

# One Mile, One Hundred Years: An Introduction to Chinese Immigrants on the West Coast of the United States in the 19th Century

Meilee Shen<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The unequal treaties from the Opium Wars totally destroyed the Chinese's confidence toward the Chinese Empire, and became the motive for them to look for a better life in the Western world. The charm of the Gold Mountain that attracted the Chinese immigrants to come to the United States began in early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the first wave of immigrants to the New World, the Chinese faced extreme challenges. The high tide of anti-Chinese sentiment began in the mid-nineteenth century and reached its zenith with the approval of the Chinese Exclusion Act by Congress in 1882; the only immigration Bill in American history that was ever passed against immigrants based on nationality and race in the nineteenth century. Despite cultural differences and other obstacles, the Chinese immigrants established their own community. The well-known Chinese Six Companies in San Francisco became a strong voice to fight for their rights and lawful equality. The growth of the Chinese communities signaled a better future when they made a connection with politicians to seek assistance for civil rights on the American soil. This paper illustrates several key issues that Chinese immigrants faced during their journey to the West of the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First, China's unstable politics and society were the causes of the Chinese to be uprooted from their homeland and transplanted on the soil of the West. Second, Chinese immigrants' golden dream as they struggled for survival as they hoped to become a part of the American dream. Third, the Chinese laborers were heavily involved with the mining industry, the Central Pacific Railroad, and manufacturing. The primary sources of the paper were based on *The New York Times* (NYT). Those articles provide a better understanding of the history of the Chinese immigrants to the United States during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other secondary sources include Irish Chang's *The Chinese in America*, Andrew Gyory's *Closing the Gate*, Benson Tong's *The Chinese Americans*, Ronald Takaki's *A History of Asian Americans*, and Judy Yung's *Chinese American Voices*.

**Keywords:** Chinese immigrants in the United States, Gold Mountain, Immigration Bill in America, Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese immigrants in the West Coast

---

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. candidate, Graduate Institute of Religious Studies, National Chengchi University; Visiting Researcher, Temple University of Pennsylvania, USA.  
Corresponding Author: Meilee Shen, E-mail: 105156504@nccu.edu.tw  
Received: 2018/06/28; Accepted: 2019/02/20

## I. The Causes of Chinese Immigrants to the United States in the Mid-1800s

The industrialization and the improving living conditions in the U.S. attracted immigrants around the world to come to the country to seek a better life. They arrived from Europe, Africa, and Asia as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first major wave of immigrants came to the U.S. in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the 1840s to the 1880s, and were of Irish, German, Scandinavian, Hungarian, and Chinese descent. The second wave of immigrants, from the 1880s to the 1900s, were Italian, Russian, Canadian, Mexican, and, of course, again Chinese.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1 From the Thanksgiving issue of Harper's Weekly, November 20, 1869. Diversity of ethnic groups in the U.S. Illustration drawn by a German-born immigrant to U.S., Thomas Nast. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

China's extraordinary geography makes for a self-conception of being the center of the world – the Middle Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> The great territory of China ranges as far as from Siberian Russian Mountains to the Himalayas of India, from the seas of Yellow, East China, and South China to the isolated Gobi Desert, then from westward to the plateaus of Central Asia. Certainly, China was a mysterious legend in the Far East from the Westerners' point of view, and many historians consider China to be the oldest civilization on the earth. Moreover, the five thousand years of civilization and significant culture were China's true grandeur beyond its geological location.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the Opium Wars and resultant unequal treaties were the result of Britain smuggling a dangerous and highly addictive drug – opium – into China from India during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gradually, a great population of Chinese became addicted to opium; there were such demands for that drug that imports soared from

<sup>1</sup> Howard P. Chudacoff and Peter C. Baldwin eds., "Great Migrations, 1870-1930," *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston, M.A.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> The Middle kingdom was translated from Chinese pronunciation "Zhong Kuo" means the kingdom in the center of the world.

<sup>3</sup> Chang, Iris (2003). *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History*. New York: Viking penguin. p. 1.

33,000 chests in 1842 to 46,000 chests in 1848 and escalated to 52,929 by 1850.<sup>4</sup> Opium had taken millions of Chinese lives for a short period of time, especially claiming large numbers of upper class elites. British opium totally destroyed the Chinese government's finances and the confidence of the Chinese toward their own country. The powerless Qing government continuously allowed Britain to import opium by opening ports for international trade with no trading restrictions.<sup>5</sup>

The Qing dynasty was still in power in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> However, China had finally fallen prey to outside political pressures due to its isolation and decline as a world power under Qing rule. The Industrial Revolution in Western countries, with the significance of technological invention, made it impossible for China to keep up with the rest of the world. The weakening of Qing leadership caused the Chinese to lose confidence in their homeland.<sup>7</sup>

Besides political issues, the population boomed and overcrowding was another cause for the Chinese to flee to other countries. In 1762, there were about 200 million people living in China, but in 1846, populations soared to 421 million.<sup>8</sup> Overcrowding caused food shortages and economic depression. As a result, what had grown on the land was not enough to feed the population. Great famine spread throughout the entire country. People begged on the roads or streets for food, and the whole country was in chaos and turmoil. Chinese started to seek opportunities outside of their homeland.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the coastal cities such as Shanghai, Canton, and Hong Kong became global trading centers, and the frequent contact with foreign countries through commerce influenced people's thoughts and ideas. Gradually, the ideas of modernization and Westernization on those seashore areas made the Chinese government lose control over the people.<sup>9</sup> Fearing the Chinese overseas in such locations as Taiwan, Philippines, Korea, and Japan would become a force to overthrow the government, the Chinese government enforced the anti-emigration policy to block citizens from leaving China. Emigration became a serious crime in China. The penalty was a death sentence by beheading, including those who assisted

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 14. Opium always shipped in chests of 60-65 kilograms (one picul); a picul is equal to 100 catties; a catty is equal to around 1.5 pounds avoirdupois.

<sup>5</sup> "England and China – The Tae-ping War," The New York Times (New York), January 31, 1864.

<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/Qing\\_dynasty](http://en.wikipedia.org/Qing_dynasty). It was also known as the Manchu Dynasty; the last ruling dynasty of China, ruling from 1644 to 1912. "Qing", meaning "clear" or "pellucid." During its reign, the Qing Dynasty became highly integrated with Chinese culture. However, its military power weakened during the 1800s, and faced with international pressure, massive rebellions and defeats in wars, the Qing Dynasty declined after the mid-19th century. Under pressure of internal rebellions, the last Emperor, Puyi, resigned in 1912.

<sup>7</sup> Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: a Narrative History*, (New York: Viking Penguin, 2003), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 10.

the escapees. However, the threat of execution did not prevent millions of Chinese from leaving China for a better opportunity abroad.<sup>10</sup>

## II. The Arrival of Chinese immigrants in the U.S.

The Chinese economic crisis affected every aspect of the country, from rural areas to cities, especially the prosperous trading center on the shore of the Pearl River – the province of Guangdong. The economic depression in Guangdong Province and the stories of a mountain full of gold motivated them to come to the “Gold Mountain” in California of the United States – a land called *Gum Shan* (San Francisco).

The testing journey for immigrants was far from over after their arrival. Most of them landed on the eastern shore of the country. In order to reach the Gold Mountain in California, they had to transfer by ships. Overcrowding caused many unpredictable problems for immigrants on their journey toward the West. Death rates were high and that caused the U.S. Congress to regulate the number of passengers on ships in order to prevent the loss of lives at sea since more and more immigrants were fleeing to this country. To be crowded on board with passengers from different races was a challenge, especially for the Chinese immigrants. The following are some figures that show Atlantic steamship passengers who travelled for the years 1864 and 1865:

Table 1 Atlantic Steamship Passenger Record<sup>11</sup>

Steamship Lines	No. of Passengers	No. of Cabin Passengers	No. of Steerage Passengers	Births	Deaths	Deaths under 8 years	Deaths over 8 years
Inman Line	167	7,118	73,491	26	49	37	12
National Line	58	1,525	4,285	24	41	30	11
Cunard line	23	11	8,641	2	2	1	1
Cunard Line, first-class	26	2,187	-	-	-	-	-
National Line	5	48	1,662		1		1
Kunhardt & Co	53	6,263	24,501	11	29	20	9
Oelrichs	46	7,931	20,190	16	18	13	5
Auchor Line	42	708	12,915	7	20	15	5
Howland & Aspinwall	19	704	5,412	2	30	12	13
Wiliama & Guion	1	11	312	-	1	1	-
Lawrence. Giles	2	16	633	-	-	-	-
G. Mackenzie	11	1,742	-	-	-	-	-
Grinnell. Minturn & Co	1	12	566	1	1	1	-
Total	454	28,279	190,911	89	192	130	62

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>11</sup> “The Overcrowding of Emigrant Ships – A Suggestion from the Commissioners of Emigration,” The New York Times (New York), May 18, 1866.

The data above revealed the death of those who were under eight years old was one in 3,080.<sup>12</sup> The number was not a high rate compared to other causes of death in the nineteenth century. However, the image of people travelling in a small space for a long journey from the East to the West with some passengers was not a comfort for passengers on board.

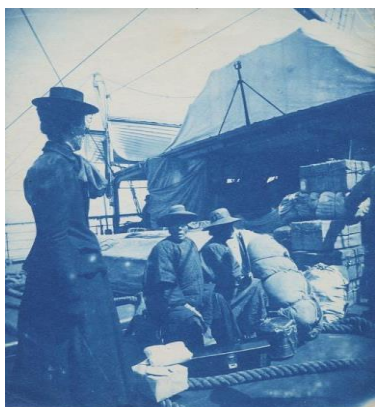


Figure 2 Chinese Passengers on Ferry.” From The Burckhalter Family Collection. Courtesy of UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

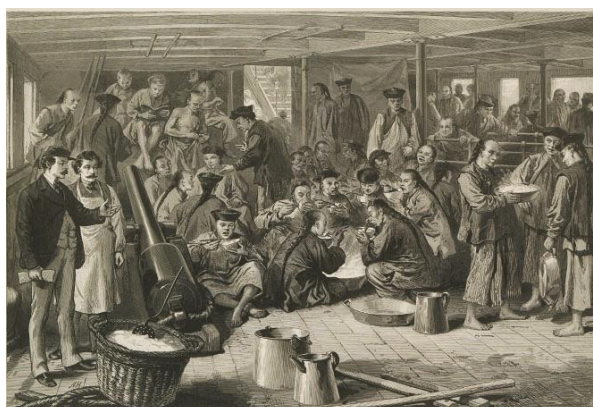


Figure 3 View of Chinese.” The Steam-ship Alaska was bound for San Francisco. Courtesy of Harper’s Weekly, April 29, 1876.

The first Chinese to arrive inland in the U.S. was in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when three Chinese sailors, Ashing, Achun, and Aceun, came on the shore of Baltimore.<sup>13</sup> About a decade later, in 1852, there were more than 20,000 Chinese who came to seek opportunities during the gold rush in the Gold Mountain, California.<sup>14</sup> The Chinese had an estimated 300,000 immigrants in America before the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.<sup>15</sup> But the number was declining in the 1910s. However, for the majority gold-seekers from Guangdong, they did not have any intention to stay overseas indefinitely. Their desires were to go back to China with gold in order to improve their living situation at home. There was a famous Cantonese nursery rhyme for children to express their hope, waiting for their fathers to come home from overseas:

Swallows and magpies, flying in glee:  
Greetings for New Year.  
Daddy had gone to Gold Mountain  
To earn money.  
He will earn gold and silver,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Benson Tong, “Roots of a Diaspora: Chinese Culture and Society in the Late Qing Period,” *The Chinese Americans*, (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and Him Mark Lai, “Part One: Early Chinese Immigrants, 1852-1904,” *Chinese American Voices*, (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California, 2006), p. 1.

Ten thousand taels.<sup>16</sup>

When he returns,

We will build a house and buy farmland.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, most of the married Chinese gold miners arrived in California without their wives and children because of safety concerns.<sup>18</sup> Harsh living conditions in the new country raised awareness of danger in their unpredictable journey.

Of course, not every miner succeeded in his gold search. Many Chinese turned away from finding gold for other opportunities. Chinese miners in California's Gold Mountain proved that with diligence and hard work, a dream could come true. Soon after their arrival, Chinese found themselves in a disadvantaged situation in the New World. Low skills, less education, and the inability to communicate resulted in isolation from American society. Chinese became cheap laborers, in particular they were the manpower for the Central Pacific Railroad, farmers for agriculture in the South, and miners in the Gold Mountain in the West. Struggling between maintaining their old culture and trying to fit into the new environment for survival were a great challenge for them. Discrimination with anti-Chinese laws blocked them from assimilating into the new culture. For a long period of time, they were like wanderers in a foreign country and contributed to their new home silently.



Figure 4 "Chinese Settlement in the Suburbs of San Francisco" (recto), Anonymous (CHS Fine Arts Collection). From Frank Lelie's Illustrated Newspaper, June 21, 1856. Courtesy of California Historical Society.



Figure 5 A run-down hut in Chinese Camp in California. About 30 or 40 Chinese immigrants from Canton arrived there in 1849 during the California Gold Rush. In 1854, the town became a Chinese Camp. From John B. Lovelace Collection of California Photos in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

<sup>16</sup> A tael is the English term for 1/16 of a catty; a catty is equal to around 1.5 pounds avoirdupois.

<sup>17</sup> Marlon Kau Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes From San Francisco Chinatown*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, C.A.: University of California Press, 1987), p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> Yung, p. 2.

Despite problems that immigrants had brought into the New World, their contribution to the U.S. helped the country to become one of the richest cultures in the world. Among those immigrants, people from Asian countries had a significant impact on American history.<sup>19</sup> Lured by the promise of economic opportunity and of returning home with golden wealth, they left their loved ones behind and began a long and unpredictable journey. Experiencing dangerous voyages, they found themselves in unfamiliar surroundings with new identities. Uneducated and unskilled, they were the lowest class of cheap labor in the industrial society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chinese immigrants became construction workers, miners, and any unskilled working force just to survive. A new culture and environment challenged their original identity.

As time went by, with more people from the same background and culture, the Chinese founded their communities in the Gold Mountain area – San Francisco. Establishing Chinatown in San Francisco was proof that the short-term stay in the New World had turned into a permanent residence. In 1882, establishing the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was an example of the united power of the Chinese immigrants in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

With more Chinese communities being established and strange rumors about Chinese spreading, Americans felt threatened and began to ask the government to create cruel laws in order to force these foreigners to go away. Ethnic discrimination included forbidding Chinese to marry American whites, heavy taxes, and blocking any opportunity for the Chinese to become citizens. However, harsh immigration laws were only external challenges for the Chinese immigrants in the country. The most serious obstacle was that Chinese had to face conflicts within their community. The incomparable gender ratio in the Chinese community made it extremely difficult for single Chinese males to find Chinese wives in U.S. In addition, there was a generation gap that existed within the Chinese immigrant community between those that arrived at the very beginning of the migration wave, and those that came later.

### **III. A Golden Dream for Chinese Immigrants**

The wealth obtained in gold mines attracted Chinese immigrants to put their lives at-risk and come to California. As time went by, the Chinese miners became preferred mining company employees to hire because of their hard-work, avoidable wages, and complaint free services. Despite their performance at work, pressure from

---

<sup>19</sup> Chinese always used “Mainland China” to represent the People’s Republic of China (PROC) to distinguish it from Taiwan (Republic of China – ROC).

<sup>20</sup> Him Mark Lai, “The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan System,” *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions*, (Lanham, M.D.: Altamira Press), p. 51, <http://books.google.com> (retrieved on March 1, 2019).



the federal and state governments led to local white labor unions being acuminated. One of the discriminating actions was to enforce an extra tax on foreign miners with Chinese miners being the main target of the tax law. Eventually, the State of California regulated a Foreign Miners' Tax from 1852 to 1870. The original purpose of the Foreign Miners' Tax was to reduce work opportunities for Chinese miners in California. For the next two decades, the total amount of tax revenue was five million dollars; it became 25% to 50 of the state government's income's income revenues.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 6 Chinese miners in a mining camp, California, 1857. From Harper's Weekly, October 3, 1857. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



Figure 7 "Across the Continent. The snow sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains." Chinese workers in constructing the first transcontinental railroad. Illustrated by Joesph Becker. From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, Vol. 29, February 6, 1870, p. 346.

Gold mines in California became the major income generator for the U.S. Treasury Department in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> In 1863, California delivered gold in total value of \$11,847,286 to the ports in New York in 1863, and in 1864, its worth even reached \$12,952,967. According to Professor Benjamin Silliman, Jr. (1816-1885) who taught Chemistry at Yale University in 1865, the yield of gold bullion would reach \$75,000,000 in California if the proper mining methods were applied in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The so-called proper way to produce gold, as Silliman suggested, was to combine modern science in mining instead of utilizing laborers or inexperienced individuals who might destroy the gold mine. In other words, he suggested replacing individual's "Placer mining" with "Deep mining" and letting companies or corporations take over the mining business with more skillful employees that would increase capital advantage as well.<sup>23</sup>

Mechanical mining methods were not the only factors to replace laborers in the gold mines in California. For Chinese immigrants, the unequal treatment from the government was the real reason they left the Gold Mountain and to find other opportunities. In 1867, there was an estimate of 10,000 Chinese immigrants in

<sup>21</sup> Yung, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> "Deliveries of California Gold at New York," The New York Times (New York), January 2, 1865.

<sup>23</sup> "Mining in the Pacific States," The New York Times (New York), March 13, 1865.



California. A large group of them had left for Nevada, Montana, and Idaho where silver mines had been discovered. They either worked in the silver mining industry or became railroad workers.<sup>24</sup> This era was the beginning for Chinese immigrants to become involved in building of the Pacific Railroad. The new work environments demanded no foreign miners' tax, and they could get water for washing and not be required to pay the water tax at all. Chinese immigrants were forced to pay taxes upon their arrival, and mining and water supply taxes in California. Chinese immigrants felt that they were in a better position than they would be in California.<sup>25</sup> Better wages from railroad companies attracted many Chinese immigrants to move out San Francisco to the East. As a result, California's tax revenue was down after a great number of Chinese miners left for other states.<sup>26</sup>

According to historical records, the working wages for Chinese immigrants in the Central Pacific Railroad was an average of \$30 dollars per month in gold. In 1869, there was already significant manpower from the Chinese immigrants to join the railroads. Opposing Chinese laborers got involved with the Central Pacific Railroad. However, Congressional candidate Judge Samuel B. Axtell (1819-1891) pointed out that Americans should make sure the glory of the accomplishment of the railroad should only belong to white Americans and not to Chinese or African Americans. He felt that only white men deserved to be recognized for the great accomplishments such as building the railroads in the U.S.<sup>27</sup> Axtell's perspective was a reflection that there were two extremes of value on the same land where Americans and Chinese lived in very close proximity, yet very far in terms of value of contribution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Table 2 The 1870 Statistics on occupations among Chinese male in the twenty.<sup>28</sup>

#	Occupation	Population	%
1.	Miners	17,069	36.9
2.	Laborers (not specified)	9,436	20.4
3.	Domestic servants	5,420	11.7
4.	Launderers	3,653	7.9
5.	Agricultural laborers	1,766	3.8
6.	Cigar-makers	1,727	3.7

<sup>24</sup> "Decrease of the Chinese Population of California – Extortions Practiced upon Them," *The New York Times* (New York), September 4, 1867.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> "The Chinese in California," *The New York Times* (New York), August 19, 1867.

<sup>28</sup> Francis A. Walker, "The Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations," *The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), Vol. 1, Table XXIX, pp. 704-715. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1870/population/1870a-01.pdf> (retrieved on March 7, 2019).

Table 2 *cont.*

#	Occupation	Population	%
7.	Gardeners & nurserymen	676	1.5
8.	Traders & dealers (not specified)	604	1.3
9.	Employees of railroad co., (not clerks)	568	1.2
10.	Boot & shoemakers	489	1.1
11.	Woodchoppers	419	0.9
12.	Farmers & planters	366	0.8
13.	Fishermen & oystermen	310	0.7
14.	Barbers & hairdressers	243	0.5
15.	Clerks in stores	207	0.4
16.	Mill & factory operatives	203	0.4
17.	Physicians & surgeons	193	0.4
18.	Employees of manufacturing establishments	166	0.4
19.	Carpenters & joiners	155	0.3
20.	Peddlers	152	0.3
Sub-Total (20 occupations)		43,822	94.7
Total (all occupations)		46,274	100.0

A number of Chinese immigrants went to other states for other jobs instead of mining in California. However, the majority of Chinese laborers still stayed in California. For those who decided to stay in California it was mostly because they had their families with them and mobility was not an easy option for children and women under harsh living conditions on their way eastward as railroad workers. Therefore, the “golden dream” was very much alive and went on to attract immigrant newcomers continuously to the Golden State. Despite losing tax revenue from immigrants due to the decline of Chinese miners in California, Americans still felt that those unskilled laborers were a threat to white American society. In fact, the so-called “Chinese question” had two aspects: the relations between America and China politically, and Americans’ attitude toward the daily increasing Chinese immigrant populations on American soil.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV. A Chinese Question or Simply Discrimination?

There were two opposing groups, the reactionists, and the progressionists, which frequently argued over the Chinese question in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the reactionists, the Chinese question was identical to the previous slavery issue that could pollute pure Americanism. For that reason, reactionaists made every effort to block future

<sup>29</sup> “John Chinaman – What shall we do with Him?” The New York Times (New York), June 29, 1869.

Chinese immigrants from coming to America and to find ways to prevent them from entering white American communities.<sup>30</sup> One incident occurred in late June 1869, when 1,200 Chinese entered the Port of San Francisco with the motive of taking American gold back to China.<sup>31</sup> Reactionists were not there to welcome those “yellow faces” with pigtailed to step on their pure American land. Conflicts and riots were unavoidable. Opposing the reactionists’ anti-Chinese position, progressionists believed that Chinese immigrants’ hard-work and humble attitude would be a good fit with American culture and a contribution to the country’s development in future. Of course, a well-organized, the Six Chinese Companies<sup>32</sup> in San Francisco belonged to the progressionist group. These companies were pro-Chinese and battled the reactionists in order to provide benefits for the Chinese people. The Six Chinese Companies were the earliest and most powerful Chinese organizations in the U.S. and members were wealthy merchants from the Chinese community. Their mission was to fight for Chinese immigrants to be treated as equal as every American in society. By doing so, they turned to politicians to seek assistance from the U.S. Congress.

Table 3 Chinese population in California, 1860-80<sup>33</sup>

Year	Chinese in California	Total Population of California
1860	34,933	379,994
1870	49,277	560,247
1880	75,132	864,894

Table 4 Population of Chinese in the United States, 1860-1900<sup>34</sup>

Year	Total Number of Chinese in U.S.	Resident Aliens	Citizens	Total U.S. Population
1850	4,000	---	---	23,200,000
1860	34,933	34,933	---	31,443,321
1870	63,199	55,396	7,803	38,558,371
1880	105,465	89,023	16,442	50,155,783
1890	107,488	94,987	12,501	62,947,714
1900	89,863	80,853	9,010	76,212,168

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> In order to defend Chinese immigrants’ own benefits, Chinese businessmen from Guangdong formed the Kong Chow Company in 1851. When tensions arose between Cantonese people of different dialects and districts, the association split in two. Four more organizations appeared in the 1850s in San Francisco. The organizations consisted of the six most important Chinese district associations of California. The associations had some mutual coordination before the Chinese Six Companies (As also known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association) was established in San Francisco in 1882.

<sup>33</sup> The Chinese Experience in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America. [http://teachingresources.atlas.illinois.edu/chinese\\_exp/process05.html](http://teachingresources.atlas.illinois.edu/chinese_exp/process05.html) (retrieved on March 3, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

In order to fight for the Chinese's benefits and to create opportunities for more Chinese immigrants to come to the U.S., the Six Chinese Companies sent out inquiries to the Congressional Committee of Ways and Means and two Senators, Benjamin Wade (1800-1878) and Roscoe Conkling (1829-1888).<sup>35</sup> The Inquiries included: the government should look after Chinese immigrants' travel issues including improving the safety of steamships and increasing ships to two lines per month; Chinese investments should be protected by law in the same way that every American's investments were protected; both immigration tax and mining taxes should not be charged only on the Chinese; and Chinese immigrants should be granted the right to testify in court to protect their civil rights.<sup>36</sup>

Granting civil rights for immigrants was still a brand new topic for both immigrants and Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1868, a story in the *San Francisco Alta* regarding the civil rights of Chinese manufacturers in California had garnered the nation's attention. The story was about an American who used a money certificate to purchase cigars from a Chinese cigar manufacturer. The certificate turned out to be a stolen certificate and was reported to law enforcement officials by its original owner previously. The Chinese owner was warned that if he wanted to deposit or cash the money certificate, he might be charged as a thief and be arrested. The manufacturer could not testify in court because Chinese had no civil rights to do so. In the end, the Chinese owner was forced to bear his loss.<sup>37</sup>

After hearing inquiries from members of the Six Chinese Companies for Chinese immigrants to be protected under the laws and receive civil rights, Senator Wade stepped up and advocated for the Chinese. During an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1869, Senator Wade described when he visited the Mission Woolen Mills in San Francisco area that he was very impressed with the character of Chinese laborers there. He praised Chinese workers he met as being patient, ingenious, and reliable. He said that people in California should accept Chinese as one of their own in order to help the state of California to be prosperous in the future.<sup>38</sup> Besides Senator Wade's support, there was another letter from Senator Cornelius Cole of California which replied to a gentleman regarding the Chinese question in California. In the letter, Senator Cole stated that Chinese immigrants were better character than Mexicans. Therefore, both the U.S. and Mexico should be open-minded to welcome Chinese immigrants.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> "John Chinaman – What shall we do with Him?" The New York Times (New York), June 29, 1869.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> "Civil Rights for Chinamen in California," The New York Times (New York), August 23, 1868.

<sup>38</sup> "Senator Wade's Views Regarding the Chinese," The New York Times (New York), July 3, 1869.

<sup>39</sup> "The Chinese Question: letter from United States Senator Cole of California," The New York Times (New York), July 17, 1869.

## V. “Sandlotism”: Anti-Chinese Movement and Legalization

However, the two senators’ endorsements of Chinese immigrants did not change the way the majority of Americans perceived Chinese in the West Coast and in other states in any significant way. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese immigrants were simply seen as unskilled and semi-human laborers whose living styles were strange and were thus avoided. In 1879, the importation of raw materials and manufactured goods from the eastern states to California had increased which opened up more work opportunities for Chinese.<sup>40</sup> In 1880, the average wages for Chinese workers in domestic jobs was \$22 per month including board; Chinese workers with experience got paid \$26 per month. Hard work, patience, and acceptance of low wages made Chinese labor the favorite manpower for manufacturers and businessmen. Gradually, American workers or immigrants from other countries felt pressed to compete with Chinese for jobs in California. The anti-Chinese emotion would soon become a movement that ended in using legal power to get rid of Chinese “intruders.”

In the 1870s, the economy in California was weak with a high unemployment rate. Many Californians scapegoated Chinese immigrants as taking away their work opportunities and destroying the job market. Violent anti-Chinese movements began when The Workingmen’s Party of California (WPC) was established in 1877. The WPC was behind all political rallies against Chinese in the 1870s and the 1880s. Their goals were to kick Chinese out of California and the U.S.; target owners of factories and companies for hiring low waged Chinese labors to intentionally corrupt the state government; and to use political power to prohibit Chinese immigrants from coming into the country in the future. The important figure of the WPC was Denis Kearney (1847-1907), who was himself an Irish-born immigrant to the country. One of his famous slogans was “The Chinese Must Go!”<sup>41</sup>

The WPC had a meeting location, called the “Sand Lot,” just next to City Hall, where they organized violent attacks on Chinese. Riots and chaos broke out on the streets of San Francisco, and business owners who had previously hired Chinese labors were also attacked. In order to chase Chinese out of the U.S., Kearney used his political connections to persuade the U.S. government to legalize and write anti-Chinese sentiments into law. Later, the anti-Chinese movement in California politics became known as “Sand-Lots legislation.” The state government of California tried to keep Chinese laborers out of either public or private works. Two months later,

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> E. D. Holton. “LETTER VII: “A Visit to the Suburban City of Oakland—Mayor Kalloch and Other Officials—The School System Travels with jottings. From midland to the Pacific. (Milwaukee, W.I.: Trayser Brothers Printers, 1880), Courtesy of Library of Congress. <https://cdn.loc.gov/service/gdc/calbk/096.pdf> (retrieved on March 5, 2019).

another Act also asked Californians to go against Chinese immigrants because as aliens, they were a threat to the welfare of Americans. However, according to the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, the Chinese immigrants should have the same rights and privileges as any American, while residing in the U.S. to enjoy “life, liberty, and property.”<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, Chinese immigrants did not get a fair treatment from the State of California.

The Workingmen’s Party of California (WPC) took the initiative to work with politicians to target and expel Chinese workers. During election campaigns in 1880, the Democratic committee printed “Against Chinese Immigration” on their tickets to express their intention of kicking Chinese out of California. There were at least eighty names which appeared on tickets to protest Chinese immigrants during the election of 1880.<sup>43</sup> Those candidates raised fear among Americans by pointing out that Chinese immigrants would do more harm than good to American society. Politicians encouraged Americans to stand up to protect American values and dignity before being “swallowed” by the Chinese. In 1880, 154,638 people voted against Chinese immigration.



Figure 8 “The Great Fear of the Period That Uncle Sam May be Swallowed by Foreigners: The Problem Solved.” From San Francisco: White & Bauer, between 1860-1869. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

In 1881, the newly elected President of the United States Chester A. Arthur, pointed out in his first public speech that legislation is necessary to prevent Chinese immigrants from coming to America. The President began to develop the Chinese Exclusion Act.<sup>44</sup> To no surprise, there was a strong reaction against the Bill by the Chinese government. They deemed it unjust and unequal. American merchants were worried the Bill might cause harm to their business with the Chinese government. As a former abolitionist, Senator Joseph R. Hawley of Connecticut defended Chinese immigration, but he did agree that restriction of the Chinese entering the country was

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 243.

necessary.<sup>45</sup> Eventually, the Act was approved by Congress and became part of American history that caused so much criticism a few decades later. However, on March 1882, a native of China, Hop Sing's naturalization was granted by a commissioner of the United States.<sup>46</sup> Americans were outraged.

Eventually, the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed into law in 1882, which particularly barred Chinese laborers, except in professions such as officials, businessmen, or education workers, to enter the U.S. for ten years.<sup>47</sup> For those Chinese immigrants who were already in the U.S., their citizenship applications were denied. This well-known anti-Chinese Act was finally repealed in 1943. But the damage to Chinese immigrants was already done.



Figure 9 The Chinese massacre in Los Angeles, 1871. From Security Bank Collection. Courtesy of Los Angeles Public Library.

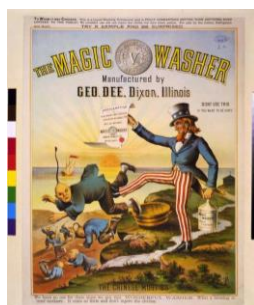


Figure 10 “Chinese Must Go” became a slogan to against Chinese immigrants from California to other states. The advertisement implicated to have washer to replace Chinese labors. From The Magic Washer manufactured by Geo. Dee, Dixon, Illinois. Created by shober & Carqueville Lith Co., Chicago, 1886. Prints and Photographs Division. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Rejecting the Chinese immigrants' ability to obtain citizenship was a way to show that both the American government and its people did not welcome them. The anti-Chinese Act had originally been regulated in 1804 which indicated that under the laws of the U.S., a native of China could not be granted naturalization by any means because a potential citizen had to be a “free white person,” of “African nativity,” or of “African descent.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> “Chinese and Naturalization,” The New York Times (New York), March 10, 1882.

<sup>47</sup> Holton, “LETTER VII.”



The 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act indicated that concerning the nation's safety, the Chinese would not be allowed to enter the U.S. for the period of ten years. It also detailed that there would be a fine of no more than \$500, or a prison term of no more than a year, to punish those who intended to smuggle Chinese into the country illegally; for those who had already arrived in the United States before the Act, any traveling within the country required a certificate; every illegal Chinese would be deported immediately after being found within the United States. Chinese would not be allowed obtaining citizenship; Either skilled or unskilled Chinese miners were on black list to enter the U.S. However, the Act did allow Chinese diplomats to enter the U.S. with an official certificate from the Chinese government.<sup>48</sup>

The Act was the first law to ban people from the U.S. based on their nationality and ethnic identity in American history. The Act was not revealed until World War II, and revised under the condition that only 105 Chinese were allowed to enter the United States each year.<sup>49</sup> Overall, the anti-Chinese Act was a tool for politicians to manipulate people in order to achieve their political gain.<sup>50</sup>

The 1882 anti-Chinese Act would soon be followed by another anti-Chinese Bill. The U.S. Senator John H. Mitchell from Oregon proposed a draft version in 1886. The Bill focused on the Chinese who were already in the United States or might consider coming in the future, excluding diplomats. The Senator pointed out that allowing Chinese to stay in the United States was a critical mistake because they would disturb the peace of the nation.<sup>51</sup> A few days later, Californians called the anti-Chinese movement a great victory for the state government. That movement was the first direct action from the people in the community.<sup>52</sup>

The debate over the anti-Chinese Bill became a spotlight on Capitol Hill. Some senators even suggested adding a phrase to emphasize the timing when the Chinese immigrants would be allowed to reenter the U.S. The ten-year restriction was the original proposal in the Bill. Such a long period of time to keep Chinese outside of America's territory was a very harsh punishment according to other senators' points of view. Not surprisingly, after a long bitter debate in Congress, the Bill eventually passed.

Sacramento was the first city to echo the new anti-Chinese movement. There were about 500 white workers who marched through the streets of San Francisco to

---

<sup>48</sup> Gyory. *Closing the Gate*, pp. 261-4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>51</sup> "National Capital Topics: A Bill to Exclude Chinaman," *The New York Times* (New York), February 12, 1886.

<sup>52</sup> "Chinese Restriction: Feeling and Action of the People of California Respecting it," *The New York Times* (New York), February 15, 1886.

make a strong statement to protest Chinese immigrants. The participants of the movement came from nine counties in California: Alameda, Nevada, San Francisco, Sacramento, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Solano. At that moment, the anti-Chinese movement really became a state-level activity for Californians. However, the anti-Chinese movement also damaged the state's economy. For instance, Chinese workers feared for their lives and refused to work in a cigar factory until protesters called off their movement.<sup>53</sup> Employers and business owners could not find white laborers to replace Chinese laborers at work. Chinese were diligent and accepted less pay than whites and business owners could not find this combination in white laborers.

Anti-Chinese movements on the West Coast were turned violent and restless as time went by. Some citizens took the law into their own hands. For instance, on February 17, 1886, a group of men from Sutter County, a mining town in California, had been put under arrest because of their illegal violence toward the Chinese miners in the town. Those offenders forced the Chinese residents onto a steamboat barge and sent them against their will out of town through the river.<sup>54</sup>

In 1888, President Grover Cleveland sent the approval of the Chinese Exclusion Bill to Congress. He explained to Congress the reason for passing the Bill was the type of action that the American government should take toward the Chinese immigrants and not depend on the Chinese government to cooperate. The President stated that the Chinese government had the power and responsibility to prohibit her countrymen from coming to America, but they failed to take any further action. The American government had limited power to control other governments' policies according to international regulation. Therefore, to make this work, the United States should act proactively in preventing the arrival Chinese on American shores in the future.<sup>55</sup>

Table 5 The legislation concerning Chinese immigrants in California and the U.S. Congress in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>56</sup>

Year	Legislation
1858	California legislature passes law forbidding Chinese to land on the California coast except due to inclement weather. Declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> "Supreme Court Opinions: A California Chinese Case," The New York Times (New York), March 8, 1887.

<sup>55</sup> "The Chinese Exclusion Act," The New York Times (New York), October 2, 1888.

<sup>56</sup> Jerome A. Hart, "The Sand Lot and Kearneyism," *In Our Second Century: From an Editor's Note-book* (San Francisco, C.A.: The Pioneer Press, 1931), pp. 64-75. <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist2/kearneyism.html> (retrieved on March 7, 2019).

Table 5 *cont.*

Year	Legislation
1862	Head tax imposed by California legislature on Chinese. Declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
1863	California legislature passes law excluding Chinese from public schools.
1867	California legislature passes a law (leveled at Chinese) declaring illegal all living rooms containing "not less than five hundred cubic feet of air to each person." Sustained by the Supreme Court.
1870	California legislature passes law imposing \$1000 to \$5000 fine for "bringing Chinese into State without certificate of good character." Declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
1876	California legislature passes law forbidding Chinese to work on county irrigating ditches.
1877	Anti-Chinese riots break out in several parts of California. Congress sends committee to investigate.
1878	California legislature passes law forbidding Chinese to hold real estate.
1879	United States Congress passes bill restricting Chinese immigration. President Hayes vetoes the bill.
1880	Treaty negotiated between the United States and China by which the United States is empowered to suspend immigration of laborers. Ratified by United States Senate, May 5, 1881.
1881	United States Congress suspends Chinese immigration for twenty years. President Arthur vetoes the bill.
1882	On May 6, United States Congress suspends Chinese immigration for ten years. President Arthur signs the bill; it becomes the law.
1888	The President of the United States Grover Cleveland signed it into law on October 1, 1888. It was introduced to expand upon the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.

## VI. Anti-Chinese Movement or Anti-Capitalism Terrorist Action

From mass-meetings, to actions against Chinese immigrants in the cities of California, state residents either anti-Chinese or pro-Chinese lived through uncertainty and unease in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on the West Coast. The majority of Californians seemed to agree with the WPC and Kearney that Chinese immigrants caused problems in the society. However, there were various voices from different perspectives to weigh in the dangerous situation in California.

According to Jerome A. Hart, the failure of the Bank of California in August, 1875, which directly impacted the state's finances should be considered one of the major causes which crippled job market instead of blaming unemployment on the Chinese. Even though the bank was reopened about two months later in October, the damage to the state's commerce was done. Between 1876-1878, the state government of California had unemployment and destitution issues beyond repair. Under such a restless situation of uncertainty, Kearney from the San Francisco Union called a mass-meeting at the Sand Lot on July 21, 1877. James F. D'Arcy, the organizer of the Chicago Workingmen's Party of the United States presided the meeting. The agitators of the Union motivated the crowd to wreck Chinese laundries, destroy Chinese wash-houses, and attack the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (the major

transportation to bring Chinese to California). Also, several people were killed in the 3-night riot against Chinese with police on the streets to secure security with the whole state was in chaos. Following the riot in July, anti-Chinese movements rapidly spread to other cities in California. On August 22, Kearney organized “The Workingmen’s Trade and Labor Union”, which J. G. Day became the President, and Kearney the Secretary. On September 12, 1877, the San Francisco Union was renamed “The Workingmen’s Party of California.”<sup>57</sup>

The WPC demanded:<sup>58</sup>

1. A reduction in the hours of labor.
2. The establishment of a bureau of labor.
3. Strict accountability of office-holders.
4. Reduction of official salaries to the rates paid for skilled labor.
5. Abolition of the national banks.
6. Property to be assessed at its full value.
7. The abrogation of the Burlingame treaty with China.

From the WPC declarations above, it is easy to see that Chinese immigrants were not the party’s only target for all violence and riots in the cities of California; to fight the state’s banking system and an employment regulation with high paid and less working hours were demands of the WPC. Therefore, anti-Chinese movements could be interpreted as Californians called on Californians to fight each other.

Besides Hart’s observation regarding the WPC and Kearney’s involvement in anti-Chinese violence in the 1870s, E.D. Holton, was also aware that the closing of the Bank of California led to devalued real estate in California which made the state’s economy worse. After his meeting with Kearney in person, Holton wrote:

Denis Kearney should have gone back to his dray and asked his friends to join him, and, if there was not employment in overdone San Francisco, led them forth on to vacant land, of which there are millions of acres lying idle, and gone to planting and reaping, and thus had bread and to spare. Then might he have become a benefactor as well as an agitator and a blessing to workingmen.<sup>59</sup>

Holton proposed a possible solution for Kearney to consider to lead his followers to find jobs in honest industry instead of staying in poverty, Holton wrote:

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Holton. “LETTER VII.”

But he did not seem to take any interest in such a proposition--but chooses, I fear, rather to stand forth as a somewhat aimless agitator. I venture to prophesy that from this time on his star will wane. That his tirade against the Chinese, against capitalists and corporations has been somewhat disastrous I make no doubt.<sup>60</sup>

Holton's observation on turmoil in California and the conversation he had with Kearney indicate that the so-called anti-Chinese movement and all riots in the state could not simply be treated as a patriotic act to defend from invasion by Chinese immigrants or seek benefits for the working class. As it has also been mentioned in Holton's book, *Travels with Jottings: From Midland to the Pacific*, most agitators, including Kearney, were pursuing a more leisurely life, and they would not allow Chinese immigrants' hard working habits and satisfaction with low paying jobs to get in their way.<sup>61</sup> It was a lose-lose situation: Chinese lost their lives and freedom while Californians would be burdened by damage to the economy and paid a heavy price in recovering from turbulence in society from the 1870s to the 1880s.

## VII. No Angel on the Island of Angel

The government and the majority of society considered the Chinese living environment of crowded living spaces, long dirty hair, and the way they walked and talked were filthy, unhealthy, and inhuman in the 1880s.<sup>62</sup> In short, Chinese immigrants were thought of as living agents of disease. When Chinese immigrants who arrived on the west coast, were sent to the quarantine center on Angel Island in California upon their arrival. They were stripped of clothing and screened as criminals in an atmosphere of suspicion and disrespect. The inspection process normally took people days before being cleared and allowed to leave the island. Fear, loneliness, and harsh treatment from the U.S. authorities made the journey to the new world uncertain and difficult. As an activist poet, Emma Lazarus (1849-1887) even wrote a poem which reveals the anguish, fear, and hopelessness that all immigrants suffered on the island:

The sea-scape resembles lichen twisting and turning for a thousand li.  
There is no shore to land and it is difficult to walk.  
With a gentle breeze I arrived at the city thinking all would be so.  
At ease, how was one to know he was to live in a wooden building?

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Nayan Shah, "Public Health and the Mapping of Chinatown," *Asian American Studies Now*, eds. Wu, Jean Yu-Wen Shen and Thomas Chen (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 170.

In the quiet of night, I heard, faintly, the whistling of wind.  
The forms and shadows saddened me; upon seeing the landscape,  
I composed a poem.  
The floating clouds, the fog, darken the sky.  
The moon shines faintly as the insects chirp.  
Grief and bitterness entwined are heaven sent.  
The sad person sits alone, leaning by a window.<sup>63</sup>

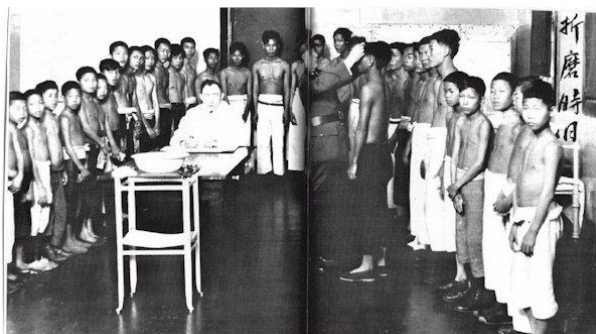


Figure 11 Chinese immigrants humiliatingly underwent physical exams at Angel Island immigration station shortly after reaching the island, 1880s. Courtesy of The Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation.

In the poem, “no shore to land,” and “difficult to walk” reflect freedoms lost, and dreams turned into nightmares when immigrants suddenly woke up and realized that they were caged as animals in wooden buildings. “Clouds, fog, and dark sky” also reflect their loneliness and hopelessness in their new home.

There were an estimated 300,000 to one million immigrants who passed through Angel Island. The majority of detained immigrants were Chinese and Japanese.<sup>64</sup> The detention center on Angel Island, was later turned into an immigration station from 1910 to 1940. A so-called “China Cove” was purposely set-up to target and discriminate against Chinese immigrants.<sup>65</sup> The station was closed in the 1940s. Later, Angel Island became a state landmark in 1964, and then became a National Historic Landmark a few years later. Today, when tourists step onto the soil of the island and enjoy the fascinating scenery of the surroundings, few of them would still remember that just a few decades ago, there were immigrants on the island whose immigration dreams were shattered, their future in the new world was in jeopardy, and their nightmares seemed endless. For them, there was no angel on Angel Island.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Gary Y. Okihiro quoted the poem from Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (Seattle, W.A.: University of Washington Press, 1991), pp. 34 & 52.

<sup>64</sup> “Immigration Through Angel Island,” DPLA-Digital Public Library of America. <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/immigration-through-angel-island> (retrieved on March 3, 2019).

<sup>65</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, “When and Where I Enter,” *Asian American Studies Now*, eds. Wu, Jean Yu-Wen Shen and Thomas Chen (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 3.

### VIII. A Cultural Melting Pot or Salad Bowl

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of Americans were not happy about the stubbornness and ignorance of the Chinese character. In return, Americans continuously treated Chinese immigrants as unwelcome strangers in society throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 12 “The Foreign Element in New York – The Chinese Colony, Mott Street,” 1896. Harper’s Weekly, February 29, 1896, p. 209.

However, some Americans were impressed by the unique culture that the Chinese had brought with them to the U.S. There was an old sea captain who had an opposite opinion of Chinese immigrants in U.S. society. During an interview, the captain described Chinese immigrants trying to fit into American communities and culture harder than people from other countries he had ever known. Chinese pictured themselves as Americans by hiding their pigtails and learning English in order to get accepted by Americans. However, as the old captain observed, the core issue of the Chinese question was not the Chinese themselves but was the Americans who intended to regard the Chinese as an inferior distant stranger.<sup>66</sup>

Also, some Americans even welcomed Chinese to introduce their native culture to share with them. For instance, during the Chinese New Year in San Francisco, the whole Chinese community was full of celebration and delight. The scene attracted large crowds of people who were interested in the Chinese way of celebrating the holiday. According to the *San Francisco Alta*, Chinese celebrated their New Year’s Day with religious worship in temples, organized stage plays in the theatres, and street parades.<sup>67</sup> The New Year’s celebration was an opportunity for Chinese to introduce themselves to Americans for a better understanding of Chinese tradition and customs. In the Chinese community, religion has always played an important role in their daily lives, especially during Chinese holidays. They decorated temples with candles, flowers, and thousands of oil lamps. The temple that had been mentioned in San

<sup>66</sup> “The Chinese in California,” *The New York Times* (New York), August 19, 1867.

<sup>67</sup> “The Chinese New-Year: How the Occasion was Celebrated in San Francisco – The Josh Temple – The Theatres,” *The New York Times* (New York), March 14, 1869.



Francisco's newspaper was the Josh Temple with a statue of Othello.<sup>68</sup> Attending religious services and prayer in temples was one of the Chinese customs during the Chinese New Year because Chinese believe that it is a sacred time and sacred space for them to purify their body and soul in order to have a fresh start in the new year. Of course, those Chinese celebrations had amazed people from other cultures, especially Americans.



Figure 13 “Stereograph of shrine and Two Giant Lanterns”



Figure 14~15 “Chinese New Year Parade on Montgomery Street and w/L. A. Kusel and Son Sign.”  
From Oroville Chinese Temple and Museum Complex. Courtesy of Online Archive of California.

Besides the New Year's Celebration on the streets of San Francisco, Chinese also introduced their way of dealing with death to the Western World. The annual Feast of the Dead is a very important holiday for Chinese to pay homage to their ancestors or deceased loved ones; it is like Memorial Day in the U.S. custom. Normally, the celebration and mourning for the dead is at least a three or four-day long ceremony. It is a special occasion to get together to remember the deceased and to socialize with the living at the same time.<sup>69</sup>

## IX. Religious Conflict in the New World

Most of Americans thought of Chinese religions and sacrifices as uncivilized and as an evil that might pollute the spirit of Christianity. The way Chinese immigrants

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., in Chinese religion (Either Taoism or Buddhism), the *Othello* statue called “Kuan-gong” in Chinese. The statue was black with a long beard and sword. Chinese believed “Kuan-gong” has an extraordinary power to protect them whenever they go. In Buddhism, the *Othello* statue “Kuan-gong” also as known as “the Dharma Protector” who is protecting the holy doctrine and preventing any destruction from evil.

<sup>69</sup> “The Chinese Feast of the Dead in San Francisco,” *The New York Times* (New York), May 1, 1868.

used fireworks in religious ceremony and prayer were unlawful. These acts were a serious crime which threatened public safety, and barbaric behavior that challenged the U.S. laws which indicated that all fireworks were prohibited due to frequent fire disasters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup>

Chinese immigrants brought their religious culture and traditions with them from their homeland. In Chinese communities in the U.S., Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism provided a bevy of religious practices for them. In fact, for the majority of the first generation of Chinese immigrants in the U.S., they continuously practiced their religions and did not convert to Christianity. One of reasons was that they still remembered the way American Christians treated them upon their arrival and their traumatizing experiences in American society.

There was a tension between China and the U.S. in the 1880s due to the Chinese government being furious over the way Americans treated Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and the anti-Chinese movements. The Chinese government attacked American Christians for treating Chinese as inhuman which went against the idea of the dignity of all humanity as taught in Christianity. To ease tensions and build a better diplomatic relationship in the future, the U.S. President, Rutherford B. Hayes, appointed Mr. John F. Swift as the Minister Plenipotentiary (Minister Resident) to visit China in 1880.<sup>71</sup> It turned out that the mission was a great mistake. Minister Swift was one of the extremists in California who worked to reject Chinese immigrants and was an active participant in the anti-Chinese movement.

However, in the New School Presbyterian Assembly, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Missions referred to a statement from missionaries who had just came back from China searching for the answer as to why Oriental people would not convert to Christianity. The report indicated that the Chinese were angry with Westerners who were supposed to be kind and compassionate, but the Christians Chinese immigrants found and experienced in the U.S. were contradictory to Christian faith. American Christians' attitude toward Chinese immigrants was abusive, crude, and disrespectful.<sup>72</sup> In addition, missionaries encouraged congregations to compassionately understand whatever pains and sufferings immigrants had experienced as the only way to convert immigrants to Christianity. These missionaries also reminded people to remember the true spirit of Christianity by being kind and loving to all.

---

<sup>70</sup> "Chinese Restriction: Feeling and Action of the People of California Respecting it," *The New York Times* (New York), February 15, 1886.

<sup>71</sup> "Much Ado About Nothing," *The New York Times* (New York), April 6, 1880.

<sup>72</sup> "Christianity and the Chinese," *The New York Times* (New York), May 29, 1869.

## **X. U.S. Education and Chinese Immigrants**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both Japanese and Chinese immigrants were two major cheap suppliers of labor on the West Coast. Unlike the earliest gold miners in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as time went by, there were more immigrants who considered staying in the U.S permanently. They either found their brides overseas and sent for them to come to the U.S., or simply found wives within their immigration communities. Chinatown's population boomed in the second-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Even though the majority of Asian immigrants were Chinese and Japanese on the West Coast, yet these two ethnic groups are very different in culture and tradition, in particular with regard to education for their children. In San Francisco, Japanese were more willing to assimilate into American society than Chinese by sending their kids to American schools. In 1867, there were four Japanese students already attending American city colleges while there were no Chinese. In the beginning, Chinese did not want to send their children to American schools. Children were found running up and down the streets of Chinatown, or became little helpers with chores. Chinese likely remained at a distance from the American community or simply stayed within their own peer groups.<sup>73</sup>

In 1854, Yung Wing (1828-1912) became the first Chinese to graduate from Yale University.<sup>74</sup> Wing was born in Guangdong, being brought to US by a Yale educated missionary, Samuel Robbins Brown, who was impressed by Wing's academic ability and potential to succeed. It was a long journey for Chinese immigrants to get admitted into colleges, in particular an ivy-league school such as Yale, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Wing's story was exceptional. After graduating from Yale, Wing committed himself to assist Chinese students to come to the U.S. for their education. There were about 120 Chinese students who fulfilled their American dreams in education under Wing's assistance. Several of them became leaders and influential figures in society after graduation. Wing's story made education a key to turn life around for Chinese immigrants in the U.S. He was praised as the pioneer of Chinese education in US.<sup>75</sup>

By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the second generation of American born Chinese began to form grassroots organizations. An academic network for student organizations and Asian studies classes began to boom with an interest in studying their original culture and traditions. Programs in Asian American Studies were

---

<sup>73</sup> "The Chinese and Japanese in California," The New York Times (New York), July 29, 1867.

<sup>74</sup> "Yung Wing," Yale Macmillan Center: Council on East Asian Studies. <https://ceas.yale.edu/yung-wing> (retrieved on November 11, 2018).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

developed in universities and colleges.<sup>76</sup> Besides studying their home cultures, a new generation of Chinese immigrants succeed in various fields in education. According to historical records, there was a great number of Chinese students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States during the late twentieth century: 11% of the students at Harvard, 10% at Princeton, 16% at Stanford, 21% at MIT, and 25% at Berkeley.<sup>77</sup> Currently, the number seems to be higher than previous eras.

The International Student Data from the 2018 Open Doors Report shows that the number of international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities increased from 334,463 in 1957/58-1948/49 to 8,748,386 in 2017/18-2008/09; it was almost 3% of the total student population (Table 6).

Table 6 Enrollment Trends, 1958-2018<sup>78</sup>

Year	Total Int'l Students	Total U.S. Enrollment	% Int'l
2017/18-2008/09	8,748,386	203,755,000	4.3%
2007/08-1998-99	5,631,945	164,740,000	3.4%
1997/98-1988/89	4,314,372	140,975,000	3.1%
1987/88-1978/79	3,256,027	121,950,000	2.7%
1977/78-1968/69	1,610,819	95,572,000	1.7%
1967/68-1958/59	721,774	37,069,000	1.5%
1957/58-1948/49	334,463	(Null: 1962/63; 1960/61; & 1958/59) 24,938,400	1.4%

The number of International students who attended undergraduate or graduate program was still impressive. In 2017/18, there were 108,539 undergraduate international students and 117,960 graduate international students in U.S. (Table 7).

Table 7 New International Enrollment, 2007-2018<sup>79</sup>

Academic Level	2007-2010	2010-2013	2013-2016	2016/17	2017/18
Undergraduate	229,696	277,515	341,513	115,841	108,539
Graduate	247,930	281,845	356,672	124,888	117,960
Non-Degree	98,925	134,517	166,452	50,107	45,239
Total	576,551	693,877	864,637	290,836	271,738

The Chinese students remained the largest population among international students in the U.S. from 2007 to 2017 (Table 8). Also, there were more American students went to study in China than any other countries in East Asia from 2007 to 2017 (Table 9).

<sup>76</sup> Glenn Omatsu, "The Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s," *Asian American Studies Now*, eds. Wu, Jean Yu-Wen Shen and Thomas Chen (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 298-99.

<sup>77</sup> Ronald Takaki, *A History of Asian Americans: Strangers from a Different Shore*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> IIE The Power of International Education. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment> (retrieved March 3, 2019).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.



Figure 16 “Americanized Chinese Gals on Mott St,” April 27, 1965. From World Telegram & Sun by Ed Ford. Courtesy of Library of Congress.



Figure 17 “Chinese Students,” The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Table 8 Chinese Students in the U.S., 2007-2017<sup>80</sup>

Year	Number of Students	Rank	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-degree
2016/17	350,755	1	142,851	128,320	19,749
2015/16	328,547	1			
2014/15	304,040	1			
2013/14	274,439	1			
2012/13	235,597	1			
2011/12	194,029	1			
2010/11	157,558	1			
2009/10	127,628	1			
2008/09	98,235	1			
2007/08	81,127	1			

Table 9 The Number of U.S. Students Study in East Asia, 2007-2017<sup>81</sup>

Year	China	Hong Kong	Japan	Macau	Mongolia	S. Korea	Taiwan
2016/17	11,910	1,641	7,531	33	90	3,770	1,002
2015/16	11,688	1,612	7,145	4	71	3,622	980
2014/15	12,790	1,508	6,053	3	71	3,520	880
2013/14	13,763	1,596	5,978	18	85	3,219	801
2012/13	14,413	1,401	5,758	17	52	3,042	890
2011/12	14,887	1,474	5,283	4	76	2,695	820
2010/11	14,596	1,033	4,134	18	76	2,487	814
2009/10	13,910	1,196	6,166	6	53	2,137	850
2008/09	13,674	1,155	5,784	0	72	2,062	597
2007/08	13,165	1,093	5,710	4	85	1,597	578

According to Yuwen Deng, who used case studies to research the situation of Chinese immigrant students in U.S. He interviewed six Chinese immigrant students in a

<sup>80</sup> IIE The Power of International Education.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

university in the Midwest; four undergraduate and two graduate students in total. According to Deng, they were affected by identity issues both from inner self and from outside peers. The establishment of cultural centers or programs became important for them to build confidence and to assimilate in society outside of the classroom.<sup>82</sup>

## **XI. Epilogue**

In 1997, Gary Locke, the first Chinese American governor of the state of Washington in the history of the United States delivered an inaugural speech as Washington's twenty-first governor. This young governor described his personal story as a descendant of the Chinese immigrant to the United States: "My grandfather came to this country from China nearly a century ago, and worked as a servant. Now, I serve as governor just one mile from where my grandfather worked. It took our family a hundred years to travel that mile – it was a voyage we could only make in America."<sup>83</sup> The Governor Locke's story was just one of millions of the Chinese who came to the United States to make their dreams come true.

For Chinese immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was a long way from home and it was a long journey and battle in the new world. As Charles Dickenson says: "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times." After surviving a long voyage, Chinese found serious challenges waiting for them. Being excluded from American society without identity, hard work, and with only minimum pay, they found their ways to survive and to build their lives from ground zero. When Samuel Langhorne Clemens, his well-known pen name was Mark Twain (1835-1910), traveled to Nevada and California in the 1860s, he got familiar with Chinese there, and he later described Chinese immigrants in his 1972 book *Roughing It*.<sup>84</sup>

"They are a harmless race when white men either let them alone or treat them no worse than dogs; in fact they are almost entirely harmless anyhow, for they seldom think of resenting the vilest insults or the cruelest injuries. They are quiet, peaceable, tractable, free from drunkenness, and they are as industrious as the day is long. A disorderly Chinaman is rare, and a lazy one does not exist. So long as a Chinaman has strength to use his hands he needs no support

---

<sup>82</sup> Yuwen Deng, "A Narrative Inquiry of Chinese Immigrant Students' Educational Experiences in the United States: Language, Culture, and Identity," (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017), pp. x-xi.

<sup>83</sup> Yung, p. 395; however, "One Hundred Years" were merely a metaphor to express that how far the Chinese immigrants had come from the moment they landed in the Western soil.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Twain, *Roughing It*. (Hartford, C.T.: American Publishing Company, 1872), Ch. LIV, p. 382. Entered according to Act of Congress in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington. <http://cdn.loc.gov/service/gdc/calbk/197.pdf> (retrieved March 5, 2019).

from anybody... Any white man can swear a Chinaman's life away in the courts, but no Chinaman can testify against a white man. Ours is the "land of the free"--nobody denies that--nobody challenges it. [Maybe it is because we won't let other people testify]. As I write, news comes that in broad daylight in San Francisco, some boys have stoned an inoffensive Chinaman to death, and that although a large crowd witnessed the shameful deed, no one interfered."

In the book, Twain sympathized with Chinese immigrants and found there were no reasons for white Americans to treat those diligent and peaceful Chinese immigrants with such indignity. Twain also pointed out that with the lack of civil rights, Chinese were in great danger due to the unjust legal system. Twain's observation on the social situation for Chinese immigrants in the U.S. was justified and practical on the West Coast during a time when the anti-Chinese movements were common in the cities of California between the 1870s to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, the successful stories of the Chinese immigrants in the U.S. has continuously encouraged Chinese immigrants to look for a bright future despite all challenges in life. As a result, the Chinese population in the United States increased tremendously in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were two reasons: the diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and China improved; the Chinese economy developed and Chinese had the financial resources to send their children to the U.S. for a better education or simply the whole family to emigrate to the new world. Immigrants from mainland China to the U.S. jumped from 299,000 in 1980 to 536,000 in 1990.<sup>85</sup> Of course, the number could be higher due to the fact that there was a great number of illegal Chinese immigrants who normally did not participate in federal census research. According to the United States 2000 census, Chinese Americans became the largest Asian ethnic group with a number of 2.8 million in America.<sup>86</sup> Chinese immigrants had come a long way indeed. From being as plants, uprooted from their original soil to be transplanted on the Western soil, the onetime "yellow perils" had blossomed to accept their own unique culture and became productive communities that, currently, even the tourist industry's brochures promote.

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 435.



## References

### I. Newspapers and Books

- Chang, Iris (2003). *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History*. New York: Viking penguin.
- Chinese and Naturalization. The New York Times [New York], 10 March 1882, Sec. 4, p. 6.
- Chinese Restriction: Feeling and Action of the People of California Respecting it. The New York Times [New York], 15 February 1886. Sec. 2, p. 5.
- Christianity and the Chinese. The New York Times [New York], 29 May 1869. Sec. 4, p. 3.
- Chudacoff, Howard P. and Peter C. Baldwin (2005). *Major Problem in American Urban and Suburban History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston, M. A.: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Civil Rights for Chinamen in California. The New York Times [New York], 23 August 1868. Sec. 3, p. 7.
- Decrease of the Chinese Population of California – Extortions Practiced upon Them. The New York Times [New York], 4 September 1867. Sec. 2, p. 5.
- Deliveries of California Gold at New York. The New York Times [New York], 2 January 1865. Sec. 2, p. 2.
- Deng, Yuwen (2017). *A Narrative Inquiry of Chinese Immigrant Students' Educational Experiences in the United States: Language, Culture, and Identity*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.
- England and China – The Tae-ping War. The New York Times [New York], 31 January 1864. Sec. 4, p. 5.
- Gyory, Andrew (1998). *Closing the Gate*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Holton, E. D. (1880). LETTER VII: A Visit to the Suburban City of Oakland – Mayor Kalloch and Other Officials – The School System Travels with jottings. From midland to the Pacific. Milwaukee, W. I.: Trayser Brothers Printers. Retrieved March 5, 2019, from Courtesy of Library of Congress. Website: <https://cdn.loc.gov/service/gdc/calbk/096.pdf>.
- Hom, Marlon Kau (1987). *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes From San Francisco Chinatown*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Jerome Alfred Hart (1931). *In our second century, from an editor's note-book*. San Francisco: The Pioneer Press.
- John Chinaman – What shall we do with Him?. The New York Times [New York], 29 June 1869. Sec. 4, p. 5.

- Lai, Him Mark (2004). *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions*. Lanham, M. D.: Altamira Press.
- Mining in the Pacific States. The New York Times [New York], 13 March 1865. Sec. 3, p. 5.
- Much Ado About Nothing. The New York Times, 6 April 1880. Sec. 4, p. 4.
- National Capital Topics: A Bill to Exclude Chinaman. The New York Times [New York], 12 February 1886. Sec. 3, p. 7.
- Okihiro, Gary Y. (2010). When and Where I Enter. In Wu, Jean Yu-Wen Shen and Thomas Chen (Eds.), *Asian American Studies Now* (p. 3). New Brunswick: Rutgers. University Press.
- Omatsu, Glenn. (2010). The Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s. In Wu, Jean Yu-Wen Shen and Thomas Chen (Eds.), *Asian American Studies Now* (pp. 298-299). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Sand-Lots Legislation. The New York Times [New York], 8 July 1880. Sec. 4, p. 3.
- Senator Wade's views Regarding the Chinese. The New York Times [New York], 3 July 1869. Sec. 5, p. 4.
- Shah, Nayan (2010). Public Health and the Mapping of Chinatown. In Wu, Jean Yu-Wen Shen and Thomas Chen (Eds.), *Asian American Studies Now* (p.170). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Supreme Court Opinions: A California Chinese Case. The New York Times [New York], 8 March 1887. Sec.2 , p. 7.
- Takaki, Ronald (1998). *A History of Asian Americans: Strangers from A Different Shore*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- The Chinese and Japanese in California. The New York Times [New York], 29 July 1867. Sec. 5, p. 6.
- The Chinese Exclusion Act. The New York Times [New York], 2 October 1888. Sec. 4, p. 2.
- The Chinese Feast of the Dead in San Francisco. The New York Times [New York], 1 May 1868. Sec. 9, p. 7.
- The Chinese in California. The New York Times [New York], 19 August 1867. Sec. 2, p. 1.
- The Chinese New-Year: How the Occasion was Celebrated in San Francisco – The Josh Temple – The Theatres. The New York Times [New York], 14 March 1869. Sec. 2, p. 3.
- The Chinese Question: letter from United States Senator Cole of California. The New York Times [New York], 17 July 1869. Sec. 4, p. 7.

- The Overcrowding of Emigrant Ships – A Suggestion from the Commissioners of Emigration. *The New York Times* [New York], 18 May 1866. Sec. 4, p. 6.
- Tong, Benson (2000). *The Chinese Americans*. Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press.
- Twain, Mark (1872). *Roughing It*. Retrieved March 5, 2019, from the Librarian of Congress at Washington. Website: <http://cdn.loc.gov/service/gdc/calbk/197.pdf>
- Walker, Francis A. (1872). The Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations. Retrieved March 7, 2019, from The Statistics of the Population of the United States. Website: <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1870/population/1870a-01.pdf>
- Yung, Judy, Gordon H. Chang, and Him Mark Lai (2006). *Chinese American Voices*. Berkeley: University of California.

## II. Websites

- Enrollment. Retrieved March 1, 2019, from IIE The Power of International Education. Website: <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment>.
- Immigration Through Angel Island. Retrieved March 3, 2019, from DPLA-Digital Public Library of America. Website: <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/immigration-through-angel-island>.
- Population of Chinese in the United States 1860-1940. Retrieved March 3, 2019, from The Chinese Experience in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America. Website: [http://teachingresources.atlas.illinois.edu/chinese\\_exp/process05.html](http://teachingresources.atlas.illinois.edu/chinese_exp/process05.html)
- Yung Wing. Retrieved November 11, 2018, from Yale Macmillan Center: Council on East Asian Studies. Website: <https://ceas.yale.edu/yung-wing>

## 十九世紀美西華人移民概論

沈美麗<sup>1</sup>

### 摘要

由於鴉片戰爭的影響，中國政府民心盡失，開始西去尋求未來。在十九世紀，美國西岸的金山夢，吸引了眾多的華人移民，對於早期移民到此的華人來說，異文化與傳統，生存實屬不易，而西元一八八二年通過的排華條款，更鼓舞了美國的反華情緒，此條款也成為了美國史上唯一針對華人移民所量身而製作的律法。在如此嚴苛考驗之下，華人移民仍然一步一腳印地建立起自己的華人地位。其中，知名的華人商社更成為華人對外爭取人權平等的窗口。本研究將以歷史文獻回顧方式，針對十九世紀華人移民在美西所面對的重要問題加以探討。首先，從歷史背景分析華人移民進入美國的當代政治因素。再來，華人的黃金夢與美國夢的挑戰與奮鬥也是研究重點。另外，華人移民對礦業以及鐵路建設的參與，也是華人移民在美國的重大貢獻。本研究所引用的主要文獻是以紐約時報為主，這些新聞事件的報導，對於了解十九世紀華人在美國的移民史提供了很重要的史料，其他二手文獻則是以學者專家的研究為主。

**關鍵詞：**美國移民、舊金山、美國移民條款、排華運動、美國西岸之華人移民

---

<sup>1</sup> 國立政治大學宗教研究所博士候選人；美國費城天普大學訪問學者

通訊作者：沈美麗，E-mail: 105156504@nccu.edu.tw

收稿日期：2018/06/28；接受刊登日期：2019/02/20

DOI:10.6284/NPUSTHSSR.201903\_13(1).2

本研究受「科技部補助博士生赴國外研究計畫」獎助（計畫編號：108-2917-I-004 -001）