</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 48, 70.

<sup>380</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 110.

consulate. In approving their employment, a senior embassy official especially praised one candidate for his discipline and elegant handwriting, a critical criterion for judging a scholar-statesman, and pointed out: “In the Gold Mountain, where Chinese and foreigners live together . . . his knowledge of the people and place [San Francisco’s Chinatown] can help to resolve disputes.”<sup>381</sup> With the authority to approve board members of the CCBA, the consulate general stood at the apex of political authority in San Francisco’s Chinatown.<sup>382</sup>

Qing diplomats in America also pushed *huiguan* leadership reforms that were successful to some degree, encouraging Consul General Huang Zunxian to say

in recent years [*huiguan*] have issued financial statements of income and disbursements for public examination. Except for the salaries of the directors, no abuses have arisen due to misappropriations and embezzlements. When I arrived I ordered the directors to arbitrate disputes. Since the directors had regard for the *huiguan*’s reputation, each has done his best in performing his duties and has thereby gained credibility among the membership. Thus the atmosphere has changed somewhat.<sup>383</sup>

*Huiguan* buildings were ubiquitous in San Francisco’s Chinatown. *The Oriental* provides a detailed description of the *Yanghe Huiguan* building:

As the reader has walked . . . his attention has been attracted by a large frame structure, evidently of Chinese architecture . . . A pair of lions, carved in wood, guard the wide doorway. . . . The two perpendicular inscriptions on either side are poetical lines. They read, Tseung Kwong Ham Man Li, Sui Hi Po Tung Yan. May the prosperous light fill a thousand leagues; May the auspicious air pervade mankind.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> *The Oriental*, April 27, 1888. The English Section.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 48, 71.

<sup>384</sup> *The Oriental*, January 25, 1855. English Section.

The prominent Chinese motif of the building was not intended to draw the attention of Euro-American spectators. San Francisco's Chinatown was not yet a tourist attraction. It embodied Chinese cultural traditions *huiguan* leaders fought to uphold. According to Yong Chen, Chinese in San Francisco modeled buildings after long-standing Chinese traditional structures. For example, a *Panyu Huiguan* building existed in Beijing where a rich merchant from Panyu County donated a large sum of money to maintain the *huiguan* house.<sup>385</sup> As the *huiguan*'s physical prominence illustrates, the merchant class, continued to maintain control of the CCBA and its affiliated *huiguan*.

Despite collaborative efforts in matters of immigration and foreign affairs, CCBA leadership in San Francisco's Chinese community had many limitations. Him Mark Lai's translation of Chinese envoy Liang Cheng's comments in 1907 perhaps expresses this most succinctly:

When the [CCBA] was established it was entirely patterned after the traditional *xiangyue* system. Thus its aims and objectives as well as its powers were lacking in definition, or were described only sketchily. These simple principles are still being followed, but in reality they are irreconcilable with the structures required for autonomous rule. The organization is also obviously incongruous with the concept of a chamber of commerce, since it not only cannot unify the merchants, do research on commercial affairs and compete with outsiders for supremacy in the marketplace, but in the community it cannot even discharge its obligations to its fellow countrymen in passing judgment on right and wrong and helping the sick and suffering.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 288.

<sup>386</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 53, 72; and Kung-Chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1960), 184-205. Utilizing a quote from the CCBA minutes, Him Mark Lai also discusses the origins of the *xiangyue*, which was a post established during the early Qing Dynasty. An official appointed in each locality was responsible for lecturing periodically to the populace, urging them to practice virtue and lead peaceful lives. In time, the office also assumed functions not directly related to indoctrination. In some instances, especially Guangdong, the *xiangyue* became arbiters of local affairs. Villages of certain localities also



Figure 20. “Family From Consulate,” Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906<sup>387</sup>

As member of the Chinese Reform Association, Liang Qichao also made the following observation:

I looked at the *huiguan*’s bylaws and found that by and large they were patterned after organizations in the West – very civilized and very detailed. But when I observe the implementation, then there was not a single instance where the actions were not contrary to provisions of the [bylaws]. For example, the CCBA [is to the Chinese community] as the municipal government is to the entire city. But each time a meeting is convened, less than one in ten of the so-

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developed the custom of gathering in the *xiangyue* offices to make decisions on matters of mutual concern. In other instances the *xiangyue* assumed a policing function in neighborhoods and also organized defense against external threats.

<sup>387</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/FN-02254-GentheCT-115.jpg](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/FN-02254-GentheCT-115.jpg). (accessed August 14, 2009).



called *huiguan* presidents and directors attend. Enforcement [of the bylaws] is lax, yet no one raises any questions. Sometimes because of minor differences of opinion, the various *huiguan* will refuse to contribute their share of the CCBA's operating expenses and CCBA can do nothing about it.<sup>388</sup>

Despite these well-founded criticisms, the following chapter's examination of its associative functions, including legal charitable services for members in order to challenge legislative exclusion, and the maintenance of Chinese tradition and culture, underscores its role as an organization working for the interest and welfare of the Chinese community. However, one must also emphasize that *huiguan* did not participate in matters that worked against merchant interests. It thus specifically dealt with only those issues upon which all strata in society had a common interest.

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<sup>388</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 55.

## CHAPTER 5

### IN *DADU*, ‘BIG CITY’: CHARITY, EXCLUSION, AND THE RISE OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

From their inception, *huiguan* were the organizations by which the merchant class maintained social control in San Francisco’s Chinatown, influencing the lives of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants as soon as they arrived in San Francisco. *Huiguan* buildings served new Chinese immigrants by providing a place to lodge as well as providing water and facilities for cooking. Persons returning from inland towns on the West Coast en route to China, or persons having finished jobs who sought new employment, could also find temporary lodging there.<sup>389</sup>

While *huiguan* offered physical protection for its members, they also offered rewards for the apprehension and conviction of those who perpetrated crimes against their respective memberships. Largely to instigate anti-Chinese labor sentiment and to pass legislative exclusion, the popular press incorrectly claimed railroad contractors paid Chinese laborers thirty-two dollars per month, of which “probably \$2 is paid per capita monthly to the headmen of the coolies, this leaving \$30 to the laborers.”<sup>390</sup> Despite this claim, *huiguan* did assess their memberships in order to raise funds for operating expenses and for projects of common concern.

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>390</sup> “Increased Chinese Immigration,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 30, 1881.



Figure 21. “Tradesmen,” Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906<sup>391</sup>

One of the most successful functions of *huiguan* in San Francisco were its measures to prevent the absconding of defaulting debtors. Chinese intending to return to China had to report to their respective *huiguan* upon arrival to San Francisco. If members paid all debts and other financial obligations in full, *huiguan* issued the member an assessment permit, after the member paid the assessment fee. The revenues from these fees went toward the *huiguan*’s operating expenses.<sup>392</sup> According to one observer,

When the immigrant is about to return to China, [the *huiguan*] collects several dollars up to \$10 or \$20 from him. . . . The [huiguan] also made arrangements with steamship companies so that if [the *huiguan*] had not received this assessment from the immigrant, and [the

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<sup>391</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/FN-02251-GentheCT-121.jpg](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/FN-02251-GentheCT-121.jpg), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

*huiguan*] had not issued an exit permit, then the steamship company will not sell him a ticket. Because of this, no one returning to China sought to evade contributing this amount. The custom has been carried out for years and has become an accepted practice.<sup>393</sup>

The *huiguan*'s issuance of special permits ensured, as the Reverend Ira M. Condit noted, that "they [Chinese members] are not running away from debts or claims against them, and that they have paid the dues [required of each member]."<sup>394</sup> According to Him Mark Lai, the practice of using the power of the *huiguan* in San Francisco to ensure payment of debts developed during the early years of Chinese immigration to guarantee that those who arrived by the credit-ticket system would settle their accounts before departure.<sup>395</sup> Since practically all Chinese departed through San Francisco during the nineteenth century, San Francisco's *huiguan* were in a particular strategic position to enforce this requirement. To ensure compliance, each *huiguan* sent an inspector to the docks to collect exit permits from departing Chinese as they boarded ships.<sup>396</sup>

An exception to this rule were Chinese Christians, who refused to pay the tax on grounds that it would be used to support idolatry in *huiguan* temples. After prolonged negotiations, *huiguan* finally allowed Chinese missions and churches to issue exit permits and assess members of their congregations separately.<sup>397</sup> Liang Qichao also noted that

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<sup>393</sup> Loomis, "Six Chinese Companies"; "Report of the Committee on Mines and Mining Interests," 1-21.

<sup>394</sup> Ira M. Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him, and Fifty Years of Work for Him* (Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell, 1900), 35.

<sup>395</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 46-47.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>397</sup> Reverend O. Gibson, *The Chinese In America* (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877), 341-45.

American authorities sanctioned and protected the right of the *huiguan* to collect money from all departing Chinese except converted Christians.<sup>398</sup>

Because of the continuous flow of passengers leaving for China, the collection of departure fees remained a major source of revenue for almost all Chinese *huiguan* in San Francisco. According to official records, from 1908 to 1930 nearly ninety thousand Chinese departed from the United States. An overwhelming majority of these were men. During this period the *huiguan* regularly dispatched officers to make sure that every passenger had a “departure ticket.” CCBA bylaws adopted as late as 1930 required every Chinese traveler over eighteen years of age to pay the departure fee. *Huiguan* also imposed a ten-dollar fine on those attempting to dodge the fees and a fine of one hundred dollars for each *huiguan* officer assisting them.<sup>399</sup> Late in the nineteenth century, dues increased to nine dollars per passenger. They increased to eleven dollars early in the twentieth century, providing for an allocation of three dollars to the CCBA, four dollars and fifty cents to Chinese charity societies, one dollar to the Chinese Hospital, and one dollar to financing the fight against anti-Chinese legislation.<sup>400</sup> When a special need arose, *huiguan* collected additional fees. In 1914, for example, the CCBA required an additional fifty cents to required fees in order to help the Peace Association, established to respond to internal violence.<sup>401</sup> During the Great Depression dutiful collectors sometimes collided with uncooperative passengers. After such a collision turned violent in 1931, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company demanded the arrest of collectors and the

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<sup>398</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 104.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

Chinese consulate had to instruct the CCBA to restrain their fee collecting officers “in order to avoid the criticism of outsiders.”<sup>402</sup>

Despite its success in preventing the absconding of defaulting debtors and collecting assessments contributing to the benefit of the community, *huiguan* did face challenges in mediating this role. Moreover, not all native kinsmen felt like being charitable all the time. On November 21, 1890, the *New York Times* reported the story that one of the most extensive merchandising houses in San Francisco, Tong Yoong and Company, who were also labor contractors, fled to China with forty-thousand dollars belonging to two-hundred and forty Chinese fishermen returning from Alaska. The article ranked the firm of Geong Hen Ven and Haw Mee Sen in importance “next to the Six Companies.” The absconders owed creditors over twenty-thousand dollars, making their total liabilities over sixty-thousand dollars. The article further noted “failures” from the CCBA assessment system amounting to over two-hundred and fifty thousand dollars in that month alone. A riot in San Francisco ensued. The Chinese fishermen, left penniless after a whole season’s work, marched to the store of Tong Fung, one of the labor contractors’ bondsmen, and forcibly took possession of the store. Fifty fishermen closed the heavy iron doors and declared they would remain inside until they received their wages. Another crowd of fishermen occupied the store of Chew Chong, another bondsman, but failed to capture it due to police interference. While the report acknowledged “serious trouble is expected,” the CCBA issued a proclamation stating

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

they would do everything in their power for the fishermen. At the time of the report, Tong Fung's store was still in the possession of the rioters.<sup>403</sup>

Dutifully playing the role of the Chinese patriarchy in San Francisco's Chinatown in the nineteenth century, *huiguan* leaders did not hesitate to use force on those who defied their authority. For example, one Ah Ti allegedly "inflicted severe corporal punishment upon many of his more humble countrymen . . . cutting off their ears, flogging them or keeping them chained." These harsh disciplinary measures ceased only after the San Francisco County Grand Jury exposed them in 1853.<sup>404</sup> In 1907, the *New York Times* also reported on a CCBA-issued notice for a meeting held to discuss the claims made by American and Chinese firms in which Chinese debtors repudiated monies owed after the San Francisco earthquake and subsequent fire. Claims were to be placed in the hands of the CCBA on behalf of the Chinese government: "Where insurance has been collected by debtors who have refused payment of the claims against them, the relatives of the debtors are to be captured in China, it is said, and thrown into prison, to be held until the debtors meet their obligations."<sup>405</sup> This type of "insurance" practice was not new to Chinese in San Francisco. As early as the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.), authorities began to hold the relatives of accused individuals responsible for their actions.

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<sup>403</sup> "Chinese Traders Abscond: They Rob Their Countrymen in San Francisco and Start for China," *New York Times*, November 21, 1890.

<sup>404</sup> *Daily Alta California*, May 31, June 7, November 17, 18, 1853; *San Francisco Herald*, May 28, 29, 1853; Gunther Barth, *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 92; Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 71. Mark Lai also notes the preface written by CCBA President Ou Tianji in *Record for Rebuilding the Temple of Yeung Wo Association*, which stated that in the early years the *huiguan* "clothed, fed and instructed [new immigrants] like a father or teacher. If they did not obey, then they were punished by flogging."

<sup>405</sup> "To Make Chinese Pay," *New York Times*, March 28, 1907.

The power *huiguan* exercised over Chinese laborers also gave apparent credence to the charge that they imported emigrants from China to perform servile coolie labor. Initial charges occurred in the early-1850s, fueled by the notoriety of the Chinese coolie trade. This impression persisted in the larger Euro-American society, effectively utilized by anti-Chinese agitators pushing for a legislative ban on Chinese immigration. Euro-American missionaries and Chinese Christians, both of whom were familiar with the operations of the *huiguan* and had no affinity toward it, consistently denied the veracity of these accusations. While one cannot say for certain that *huiguan* were directly responsible for the importation of coolie labor, they did play an integral role in ensuring the smooth operation of the credit-ticket system of Chinese immigration for many years.<sup>406</sup>

While *huiguan* could be authoritarian in their debt-collecting duties, the larger Euro-American society also recognized them for their charitable functions and contributions. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the overcrowding of San Francisco's Chinatown in 1886, caused by "the immense influx from interior towns," and "owing to the anti-Chinese movement." "The Chinese merchants are doing no business in the country," stated the *Los Angeles Times*, "and are withdrawing credit from the country merchants. The Chinese companies are securing tickets to China for poor Chinamen for \$25, and it is stated that \$10 of this sum is paid by the companies."<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 47.

<sup>407</sup> "Disgusted Celestials Returning to China: The Six Companies Aid Their Exit," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1886.



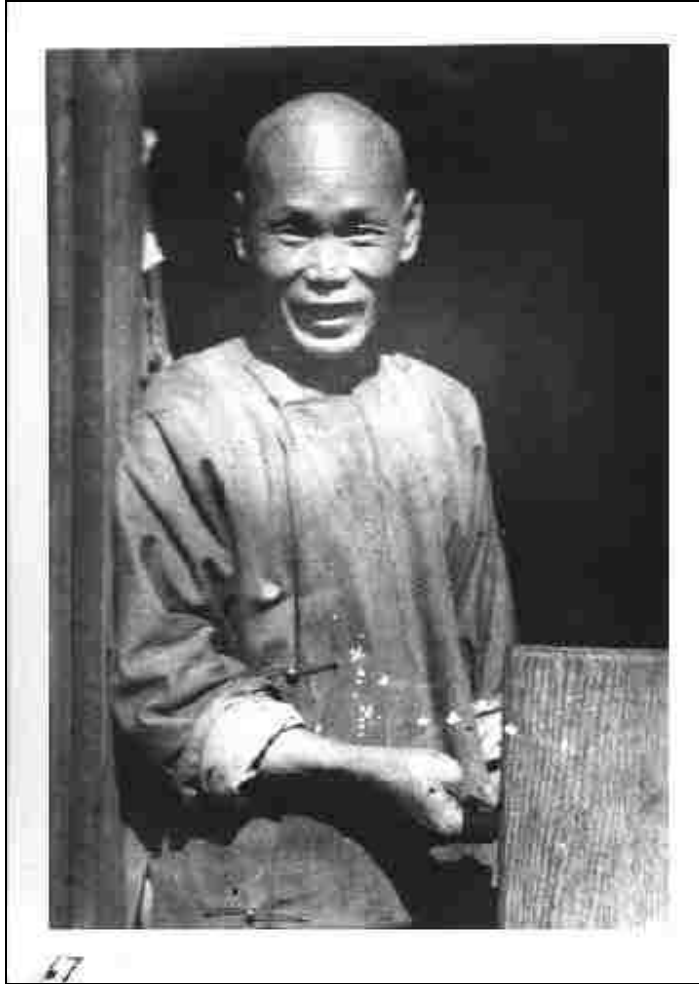


Figure 22. “Chinese Cook,” Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906<sup>408</sup>

*Huiguan* also maintained cemeteries, providing medicine and burial expenses for the poor, and donating passage money to China for the infirm and indigent elderly.<sup>409</sup> However, they provided so few other services for their membership that Consul General Huang Zunxian wrote in disappointment:

According to my investigation each *huiguan* has comparatively large incomes. Yet they have not provided for the welfare of the membership with this money

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<sup>408</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/FN-02351-GentheCT-067.jpg](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/FN-02351-GentheCT-067.jpg), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>409</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 47.

collected from them. None of the *huiguan* can escape criticism on this point. Although their reputation might not be as bad as stated by the white people, yet there are areas which they can justly be attacked.<sup>410</sup>

Huang Zunxian decried the lack of social services that “fulfilled the people’s hope” and noted that its roots were in internal organizational weaknesses:

The *huiguan* operate with few established rules. The money they collect is not accountable to anyone. If the directors and interpreters are men of integrity, then the organization’s functions are carried out reasonably well. If not, then powerful individuals and large clans can entrench themselves; unscrupulous persons can purchase property, profit from it, and line their pockets.<sup>411</sup>

Under the guiding principle of the CCBA’s tendency to only deal with matters that would not jeopardize *huiguan* interests and would instead benefit all strata of society could benefit, it provided support for San Francisco’s *Donghua* (in Cantonese, *Tung Wah*) Dispensary in 1900 and was one of the fifteen founding organizations of the Chinese hospital in 1920.<sup>412</sup> Consulate officials also directly involved themselves with matters concerning the welfare of San Francisco’s Chinese community, including the construction of a Chinese hospital providing free services. While the hospital generally supported the Chinese community, over ten Euro-American San Franciscans pledged an annual subscription of five dollars. Donations continued, as well as the *huiguan* fees collected from departing Chinese passengers, which remained a constant source of considerable revenue for the hospital.<sup>413</sup> Before the establishment of the consulate,

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 53, 72.

<sup>413</sup> *Chinese Hospital of San Francisco* (Oakland: Carruth & Carruth, Printers, 1899).

Chinese in San Francisco had health agencies. In 1870, a Chinese Asylum on Pine Street housed a staff of eleven, including two doctors and a cook. Most of the patients were Chinese laborers.<sup>414</sup> Understanding the difficulties Chinese had in obtaining adequate medical care, the consul general, together with the CCBA, began collecting money to build a Chinese hospital. In 1888, the consulate issued instructions to *huiguan* officials involved in the project to coordinate closely with one another without dodging responsibilities.<sup>415</sup>

In 1909 the CCBA established the *Daqing Qiaomin Xuetang*, the predecessor of the present-day Chinese Central High School, to teach Chinese language and culture to Chinese American children.<sup>416</sup> To protect San Francisco's Chinatown against nocturnal prowlers, the CCBA hired night watchmen to make rounds. It also acted as a clearinghouse for fund-raising campaigns, in large part because these fund-raising projects could open many opportunities for donations to respective *huiguan*. Many CCBA actions protected the interests of the business community. For example, before

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<sup>414</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 113.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid. According to Yong Chen, Chinese purchased a piece of land for the hospital but the city of San Francisco forbade the subsequent building plan because of its objections to the prospective hospital's primary use of Chinese medicine. In 1899, the consulate general rekindled the aborted project and chose a new site on Sacramento Street. It not only mobilized community resources but also attempted to enlist support from white San Franciscans. At a meeting held inside the consulate general, members formed a charitable society for fundraising. The Chinese committee elected consul General Ho Yow chairman while electing John Fryer of the University of California as president of the society.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid. After the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed San Francisco's Chinatown, the Qing imperial court sent fifty thousand taels of silver, equivalent to twenty thousand U.S dollars to the CCBA in San Francisco for relief of victims. Subsequently, when the CCBA in San Francisco discovered that the funds were not needed for this use, it requested permission to borrow this money for construction of a new headquarters building. The Chinese envoy vetoed the idea, stating that the organization's functions were not related to charity. He suggested that establishing a Chinese school or expanding the Tung Wah Dispensary would be acceptable alternative uses. The CCBA then spent the funds to construct a new school building, reserving the ground floor for use as headquarters for the CCBA, and locating the classrooms on the upper floors.

the advent of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the CCBA acted as witness for changes of ownership and property sales.<sup>417</sup>

Several Chinese immigrants to the United States traveled back to China. In 1853, one year after the recorded arrival of 20,026 Chinese immigrants, 4,421 returned to China, outnumbering those immigrating to the United States in the same year.<sup>418</sup> Moreover, China was not always the end of the American journey for those who returned. After their return, many Chinese said farewell to loved ones and crossed the Pacific once again.<sup>419</sup>

Scholars of Chinese American history often mention two important reasons for their return: anti-Chinese discrimination and the unbalanced ratio of Chinese men to women in America. However, many other immigrant groups in America returned without the presence of these two factors. To comprehend Chinese immigrants' pervasive desire to return to China, therefore, one must look at the cultural traditions and socioeconomic forces at work within Chinese society in San Francisco. Most importantly, one must remember the importance of native community in the minds and lives of Chinese immigrants.

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>418</sup> Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration*, 498-500, appendix. Coolidge based these figures on the records of San Francisco's Customs House, which Coolidge included in her 1909 study.

<sup>419</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 103.



Figure 23. “A Merchant” in Chinatown, Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906<sup>420</sup>

In her 1986 study Carol B. Brettel illustrates the importance of what she terms “migration to return” in the history of Portuguese immigration. She concludes that this “can be viewed in the Portuguese context as an ideology that defines or gives meaning to experience.”<sup>421</sup> For many Chinese, the act of returning signified not only their commitment to family responsibility but also a mentality, if not an ideology, deeply

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<sup>420</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/index.html](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/index.html), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>421</sup> Carol B. Brettel, *Men Who Migrate, Women Who Wait: Population and History in a Portuguese Parish* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 263.

rooted in their homeland. To Chinese, native community remained the center of their world and the place in which one could return to achieve ultimate self-fulfillment. Only there could one fully appreciate and acknowledge their experiences, and especially their successes, overseas. Indeed, as Yong Chen illustrates, doing so meant one sought *ronggui*, meaning “a glorious return.”<sup>422</sup>

As in Indochina, not all immigrants wishing to return to China could do so in their lifetime, and, unable to return alive, many immigrants requested their bodies or ashes be sent back to China to be with loved ones. That wish, wrote Reverend A.W. Loomis, demonstrated the Chinese “love for his native land, and the desire that his last resting-place shall be where the ashes of his kindred lie.”<sup>423</sup> The collective efforts of *huiguan* to ship the dead to China started as early as the mid-1850s. In most cases, Chinese buried the bodies in America first before exhuming them for transportation to China. On May 14, 1855, the *Sunny South* left San Francisco for China carrying the remains of seventy Chinese.<sup>424</sup> A few months later, on the night of November 12, 1855, the bones of another twenty people arrived by boat from Sacramento for transportation to China.<sup>425</sup> This practice came under attack at the height of the anti-Chinese movement. In the 1870s, the city of San Francisco even attempted to prohibit it.<sup>426</sup> Sending bodies back to China was

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<sup>422</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 104.

<sup>423</sup> A.W. Loomis, “Chinese ‘Funeral Baked Meats,’” *The Overland Monthly* 3, no. 1 (July 1869), 29.

<sup>424</sup> Dorothy H. Huggins, comp., *Continuation of the Annals of San Francisco*, Part I (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Historical Society, 1939), 43.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 105.

not only time consuming but also entailed “a considerable expense.”<sup>427</sup> It involved raising funds, locating Chinese graves, exhuming the bodies, and purchasing coffins. Euro-American hostility added a new cost. In 1886 Zhang Yinhuan received a report from the consulate in San Francisco stating Euro-American authorities charged ten dollars for every coffin sent to China. In a letter to the State Department Zhang protested that Chinese discrimination “is now applied to dried bones.”<sup>428</sup>

The tradition nevertheless persisted because *huiguan* invested many resources to sustain it. On April 28, 1856, three hundred and thirty-six Chinese coffins returned to China. Eight Chinese charity groups handled two hundred and twenty-eight of them and relatives handled the remaining eight.<sup>429</sup> In 1862 the Panyu charity house under the *Sanyi Huiguan* carried out its first operation to ship the remains of deceased Panyu natives back to their land of origin. By the spring of 1863 the charity house raised more than twenty-five thousand dollars and shipped the remains of two hundred and fifty-eight at an actual cost of \$20,500.<sup>430</sup> Transported back to their native community, as one Panyu man noted, the deceased could finally “rest in peace.”<sup>431</sup>

Chinese exhumations also received attention in the popular press. The *New York Times* reported that three Chinese merchants from San Francisco, Moy Ah How, Wong Ye Shin, and Lee Ma Yu, representing the CCBA, arrived in New York on a “novel mission.” The article provided its own explanation for the practice:

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<sup>427</sup> A.W. Loomis, “Chinese ‘Funeral Baked Meats,’” 29.

<sup>428</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 105.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

The surplus in the treasury of the Six Company syndicate has grown so large that the managers have voted to reduce it by shipping to China the bones of every dead Chinaman in the United States.<sup>432</sup>

The report further noted that the committee was in New York to visit Eastern cities to have Chinese buried there “because their friends were too poor to ship them to China immediately after death disinterred and forwarded to their native land.” While the merchants emphasized “there was no particular superstition connected” with the exhumations, they occurred “to gratify the natural wish that one has to have his bones rest near those of his forefathers.”<sup>433</sup> The *New York Times* also reported on the exhumations occurring in San Francisco. On May 18, 1893, a representative of the “Ying [most likely the *Yanghe*] Company,” identified as “one of the Six Companies,” notified San Francisco health officers that within ten days they would proceed to disinter six-hundred bodies and send their remains to China. The city of San Francisco detailed a corps of inspectors to supervise the exhumations.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> “To Remove Dead Chinamen’s Bones,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1888.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> “To Send Remains of Dead Chinese to China,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1893.



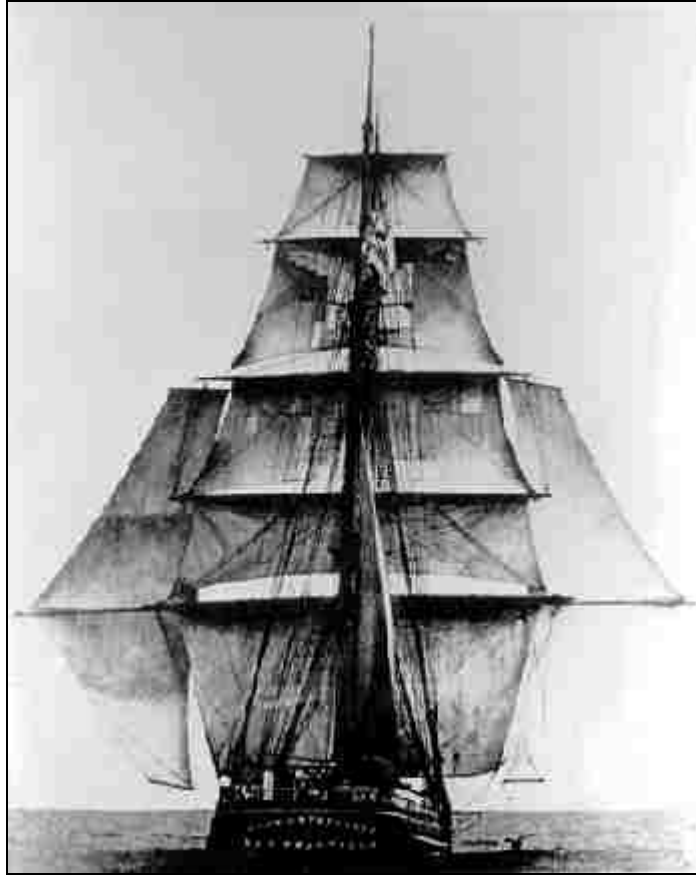


Figure 24. Chinese “Death Ship” Sails, ca. 1858, San Francisco Maritime Museum<sup>435</sup>

So much Chinese support for *huiguan*-sponsored charity organizations existed that these organizations managed to stay in business for relatively long periods of time. Some were even able to save a considerable amount of money.<sup>436</sup> As late as 1913, the *Los Angeles Times* reported the disinterment of the “Los Angeles quota” for the “Great Funeral Ship” carrying the remains of “departed Celestials” back to China. Under the general direction of the CCBA, Wong Su and an attorney from Santa Rosa, as well as Henry Sief, the city mortuary clerk, began searching burial records in an attempt to

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<sup>435</sup> [http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Death\\_Ships.](http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Death_Ships.), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>436</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 105.

classify one-hundred and fifty “relativeless” Chinese buried in the Chinese plot of the Evergreen Cemetery in Santa Rosa, California. Along with three-hundred and fifty Chinese buried in Los Angeles cemeteries, the Chinese dead of Santa Rosa “join[ed] the great hejira of the dead to their native country, the funeral ship for which is to sail from some California port within the next few months.”<sup>437</sup>

With the disinterment of over two-thousand bodies in northern California, where “the uneasy and restless souls are possessed of earthly kith and kin the transfer is arranged under [CCBA] direction, but in many instances the dead are unknown, and it is in their behalf that the Six Companies is interesting itself.”<sup>438</sup> The investigatory group’s list of Chinese dead dated back to 1888, and the group spent several weeks on the job. Upon finishing the identification process, the legal work began. The Chinese had to gain the consent of local authorities, as well as convince the California Board of Health that “divorce of the bones from the earth to which they were returned will not involve the health of those whose souls are still clothed in mundane style and taking the usual number of hours sleep every day.” While the article recognized the “Chinese superstition [that] there is no rest until the remains are safely interred in native soil,” and that the “Six Companies and thousands of uncles, cousins and parents are going to the heavy expense of finding a new sepulcher for their departed,” the article acknowledged its practice in the minds of Westerners as an “interesting and strange ceremony . . . [that] will accompany the exhuming and preparation of the unusual cargo, and local Chinese will take suitable

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<sup>437</sup> “Searching the Reaper’s Rolls: Chinese Listing their Dead for Disinterment,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 1913.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

cognizance of the occurrence.”<sup>439</sup> The energy and money the living sent in carrying out the wishes of the dead reveals the importance the Chinese placed on cultural identity as well as their native land as the ultimate place of rest.



Figure 25. “New Year’s Day Before the Theatre,” Arnold Genthe, 1895-1906<sup>440</sup>

For Chinese immigrants, cultural identity was not just a state of mind. They publicly displayed and celebrated it. One of the primary functions of *huiguan* in

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/FN-02294-GentheCT-027.jpg](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/FN-02294-GentheCT-027.jpg), (accessed August 14, 2009).

Indochina and San Francisco was its celebration of Chinese New Year, where “gorgeous lanterns were suspended in front of doors or hung in rows from the numerous balconies,” and the crackle of firecrackers filled the air along with the thunder of gongs and drums.<sup>441</sup> Such celebrations, as *The Oriental* noted perceptively in 1855, helped the “heart of the old empire to give another grand beat and heave the tide of life for another year.”<sup>442</sup> Through New Year celebrations, San Francisco’s *huiguan* displaced Chinese identity with persistence and tenacity, virtually ignoring the larger society’s attempts to stifle these celebrations. During the Chinese New Year of 1876, for example, a Chinese violation of San Francisco’s ban on fireworks led to the arrest of more than a dozen people and a fine of five dollars for each individual.<sup>443</sup>

While Chinese celebrations often led to police arrests, the Chinese of San Francisco actively requested permission from police authorities to conduct New Year celebrations. Writing on behalf of the CCBA to John Martin, Chief of Police in San Francisco on January 29, 1910, Hsu Ping Chen congratulated him on his “honorable appointment . . . and that you have already entered office to discharge your duty.” He informed Martin that for Chinese New Year (February 9, 1910), there would be a display of Chinese goods to sell on Chinatown’s sidewalks for ten days before and after the New Year, and requested permission to “carry on their business in the above described.” He also made one additional request: “And again for the same favor will you also allow

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<sup>441</sup> Catherine Baldwin, “The Sixth Year of Qwong See,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 62, no. 367 (December 1880): 72.

<sup>442</sup> *The Oriental*, February 15, 1855. The English Section.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, February 5, 1876. The English Section.

them to shoot 'Frيره Crakers' [sic] for the celebration of the occasion on the New Year Eve and commencing until seven days afterward."<sup>444</sup>

During the festivities of the Empress Dowager's birthday and the creation of the CCBA, the *Alta* described the Chinese cultural festivities in San Francisco:

From the housetop of every prominent residence and business house in Chinatown floated the Chinese dragon, and the exteriors were decorated with gaudy lanterns. The merchants took occasion to express their loyalty to the mother country by sumptuous banquets and entertainments, while the poorer classes celebrated the day in a more humble way. The usual noisy explosions of firecrackers and bombs which occurred formerly on all heathen holidays were not heard, owing to the fact that the Police were ready to pounce upon any offender who gave vent to his patriotism in such a demonstrative manner.<sup>445</sup>

The exhibition of cultural distinctiveness was by no means just a festive activity. It was deeply imbedded in everyday life. By wearing their "queer looking"<sup>446</sup> clothes and queue, Chinese in San Francisco and throughout America made a constant statement about their ethnic identity.

The historian Daniel Boorstin affirms the social significance of dress in his discussion of the connection between "the American democracy of clothing" and the American democracy of politics: "If as the Old World proverb went, 'clothes make the

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<sup>444</sup> Letter from Hsu Ping Chen to Police Chief John Martin, January 29, 2010, *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 29 Jan., cubcic brk3926, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003926\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003926_16a), (accessed October 3, 2009).

<sup>445</sup> "The Chinese Six Companies," *San Francisco Daily Alta*, November 20, 1882.

<sup>446</sup> Frederick E. Shearer, ed., *The Pacific Tourist* (New York, NY: Adams and Bishop, 1879), 279.

man,' the New World's new way of clothing would help make new men."<sup>447</sup> In similar fashion, one may say that the traditional style of dress helped the Chinese to maintain and announce their identity.

The prevalence of Chinese dress also made a deep impression on Chinese visitors to San Francisco. In 1868, a Chinese official in the Burlingame delegation asserted that less than one percent of the Chinese in San Francisco changed to a Western style of dress.<sup>448</sup> The queue was another ubiquitous traditional symbol, with its cultural meanings well known. Originally imposed on the Chinese by the Manchus, the queue, according to contemporary Euro-Americans, "ceased to be the symbol of the victory of the Mantchurians [*sic*]" in the late nineteenth century.<sup>449</sup> In a simplified analogy, one American stated that the queue "is what our Star-Spangled Banner is."<sup>450</sup> The Reverend Otis Gibson remarked, "So long as the queue is retained the Chinese fashion of dress will be retained." He summarized their cultural significance: "These two things will forever make them a distinct and peculiar people."<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York, NY: Random House, 1965), 92.

<sup>448</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 138.

<sup>449</sup> M. von Brandt, *Chinese Pigtales and What Hangs Thereby* (New York, NY: Tucker, 1900), 4.

<sup>450</sup> *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 640.

<sup>451</sup> Gibson, *The Chinese In America* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877), 77.



Figure 26. “Children of High Class,” Arnold Genthe Collection, 1895-1906<sup>452</sup>

During the second half of the nineteenth century, most Chinese Christians did not abandon the queue, and they also maintained their Chinese style of dress. Countering a widely-held assumption that they discarded the two traditions, Reverend Gibson wrote: “That is a mistake. Some two or three Chinese Christians have adopted the American dress and have discarded the queue, but the Chinese Christians have generally not done

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<sup>452</sup> [http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo\\_collection/genthe/index.html](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/collections/photo_collection/genthe/index.html), (accessed August 14, 2009).

so.”<sup>453</sup> This reveals that Christian conversion did not signify fundamental assimilation. Perhaps wearing the same attire as their countrymen helped converts mingle with others in the community. In reference to the presence of Chinese Christians, Chin Fong Chow stated: “I would not know one if I should see him.”<sup>454</sup> At the close of the nineteenth century Frederick J. Masters noted, “It is true that every Christian Chinaman does not cut off his queue or adopt American costume.”<sup>455</sup>

Chinese cultural customs were under increasing attack by the anti-Chinese movement, viewing these traditions as a statement of non-conformity.<sup>456</sup> As early as 1855 an article in *The Oriental* stated: “The Chinese in this city have often been made fun of, humiliated and bullied, because [they] do not dress the American way.” At the 1876 congressional hearing on Chinese immigration, when the Reverend A.W. Loomis testified that a Chinese man named Yung Wing “has been gathering up facts [concerning anti-Chinese discrimination],” the representative of San Francisco, Frank M. Pixley, interjected promptly and irrelevantly: “We will cut off his queue.” Loomis responded: “He is an American citizen.” “Then he will not want a queue,” Pixley insisted.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Ibid. Also consult Charles Wolcott Brook’s testimony of 1876 in *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 950-51.

<sup>454</sup> *The Social, Moral, and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration*, 98.

<sup>455</sup> Frederick J. Masters, “Can a Chinaman Become a Christian?” *The Californian Illustrated Magazine* 2 (1892), 625.

<sup>456</sup> A.W. Loomis, “The Oldest East in the New West,” *The Overland Monthly* 1, no. 4 (October, 1868), 363. Loomis noted that even the Chinese manner of walking was “apt to provoke in many persons a scornful smile.”

<sup>457</sup> *Report of the Joint Special Committee*, 461; Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States Since 1850* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1988), 27; Wing, Yung, *My Life in China and America* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 1909). After graduating from Yale in 1854, Yung Wing became a Chinese diplomat in Washington from 1875 to 1881. Yung became a U.S. citizen in 1852, but in 1898 the United States government nullified his citizenship.



Pixley's arrogance exemplified widespread Euro-American hostility toward the queue. In the same year, the city of San Francisco passed the Queue Ordinance, declaring that "every male person imprisoned in the county jail . . . should immediately upon his arrival at the jail, have the hair of his head 'cut or clipped to an [*sic*] uniform length of one inch from the scalp thereof.'"<sup>458</sup>

Chinese in San Francisco resisted Euro-American pressures to conform, indicating once again that the persistence of cultural identity was not simply a result of oppression. They held dear their way of dress because it represented a Chinese tradition too deeply rooted in their life to be easily discarded. The refusal to cut one's queue, however, was a much more complex issue. As queues were a Manchu hairstyle imposed on the Chinese upon the establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644, to appear in China without a queue signified rebellion of the imposed regime, and therefore immediate execution. Therefore, Chinese rebels during China's 1911 Revolution declared a powerful statement of rebellion when they cut their queues.<sup>459</sup> Demonstrating the lack of knowledge on the part of Euro-Americans, Chinese proved unwilling to cut their queues because, as an editorial stated, "the body and hair are inherited from parents to which [they] must not do any damage."<sup>460</sup> As a facet of each individual's cultural identity and

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<sup>458</sup> *The Invalidity of the "Queue Ordinance" of the City and County of San Francisco: Opinion of the Circuit Court of the United States for the District of California in How Ah Kow v. Mathew Nunan, Delivered July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1879* (San Francisco, 1879), 3. In this case, which declared the Queue Ordinance invalid, San Francisco authorities originally arrested the plaintiff and convicted him in the same year for breaking another ordinance, the Cubic Air Ordinance, which required there be at least 500 cubic feet of space for each person who slept in a room.

<sup>459</sup> For more information on the queue and its Manchu mandate, consult Jonathan Spence, *The Search For Modern China*.

<sup>460</sup> *The Oriental*, June 10, 1876. English Section.

dignity, having it cut by white officials meant “a grave humiliation.” If that happened, the editorial asked, “how can [one] face the hometown fellows and relatives?”<sup>461</sup>

The community made conscious and sometimes concerted efforts to uphold its cultural identity, often punishing those who strayed. According to Reverend Loomis, a youth “provoked [the] wrath of his relatives and brought upon himself a fearful torrent of abuse and castigation,” because he exhibited “symptoms of forsaking the customs and traditions of his fathers” by discarding the Chinese style of dress.<sup>462</sup> Acting as the guardians of Chinese cultural tradition, *huiguan* constitutions stipulated individuals who adopted Western-style clothes could not join, nor would these individuals enjoy *huiguan* protection.<sup>463</sup>

One must emphasize, however that not all individuals conformed to traditional modes of Chinese dress. Lisa See meticulously documents the details of her ancestors’ remarkable history through her utilization of sources found at the National Archives and several historical societies, as well as her compilation of nearly one-hundred interviews with relatives. In her study, she recounts the life of her great-grandfather, Fong See who, while establishing his own business in California, married a Euro-American woman and fathered many offspring. He would return periodically to China to redistribute some his wealth and launch another family. Fong See adopted Western-styled dress as early as the 1870s.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Loomis, “The Oldest East in the New West,” 362.

<sup>463</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 140.

<sup>464</sup> For more information, consult Lisa See, *On Gold Mountain: The One-Hundred-Year Odyssey of My Chinese American Family* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1995).

San Francisco's Chinatown thus became a contested battlefield between two cultures. In 1876, in an attempt to counter Western influence, *huiguan* sponsored a lecture series. Subjects of this lecture series included the Emperor Kangxi's Confucian edicts on education from the early Qing Dynasty.<sup>465</sup> In a public announcement, the *huiguan* explained the significance of the lectures. In order to preserve the Chinese way of life in a land "not under the influence of [Chinese] civilization," it stated, "we must listen to the Imperial Edicts."<sup>466</sup> The lecture series ran from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every day for several months. In the course of the series, *huiguan* officials moved the lecture location from *huiguan* headquarters to a theatre to accommodate the increasing audience.<sup>467</sup>

This event did not escape the attention of the missionaries. Reverend Gibson reported: "During the last few months the Chinese have employed a teacher or preacher from China to read and expound the teachings of Confucius, and the ceremonials of heathen worship."<sup>468</sup> Gibson understood that it represented the Chinese "cultural counterattack" on Chinese missions: "The constant preaching of the Gospel of Jesus has had the effect, at least, to excite the Chinese to take a little active effort to teach their own peculiar national doctrines."<sup>469</sup> Gibson continued:

While Christian Chinamen have been expounding the Gospel of Jesus in the 'Gospel Temple,' a heathen

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<sup>465</sup> For further information on the Kanxi Edicts as the basis of lectures emphasizing Confucianism, consult Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*.

<sup>466</sup> *The Oriental*, February 19, 1876. Special Announcement. The English Section.

<sup>467</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 140.

<sup>468</sup> Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 96.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

Chinaman has been expounding the philosophy of Confucius and the ceremonial of idolatry in a heathen theatre, on the opposite side of the street.<sup>470</sup>

Reporting on the popularity of this lecture series on May 30, 1876, the *San Francisco Chronicle* estimated that six hundred to one thousand Chinese attended the lecture series.<sup>471</sup>

While awareness of Chinese culture and tradition constituted an important part of *huiguan* identity, Chinese in general did not overwhelm themselves with Euro-American efforts to transform them. They preserved and proudly and publicly demonstrated their cultural distinctiveness, less as a response to racism than an outcome of the native-place connections deeply ingrained in each individual's life. It is a mistake to view this consciousness, illustrated in *huiguan* efforts to preserve Chinese tradition and culture, for nascent political nationalism. As historian Yong Chen asserts, in the nineteenth century such consciousness defined itself primarily by cultural and historical ties. Chinese in San Francisco were not yet participants in national political events in China.<sup>472</sup>

This lack of nationalism among Chinese in San Francisco deeply disturbed Liang Qichao on his visit in 1903, and he wrote critically that they had “the quality of the clansmen, not that of the citizen,” and “the village spirit, not the national spirit.”<sup>473</sup> Liang's criticism reflected his elitist, Western-influenced intellectualism and his eagerness to modernize Chinese society. It eventually became clear, however, that

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 30, 1876.

<sup>472</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 141.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

Chinese tradition in San Francisco, embodied in *huiguan*, constituted the fertile ground for the emergence of political nationalism.

Increasing anti-Chinese agitation in California during the 1870s ultimately led the United States Congress to pass a series of Chinese exclusion acts beginning in 1882. The implementation of these laws abruptly halted Chinese immigration. Traditional *huiguan* foundations of power began to erode, relegating the maintenance of social control as secondary to the larger problem of ensuring the very survival of San Francisco's Chinese community within this hostile environment. The CCBA emerged as the acknowledged leader of the Chinese community, its ascendancy marked by a growing sense of identity among the Chinese as a larger community rather than as individual *huiguan* members asserting native-place connections.<sup>474</sup>

The primary objective of the CCBA in 1882 was to garner Chinese community support to effectively challenge legislative exclusion. Placing its trust in the American judicial system, the CCBA was often successful in nullifying or modifying hostile measures. However, the Chinese response to the anti-Chinese movement was not monolithic but, rather, multifaceted, disclosing both Chinese and Western influence on an emerging Chinese American consciousness. Most of the time, local Chinese elite used the same approach as appointed Chinese officials. They refuted charges made against the Chinese and stressed American ideals of equality and fair treatment.

Chinese often expressed frustration over the hostile actions of Euro-American society anonymously. For example, many individuals inscribed poems on the barrack walls of Angel Island's detention facility, or wrote anonymous articles protesting

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<sup>474</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 50.

discriminatory treatment and Chinese exclusion. Still others, particularly prominent Chinese merchants, diplomats and students educated in America, wrote articles in popular magazines and journals and gave speeches to middle- and upper-class Americans.

After the passage of the first Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and in his graduating address at Yale University entitled “The Other Side of the Chinese Question,” Yan Phou Lee, a Christian student brought to America by the Chinese Educational Mission, challenged the absurdity of Euro-American charges against the Chinese and the justification of exclusion. In the same year of his graduation, both the *Rochester Herald* and the *New York Times* advertised the marriage of Yan Phou Lee to Elizabeth Jerdine of Rochester, New York.<sup>475</sup> The article described how, in 1882, he was selected out of a contingent of young men who took a Chinese examination qualifying him to receive an education in America “at the expense of China,” and Yale was the preferred institution. According to the article, in the course of one year, while students faced studies at Yale with great enthusiasm and eagerness, the nation had a change of heart and recalled the students. Captivated by the “republican air,” Yan Phou Lee chose to finish his education in the United States, never again to return to China “except on peril of losing his head.” He continued his studies at Yale, while paying for his education by reporting for the local press and completing clerical work. Yale awarded him the Larned scholarship, and he was further distinguished by awards in political economy, history, and law, as well as his proficiency in English. At the time of the published article, Yan Phou Lee planned to continue for one more year at Yale to earn his Ph.D. at the age of twenty-six. He opened his graduating address by asserting,

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<sup>475</sup> “Yan Phou Lee to Marry,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1887.

The catastrophe [the violation of the U.S. Constitution] [is] too terrible, and has made too deep an impression to be forgotten. Even if Americans are disposed to forget, the Chinese will not fail to keep the sad record of faith unkept, of persecution permitted by an enlightened people, of rights violated without redress in a land where all are equal before the law.<sup>476</sup>

Yan Phou Lee decried the apathy of Euro-American society. While alluding to the hypocrisy of America's Christian populace, "enemies of the Chinese laborer" could be "counted by the millions," while few individuals voiced protests against the humiliating treatment toward Chinese in America. In a moment of prescience, regarding the alleged threat to employment opportunities for Euro-Americans and the subsequent efforts to deport Chinese laborers in America, he stated:

For be assured that after the Chinese have all departed, those men who are determined to get high wages for doing nothing will turn against other peaceful sons of toil; and who would venture to say that there will be absolute safety for the native American? Mob rule knows no respect for persons; the Chinese were attacked first simply because they were the weakest.<sup>477</sup>

Yan Phou Lee further challenged the absurdity of assumptions made about "China's four hundred millions waiting for an opening to inundate the country," and provided contextual comparisons of the number of immigrants arriving from other countries at the same time to further refute this charge. He spoke to the very nature of the Chinese community in attempt to dispel popular Euro-American myths about their nature, while also illuminating the functions of *huiguan*:

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<sup>476</sup> "Graduating Address of Yan Phou Lee, at Yale College," *The American Missionary*, vol. 1, no. 49 (September 1887), 269.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

The Chinese are by nature and from habit gregarious, but not migratory. They dislike to cut adrift from the ties of kindred, the associations of home, the traditions of fatherland. The belief that their welfare in the future life depends on the proper burial of their remains in home-soil, followed by sorrowing children and tearful widow, curbs their desire to go abroad, even with the hope of bettering their condition . . . you will find that Chinese immigrants are usually poor on landing . . . and so they must rely upon their countrymen who have preceded them for assistance. This is afforded by the Six Companies, who accordingly have a lien on their wages.<sup>478</sup>

The conclusion of Yan Phou Lee's address called upon his fellow colleagues to remain steadfast in their "duties as lovers of justice and fatherland, in *not* [original emphasis] enforcing your opinions in public and in private, as well as in church and State."<sup>479</sup>

In their collective effort, and in writing President Ulysses S. Grant in 1876 before the passage of the first Chinese exclusion act, *huiguan* declared: not all Chinese women in the United States were prostitutes and that Euro-American men were a part of this sordid business as well; that the Chinese diet, although different from that of many Americans, was hardly a cause for immigration restriction; that the Chinese Six Companies was not a secret tribunal; and that the Chinese in America were wage earners, not slaves. "If these men are slaves," they asserted, "then all men laboring for wages are slaves."<sup>480</sup> *Huiguan* also pointed out that the United States had a policy to "welcome immigration," that the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 provided for Chinese immigration to America, and that Chinese "neither attempted nor desired to interfere with the established

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<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>480</sup> Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, *A Memorial to His Excellency U.S. Grant, President of the United States from Representative Chinamen in America* (n.p., 1876), 6-9.



order of things in this country, either of politics or religion.”<sup>481</sup> In other words, no cause existed for singling out the Chinese for exclusion.

*Huiguan* officials, including diplomats, intellectuals, and the local elite who spoke out against Chinese exclusion maintained a Sino-centric worldview, defending China as a country traditionally considering itself the center of the civilized world. *Huiguan* protested American immigration policies because it offended their Chinese sensibilities and demanded fair treatment for themselves and their lower-class compatriots on the basis of China’s great civilization and past achievements. When seeking equal treatment, *huiguan* often resorted to denigrating other ethnic groups to elevate the status of the Chinese. Even their appeals to justice and fairness were tactics designed to force Americans to live up to the rhetoric of democracy, even if little indication existed that *huiguan* spokespersons actually believed in democratic processes.

San Francisco’s racially-charged environment undoubtedly enhanced Chinese national awareness, and the formation of the CCBA was largely a response to these new conditions. However, the numerous public documents issued in protest of anti-Chinese discrimination to American public officials, including the president of the United States, members of Congress, and San Francisco city officials used such terms as “our Chinese people” or “our countrymen.” *Huiguan* reminded Congress that America and China had respective obligations to treat “our people resident here” and “your people resident in China” fairly; clear boundary delineations existed between “we” and “you.”<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>482</sup> Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, California, *Memorial of the Six Chinese Companies: An Address to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States* (San Francisco, December 8, 1877; reprint San Francisco, CA: R & E Research Associates, 1970).

*Huiguan* published pamphlets, continued to send petitions to the federal government, and sponsored the publication of books written by Americans friendly to the Chinese.<sup>483</sup> These cumulative attempts reflect a concerted effort in the 1870s to answer the charges against Chinese immigration and to correct the misconceptions about Chinese culture, traditions, and community life. These efforts, however, failed to reverse Chinese exclusion.

The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act prompted many Chinese in San Francisco to reexamine their experience in the United States and to find the reasons for their ineffectiveness in challenging the anti-Chinese movement. Lack of political influence was one deciding factor in the Chinese failure to defeat exclusionary legislation. The solution was, therefore, greater Chinese participation in American politics. Moreover, despite the hardships involved, many Chinese continued to respond to exclusion by maintaining transnational households, even for several generations.<sup>484</sup> Others engaged in fierce battles against the law and its enforcement, charging the United States government with racial discrimination and injustice.

The CCBA in San Francisco spoke on behalf of Chinese communities across the United States. In 1885, the CCBA issued a proclamation describing the treatment of Chinese in the United States. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* characterized the “Chinese Six Companies” as embracing the “troubles” occurring at Eureka, California,

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<sup>483</sup> Otis Gibson, *The Chinese in America* (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877).

<sup>484</sup> Sin Jang Leung, “A Laundryman Sings the Blues,” translated by Marlon K. Hom in *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* (1991): 5-6; Victor G. Nee and Bret de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ’: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 17; Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 40-53; Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 123.

Seattle, Washington and Rock Springs, Wyoming. More than “troubles” occurred in these communities and others throughout the American West. Years of widespread hostility against the Chinese culminated in violence during the 1880s, whereby Euro-Americans forcibly expelled and killed Chinese, destroying Chinese homes, business, and personal property. After the Rock Springs riot, anti-Chinese mob violence quickly spread to other regions in the West. Historians estimate Chinese property damages totaled in the millions.<sup>485</sup> The proclamation, as the article attests, “estimates the damage which the Chinese sustained. Copies have been forwarded to the Chinese Minister at Washington, who, it is supposed, will make it the basis of a claim against the United States government.”<sup>486</sup>

Chinese immigrants began to challenge the legality of the exclusion laws through the judicial system and protest American exclusion policies individually and through community organizations. They hired lawyers and used the courts to affirm the rights of merchant families, returning laborers, and American citizens of Chinese descent and their families to enter and reenter the country. The CCBA and the Chinese consulate sponsored many of the early court cases, and individual Chinese were also extremely successful at using the federal courts to overturn denials by the immigration service.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> For additional information on anti-Chinese violence and its aftermath, consult Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).

<sup>486</sup> “San Francisco: The Chinese Six Companies Exercised Over Recent Anti-Coolie Riots – Chinese Grievances,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 1885.

<sup>487</sup> Lucy Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 81-83.

One of the most valuable resources for CCBA and Chinese individuals during the exclusion era was the organized network of immigration lawyers facilitating Chinese entry and reentry through its record keeping and lobbying on behalf of Chinese clients, tasks that would prove extremely difficult for any organization on its own. The number of immigration lawyers hired for Chinese immigration cases grew in direct proportion to the increasing complexity of the exclusion laws and their severe enforcement. Chinese established a long history of hiring the best American lawyers to challenge anti-Chinese measures even before 1882.<sup>488</sup>

As early as 1853, lawyers sent letters to Congress on behalf of Chinese miners to complain about California's foreign miners' tax.<sup>489</sup> One of the most successful and diligent attorneys hired by the CCBA was attorney Carroll Cook, discussed later in this chapter, who spoke on behalf of the organization as well as individual Chinese. Cook not only petitioned and protested the treatment of Chinese in San Francisco, but also made appeals on behalf of Chinese communities in San Jose and Los Angeles, as well as Chinese communities throughout America, including Arizona, Georgia, Texas, and West Virginia.

The passage of the Geary Act in 1892 not only extended Chinese exclusion for another ten years, but also, to the indignation of the Chinese, required Chinese laborers in the United States to register for certificates of residence, imposing heavy penalties on violators of the provision. Angered by the Act, the Chinese vice-consul in San Francisco

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<sup>488</sup> For a general history of challenging exclusion, consult Charles McClain Jr., *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>489</sup> Stanford M. Lyman, *Chinatown and Little Tokyo: Power, Conflict and Community among Chinese and Japanese Immigrants in America* (Millwood, NY: Associated Faculty Press, 1986), 165-172.

asserted the system of registration required by the act placed the Chinese “on the level of your dogs.”<sup>490</sup> The Geary Act faced organized resistance from Chinese communities across the nation and resulted in a resolution denouncing it as “monstrous, inhuman and unconstitutional.”<sup>491</sup> The CCBA for its part urged Chinese laborers not to register, declaring the law unconstitutional and hiring lawyers to bring a test case in 1893, *Fong Yue Ting v. United States*. The Supreme Court decision upheld the right of Congress to expel or deport Chinese, declaring the state’s unconfined power over immigration as sovereign. The Supreme Court decision upholding the Geary Act had a chilling effect on the number of Chinese arrivals: 39,579 Chinese immigrated in 1882; only 472 entered the United States in 1893.<sup>492</sup>

No time seemed to catch the popular press’s attention more in its discussion of the “Chinese Six Companies” than the passage of the Geary Act. The *New York Times*, in particular, reported extensively on events in San Francisco’s Chinatown leading up to the Supreme Court decision. Eight months before the decision, the CCBA reportedly sent a committee of seven men to New York to visit all of the stores in the “Chinese quarter” to secure signatures from all Chinese merchants for a petition. This petition allegedly requested “agents’ be sent to America to “get acquainted with all the circumstances of the

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>491</sup> *New York Times*, September 22 and 23, 1892.

<sup>492</sup> Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers*, 28, 46-58; Charles J. McClain and Laurence Wu McClain, “The Chinese Contribution to the Development of American Law,” ed. Sucheng Chan *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America: 1882-1943* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991), 18; Christian G. Fritz, “Due Process, Treaty Rights, and Chinese Exclusion, 1882-1891,” Sucheng Chan ed. *Entry Denied*, 46, 49.

Registration act by conferring with all Chinese in this city, and then to proceed to Washington and request President Harrison to take some action to nullify the law.”<sup>493</sup>

76240 ORIGINAL

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Certificate of Residence.

Issued to Chinese *Labourer*, under the Provisions of the Act of May 5, 1892.

This is to Certify THAT *Ng Len* a Chinese now residing at *...*

has made application No. *106* to me for a Certificate of Residence, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved May 5, 1892, and I certify that it appears from the affidavits of witnesses submitted with said application that said *Ng Len* was within the limits of the United States at the time of the passage of said Act, and was then residing at *...* and that he was at that time lawfully entitled to remain in the United States, and that the following is a descriptive list of said Chinese *Labourer*:

NAME: *Ng Len* AGE: *Thirty*

LOCAL RESIDENCE: *San Francisco*

OCCUPATION: *Labourer* HEIGHT: *5 ft 6 in* COLOR OF EYES: *Brown*

COMPLEXION: *Dark* PHYSICAL MARKS OR PECULIARITIES FOR IDENTIFICATION: *Scar on right side chin, mole on left*

And as a further means of identification I have annexed hereto a photographic likeness of said *Ng Len*

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL THIS *May* day of *May* 1892

State of *California*

*O. M. Kelburn*  
Collector of Internal Revenue,  
District of *San Francisco*

*Robert M. Maynard Deputy*

Figure 27. "Certificate of Residence," 1892<sup>494</sup>

<sup>493</sup> "Chinese and the Registration: The Determined Opposition Offered by the Six Companies," *New York Times*, September 23, 1892.

<sup>494</sup> Many of these "Certificates of Residence" can be found through the National Archives and Records Administration, and this system of registry laid the foundation for subsequent alien identification cards, or "green cards" issued by the Immigration and Naturalization service today. <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt7w10224t/>, (accessed August 14, 2009).

One *Times* report informed its readership that Chinese had time to comply with the provisions of the Geary Act. All Chinese laborers had one year to apply to the Collector of Internal Revenue within their respective districts for a certificate of residence, under rules established by the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. Any Chinese laborer found without the certificate would be arrested and “examined” before a United States Judge. It remained to be seen, however, “whether the hundred thousand Chinamen in this country can be brought to disobey the law.” The report concluded:

. . . the whole question of the right to exclude Chinamen seems to be at stake, which is quite a different matter from the requirement to procure ‘tickets of leave’ as they indignantly call their certificates of residence. The restriction of immigration is one thing and the imposition of hardships on residents is quite another . . . One thing safe to predict is that the great body of Chinamen will take no risk of imprisonment and final exclusion.<sup>495</sup>

Rather than directing members to comply with the Geary Act during this time, however, the CCBA required each Chinese individual in the United States to contribute one dollar for the expense of the suit that would test the Geary Act’s constitutionality in the Supreme Court. The CCBA would prevent Chinese members who refused to pay, according the *Times*, from returning to China “when he applies to the Six Companies for his papers.”<sup>496</sup>

In a separate article published by the *New York Times*, the CCBA, in response to queries from Collector of Internal Revenue John C. Quinn about whether the organization ordered Chinese laborers not to register under the Geary Law, returned this statement:

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<sup>495</sup> “The Registry of Chinamen,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1892.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

We have issued a circular advising Chinese laborers that the law requiring them to register is unconstitutional and cannot be enforced and therefore suggesting to them that they do not comply with the law. This circular is based upon the advice of our attorneys that the law is unconstitutional and in violation of the treaty rights.<sup>497</sup>

Due to these efforts, Chinese reportedly contributed \$60,000 to fight the Geary Act in the courts while the CCBA sent their “renowned” attorney and appointed legal counsel to New York and Washington, D.C. as a “preliminary step.”<sup>498</sup>

Two months later, on the eve of the Supreme Court case, a *New York Times* interview with Collector of Revenue John C. Quinn revealed that, with regard to Chinese laborers acquiescing to the registration law, they acted “very sullenly” in their refusal to register. Quinn stated, “. . . they [Chinese] laugh at the idea of the law going into effect. They seem to think that the Chinese Government will never permit its people to be removed from the United States.”<sup>499</sup> Chinese “sullenness” seemed to be due in part to the CCBA’s efforts to issue circulars advising Chinese to not only resist the law, but to stand firm and prepare for a “vigorous defense.” The CCBA denied this was a preemptive measure advocating violence, but rather advice to their membership to not become panic stricken and register on the last day allowed by the law. Instead, the CCBA required individuals to contribute their quota to the fund for employing legal counsel to fight the law.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> “The Six Companies Will Fight: They Are Ready to Contest the Geary Law’s Constitutionality,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1893.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> “The Chinese Are Sullen: They Expect Their Government to Go to War to Keep Them Here,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1893.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.



Wherever the CCBA posted circulars, crowds of Chinese “eagerly scanned every character printed on them.” As far as the *Times* was concerned, it was evident the CCBA advocated physical violence in order to resist the law. However, an interview with the Chinese Vice Consul assured the reporter that: “There will be no trouble . . . the Six Companies will not advise their countrymen to shed blood. If the law is declared to be constitutional and no other legal defense presents itself, the Chinese will obey the law and depart from this country. What my Government would do in this event I am not in a position to state.”

One week later, when news that the United States Supreme Court confirmed the constitutionality of the Chinese Exclusion Act quickly reached San Francisco’s Chinatown, Chinese “quietly received” the news. They

. . . stood about in large groups before their own bulletin boards for some statement from the Six Companies, which had compelled them to refuse to register. They were not inclined to accept the report through the American newspapers.<sup>501</sup>

In response to the Supreme Court decision, the Chinese Vice Consul noted:

Although the Geary Law has been declared constitutional, the Government is not prepared to immediately carry out its provisions. It will entail great expense, for which no appropriation is made. I have nothing to say in regard to the immediate effect the final decision of the Supreme Court will have on the Chinese in America . . . The treaty between China and America has been broken by the Government at Washington, and is no longer a contract, and will not be regarded by the Chinese Government as a factor governing any action they may see fit to take.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> “The News on the Pacific: Quietly Received Both by the Californians and the Chinese,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1893.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

On the same day, during the noon hour, a Euro-American crowd gathered in the vicinity of the Stock Exchange building in San Francisco to hear Dennis Kearney and other local anti-Chinese agitators urge listeners to hold mass meetings in approval of the decision. The crowd listened to the speakers, but displayed little interest in what they had to say.<sup>503</sup>

One year after the passage of the Geary Act, numerous articles flooded the press regarding Chinese laborers' refusal to register. The *New York Times* was indicative of the denouncement of Chinese refusals despite impending arrest, imprisonment, and deportation because

...the almond-eyed alien applies to himself the injunction that 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' or it may be because he has given attention to the Geary registration law, with the assistance of legal talent, which has convinced him that his position under that law is more tenable than a great many who are talking and writing about the subject state.<sup>504</sup>

Outside of the courts, Chinese continued to protest American exclusion policies through a variety of forums. The CCBA, diplomats and individual Chinese persisted as vocal critics of their discriminatory treatment.<sup>505</sup> In 1892, Yung Hen, a poultry dealer in San Francisco, asked a newspaper reporter, "Why do you not legislate against Swedes, Germans, Italians, Turks and others? There are no strings on those people. . . . For some reason, you people persist in pestering the Chinamen."<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> "Chinese Registry Law: Its Purposes Are Not Being Accomplished," *New York Times*, February 19, 1893.

<sup>505</sup> For Chinese diplomats and local elites, see Ho Yow, "Chinese Exclusion, A Benefit or Harm?" *North American Review* 173 (September 1901), 314-30; and K. Scott Wong, "Cultural Defenders and Brokers: Chinese Responses to the Anti-Chinese Movement," eds. Sucheng Chan and K. Scott Wong *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press), 8.

<sup>506</sup> *San Francisco Morning Call*, September 14, 1892.

On the eve of renewing the Act's ten-year exclusion regulations, the *New York Times* again reported the Chinese prepared themselves to make a "vigorous fight" against further Chinese legislative exclusion. The CCBA issued an additional proclamation requiring every Chinese individual in the United States to immediately contribute one dollar to the fund to defeat exclusion. In order to compel the payment of the assessment, the CCBA's proclamation stated that if payment was not made within one month the amount exacted would double. Those who failed to pay within two months would have their assessment doubled once more. As the report concluded,

Lest some should still seek to evade the enforced contribution, the proclamation adds that Chinese desiring to return to China will be compelled to exhibit a receipt showing they are paid up. In default of such receipt they will be fined \$10. The proclamation has been posted in Chinatown, and is to be distributed all over the country.<sup>507</sup>

The formation of the Chinese Equal Rights League in New York was due in large part to protest the notorious Geary Act in 1892. As its name suggests, the founders of the Chinese Equal Rights League had different goals in mind from the CCBA. Articulated in a pamphlet published by the League in 1892 entitled "Appeal of the League to the People of the United States,"<sup>508</sup> it denounced the Geary Act, contending that it

was made to humiliate every Chinaman, regardless of his moral, intellectual and material standing in the community; neither was his long residence in the country considered. By this mean and unjust Act discriminating between foreign residents from different countries, [it] has traversed and contraversed the fundamental principles of common law.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> "Chinese to Fight Exclusion: Raising Fund in San Francisco to Oppose Geary Law," *New York Times*, December 1, 1901.

<sup>508</sup> Chinese Equal Rights League, *Appeal of the Chinese Equal Rights League to the People of the United States for Equality of Manhood* (New York, NY: Chinese Equal Rights League, 1892), 1-2.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

The appeal then exposed the deeper interests of the League, including equal franchise for Chinese. The author of the pamphlet declared that the Chinese were industrious, law-abiding, and honest people; they paid taxes and thus supported the nation and the government; they loved and admired the United States government and appreciated its “unwavering love of human rights.” “Our interests are here, because our homes, our families, and all our interests are here. America is our home through long residence,”<sup>510</sup> declared the author, who then raised a specific demand:

“We, therefore, appeal for an equal chance in the race of life in this our adopted home – a large number of us have spent almost all our lives in this country and claimed no other but this as ours. Our motto is: Character and fitness should be the requirements of all who are desirous of becoming citizens of the American Republic.”<sup>511</sup>

Prior to the passage of the first Chinese exclusion act, the CCBA in 1877 also produced an important document, the *Memorial of the Chinese Six Companies to the Congress of the United States*. A comparison of this document with the appeal of the Chinese Equal Rights League of 1892 reveals fundamental differences between the two organizations. In the 1877 *Memorial*, CCBA leaders took a defensive tone, depicting themselves as guests, asserting treaty rights, and demanding hospitality and international justice.<sup>512</sup>

The demands of the Chinese Equal Rights League prompted the formation of the more powerful Chinese American Citizens Alliance in 1895 in San Francisco, with

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<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>512</sup> Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, California, *Memorial of the Six Chinese Companies: An Address to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States* (San Francisco, December 8, 1877; reprint San Francisco, CA: R & E Research Associates, 1970).

lodges throughout the United States. Originally named the United Parlor of the Sons of the Golden State, the group attracted both Chinese born in America and naturalized Chinese Americans whose worldview was shaped by education in America and exposure to Euro-American culture.<sup>513</sup> The group's visibility grew during the exclusion era. In 1900, approximately eleven percent of the Chinese in the United States were born in America. The figure increased to fifty-two percent by 1940.<sup>514</sup> The organization understood the duality of being engaged in China-centered nationalism in the early twentieth-century, thus experiencing a conflicted loyalty between China and the United States. Foreign-born, traditionally-minded Chinese contemptuously referred to them as "ABCs," literally meaning "American-born Chinese" but also implying "brainless," as well as *juk sing* (literally, in Cantonese, the hollow part of a bamboo stalk, also implying "empty," or "useless"), because of their supposedly shallow understanding of traditional Chinese culture.<sup>515</sup> Some American-born Chinese objected to the homeland orientations of traditional organizations like *huiguan*, which they felt hindered Chinese acceptance by the larger Euro-American society. Moreover, as Sue Fawn Chung illustrates, American-born Chinese raised among Euro-Americans acculturated to such a degree that they could not identify with the conservative, China-oriented segment of the Chinese population the *huiguan* merchant elite represented.<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Sue Fawn Chung, "Fighting for Their American Rights: A History of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance," in *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era*, ed. K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), 96-97.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 98..

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

In stark contrast, until the establishment of the first Chinese legation in Washington, D.C. in 1878, *huiguan* operated as diplomatic representatives for Chinese in America. Since most Chinese were foreign-born at the time and had yet to plant generational roots in America, *huiguan* often justified the fight against racial oppression on the grounds of defending treaty rights and demanding hospitality and reciprocity in accordance with China's sovereignty.<sup>517</sup> The Equal Rights League of 1892 was more aggressive in its assertions. Its members wished to be treated as part of the nation, demanding common humanity and equal rights. The change from the *huiguan*'s initial defensive posturing to the Chinese Equal Rights League's aggressive strategy could not alter the established national policy of Chinese exclusion. A *New York Times* editorial illustrates how Euro-America construed the League's appeal:

The Chinese Equal Rights League has not chosen a very favorable time for agitating the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, just when the public mind is occupied with the question of drawing closer the lines for excluding undesirable alien elements from our population. The Geary Act was unnecessarily harsh and created an invidious distinction, and it would be well if all except the section continuing the present restrictions could be appealed, but the matter is hardly likely to receive favorable consideration at present. The statement of the league put the case rather too strongly and ask [*sic*] rather too much. . . . It is asking too much to demand that Chinese residents here be 'forthwith admitted to citizenship and given the franchise of the nation.' The Chinese Equal Rights League should be more moderate in its presentations and more modest in its demands.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> Him Mark Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan System," in *Becoming Chinese American*, 53, 72; L. Eve Armentrout-Ma, "Chinatown Organizations and the Anti-Chinese Movement, 1882-1914," in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991), 148-50, 154-55.

<sup>518</sup> *New York Times*, December 18, 1892.

One must underscore that despite the attempt to adopt more aggressive strategies to combat Chinese exclusion and the legacies of Chinese racism permeating San Francisco's government agencies and city ordinances, the CCBA continued to appeal primarily through diplomatic recourse. In 1913, the *Los Angeles Times* recounted the protest of Chinese Consul Li Yung Yo and the CCBA against police treatment of "reputable Chinese citizens" under Corporal Charles E. Goff. Wong Quong, a wealthy merchant, filed the charge with the Police Commission in San Francisco, charging Goff and another patrolman with police misconduct. The CCBA attained legal counsel and with the assistance of Consul General Li, appeared at the court hearing to aid Wong. In his letter to the San Francisco police commission, Wong stated: "The Chinese residents of San Francisco have not been accorded the same rights as the American citizens and the rights of the most favored nation, as the United States is bound to extend to us."<sup>519</sup>

In the same year, the CCBA also protested against the enactment of the Alien Land Act. It was the first legislative protest against alien land legislation from the Chinese in California. The board of directors of the Panama-Pacific Exposition, the worlds fair hosted by San Francisco in 1915, was instrumental in forwarding the resolution drafted by the CCBA. The board visited California Governor Hiram W. Johnson in Sacramento to deliver the resolution, while a news article noted that Governor Johnson declined to comment on it.

The resolution stated the Chinese resided in the state of California by "virtue of treaties" guaranteeing "common rights of man," as defined by California's bill of rights. The CCBA pointedly addressed both the governor and the bill of rights as part "of your State Constitution." The CCBA then elaborated its desire "to promote wider and more

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<sup>519</sup> "Six Companies Back Consul," *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1913.

abundant trade between this State and China.” The resolution also referred to China’s Republican Revolution of 1911 as “the movement that has caused China to imitate the example of your country by the adoption of a republican form of government.” Moreover, the CCBA linked China’s governmental reform with increased commercial trade for California through its assertion that “increase[ing] the consuming and commercial capacity of the Chinese people,” will “vastly increase their trade with the western nations.” As “domiciled Californians” the CCBA formulated its argument as a

protest that this State’s due share of such trade cannot be secured by legislation that humiliates us, brands us with an infamous inferiority, and shames us before the nations. Your proposed legislation impairs the capacity of our countrymen to earn a living here and to contribute to the commonwealth by their labor and enterprise, and we insist that it is unfriendly and inhospitable to the people of the youngest republic at the hands of the greatest republic in the world.<sup>520</sup>

The resolution still reverberates with the delineations made within the *Memorial of the Six Companies* in 1877 by protesting “your proposed” humiliating legislation harmful to “us” before “the nations,” in a stand of diplomatic protection for “our countrymen.” The CCBA once again utilized the notion of China’s long-standing history and its position as the center of the civilized world while America was the “youngest republic at the hands of the greatest republic,” though China essentially became a republic not more than two years earlier.

During the early twentieth century, Chinese across America looked to the CCBA for leadership in areas of common concern such as fighting exclusion laws and discriminatory actions against Chinese. The power wielded by the CCBA attests to the

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<sup>520</sup> “First Chinese Appeal Cities Bill of Rights: Six Companies Protest Against Enactment of Anti-Land Act,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1913.



Chinese need for intra-community governance in San Francisco, given their exclusion from the American political sphere. These expectations also extended to Chinese in American colonies and countries in Latin America that did not have Chinese diplomatic representation. The CCBA continued to retain lawyers on an annual basis to facilitate the handling of these and other legal matters abroad, and hired legal counsel for specific cases in other locations.<sup>521</sup>

In 1910, on behalf of the CCBA and in response to further police action taken against Chinese in the city, attorney Carroll Cook wrote to E.C. Laffingwell, San Francisco's Chief of Police, as well as the President of the United States, to "[advise on] the conditions existing" within San Francisco's Chinese community. Following a meeting with San Francisco's Chinese residents, the Chinese Consul General, the CCBA, and the Chinese Merchants' Association, as well as the property owners in Chinatown, joined in the demand that if their presence in the community was desired, "existing outrages must cease."<sup>522</sup> The CCBA secretary notified Cook to "take [necessary] actions . . . to put a stop to the outrages that are being perpetrated on their race, in the name of the law and through certain petty police officers."<sup>523</sup> While stating that "if it occurred among the white people in this community, [it] would result in their immediate arrest as violators of the law themselves," Cook emphasized police continued to trespass on Chinese merchants' private residences, "where . . . wives . . . are in their room retiring

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<sup>521</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 53.

<sup>522</sup> Letter from Carroll Cook to E.C. Laffingwell, May 6, 1910, *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 6 May, cubic brk3929, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/brk3929> (accessed October 3, 2009).

<sup>523</sup> Ibid.

and [went] through [these] rooms.” Police regularly stopped Chinese men in public, looking for “coupons or for lottery tickets,” without warrant or authority to do so. With regard to Chinese businesses, “[they] are entered, doors broken down and property taken away, without anybody being arrested for violation of any law, but all done simply [to terrorize Chinese].” Cook concluded his letter by stating:

I anticipate that the Chief of Police will use his best efforts to put an end to these outrages, but I desire the co-operation of your office, and if they are not stopped I shall be compelled to file criminal charges and civil actions against the officers responsible in this matter, as well as . . . charges against them before the Board of Police Commissioners.<sup>524</sup>

Cook also brought an article published by the “*Tai Tung Yat Bo Company*” [most likely the *Chung Sai Yat Po*] to the attention of the CCBA in a letter dated October 15, 1910. Referring the article as “grossly libelous,” Cook stated, “if it were not that I hold the position that I do as attorney for your Association, I should feel called upon to cause the arrest of the editor of that paper for libel in the criminal courts.” However, because Cook realized it would not “do for [him] to enter into litigation with the Chinese...,” since, as attorney for the CCBA, “I am supposed to, and do represent, all Chinese people; therefore, I cannot even for myself, not against Chinese people.”<sup>525</sup>

The article Cook referred to contained statements about “pharmacy cases” pending in San Francisco’s “Police Court,” whereby Cook allegedly additionally received commissions for these cases. He emphatically denied the charge, insisting he only

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> Letter to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association from Cook, October 15, 1910, *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 14: 15 Oct., cubcic brk4010, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/brk4010>, (accessed October 3, 2009).

received the monthly compensation provided to him by the CCBA. The CCBA notified Cook about the pending cases, and the secretary of the CCBA requested Cook to defend its membership in similar cases pending in Oakland, California. According to Cook's own correspondence, the "special attorneys" appearing for the pharmacy board offered to consent to paying a fine of one-hundred dollars if the other half of the cases pled guilty to the alleged pharmacy violations. Upon Cook presenting this proposal, the CCBA decided to accept the attorneys' proposition rather than continue to make challenges within the courts. Cook emphasized that no fee was charged because payments for services were rendered to him by the CCBA, either in San Francisco, or in the cases pending in Oakland.<sup>526</sup>

The allegations Carroll Cook refers to in his letter to the CCBA most likely stemmed from the *Chung Sai Yat Po*'s fundamentally different stance compared to the CCBA with regard to the Chinese community in San Francisco, and to Chinese immigration in general. Through the Reverend Wu Panzhao, more commonly known as Ng Poon Chew, a prolific journalist and lecturer, Chinese Christians vocalized their political consciousness in Ng's daily newspaper, *Chung Sai Yat Po*, the leading U.S. Chinese-language newspaper in the early-twentieth century. The San Francisco-based newspaper's editorials called for an anti-Qing revolt in China and linked it to the struggle for equal rights in America. Like the Chinese American Citizens' Alliance, and the Chinese Equal Rights League that preceded it, a small but vocal Chinese Christian community competed with the CCBA and its affiliated *huiguan* for the attention of Chinese Americans in the early twentieth century.

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

In small Chinese American communities, Chinese missions, in the absence of *huiguan* and other district or clan associations, stepped into the latter's role and functioned in several ways to acclimatize Chinese who recently arrived to America to the new environment. Through these missions, they offered English classes, living quarters, and social centers, all in one place. In sizeable Chinese communities like San Francisco, Chinese Christians jostled with *huiguan* and other traditional Chinese organizations for potential converts. Like the Chinese American Citizens' Alliance, Chinese Christians rejected the elitist, conservative nature of the Chinese political leadership in San Francisco, thus attacking the core foundation of *huiguan* power by embracing more Western-oriented political ideals.<sup>527</sup>

Some of the most fervent supporters of efforts to top the Qing monarchy were Chinese Protestants. Chinese Christian churches in America served as sanctuaries where the Chinese revolutionary Sun Yat-sen and his followers took rest, promoted revolution, and raised money. Convinced that America's values of democracy, its republican form of government, and its modernity developed as a result of Christian influence, Chinese Christians compelled China to take a similar path. Like the Chinese American Citizen's Alliance, Chinese Christians extolled the lifestyle and form of government of a society that often discriminated against Chinese immigrants. Therefore, their fellow conservative, traditionally-minded peers saw them as insufficiently "Chinese." The Chinese Christians

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<sup>527</sup> For more information on Chinese Christians in San Francisco, see Welesy Woo, "Chinese Protestants in the San Francisco Bay Area," in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991), 213-245; and Timothy Tseng, "Chinese Protestant Nationalism in the United States, 1880-1927," in *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans*, ed. David K. Yoo (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 19-51.

were thus marginalized in Chinatowns, which required them to band together for mutual support. They soon established their own schools, missions, and newspapers.

In the early 1900s Reverend Ng embarked on several nationwide speaking tours, attempting to make a case for Chinese contributions to the well-being of America and thus the need for immigration reform.<sup>528</sup> In 1900, when Euro-Americans blamed San Francisco's Chinese for a rumored bubonic plague and the entire community was quarantined, leading Chinese Christians, taking advantage of the inner turmoil and division within the CCBA, led the charge to end this demonization. Through these efforts, Chinese Christians gradually established a tenuous credibility within the larger Euro-American community.<sup>529</sup>

One week after he informed the CCBA of the *Chung Sai Yat Po* article, Cook sent a letter of thanks to the CCBA for re-electing him as its legal counsel for the next year. Both the secretary of the CCBA and the consul general, as well as several *huiguan* presidents, informed Cook of his reappointment, and in response, he stated,

I have tried at all times during the past year to faithfully attend to all matters confided to me by your Association and I can only say to you that I shall do in the future exactly what I have done in the past and shall always consider that it is my duty . . . to do all within my power in the interests of your Association and in the interests of all Chinese in the Country.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Tseng, "Chinese Protestant Nationalism," 20; Woo, "Chinese Protestants," 238.

<sup>529</sup> Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 237.

<sup>530</sup> Letter to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association from Cook, October 24, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 14: 24 Oct. (ii), cubic brk4009, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00004009\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00004009_16a) (accessed October 3, 2009).

On the same day, Cook drafted a letter addressed to “Chinese Residents of the United States,” expressing his gratitude for electing him to another year of legal service. Cook won by a landslide, receiving over twice the number of votes than the lawyer running against him. Cook assured that, “. . . all your [Chinese] confidence is not in any way misplaced and as I have done during the past year I shall continue to do so [as] long as the Chinese people desire me to act for them and be always watchfull [sic] for their interest . . . [and] protect them in their rights . . . to see that what they are entitled to they obtain.”<sup>531</sup> During his next year of legal service, he continually advocated on behalf of the CCBA and individual Chinese in the San Francisco community. Particularly, Cook was instrumental in his appeals to immigration officials, as well as other governmental departments, regarding the treatment of Chinese at the new detention facility at Angel Island.

During the early nineteenth-century, American immigration law remained firmly entrenched in the policy of Chinese exclusion. There was no more powerful symbol of its institutionalization than the new immigration station built on Angel Island. Before the construction of the new facility, early Chinese immigrants to San Francisco encountered a gloomy, poorly lit, two-story shed, known to the Chinese as *Mu wu*, or “wooden barracks,” at the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Chinese arrivals were held at this overcrowded, unsafe, and unsanitary facility until immigration officials cleared them. In 1910, the government erected a two-story wooden building to serve as the new

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<sup>531</sup> Letter to Chinese Residents of the U.S. from Cook, October 24, 1910, *Carroll Cook correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 14: 24 Oct. (i), cubcic brk4008, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00004008\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00004008_16a) (accessed October 3, 2009).

immigration station on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. Immigration officials and the government primarily justified the construction of this new facility as an effort to isolate newly-arrived Chinese immigrants with supposed communicable diseases.<sup>532</sup>

First conceived of in 1903, the station on Angel Island represented the achievement of several goals of the Bureau of Immigration. As San Francisco Commissioner of Immigration Hart Hyatt North explained, the new station would provide immigration officials with larger offices and Chinese immigrants with better detention quarters. Most important, its location on an island would be the most effective means of keeping a watchful eye over the resourceful Chinese. Furthermore, it was escape-proof. Officials at the new station subjected the Chinese to extensive and frequently humiliatingly invasive examinations. The interrogation process remained protracted because officials believed most Chinese gain entry into the United States by dishonest means.<sup>533</sup> Those who failed the initial interrogation could appeal or be reexamined, but the process was undoubtedly a psychological burden for immigrants. Throughout this period, Chinese relied on their transnational networks of family, clan, and community across the United States and in China to provide financial backing, immigration advice, crucial witness testimony, and legal counsel. They continued to protest their treatment by immigration officials for years after the Angel Island station opened.

The CCBA advocated the goals of the Chinese Equal Rights League when it issued circulars throughout San Francisco's Chinatown calling on residents to "protest for equal rights," and it sent telegrams to Hong Kong and Canton warning new immigrants to

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<sup>532</sup> Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (San Francisco, CA: Hoc Doi, 1986), 13.

<sup>533</sup> Lee, *At America's Gates*, 126-130.

avoid entering the United States through San Francisco's new station.<sup>534</sup> It also joined forces with the San Francisco Chinese Chamber of Commerce to send a lengthy petition to the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce in May 1911. The petition documented numerous cases of injustice. Angel Island immigration authorities responded by inviting the San Francisco Down Town Association, a large commercial organization, Robert Dollar of the Dollar Steamship Company, and Reverend Wu Panzhao (Ng Poon Chew), editor of the *Chung Sai Yat Po*, for an extensive tour of the immigration station.

The group was appalled at what they witnessed and concluded Chinese immigration examinations were "unreasonable." An applicant, the commission reported, was "considered guilty until he proves himself entitled to land." The "high standards of proof required of Chinese in admission cases and the ways in which applicant and witness testimonies were read against one another," they charged, "were sufficient to exclude every man, woman and child from landing."<sup>535</sup> In addition, the observers reported that detainees were allowed to leave their quarters only once or twice a week for one-half hour. The lavatories were "exceedingly unsanitary," and the hospital was horribly inadequate. The dormitories were so crowded and dismal, in fact, that one visitor demanded of the commissioner of immigration, "Is this a jail . . . and must all Chinese imprisoned here be treated as felons? This is not the least unlike a cattle pen!"<sup>536</sup>

As the CCBA's legal counsel, and at the request of the Chinese Consul General on March 22, 1910, Carroll Cook wrote to Commissioner North to ascertain why the government charged fifty cents for "the transportation of Chinese witnesses and back" to

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.



Angel Island. Cook received this information from the Chinese Consul General, who informed him about the notice from the U.S. Immigration office, later published in a Chinese newspaper. While immigration officials required Chinese attendance at the station rather than in the city, “instead of taking their testimony here where they are available.” Cook further asserted:

Of course, you know that it is almost impossible for the Chinese Immigrants to get their witnesses to go over there under the most favorable conditions and that neither you nor the Government of the United States have any power to compel their attendance on behalf of the Immigrants, whose right to land is questioned, to tax them with fifty cents, to be paid to the Government, when they are ready to go voluntarily, seem to me to add an additional obstacle, which is wholly uncalled for, since the Government insists upon their making such [a] trip.<sup>537</sup>

While he did not address the reasons why Chinese were summoned to the island as witnesses, Commissioner North promptly replied to Cook that the information regarding the fee charged was incorrect, and that two vessels, the ‘Monticello’ and the ‘Inspector,’ transported Chinese from the mainland to Angel Island and in “return for the convenience of this Service . . . all persons having business here are conveyed free of charge . . . and when witnesses are summoned here, they are always furnished with the necessary transportation”<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Letter from Carroll Cook to H.H. North, March 22, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 22 March, cubcic brk3927, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003927\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003927_16a) (accessed October 3, 2009).

<sup>538</sup> Letter from H.H. North to Carroll Cook, March 23, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 23 March, cubcic brk3928 [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003928\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003928_16a) (accessed October 3, 2009).

Approximately one week after his re-election as legal counsel in 1910, Carroll Cook further made a further appeal on behalf of Chinese in a letter to the commissioner of immigration on Angel Island in order to ascertain whether there was truth to the claim that the immigration office deemed “Chinese Merchants having an interest in the Mercantile business” as untitled to certificates of residence unless “[they are] actually engaged in the conduct of the business itself.” Cook argued that many Chinese merchants were “similar to our capitalists” through their own banking businesses, which were “merchandise in money” and “other pursuits of such character which do not require their actual attendance at . . . places of business, but which still leaves them Merchants in the full sense of the word.”<sup>539</sup> Cook further questioned the immigration office about the reported deportation of merchants “upon the claimed ground that they were suffering from, [as] the Department calls it, ‘Hook-worm.’”<sup>540</sup>

Although a response from the Commissioner of Immigration was not found, Carroll Cook sent an appeal to Charles Nagle, Secretary of Commerce and Labor in Washington, D.C. one week later, requesting the Chinese at Angel Island be relieved of medical examinations to detect the presence of hookworm. “All Chinese merchants returning are greatly incensed at indignities to which subjected,” Cook wrote. These methods “in vogue,” added Cook, compelled the submission of Chinese to “mutilations

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<sup>539</sup> Letter from Carroll Cook to Commissioner of Immigration, November 4, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 4 Nov., cubcic brk3932, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/brk3932> (accessed October 3, 2009).

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

of ear and fingers and to injections,” when qualified physicians could more effectively test for its presence.<sup>541</sup>

Luther C. Steward, U.S. Commissioner of Commerce and Labor, responded to Cook’s first inquiry on whether or not a Chinese merchant ‘having an interest in a mercantile business is not entitled to a certificate,’ by citing the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1893, which defined a “merchant” as: “a person engaged in buying and selling merchandise, at a fixed place of business . . . and who during the time he claims to be engaged as a merchant does not engage in the performance of any manual labor, except such as is necessary in the conduct of his business as such merchant.”<sup>542</sup> According to the 1893 exclusion law, when a Chinese individual submitted an application “on the ground that he was formerly engaged in this country as a merchant,” this person was also required to “establish . . . the testimony of two credible witnesses other than Chinese the fact that he conducted such business . . . for at least one year before his departure from the United States . . .”. Steward further stated the Department of Commerce and Labor would not rule under this statute that a banker “could be brought within the term ‘merchant,’” although, “. . . in instances where Chinese claim to be the non-laboring or

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<sup>541</sup> Letter from Carroll Cook to Charles Nagle, November 15, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 15 Nov, cubcic brk3938, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003938\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003938_16a) (accessed October 4, 2009).

<sup>542</sup> Letter from Luther C. Steward to Carroll Cook, November 9, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: 9 Nov, cubcic brk393, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/brk3935> (accessed October 4, 2009).

exempt status under the Exclusion Laws, the very nature of their claim would necessitate the consideration of each on its own merits.”<sup>543</sup>

In answering Cook’s second inquiry, Steward confirmed Chinese and other immigrant groups were subjected to medical examinations “incident to determining whether they come within any of the excluded classes” designated in Section Two of the Immigration Act of 1907, he denied the invasive methods in which examiners conducted these tests: “The examination is made by a duly-appointed and qualified physician of the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, assigned to duty in the Immigration Service as Medical Examiner.” The actual exclusion of a Chinese applicant “so afflicted,” was accomplished by a “Board of Special Inquiry,” consisting of three officers, “the basis of their action being the medical certificate of the Medical Examiner as to the condition existing.”<sup>544</sup>

Cook appeal to Commissioner Steward at the end of the year requesting special passes to Angel Island for Lum Leong, Lee We Do, Ye Wing Chang, Dung San Lung, Chun Key, and Quong Hong Sing, the six secretaries of the CCBA. Steward granted Cook’s request for the passes, complete with photographs attached, which permitted the *huiguan* secretaries to “board outgoing vessels for the purpose of supplying necessities to Chinese who have been ordered deported.”<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Correspondence Regarding Permission for Secretaries of CCBA to Board, December 3, 1910. *Carroll Cook Correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 18, cubcic brk4051, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00004051\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00004051_16a) (accessed October 3, 2009).

On November 25, while not providing a response to Cook's first inquiry regarding the status of bankers, Charles Nagle, Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor responded:

Your telegram . . . was received sometime ago and has been considered. Inquiry from the authorities in charge at San Francisco satisfies me that the methods of examination adopted there are similar to those which are followed in other places . . . the medical examination which is directed from the common head in Washington and is not selected by this Department, is substantially uniform throughout the country. I am assured that the test to which aliens are subjected is not only uniform, but is simple and calculated to impose as little hardship as possible.<sup>546</sup>

Earlier in the same year, the *New York Times* reported on an alleged boycott organized in China against American goods, while Chinese merchants and "powerful Six Companies' officers" in San Francisco remained "reticent." The article reported that the Chinese boycott's alleged members were wealthy merchants who failed to obtain "original admission" to America, or the country deported them after a second attempt to re-enter the country, but it also pointed out as "another source of complaint" the "rigid system of examinations" required by port authorities upon entrance to San Francisco: "Wealthy merchants on re-entrance after visits to China are said to have complained bitterly of these minute physical examinations, particularly the new 'tissue test' to determine age and general condition of health."<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Letter from Charles Nagel to Carroll Cook, November 25, 1910. *Carroll Cook correspondence Relating to Cases of Chinese in the U.S.: Correspondence with Officials on Behalf of Chinatown Merchants and Immigrants*, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley, AAS ARC 2000/42: fol. 2: Nov. 25, cubcic brk3939, [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003939\\_16a](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/flipomatic/cic/images@ViewImage?img=brk00003939_16a) (accessed October 3, 2009).

<sup>547</sup> "Inspired By Angry Chinese: Proposed Boycott Said to be Due to Merchants We Barred," *New York Times*, May 31, 1910.

The article further elaborated that those “in touch with the local Chinese business world” said the movement’s impetus was, ironically, the restoration of the original Pacific Mail Detention Station to “effect an amelioration of the physical examination.”<sup>548</sup> On the same day, the *Los Angeles Times* also reported on the proposed Chinese boycott. While the article also characterized “powerful Six Companies’ members” as “reticent,” refusing to discuss any details, the article also described the Chinese call to restore the original detention depot, reporting Chinese called the physical examination requirements both “debasing” and humiliating.”<sup>549</sup> A call to restore the original detention facility is a powerful statement to the conditions that prevailed on Angel Island.

In 1911, the CCBA and sympathetic representatives of the Down Town Association of San Francisco sent a ten-page memorial to President Taft reminding him that China and its population of four hundred million could “make the United States her closest occidental neighbor, the marketing place for her requirements.” However, the merchants passionately warned, the mistreatment of Chinese merchants on Angel Island could potentially destroy commercial relations between the United States and China. The memorial concluded with fifteen detailed recommendations for improving conditions and the handling of merchant cases.<sup>550</sup> Although detention officials made some improvements to the facility, substandard conditions prevailed, as did Angel Island’s endurance as a pervasive symbol of Chinese discrimination and exclusion.

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> “Want Depot Restored: Chinese Boycott Probably Inspired by Humiliating Entrance Examinations at Port,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1910.

<sup>550</sup> Lee, *At America’s Gates*, 126-130

A telegram from the CCBA in to President Wilson in 1918 reemphasized the importance of Chinese merchants to Chinese-U.S. trade and then demanded the “ruthless insults” made by immigration officers to “unoffending merchants” and their families cease.<sup>551</sup> Infuriated by the mistreatment of Chinese residents the telegram asserted, “No matter how long their residence or how firm their right to remain, Chinese are being arrested, hunted, and terrorized.” As a result, the Chinese population of the Pacific Coast was “fast decreasing.”<sup>552</sup>

The CCBA and affiliated locality and clan associations were nominally non-political organizations. But during the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese in San Francisco and throughout America became increasingly politicized as they witnessed a China divided by corrupt warlords and threatened by foreign aggression. By the early 1900s, a China-oriented political consciousness permeated San Francisco and, to a degree, continued to undermine the foundation of the traditional *huiguan* power structure. The humiliating defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the botched “Hundred Days’ Reforms” of 1898, designed to speed up China’s modernization but essentially serving to expand European economic imperialism in Asia, the continued discrimination suffered by Chinese in America, and the sociopolitical changes occurring within San Francisco’s Chinatown, awakened nationalist sentiment in Chinese at home and abroad.<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> L. Eve Armentrout-Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists, and Chinatowns*, 1-40, 100-113, 139-40.

This integral role played by *huiguan* in San Francisco and throughout the United States was well known to governments in China throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chinese diplomats continually sought to channel *huiguan* efforts to benefit the government in China. Qing envoys exerted their control after the establishment of permanent missions in the United States, so much so that the CCBA did not openly espouse the revolutionary cause until after the 1911 Revolution.

The emergence of Chinese nationalism was responsible for some of the social changes occurring within San Francisco's Chinese community. Ardent critics of the Qing government journeyed to America from the turn of the twentieth century onward to establish parties promoting their respective political agendas, and by the 1910s, a far broader segment of the Chinese population in America became interested in anti-imperialist politics in China, which led in part to an identity transformation for Chinese. When fused with the racism experienced by Chinese in America, China-centered nationalism gave momentum to the forging of a new Chinese American identity.<sup>554</sup>

In the years prior to 1911, when the Chinese Revolution occurred and toppled the Qing Dynasty, a failure to truly comprehend Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary ideology, coupled with Chinese tradition to obey the mandate of heaven, rather than rebel from it, limited the popularity of Sun's ideology to some degree. The *Xingzhonghui*, later renamed the *Tongmenghui* (also referred to as the Chinese United League or Chinese Revolutionary Alliance), was a secret society founded in Honolulu in 1895 by Sun Yat-sen. Chinese Americans' early moral and financial support for this organization was far from overwhelming, due in part to the pro-Qing CCBA and Chinese Chamber of

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<sup>554</sup> Shehong Chen, *Being Chinese, Becoming Chinese American* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press), 9-42.



Commerce. As a result, *Tonmenghui* members in the United States focused on portraying the Manchus as foreign, thereby justifying the need to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. In contrast, the *Baohuanghui* (literally, “Society for the Protection of the Emperor,” but also translated as “Chinese Empire Reform Association”) was established in 1899 in Vancouver by Chinese reformer Kang Youwei, who favored a constitutional monarchy in China. This party competed for Chinese American support with Sun Yat-sen, who remained the proponent of a republican form of government for China.<sup>555</sup>

Chinese in San Francisco and throughout America, whose efforts became a part of the larger overseas Chinese politicization, soon offered monetary contributions, financed China-based commercial ventures to modernize the homeland, disseminated propaganda in North America, and even organized a military academy in California to train men for subversive work in China. Branches of both parties mushroomed in the major Chinatowns of North America, and eventually in China and Southeast Asia. The political freedom of the Chinese in America allowed these political parties to develop relatively unhindered. Moreover, the shift of mainstream American attention from the Chinese to the Japanese “menace,” following the 1904 indefinite ban on Chinese immigration, also facilitated this ethnic mobilization.<sup>556</sup>

Like Sun Yat-sen’s *Tongmenghui*, the *Zhigongtang* (or *Chee Kung Tong*, “Active Justice Society,” also referred to as the Chinese Free Masons), was an anti-Manchu secret society that advocated an overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in order to reestablish Chinese authority and leadership. Both organizations contested the prominent role played by the

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

CCBA and its affiliated *huiguan* in San Francisco's Chinese community, yet the *Zhigongtang* had different, more traditional goals than those espoused by Sun's *Tongmenghui*. Sue Fawn Chung's study of the organization from 1870-1949 illustrates that, like *huiguan*, the *Zhigongtang* functioned less as a political body and more as an organization offering Chinese immigrants protection, employment opportunities, business networks, and mutual aid.<sup>557</sup>

Like *huiguan*, the *Zhigongtang* functioned as an important fraternal organization for overseas Chinese, yet it represented Chinese who were not represented by *huiguan* or larger kinship associations. By the 1870s, almost every major Chinese community in America had a branch of the *Zhigongtang*.<sup>558</sup> As a "loosely-connected international network" and "trade network,"<sup>559</sup> the *Zhigongtang* traced its roots to the *Hongmen* of Guangdong Province and the *Tiandihui* of Fujian Province.<sup>560</sup> Although the Qing government banned the organization in China, its leaders in America often equated the organization to Masonic societies in America, thus attempting to increase its prestige in the eyes of the larger Euro-American society. While Europeans continued to deny the connection between the organizations, the *Zhigongtang* did receive a measure of respect, as well as economic and political advantages, from Euro-American society.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Consult Sue Fawn Chung, "The Zhigongtang in the United States, 1860-1949," in *Empire, Nation, and Beyond: Chinese History in Late Imperial and Modern Times – A Festschrift in Honor of Frederic Wakeman*, ed. Joseph Esherick, Wen-hsin Yeh, and Madeline Zelin, China Research Monograph 61 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 231-249; and "The Zhigongtang and Chinese American Funeralary Rituals," in *The Chinese in America: From Gold Mountain to the New Millennium*, ed. Susie Cassel (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 217-238.

<sup>558</sup> Sue Fawn Chung, "The Zhigongtang and Chinese American Funeralary Rituals," 220.

<sup>559</sup> Sue Fawn Chung, "The Zhigongtang in the United States, 1860-1949," 231, 242.

<sup>560</sup> Sue Fawn Chung, "The Zhigongtang and Chinese American Funeralary Rituals," 218.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

As an important cultural parallel, Chung examines the connections between the *Zhigongtang* in America and Chinese American funerary rituals. Similar to *huiguan*, the *Zhigongtang* recognized that proper burial practices were fundamental to the Chinese worldview of life and death, and it was important for Chinese immigrants to know they would be taken care of properly far from home when they died. Most importantly, however, *Zhigongtang* burial practices differed fundamentally from *huiguan* practices because the organization learned to adjust Chinese burial customs to accommodate American social and legal mores, as well as the increased acculturation of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in America.<sup>562</sup> Chung's important scholarship addresses the *Zhigongtang*'s understanding of Chinese history and culture, as well as its transformation of traditional Chinese culture as a Chinese American organization.

One must also delineate the *Tongmenghui*, *Zhigongtang* and other secret societies from the fighting tongs, Chinese societies most well-known to Euro-Americans at the time. Established as early as 1852, these structured, exclusive socioeconomic organizations also struggled for political and economic power within the community. Often pitted against one another as well as against the CCBA, tongs resorted to open warfare to settle scores. They took control of and played a significant role in managing Chinese vice businesses, including gambling saloons, brothels, and opium dens. Limited employment opportunities and low levels of acculturation, all products of the anti-Chinese movement, drew individual Chinese to these organizations.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>563</sup> For more information on the fighting tongs and the Chinese Triads, consult Renqui Yu, *To Save China, To Save Ourselves: The Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance of New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 12-15, 30; Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America*, 53-54, Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns*, 23-24.

Against the backdrop of growing nationalism, Chinese American politicization and identification with secret societies, and further racially-based agitation in America at the turn of the twentieth century, the call for a boycott of U.S. goods in 1905 in Guangzhou and Shanghai also evoked a response from the Chinese in the United States, whose resentment of the years of discriminatory treatment flared into outright hostility. The boycott, which lasted nearly a year and drew support from all major Chinese organizations including the *Zhigongtang*, Chinese Christians, and native-born Chinese Americans under the aegis of the *Zhuyue Zongju*, or Anti-Treaty Society, represented a significant departure from the CCBA's previous emphasis on judicial and diplomatic recourse. The boycott faltered when the Qing government, buckling under pressure from U.S. authorities, retracted its support for it.<sup>564</sup>

Nevertheless, the boycott checked certain blatant abuses: raids on Chinatowns throughout America ceased, processing times for new immigrants shortened somewhat, calls for a more stringent registration process abated, and the momentum to expel all Chinese slowed to an eventual halt.<sup>565</sup> The failure of the boycott to reverse anti-immigration laws, however, reinforced Chinese Americans' sense of inferiority. The boycott, as much as it united the Chinese community, also polarized it. The CCBA and other affiliated *huiguan* organizations, the *Baohuanghui*, and various merchant guilds, all factions favoring constitutional reform in China, backed the demand that the United States admit all Chinese except laborers. In opposition were those favoring revolution in China and the admission of all Chinese including laborers, namely the *Zhigongtang*

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<sup>564</sup> Delbert L. McKee, "The Chinese Boycott of 1905-1906 Reconsidered: The Role of Chinese Americans," *Pacific Historical Review* 55 (May 1986): 168-89; Tsai, *China and the Overseas Chinese*, 105, 108.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

*Tongmenghui*, Triad lodges, Chinese Christians, and American-born Chinese. When the boycott failed to elicit the espoused aims, each faction blamed the other for the failure.



Figure 28. Nationalist Demonstration, ca. 1911, California State Library<sup>566</sup>

Despite organizational competition for the allegiance of San Francisco's Chinese community, the CCBA remained the most powerful organization until the 1970s. Many of its *Sanyi* leaders, however, lost much credibility when they failed to counter the Geary Act. Community leaders of *Siyi* origin, who made up almost two-thirds of the Chinese population in America, now found the perfect opportunity to challenge *Sanyi* leadership. Boycotts of *Sanyi* businesses ensued, and soon tong wars broke out.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> [http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese\\_Nationalism..](http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese_Nationalism..), (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>567</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 59-60.

Regardless of continual inter-*huiguan* disputes, President Theodore Roosevelt's concessions to Japanese in 1909 resulted in an impassioned plea by the CCBA for the same rights and privileges long denied to the Chinese. The tone of the plea was much more emphatic and assertive than earlier, nineteenth-century memorials. It demonstrates that although and perhaps because Chinese nationalist consciousness was emerging in the early-twentieth century, the CCBA continued to represent Chinese throughout America through its appeals to the American government for equality and protection under the law.

San Francisco attorney O.P. Stidger, who drafted the telegram for the CCBA, informed the *New York Times* that it was in protest of President Roosevelt's exertion of power to prevent the segregation of Japanese children in California's schools. However, the president did not protest "the common practice of excluding Chinese from the white schools." The telegram also denounced the Chinese exclusion acts, stating that immigration inspectors on Angel Island continually violated the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>568</sup> The *Times* published a portion of the telegram one day later:

We beg leave to refer you, Mr. President to the fact that there is a discrimination in favor of Japanese aliens as against Chinese residents, and privileged classes of this country. Such a discrimination is very apparent from the fact that the Department of Commerce and Labor, governed by the policy of your Administration, imposes upon the citizens of Chinese descent, domiciled Chinese merchants, their families, the privileged classes of Chinese under the treaty, every conceivable embarrassment which is in no way suffered by the Japanese.<sup>569</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> "Chinese Now Complain: The Six Companies Protest Against Roosevelt Favoring the Japanese," *New York Times*, February 9, 1909.

<sup>569</sup> "Chinese Make Protest: Want Roosevelt to Urge Justice of Them as for Japanese," *New York Times*, February 10, 1909.

The appeal further requested of the president to “right the wrongs” suffered by Chinese in Reno, Nevada, whose property was destroyed “without due process of law,” and its occupants, forcibly expelled from their homes, left the city homeless and destitute. It also requested the president to “exert a strong protest against” school laws in California which discriminated against Chinese children, and assist the CCBA in testing the constitutionality of their cases within the courts. The appeal also addressed immigration inspectors throughout the United States who “violated every letter of the Fourth Amendment” of the U.S. Constitution: “Chinese are arrested, searched, and their papers, the only means by which they may be identified and saved the humiliation of arrest and deportation, confiscated. Is there no remedy to protect these people from such flagrant injustice?” The article concluded that immigration authorities often held Chinese in the United States “incommunicado” while investigating their rights to enter the country. Immigration inspectors continued to invade Chinese homes “without fear of reprimand,” while Chinese were “dragged from their hearths, confined in prisons without bail, advice of counsel, and even the right to consult their own medical advisors denied.”<sup>570</sup>

While regional and clan ties remained two bases for *huiguan* organization in nineteenth-century China, when immigrants journeyed abroad, they organized and applied these concepts to meet the needs of their new environment. “Traditionist” *huiguan*<sup>571</sup> did not exist in China; however, they operated in accordance with Chinese traditional mores and values. While continuing to exist as a male-dominated power

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<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> This term is conceptualized and discussed in W.E. Willmott, *The Political Structure of the Chinese Community in Cambodia* (London, UK: The Athlone Press, 1970), 85. A “traditionist” Chinese organization was one oriented toward traditional Chinese values, but not necessarily traditional in the sense of existing in pre-contemporary China; thus, its orientation rather than its existence was traditional.

structure, *huiguan* were virtual oligarchies established by the merchant class, and until well into the twentieth century, only merchants, or representatives appointed by merchants, served on *huiguan* governing boards. In theory the system looked after its members in a paternalistic fashion, but leaders could also be corrupt and tyrannical or misuse their powers to further their own personal interests.

During the early period of their development, *huiguan* filled a crucial need for Chinese immigrants in San Francisco's Chinatown. Individuals could mingle with people from the same area who perhaps knew mutual friends or relatives. Since a Chinese immigrant at this time usually expected to retire to his native village one day, it was also in his interest to maintain good relations with the *huiguan*, which provided the link to his land of origin. Moreover, the organization gave him needed protection from threats arising due to clan or regional conflicts and due to persecution by Euro-American society. Thus, during this early period, as with *huiguan* in Indochina, the most severe punishment imposed on any individual was social ostracism, namely by banishment from the *huiguan* during his lifetime and excluding him from the *huiguan*-maintained cemetery after death.

After the passage of the first Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, however, the Chinese population in America declined, and by extension the membership of locality and clan associations likewise shrank rapidly. China also underwent rapid and profound change so that newer, younger Chinese immigrants increasingly tended to share a common ethnic identity as fellow Chinese that ultimately transcended regional and clan affiliations. In America, a second Chinese generation in America also grew up, for whom regional and clan loyalties were much less significant than they were to the older generation. Because of this newfound ethnic identification, the first half of the twentieth



century saw a diminution of regional and clan antagonisms in San Francisco, a development that chipped away at the fundamental *raison d'être* for *huiguan*.

Class delineations in San Francisco's Chinatown also loomed large and remained so for the remaining early twentieth century. The failure of the 1911 Republican Revolution to secure full Chinese democracy also meant political consensus among Chinese in San Francisco remained elusive. However, China's 1911 Revolution in China further stimulated the process of social change in San Francisco's Chinese community.<sup>572</sup> *Huiguan* attempted to modify their structure and activities to be more in step with this social change.

Once guardians of Confucian orthodoxy and tradition, *huiguan* became vanguards of the new reform mentality. For example, the *Ningyang Huiguan*, the largest and most powerful *huiguan* in San Francisco, was the first to institute new social practices. It announced repeatedly that, in order to celebrate the opening of its new building, it would hold a new ceremony including guest speakers whose speeches emphasized the progress of China and of Chinese America, rather than the worship of the gods.<sup>573</sup> In 1910, the *Shaoqing Huiguan* followed suit, voting against placing idols in their new building.<sup>574</sup> Thus, the social transformation of Chinese in San Francisco also involved cultural adaptation. Many of San Francisco's *huiguan* and *shantang*, however, continued to sponsor Chinese schools to ensure that future American-born generations received a proper Chinese education. The location itself continued its traditional role in provided

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<sup>572</sup> Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 183.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

members a place to socialize while concurrently maintaining its primary mutual aid functions. Today, *huiguan* through *shantang* associations still administer cemeteries for their members. In spite of these measures, *huiguan* influenced steadily declined after the first two decades of the nineteenth century, while the scope and operation of each contracted.<sup>575</sup>

Mounting nationalistic feelings and increasing activity by China's political parties, especially the Guomindang, the Nationalist Party of China, in the United States led to the CCBA's deeper involvement in China's political issues. For example, the CCBA led opposition to President Yuan Shikai's intentions to declare himself emperor in 1915.<sup>576</sup> Even more often, the CCBA provided propaganda and logistical support for the Chinese government in its struggle against foreign aggression. As early as 1907, the CCBA sent telegrams to China protesting Britain's infringement upon China's sovereignty. And when Chinese in San Francisco heard about Russia's attempt to annex Outer Mongolia, they set up a bureau to collect money, planning to sponsor an expeditionary army to fight the Russians. They backed China's fight against turning Germany's special privileges in Shandong over to Japan in the 1919 Versailles Treaty, and after the Shenyang (Mukden) incident in 1931, *huiguan* mobilized the community to raise millions of dollars to support China's resistance to Japanese invaders in the ensuing years.<sup>577</sup>

A heavy concentration on Chinese politics emphasized by Guomindang partisans caused the CCBA and other *huiguan* in the United States to ignore or become oblivious

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<sup>575</sup> Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American*, 59.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

to the fact that Chinese Americans were increasingly integrating into and playing larger roles in American society. Thus, *huiguan* increasingly divorced themselves from playing a relevant role in community affairs. Newer generations of Chinese American leaders arose in San Francisco and throughout the United States who were products of a changing Chinese American society and therefore exhibited a greater awareness of these changes.<sup>578</sup>

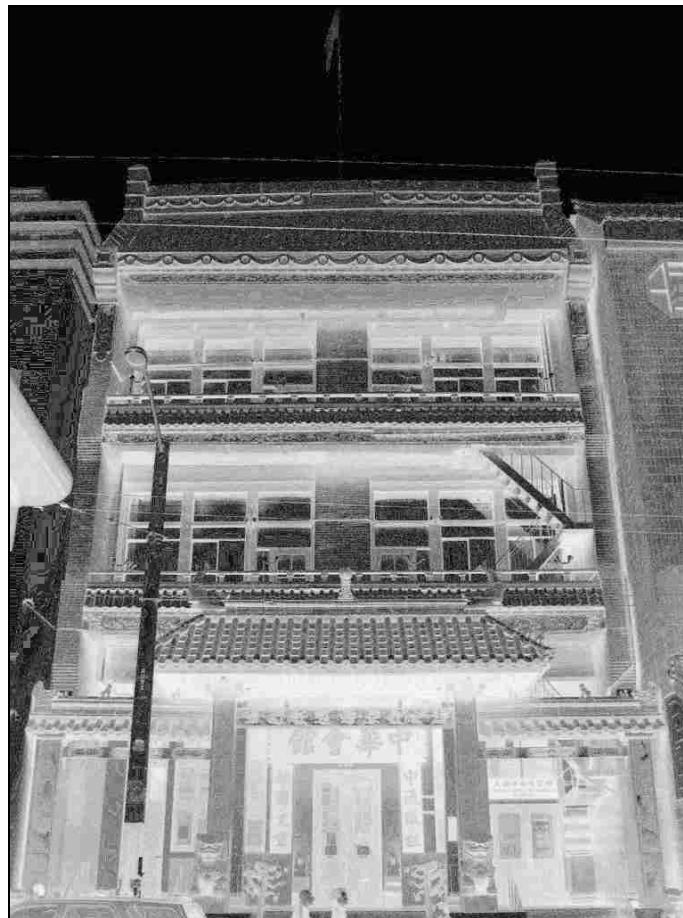


Figure 29. Guomindang Flag above CCBA Headquarters on Stockton Street<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> [http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Zhonghua\\_Huiguan,\\_San\\_Francisco\\_\(6540\).JPG&imgrefurl=http://reference.findtarget.com/search/Chinatown,%2520San%2520Francisco/&usg=\\_\\_Uf7bxWnMYxU2eq5DqC2V6JOWSmw=&h=1024&w=768&sz](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Zhonghua_Huiguan,_San_Francisco_(6540).JPG&imgrefurl=http://reference.findtarget.com/search/Chinatown,%2520San%2520Francisco/&usg=__Uf7bxWnMYxU2eq5DqC2V6JOWSmw=&h=1024&w=768&sz)

The future destiny of the CCBA and *huiguan* in San Francisco and throughout America is difficult to foretell. Him Mark Lai contends that as long as there is an ethnic community based on common interests, the CCBA or an organization similar to it will be able to justify its existence.<sup>580</sup> Whether organization principles based on common locality, county of origin, or surname, originally derived from China, can be sustained in America in the future is doubtful. For successive generations of American-born Chinese whose knowledge of Chinese language and culture is limited or non-existent, and for the many who only possess a vague idea about the ancestral village, such regional affinities may be weak or completely lacking. *Huiguan* now have very limited constituencies even in Chinatowns, so it is difficult to see how *huiguan* can flourish or even survive at the present time as viable institutions.<sup>581</sup>

One cannot doubt, however, the historical importance of the *huiguan* in San Francisco's Chinese community, and of their historical importance to Chinese communities throughout America, Southeast Asia and throughout other regions where Chinese immigration occurred. From the earliest moments of Chinese immigration, *huiguan* established and continued to stand as a pillar of complex traditional Chinese social relations defined by geographic, clan, and linguistic bonds and boundaries. Furthermore, they represented the early, predominantly bachelor Chinese population's desire for community life. These types of traditional relationships constituted the most

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=138&hl=en&start=4&tbnid=csxX6MnnMYHcQM:&tbnh=150&tbnw=113&prev=/images%3Fq%3DChinese%2BSix%2BCompanies%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG., (accessed August 14, 2009).

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 69.

important organizational foundation of *huiguan*, extending its influence to Chinese communities beyond San Francisco.

## CONCLUSION

In the “Introduction” to their study of local Chinese elites, historians Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin comment that they include merchants among the local elites “because of their wealth, often buttressed by resources commonly associated with the gentry, such as degrees (purchased or regular), landholding, cultural symbols, and community involvements” and because they “relied on some resources and strategies akin to those of the late imperial gentry.”<sup>582</sup> In fact, the notion of merchants as elite nicely parallels the realities of *huiguan* in Indochina and San Francisco in the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

Maintaining the status of local gentry within overseas Chinese networks, wealthy merchants received traditional perquisites of exalted status in exchange for upholding and fulfilling the obligations of the traditional elite, including mutual aid, community education, and defense against the larger hegemonic tides of national and colonial bureaucracies. This placed Chinese elite in Indochina and San Francisco in an ironic and often conflicting position. In many areas, ruling states, in this study either the French colonials or the United States government, reinforced the supremacy of the Chinese merchant class. They did so in ways similar to the reinforcement of local, non-mercantile elite in imperial China. For example, this reinforcement received the most concrete form in the office of *huiguan* presidents in Indochina and San Francisco; however, particularly in Indochina, Chinese members often undermined this physical manifestation of authority by electing *huiguan* presidential lackeys, rich enough to satisfy colonial demands but not really occupying the top rung of the *huiguan* hierarchy.

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<sup>582</sup> Esherick and Rankin, *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 12-13.

This idea of colonial reinforcement is in no way intended to imply the absence of competition of power within and amongst *huiguan*; quite the opposite was true in San Francisco's Chinatown. In addition to regional rivalries and challenges, *huiguan* leaders and larger state, national, or colonial powers often found themselves engaged in fierce competition for dominance over the Chinese population within their respective communities. Thus, *huiguan* challenged state, national and colonial hegemony not only through an assertion of personal power and prestige, but also to maintain virtual autonomy over their respective communities. They did so in spite of the challenges made by larger state, national and colonial powers to enforce discriminatory legislative measures in an attempt to enforce what it perceived as its own autonomy, especially in times of national political or financial unrest.

The idea that frequently violent confrontations and feuds between *huiguan* contraindicated any type of intercommunity unity or identity also deserves close investigation. This assertion might bear some merit during the late nineteenth century, but by China's Republican Revolution in 1911, the political status of the Chinese community in Indochina and San Francisco changed. With the rise of Chinese nationalism during the early-twentieth century, *huiguan* overcame earlier, regional rivalries, and during times of critical national importance, *huiguan*'s ongoing regional conflicts faded into insignificance against the backdrop of national solidarity and the support exhibited by the Chinese community at large. A number of intercommunity organizations contributing to the development of schools, mutual aid associations, and political organizations in Indochina and San Francisco provide evidence of Chinese unity.

According to Habermas's model, a citizen gains access to the public sphere only after his stature as a "private" citizen negates his need for association with the "public" state. If association with state authorities negates one's "private-ness," then, by definition, a majority of prominent Chinese in *huiguan* throughout Indochina and America were members of the "public." Perhaps a more accurate point of distinction is available, even without Habermas's own writings. In the liberal model of the public sphere described by Habermas, public power and private autonomy stand as competing social bulwarks:

between the two spheres, as it were, stands the domain of private persons who have come together to form a public and who, as citizens of the state, mediate the state with the needs of bourgeois society, in order, as the idea goes, to this convert political authority to 'rational' authority in the medium of this public sphere.<sup>583</sup>

Did *huiguan* occupy this role as mediator between public and private, even if its leaders were only secondarily "citizens of the state?" A recurring issue concerns the degree of co-optation of *huiguan* by different groups and in different ways. *Huiguan* in Indochina and San Francisco were particularly susceptible to co-optation, beginning with state, national and colonial governments whose regulations governed members' lives and the very institution itself. Perhaps more significantly, the imperial and republican governments in China co-opted *huiguan* repeatedly throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This co-optation took many forms, including commissions in the imperial bureaucracy, roles as mediators between China's reformists and revolutionaries, financial power and control over arriving and departing Chinese

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<sup>583</sup> Habermas, "The Public Sphere," 401-2.



immigrants, and as political propagandists, agitating for change and reform in China, irrespective of their individual places of residence.

Philanthropy provides another window into the mediating role played by *huiguan* in Indochina and the American West, but this issue is not without controversy as well. Philanthropic activities stood as a cornerstone of Chinese elite responsibility and had since time immemorial. This precedent of service to clan and kin and support of the downtrodden is a deeply-ingrained Confucian ethic. Therefore, it poses a significant problem for historians hoping to use philanthropy as a measure of shared urban community or modernity. However, while philanthropic pursuits signified local elite responsibility in the Ming and early-Qing Dynasties, changing social values could easily affect reasons for pursuing such activities without changing the activities themselves. In other words, self- or private-interest and public- or state-interest absolutely can coincide without real contradiction.

All overseas Chinese, irrespective of *huiguan* affiliation, stood to gain by having well-trained and responsive fire-fighting units, decent and responsible schools, access to skilled doctors, or even required participation in public works, such as construction, canal maintenance, or road improvements. Likewise, financial contributions to local defense and public safety also benefited both the public and the private spheres. As for *huiguan* cooptation by French colonialists and the American government, or “state” officials, commission into a French colonial position or as diplomatic intermediary in America provided a corresponding increase in the authority and influence available to the respective Chinese community. Essentially, *huiguan* strengthened private autonomy by allowing Chinese access to the public sphere. It did so because, generally speaking,

among overseas Chinese, money and prominence were the measure of the game, the marker of success for both the individual and the community. Access to even a few of the rights and privileges bestowed by colonial or national governments translated into tangible benefits in terms of private autonomy for overseas Chinese.

Concentrating on intersections between Chinese, French, and Euro-American interactions illustrates that while the national government or colonial powers held official authority, Chinese *huiguan* exercised unofficial control over decision-making in Chinese communities, not only in commerce but also in the wider arenas of politics, law, and the maintenance of cultural tradition. Implicit in this conclusion is the ability of *huiguan* throughout Indochina and in San Francisco to manipulate larger state, national or colonial systems to their own advantage. Likewise, they were able to use the government in France and China for assistance and protection when necessary. These factors represent the internationalization of *huiguan* in Indochina and San Francisco, a phenomenon that allowed Chinese to be successful in the national and colonial milieu while still maintaining influence in their native territories.

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Bachelor of Arts, History Extended, 2002  
Montana State University – Billings

### Special Honors and Awards:

Barnes and Noble Book Scholarship, College of Liberal Arts, University of Nevada,  
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Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2007 – Present

Outstanding History Graduate, Montana State University-Billings, 2002

Willard E. Fraser Memorial Scholarship, Montana State University-Billings, 2002

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