

# **California's Chinese Community, 1849-1949**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Čínská komunita v Kalifornii je největší čínskou komunitou ve Spojených státech amerických. Ve druhé polovině devatenáctého století mnoho Číňanů začalo emigrovat do Kalifornie kvůli různým faktorům. Někteří z nich se vrátili zpět do Číny, většina však zůstala a začala zde nový život. Tito založili v San Francisku čínskou čtvrť Chinatown, kde pokračovali ve svých zvyklostech a tradicích. Jejich život ve Spojených státech nebyl nijak jednoduchý, jelikož nejen že čelili rasismu a vykořisťování ze strany rodilých Američanů, ale i nativismu, což uškodilo samotné komunitě. Většina Číňanů však tyto činy přežila a prošla si různými fázemi dějin této země, mezi které patří Zlatá horečka, práce na železnici, Pozlacené období, Pokroková éra, Velká hospodářská krize nebo druhá světová válka. To vše položilo základy pro unikátní americkou komunitu, která zde žije dodnes.

Klíčová slova: Číňané, čínská komunita, imigrace, zákony, nativismus, Kalifornie, San Francisco, Chinatown, Zlatá horečka, železnice, Pozlacený věk, Pokroková éra, Velká hospodářská krize, druhá světová válka, komunismus

## **ABSTRACT**

The Chinese community in California is the largest community in the United States. In the second half of the nineteenth century, due to a variety of push and pull factors, Chinese began immigrating to California in large numbers. Some of them later returned home, but the majority stayed and started new lives. They established their own neighborhood in San Francisco called Chinatown, where they continued to maintain their customs and traditions. Their life in the United States was not easy, as they repeatedly fell victim to white American racism and exploitation, as well as to the nativist impulse that repeatedly reared its ugly head, to the community's detriment. But through it all, the Gold Rush, the mining, the railroad construction, the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, the Great Depression, World War II, and the rise to power of communists in China, California's Chinese community survived, laying the foundations for the vibrant, yet unique American community it is today.

Keywords: Chinese, Chinese community, immigration, laws, nativism, California, San Francisco, Chinatown, Gold Rush, Railroad, Gilded Age, Progressive Era, Great Depression, Second World War, communism

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.



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## INTRODUCTION

California's Chinese Community is the largest Chinese community in the United States. In the nineteenth century, facing war in China, they sought a better place for living and earning money. After they heard about California's Gold Rush, in 1849, many of them moved to California. Some were sojourners, and moved back to China after earning money, but many Chinese stayed in California in hopes of a better life, and even sent for their families. They established San Francisco's Chinatown, and maintained their culture and traditions. They repeatedly faced hard times, often due to white American racism and exploitation, but there were also better times, the result of good job opportunities. These Chinese immigrants lived through the Gold Rush, the western mining industry, the creation of the transcontinental railroad, the labor exploitation and Social Darwinism of the Gilded Age, the aid societies and immigration restrictions of the Progressive Era, the Great Depression, World War II, during which they found themselves in America's good graces, and the rise of communist China, which put them on the outs again. As this thesis will document, they survived all of this and, without really changing, somehow became truly American in the process.

## 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND BEFORE 1849

Before analyzing in depth the Chinese community in California between 1849 and 1949, it is essential to start with a brief historical background of both California and China before 1849. California originally belonged to Spain, and then Mexico, but in 1848, it became a U.S. territory. Gold was discovered in the territory in 1848, prompting a population boom that led to statehood in 1850. At the same time, European countries were warring with China over opium. This Opium War led to a mass out-migration of Chinese, mainly to California. With this move, two vastly different worlds intersected.

### 1.1 California before 1849

Historian Patricia Nelson Limerick contends that “the history of the West is a study of a place undergoing conquest and never fully escaping its consequences.”<sup>1</sup> Synonymous with the West, at least for much of the nineteenth century, was the frontier, which is defined as a place where two or more societies meet and complete. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the American West was a meeting place for varied races and ethnicities, such as Indian, Hispanic, Anglo-Saxon, African and Asian. This cultural pluralism unsurprisingly led to repeated contests over dominance, often centered on language, religion and culture.<sup>2</sup>

One such conflict was the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), fought between the United States and Mexico over a border dispute. In April 1836, Texas gained its independence from Mexico. In 1844, after the election of Democrat James K. Polk, an ardent expansionist, the United States annexed Texas. At question was the border between Texas and Mexico. The United States believed it to be the Rio Grande River, while Mexico contended that the border was the Nueces River, much further north.<sup>3</sup> The Mexican-American war started in April 1846, when Mexicans attacked U.S. soldiers, killing about a dozen. Once provoked, the United States quickly declared war, mobilized its troops, and invaded deep into Mexico, capturing Monterrey before setting its sights on Mexico City

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987), 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-30.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyn Osborn, "The Changing Mexico-U.S. Border," Library of Congress, <https://blogs.loc.gov/maps/2015/12/the-changing-mexico-u-s-border/>, accessed March 27, 2017.

itself. Outmatched from the start, Mexican General Santa Anna had little choice but to surrender. In February 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, establishing the U.S.-Mexican border at the Rio Grande. Under this treaty, Mexico also had to recognize the annexation of Texas and sell California and the rest of the territory north of the Rio Grande to the United States. For this vast territory, the United States paid approximately 15 million dollars, which included the assumption of some debt.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 China before 1849

Europe had a strong influence on China before 1849. The first conflict between Europe and China was the Opium War, which began in 1840. England was selling opium for silver, and there was a large market for it, as opium was a staple of Chinese medicine. Nevertheless, the Chinese started to use opium for pleasure, and many became drug addicts or drug dealers. So, China banned the selling of opium in China, and the Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu had many drug dealers arrested and their confiscated drugs thrown into the sea. England demanded reimbursement in silver for the full value of the confiscated and destroyed opium. China refused, and so England attacked the east coast of China. China was no match for the English forces, whose weapons were far superior. The English navy sailed up the Yangtze River and occupied Shanghai, a strategic market. In the subsequent 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, the British were given the island of Hong Kong and equal status in Shanghai, with the right to trade freely there, without Chinese taxes.<sup>5</sup>

The Opium War in China led to a worldwide Chinese migration, especially to California. Men left their families behind in search of more money so they could better provide for their families back in China. Although leaving was difficult, a better financial status was more important. Single men not only hoped that they could find better job opportunities in California, but also better living conditions, free of war.

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<sup>4</sup> History.com Staff, "Mexican-American War," History.com. <http://www.history.com/topics/mexican-american-war>, accessed March 7, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Sebastien Roblin, et al., "The Opium Wars: The Bloody Conflicts That Destroyed Imperial China," National Interest, accessed March 7, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-opium-wars-the-bloody-conflicts-destroyed-imperial-china-17212>.

Ivana Bakešová, *Čína ve XX. století* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2001), 7-8.

### 1.2.1 Chinese Traditional Way of Thinking

The Chinese traditional way of thinking completely differs from the European way. Chinese society focuses on the harmony between humanity and nature. Chinese ideology says that there should be a connection between the sky and man. Traditional Chinese thinking also indicates that people should focus on self-improvement and developing virtues such as wisdom. This traditional thinking originates from Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. However, the biggest influence comes from Confucianism, which says that the family is the most important thing, especially honoring fathers and the elderly.<sup>6</sup> This way of thinking in part explains why Chinese emigrated: for self-improvement. They wanted better jobs, and better standards of living for themselves and their families. That is why the Chinese immigrants wanted to earn money for their families back in China, and after earning it they would return home or pay for their families to join them in California.

### 1.2.2 Chinese Way of Life

The Chinese are positive about their life. They love to cook and take great pride in their gastronomy. Another traditional part of Chinese life is the dress Qipao, of which the Chinese people are also quite proud. So, the basics for the Chinese way of life are dress, food, way of living and traveling.<sup>7</sup> Other popular parts of Chinese culture are tea, liquor, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture and indeed their language – Standard Chinese or the so-called Mandarin Chinese. The Chinese people are proud of their language, which dates back more than three thousand years and is the most spoken language in the world. For these reasons, the Chinese are generally not willing to learn a new language.<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese way of life, including what they take great pride in, is essential for understanding how they responded to life in California. Chinese immigrants are proud of their country, their traditions, and their language, and they are generally not willing to adapt to or assimilate with the American way of life. On the contrary, they tend to self-segregate in their own neighborhoods and replicate life in China, as is demonstrated by Chinatown in San Francisco, California.

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<sup>6</sup> Ren Qiliang, et al. *Zhongguo wenhua changshi* (Beijing: Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2007), 3-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 222-241.

## 2 CHINESE IMMIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA

Chinese immigration to the United States started during the 1780s. However, the largest wave of Chinese came in 1849 because of the discovery of gold in California. In the following three decades, there was a mass immigration mainly due to employment opportunities. There were push and pull factors that inspired the Chinese to leave their homeland and sail across the Pacific Ocean to California. The push factors were the Opium Wars and the poor economic situation in China. The pull factors were the discovery of gold in California and the economic opportunities in the United States.<sup>9</sup> California was the most multicultural place in America. Large groups of immigrants converged there, not just from China and Mexico, but from France and Italy, and to a lesser extent, from Romania, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Greece. The biggest immigrant communities were the Mexicans and Chinese in San Francisco, but in the 1850s, the city had newspapers published in over 30 different languages, including Chinese.<sup>10</sup>

The majority of Chinese immigrants came from the south of China, namely from the Pearl River Delta, Canton, Hong Kong and Macao. Because of their dissatisfaction with the situation in China, they searched for a way to get to the United States and earn money there. They arrived in the United States not as emigrants but as sojourners, meaning they wanted to return to their mother country and reunite with their families again. If they succeeded in finding a job, the money they earned was often sent home to their families, and then they set a little aside so they could return home some day with sufficient savings to live in financial security. The first Chinese in California are believed to have arrived from Hong Kong in 1848 (two men and a woman). Most of the Chinese came on the credit-ticket system (similar to the colonial English system of indentured servitude) run by greedy merchants. Chinese businessmen in San Francisco or Hong Kong paid for the trans-Pacific travel of the immigrants. In exchange, the immigrants worked for the businessmen until the debt was paid off, which could take years. Despite the harshness of the system, the number

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<sup>9</sup> "Chinese Immigrants," Immigration to the United States, accessed March 04, 2017.  
<http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/425-chinese-immigrants.html>.

Tan Chee-Beng, *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2013), 122-124.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, *The Rise of the City 1878-1898* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 33-35.

of Chinese immigrants in California was rapidly increasing. They concentrated in the area of San Francisco and soon represented one-tenth of the population in California.<sup>11</sup>

Between 1840 and 1900, approximately 300,000 Chinese travelled to the United States to work, mostly to California, which offered the closest ports. The immigrants were mainly young men who worked later in the mines, on the railroads, in agriculture or the service industries. These immigrants were welcomed because the demand for labor in the West was high. Later on, labor competition would lead to discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

San Franciscans were fascinated by the Chinese characters in the local newspapers, and the Chinese community in the city developed a reputation of being the most exotic and interesting community in the city. The opium dens only added the allure. Initially, the Chinese were well received in California, but as their numbers swelled, they began to be discriminated against. They became victims of violence, partly due to their race, but also due to their poverty and cultural differences.<sup>13</sup> That they arrived in the 1850s, at a time when white Americans, already frustrated by the mass immigration of Irish and Germans to America (as a result of the Irish Potato Famine and the Revolution of 1848 in Europe), were increasing nativist, did not help their plight.

The push-pull factors can show the main reasons for Chinese immigration to San Francisco. The push factors were caused by the negative situation in China, which included natural disasters, internal revolution or imperialistic aggressions during the 1840s and 1850s. And the pull factors to the United States included the discovery of gold in California and economic opportunities for finding a new job there.<sup>14</sup>

Natural calamities in China during the 1840s and 1850s included a severe draught in Henan Province, the flooding of the Yangtze River in provinces of Hubei, Anhui, Jiangsu and Zhejiang and famine in Guangxi. Famine and flood in Guangdong resulted in a

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<sup>11</sup> Richard A. Bartlett, *The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 165-166.

<sup>12</sup> William Fischer, *Identity, Community, and Pluralism in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30.

<sup>13</sup> Bartlett, *The New Country*, 164-165.

Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: from the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 95.

<sup>14</sup> "Chinese Immigrants," Immigration to the United States, accessed March 04, 2017, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/425-chinese-immigrants.html>.

revolution which destroyed the land and caused economic and political problems. The Opium war also did not help to solve the bad situation in China.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.1 The California Gold Rush

The California Gold Rush began a new era in American history. In January 1848 James W. Marshall who was employed to construct a mill on the American River picked up some mineral flakes in the river, and that is how the history of mining started. The news of the mineral discovery spread fast. The gold in California was available to anybody and its discovery attracted the greatest mass of migration in the history of the United States. It attracted mainly young men, half a continent away. First it attracted citizens from most parts of the United States, including the slaves, and later the Gold Rush attracted immigrants from all over the world such as China, France, Wales and Chile. California became the most populous state and San Francisco the most populous city in the United States. The main reason to go to San Francisco was to get rich. Not only men of all ages flocked to California, but women too. The newly arrived settled San Francisco, Sacramento and Stockton. They built their own small towns and villages close to the mines. The mining companies observed that working in groups of three or four was beneficial. But mostly there were six to eight miners cooperating in each group. The miners had long days of work full of restless energy, hope and group loyalty. For the miners it was cheaper and more efficient to live and work in groups. William Deverell describes mining in California in the middle of the nineteenth century in his book, "A Companion to the American West": "Gold was found in the nooks and crannies of old stream beds and in the bottoms of existing water courses, where it had been left by thousands of years of the movement of water carrying the mineral downstream to the point when the strength of flow was insufficient to support the weight."<sup>16</sup> The early miners were the Mexicans, followed by a large stream of the Chinese after 1851. The access to the mining areas was free, no licenses were needed. In few years the individuals or small groups of miners were replaced by new technology. The miners became part of larger companies and the sale of shares to public

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> William Francis Deverell, *A Companion to the American West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 117.



was increasing. The people's expansion towards the West was the description of the discovery of gold in California and the rush of people to the mines for searching gold.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2 Establishment of San Francisco's Chinatown

In the 1850s, the Chinese moved to the western regions of the United States, primarily to California, because of the political unrest and economic pressures in China. In the United States, the Chinese searched for temporary work.<sup>18</sup> The first Chinese immigrants (two men and one woman) arrived in San Francisco in 1848, and Chinatown was created step by step. That same year, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill, so the Chinese had an opportunity to start working there. In 1853, the first Asian church in North America, Old St. Mary's Church, was erected in Chinatown. Six years later, the Chinese School was created, which Chinese children had to attend, because they were not permitted to attend any other public school in San Francisco. In 1873, more churches were established, including the Chinese Congregational Church and the Chinese United Methodist Church. In 1880, the first Chinese Baptist Church was founded. The Chinese School was renamed in 1885 to the Oriental School, so that students of different nationalities from the Orient such as Korean and Japanese could also attend the school. An important institution opened in Chinatown in 1900 – the Tung Wah Dispensary, renamed in 1925 as the Chinese Hospital. In 1908, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was formed. In 1911, the Chinatown YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) was established, followed by YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association). In 1921, the Chinatown Public Library opened. In 1924, students speaking Chinese were barred from public schools and playgrounds, so the residents of Chinatown responded by establishing their own schools and playgrounds.<sup>19</sup> This was because of the Johnson Reed Act of 1924 or "the Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants allowed entry to the United States through a national

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<sup>17</sup> William Francis Deverell, *A Companion to the American West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 114-118.

<sup>18</sup> "Chinese Immigrants in the United States," Migrationpolicy.org, accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states/>.

<sup>19</sup> Tiger Business Development, "History of San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," Chinatown San Francisco, accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/index.html>.

origins quota.”<sup>20</sup> This quota provided visas to the immigrants only for two percent of the total number of people of each nationality, and it completely prohibited the entry of any Asian immigrant to the United States. Several important regulations of 1917 Act gave to the 1924 Act an impulse. This was the implementation of a literacy test that required from immigrants over 16 years old to demonstrate their basic knowledge in reading in any language. This also led to the fact that the new immigrants had to pay higher taxes after their arrival and also allowed to the officials to decide who they should exclude. The Act excluded from entry to the United States anyone who was born in the “Asiatic Barred Zone”, only with the exception of Japanese and Filipinos. Even that China was not included to the Asiatic Barred Zone, Chinese were already denied immigration visas because of the Chinese Exclusion Act.<sup>21</sup> In short, San Francisco’s Chinatown developed all the necessary institutions but also maintained Chinese culture, traditions and language.

An American entering Chinatown might have immediately noticed that the residents were concentrated in quarters. Merchants were dressed in exotic silk clothes, sold exotic oriental goods and celebrated traditional Chinese holidays. There was also a seamier side to Chinatown. Chinese girls were imported as slaves or prostitutes. In addition to prostitution, the residents also liked gambling and smoking opium in dens. Another issue that gave Chinatown a bad reputation was the Tongs, or secret societies, who often warred for control of vices. Because whites were allowed in these societies, reformers insisted that Chinatown must disappear or Chinese immigration must stop.<sup>22</sup>

After the Chinese built Chinatown in San Francisco, the town developed some bad characteristics of ghettos. Luckily for Chinese immigrants and later Chinese American generations, the prospects were more positive. One of the Chinatown residents said in the mid-1920s that he could live a better life among strangers. Outside Chinatown, the relations between Chinese and Americans were cold, formal or commercial. However inside Chinatown the Chinese immigrants could find a society that was friendly to them and could find relatives that shared the same visions as the immigrants had. The Chinese immigrant could entertain others and make them laugh. He could also listen to folktales

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<sup>20</sup> "The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)," U.S. Department of State, accessed April 27, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Richard A. Bartlett, *The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 168.

that created the illusion that one is not only in Chinatown, but would feel as like being in China.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.2.1 A Story of the Chinese Immigrant Fou Sin

Even though most of the Chinese immigrants were like Fou – did not spend a lot of time sailing the oceans, most of them did not speak English and few of them spent working for European or American employers, his example could show the changes that happened in South China during the Opium War of 1839-1842 which led many Chinese to leave the country. The Han Chinese moved south into the area of Guangdong Province (Canton). Over centuries they had been isolated from the rest of China (the interior part) by mountains. This province is oriented toward the South China Sea. That is why foreign trade by the sea and emigration to different parts of the world was quite common. In 1848, the Chinese immigrant Fou Sin was a sixteen-year-old boy when he left his job in a Hong Kong store and boarded an American ship where he served as a cabin boy. He did not know that in ten years he would stand in a California court and would be accused of robbing a water company safe, murdering a white clerk, and sentenced to death by hanging along with four other Chinese. The personal story of Fou Sin reveals a lot about the Gold Rush emigration of Chinese from Guangdong Province (South China).<sup>24</sup>

Fou Sin was born close to Hong Kong in a tiny farm; his mother died young and left the family with two kids. His father worked as a stonecutter. At the age of twelve he boarded a British brig as a cabin boy and a year and a half later he went to work in a Hong Kong store, where he learned to speak English. The next few years he worked in several ships as a steward and for a while he settled in Honolulu, where he worked as a cook for an American family. Then he boarded again a ship and traveled to Russia or Japan. The Russian ship then sailed east for California and on New Year's Day in 1857 Fou Sin finally arrived to San Francisco. Here he lived at a sailor's boardinghouse and worked as a cook.

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<sup>23</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 70.

Ching Chao Wu, *Chinatowns: a Study of Symbiosis and Assimilations* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1928), 158.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 81-85.

The boarding house was owned by a white and black. He worked there for a few months and then he boarded at a Chinese barber-shop. Meanwhile he got in a fight with a black man at a Spanish dance house and this led him to jail. Because there were no witnesses against him, so he was released. He found new jobs as a cook, but again unemployed, he got in trouble in a Chinese brothel. This time he escaped successfully. He ran to find his old friend Chou Yee from Honolulu and a man who grew up close to him in China. Chou Yee was in San Francisco for few days and then wanted to leave for the Southern Mines. He assured Fou that there were a lot of job opportunities as a cook, so they left together in September 1857. The authorities charged Fou with murder along with four other Chinese, including his friend Chou Yee. One of these men was never apprehended and the last one committed suicide in jail. However the other three men were sentenced for murder. The third man's name was Coon You and he came from the region of Macao, South China. Coon You said to the newspapermen that he was only twenty years old when he came to California and a year or so later he was arrested leaving his wife in China.<sup>25</sup>

Most likely Coon You had more in common with the Chinese immigrants – the Gold Rush Chinese who came to California in search of job opportunities. He did not speak English, had his family back home in China (he could talk about his wife for a long time) and probably considered himself his family's emissary to California. Like other Chinese immigrants working in the mines, he also sent money back home to his relatives. However the gold deposits for which he was sentenced to death were clearly in the coffers of water company managers and not in the creeks of the Southern Mines.<sup>26</sup>

The large majority of Chinese immigrants to California were like Fou, Chou and Coon. They were young men sent by families to earn some money and a small minority was women. These women were merchant's wives or servants and many of them worked as prostitutes as well. Most of these women moved to San Francisco and worked in the Chinese brothels, one of which Fou visited and had fight. By 1860 many women were also found in the Southern Mines.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 81-86.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>27</sup> Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 86-87.

### 2.3 Mining and the Trans-Continental Railroad

After the Chinese heard about the discovery of gold in California, they immigrated to the United States. The news of this discovery spread quickly around the whole world and soon it attracted a lot of gold-seekers in California. Firstly there were around 300 Chinese gold-seekers; however during the 1850s the number increased in 1851 from almost 3,000 Chinese seekers and one year later to around 20,000. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act ended the large amount of Chinese immigrants to the United States. The gold seekers from China were mostly adult men from Guangdong Province – South China. Gold was very important for them and the majority of Chinese gold seekers worked in the mining areas of California. The official immigrationtotheunitedstates.org website says: “They washed the gold-bearing sand in a pan or rocker to let the heavier particles of gold settle at the bottom.”<sup>28</sup> Because there were a lot of Chinese miners in many parts of California’s hills, the white miners demanded the elimination of non-white (foreign) competition by requesting new laws from the California legislature. As a result of that in May 1852, the state required foreigners who were ineligible for citizenship pay taxes (so-called the Foreign Miners’ Tax), they had to pay a monthly fee of three dollars.<sup>29</sup>

Seeking precious metals was sometimes quite hard because people would do anything for it; even seek them by rule-of-thumb methods. People thought that if they had a lot of gold, they would have comfortable fortunes. In 1880, there were more than one hundred mining corporations. “The typical American of the 1880s preferred to get his thrills vicariously, risking his money (rather than his life) by buying stock in mining corporations which, alas, too often defaulted their dividends.”<sup>30</sup>

Apart from mining and searching for gold, the Chinese worked as laborers when constructing the transcontinental railroad. Many of these laborers were miners before they started to construct the railroad. The Civil war was over, so the US government could once again start constructing the transcontinental railroad. In 1865, the Central Pacific Railroad Company hired only fifty Chinese labors to test their skills in constructing the railroad. They had to perform several tasks connected to the construction of the railroad. After the Chinese laborers proved to be the right workers, the company hired even more of them. At

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, *The Rise of the City: 1878-1898* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 34-35.

their peak, twelve thousand Chinese laborers were employed. This number represented 90 percent of total workforce.<sup>31</sup>

The Chinese community was not only working as miners or transcontinental railroad workers. Some families also fished in the Monterey Bay region, so the family could survive. After finishing with the construction of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, some workers were forced to become farmers and became farm laborers in California. Some of them had to leave and migrate south and east to work there in the plantations.<sup>32</sup>

To suppress the Chinese, American lawmakers created laws and taxes for them, which altered the course of history for the Chinese in California. The first important tax in California was the so-called Anti-Coolie Tax of 1862, the purpose of which was “to protect free white labor against competition with Chinese coolie labor, and to discourage the immigration of the Chinese into the State of California.”<sup>33</sup> Coolie is described in the dictionary as “an unskilled laborer employed cheaply, especially one brought from Asia.”<sup>34</sup>

## 2.4 The Gilded Age

Gilded Age dates back to 1870s and 1890s when technological innovation, mass immigration and political corruption took place.<sup>35</sup> During this period of time politicians aimed not only to eliminate wasteful government expenditures, but also balance the federal budgets. Retrenchment was a serious problem as well, when salaries of many government officials were reduced.<sup>36</sup> Railroads played an important role when connecting the West to other parts of the United States. Other vital industries connected with national and international markets were mining, farming or ranching. Naturally there were people who could get rich by being part of this industry, but there were people who had bad living conditions and had to fight to survive. The Homestead Act was created, which was the federal government’s land policy. This Act sped up the movement into the plains and

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<sup>31</sup> "Chinese Immigrants," Immigration to the United States, accessed March 04, 2017, <http://immigrationtotheunitedstates.org/425-chinese-immigrants.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> "1862 California's Anti Coolie Tax in San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/1862anticoolietax.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> "Coolie," Dictionary.com, accessed May 02, 2017, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/coolie>.

<sup>35</sup> Digital History, accessed April 5, 2017, <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraID=9&smtID=2>.

<sup>36</sup> Digital History, accessed April 5, 2017, [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3113](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3113).

brought the workers to the national market. In the beginning some of them had hard time to adjust the environment, however some endured, some had to leave.<sup>37</sup>

The Federal Government had the central role to control the development of the West, whereas on the East it did not. The constructed railroads served the new settlers to take them to the Great Plains. These railroads were nationally subsidized. The railroads were under a great expansion and provided the farmers a way of transportation to get their goods to the market. In this period of time the agricultural land was considered as one of the most important.<sup>38</sup>

Since the 1870s, Chinese people were engaged in many economic activities, and worked in woolen factories, farms, hop plantations, kitchens, knitting mills, built railroads, constructed highway and wharfs, manufactured clothes and liquor, made cigars and cigarettes, and other products. In 1877, there was an article in one newspaper that estimated around eighteen thousand Chinese that were employed in San Francisco factories. If any of them were fired, the factories would be confused in their business without these hardworking Chinese workers. The wages of these Chinese workers varied according to the time, place and occupation. According to the numbers, the highest wage they could receive was in domestics, brick making, cooking, farm laboring, bag, slipper and cigar making, mining or laundry. In 1879, San Francisco reported more than one thousand licenses given to Chinese tradesmen. They maintained their own merchant exchange in the city of San Francisco. Because Chinese merchants became more assertive, Californians wanted to monopolize all of Chinese businesses. These included boot and shoe industry, broom manufacturing, cigar making, Chinese marine insurance and foreign exchange.<sup>39</sup>

The majority of Chinese immigrants in California were single men, they were racially discriminated, and they brought their own customs from their native country. "China is a nation with one of the longest continuous identities of any people in existence."<sup>40</sup> The Chinese had deep-rooted survival instincts, which helped them become the largest immigrant population in California. A history of repeated invasions and assimilations

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<sup>37</sup> Janice Christophel, "The West in the Gilded Age," Home, accessed April 5, 2017, <https://dlc.dcccd.edu/history2-2/the-west-in-the-gilded-age>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, et al. *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 20-22.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 22.

influenced the character of Chinese people in their conservatism, fatalism, and the ability to adapt to new changing conditions. When China was under the Empire, the country was patriarchal. Family was the most important, not the individual. Whenever a Chinese family had a problem, the family members would stand by each other, even if a family member committed a crime. Family members would rather be executed rather than tell the truth to the police or accuse any of the family members.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the strong family unit, the Chinese maintained power with their guilds. Chinese had four types of guilds: craft, merchant, community, and provincial. The provincial was the most apparent in California, because Chinese liked to stay in their own neighborhoods. There were six of these guilds in California, the headquarters were found in San Francisco. In these guilds, so-called the “Chinese Six Companies”, each Chinese person was united with others from their province. The Chinese Six Companies were established in 1882, also known as Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.<sup>42</sup> The topic about the Chinese Six Companies will be discussed later in the section of the Progressive Era.

During this period of time, there were some important acts, taxes or laws that were directed toward the Chinese. Some were to improve their reputation, others were to keep them from becoming too successful. In 1870, to curtail prostitution, a law against the importation of Chinese, Japanese and Mongolian women was passed. That same year, Anti-Chinese ordinances restricted Chinese housing and employment options. In 1880, the United States and China signed a treaty that limited Chinese immigration to the United States. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned Chinese immigration to the United States and prohibited Chinese from becoming naturalized citizens.<sup>43</sup>

To sum up this period of time, in the 1870s was the beginning of hard economic times when other immigrants started to compete for the jobs that were reserved for Chinese. Along with the economic competition, hard times for the Chinese began together with racism and hate. All of these, especially in California, were accompanied by anti-Chinese

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>42</sup> Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, et al. *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 23-24.

"Chinese Six Companies," Immigration to the United States, accessed April 27, 2017, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/428-chinese-six-companies.html>.

<sup>43</sup> "History of San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/index.html>.



riots and pressure, which led to their exclusion from the United States (Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882).<sup>44</sup>

In 1880, a treaty was signed that did not prohibit but only limited Chinese immigration to the United States. Two years later the Chinese Exclusion Act banned Chinese to immigrate and to become naturalized citizens. During this time, Chinese in California were focused on their businesses. Because of the lack of Chinese women, some men were pushed to do the women's work. Some of the Chinese and their relatives were exploited by the Chinese American because of the fact that they did not have enough employment or were illegals in the United States. Another factor was the rotating credit associations among Chinese and Japanese immigrants from which they made a profit and earned a lot of money. However the most popular business among the Chinese was the laundry business because it was easy to get in and get out. This was a necessary convenience because Chinese men returned to China every few years to visit their wives and family. The business could be sold to kinsman or clansman who gained working experience from it. In addition the newly opened business could offer new job opportunities to kinsman or clansman that newly arrived to California.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.5 Angel Island

Angel Island, in San Francisco, served as a detention center for Chinese immigrants who came to United States from 1910 to 1940 and were interrogated there by the U.S. officials. They asked many difficult questions to the immigrants so the immigrants answered wrongly, and so they could be deported back to China.<sup>46</sup> Angel Island played an important role concerning Chinese immigration to the United States. The official San Francisco Chinatown website and the Robert Eric Barde's *Immigration at the Golden Gate: Passengers Ships, Exclusion, and Angel Island* book says that during its lifetime there were around 200,000 immigrants who passed through this immigration station. Compared to the

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<sup>44</sup> "Chinese Immigration to the United States - For Teachers (Library of Congress)," Library of Congress, accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/riseind/chin imm/>.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 75-81.

17 million immigrants of New York's Ellis Island, it was not so much, though Angel Island is much bigger in size. Angel Island was not considered as a place of help for the immigrants or "The Ellis Island of the West", which was built to facilitate the entry processing and helped immigrants become new Americans. It was not as benevolent as Ellis Island. It made the exclusion of Asians (the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Indians and other Asians) easier. This was the period of time when the public did not welcome immigrants and threatened the liberties of all immigrants mainly from Asia. However, it is considered as an important chapter of immigration in the US history because of its big multicultural image.<sup>47</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 lasted until its suspension of the National Origins Quota Act of 1924. Even though Chinese could not enter the United States; they were very adventurous and tried to enter anyway. According to the law, if a Chinese man had a child during his visit to China and recorded it in the official papers, the child could immigrate with his father to the United States. If the children were already adults, they researched ways to immigrate to the United States. They were so fascinated with immigration that they learned by heart the details of their father's address and family background so they could immigrate. These children were so-called "paper sons" or "paper daughters". When immigrating to the United States, the Chinese immigrants had to go through long physical examinations and had to be interrogated by immigration officials. Many of the Chinese immigrants found this very frightening, especially the "paper sons" and "paper daughters". To avoid illegal immigrations, the immigration officials detained the Chinese immigrants for months and interrogated them in detail. If there was any misunderstanding, the Chinese immigrants had to be detained or even deported back home to China. Many of the Chinese immigrants expressed their loneliness and frustration by writing poems on the walls.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "Angel Island: Immigrant Journeys of Chinese-Americans," Angel Island, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.angel-island.com/history.html>.

<sup>47</sup> "Immigration at the Golden Gate: Passenger Ships, Exclusion, and Angel Island San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/events/books/immigrationatthegoldengate.html>.

<sup>48</sup> William Fischer, *Identity, Community, and Pluralism in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 33-34.

### 2.5.1 The Lives of Chinese Immigrants

Gradually some of the Chinese immigrants did not want to return to their country. After they paid all of their debts they found themselves somehow free and independent in this new white man's land. They found various occupations such as becoming fishermen, freighters, wood choppers, gardeners, railroad maintenance workers or they went into business opening restaurants or becoming laundrymen. Apart from all of these, some of the Chinese immigrants maintained the Chinatown retail stores, where they sold silk and fans to wives of hard working miners.<sup>49</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century the main business the Chinese immigrants in the United States did was laundry business. In the 1870s, the prejudice against the Chinese immigrants cut them out of the possibility to find a job. That is why they could not find a job and were forced to rely on their own to earn money. When starting their laundry business, they did not have to look for jobs anymore. What they needed was to find a low rent place and start their own business. In the United States, apart from laundering opening restaurants was also one of their important businesses. Initially the restaurants served mainly the Chinese bachelors working in the farms, ranches or mining towns. After a while the Chinese restaurants attracted other nationalities as well, so the Chinese immigrants realized that it would be a good business if they opened more Chinese restaurants. During the 1890s, there were many Chinese restaurants in different parts of the United States. Most of the restaurants were run by families, the husband cooked and washed the dishes while the wife worked as a waitress and dealt with the customers. Apart from laundries and restaurant businesses, the Chinese community also worked in the grocery business, even if it was small part of the community. In these Chinese grocery stores people sold essential ingredients for cooking Chinese food or other goods the Chinese community needed. The Chinese grocery store attracted not only the Chinese community, but Asian as well. The stores were built mainly in the Chinatown or other Asian communities places.<sup>50</sup>

Americans could recognize the Chinese because of how they dress. The typical clothes they wore were according to Bartlett "wide-bottomed, blackish trousers, a loose blouse of

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<sup>49</sup> Richard A. Bartlett, *The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 169.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

the same material, and in cold weather, a sleeveless, quilted coat. They also wore a wide umbrella-shaped hat made of split bamboo or grass. In addition, they also often carried baskets with the aid of a pole set across their shoulders.”<sup>51</sup> All of these were possible to buy in a Chinese store, where Chinese also sold the fish, rice and tea they were used to consuming from their mother country. And what Americans did not like about the Chinese that they worked like beasts. What the author says is that “this violated concepts of democracy, muddled the California dream of a great western center of free men, and savored of the evils of black slavery in the American South.”<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless many American entrepreneurs did not realize this and did not find it wrong. Around ten thousand Chinese were brought to work on the Central Pacific.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless there were many Chinese who never abandoned their dream to return to China and bring some extra money they earned in the United States. Some of the Chinese immigrants returned to their country with some modest sums of two or three hundred dollars. This amount of money was considered quite high. Yet for many Chinese the commitment to go to America for work was permanent and they had to make a decision before going to the United States. This is due to the fact that they did not know if they would be welcomed or not. But still together with the other ethnic groups of immigrants the Chinese were part of an alien land.<sup>54</sup>

## 2.6 The Progressive Era

The Progressive Era started in 1890 and lasted until the 1920s. This was an era of business expansion and progressive reforms in California. “The progressives, as they called themselves, worked to make American society a better and safer place in which to live. They tried to make big business more responsible through regulations of various kinds.”<sup>55</sup> Their main goals were to clean the corrupted cities, improve working conditions in factories, and tried to make better conditions for people who lived in slum areas. Apart

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 165-167.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>55</sup> "Progressive Era to New Era - American Memory Timeline- Classroom Presentation- Teacher Resources," Library of Congress, accessed April 28, 2017.

from this, they also wanted to take interest in the environment, and conservation of resources, hoped to start democracy by giving rights to vote to women. During the Progressive Era, there were a lot of new immigrants from Europe coming to the United States, but not Chinese, because of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.<sup>56</sup>

During the Progressive Era, there were the Chinese Six Companies, which helped Chinese communities. They maintained houses, which served as hotels and restaurants for the new coming immigrants, for those, who were in San Francisco temporarily or for ill people. They helped to find work for the new immigrants and provided them with food and shelter. These companies also settled any disputes among their members, helped their members involved in the courts, took care of the sick, buried the dead, took care of their tombs or return their bones back to China. However, they did not have anything to do with the coolie traffic or with the importation of Chinese prostitutes to California. Moreover, after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act ended Chinese immigration, the Chinese Six Companies maintained community integrity. They encouraged immigrants in their employments of restaurants, factory labor or import and export. The Chinese Six Companies continued over decades to promote business opportunities for Chinese Americans, and to seek support in political area.<sup>57</sup>

During this period of time, there were important laws, and acts that changed the history of Chinese immigration to California. In 1892, the Geary Act was signed, which again prohibited Chinese immigrants from coming to the United States. In 1902, the Chinese Exclusion Act was extended for another 10 years, and in 1912 it was extended indefinitely. Because of the mass immigration of Chinese, in 1910 the Angel Island Immigration Station was opened, which served as a detention and processing center for Chinese immigrants.

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<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/index.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

"Immigrants in the Progressive Era - American Memory Timeline- Classroom Presentation- Teacher Resources," Library of Congress, accessed April 28, 2017.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/immigrnt/>.

"Progressive Era: 1890–1920s: Progressive Political Reform," Progressive Era: 1890–1920s: Progressive Political Reform- Picture This, accessed April 28, 2017,

<http://picturethis.museumca.org/timeline/progressive-era-1890-1920s/progressive-political-reform/info>.

<sup>57</sup> Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, et al. *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 23-24.

"Chinese Six Companies," Immigration to the United States, accessed April 27, 2017, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/428-chinese-six-companies.html>.

Thousands of Chinese were detained there and had to undergo strict interrogations by U.S. immigration officials.<sup>58</sup>

Since 1882, California underwent a certain amount of illegal Chinese immigration. Luckily for Chinese immigrants, an earthquake and fire in April 1906 in San Francisco helped them to cheat. These natural disasters destroyed the city's most vital statistic records so it enabled Chinese immigrants to make frauds, so they claimed that they were born in America. Once they became American citizens, they could go wherever they wanted to, and men could also claim their fathered children abroad as American citizens. The majority of these children were sons. Unfortunately, their mothers could not go with the sons and they had to stay at home. That is why it made the male Chinese population in California higher even than wives and children of treaty merchants had the possibility to enter the country. This situation led to the start of making illegal documents. Some Chinese men claimed other children that were theirs and these children were known as "paper sons". However the immigration officials soon noticed all of these paper son tricks and started to find all of those who made these frauds.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.6.1 The Panama Pacific International Exposition

In 1915, San Francisco hosted the Panama International Exposition. "The vast fair, which covered over 600 acres and stretched along two and half miles of water front property, highlighted San Francisco's grandeur and celebrated a great American achievement: the successful completion of the Panama Canal."<sup>60</sup> San Francisco had to reconstruct most of the city, because of the terrible earthquake of 1906. It took nine years to rebuild the city. By 1915, the city was ready to host a World's Fair. More than 18 million people visited the fair, which showcased technological and motor advancements, such as the first transcontinental telephone call, wireless telegraphy and the automobile. "Each day, the fair highlighted special events and exhibits, each with their own popular souvenirs."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "History of San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/index.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 94-95.

<sup>60</sup> "The Panama-Pacific International Exhibition," National Parks Service, accessed April 28, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/ppie.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

The fair was so large, that the visitors could not see all of its exhibits.<sup>62</sup> Besides the celebration of the Panama Canal completion, the fair also commemorated the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Pacific Ocean, and the fair was widely considered as a success.<sup>63</sup> China was one of the participating countries, and won a gold medal for its Maotai, a Chinese liquor.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.7 The Great Depression

The Great Depression started after the sudden crash in the stock market of October 1929, and because of this the prosperity of the 1920s was over. The hard times started when people was threatened by losing their jobs, homes, savings or farms. The world was affected by these economic troubles, and in some parts of the world it led to political instabilities, such as dictatorial regimes in Germany (Adolf Hitler) or military regime in Japan. The United States did not want to be influenced by these conflicts; however, this topic will be discussed later on in the next section.<sup>65</sup>

California observed hard times as well. Because of the economic collapse, the Great Crash soon was renamed to the Great Depression. The owners of manufacturing plants were not able to sell their goods; that is why they had to fire some of their employees, they could not find jobs afterwards, and the unemployment started. These workers lost their savings, and they were not able to afford to buy essential goods for living. In addition, a lot of businesses had to stop their production and close down, which led to the devastation of the society. In addition to this bad situation, in 1930, there were huge droughts in the United States. By 1932, over 12 million of U.S. workers were unemployed and millions of them were hungry. In California, it led to violent struggles between labor and employers. The violence resulted in strikes. In 1934, there was a strike in San Francisco called “Bloody

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<sup>62</sup> "The Panama-Pacific International Exhibition," National Parks Service, accessed April 28, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/ppie.htm>.

Robert W. Rydell, *All the World 's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 209.

<sup>63</sup> Zoe Heimdal, "Introduction: A Brief History," The Panama Pacific International Exposition, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.sanfrancisco memories.com/ppie/history.html>.

<sup>64</sup> "Chinese Pavilion of Fine Arts," Panama-Pacific International Exposition, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.ppie100.org/event/chinese-pavilion-fine-arts/>.

<sup>65</sup> "The Great Depression and WWII Teacher Resources - American Memory Timeline- Classroom Presentation- Teacher Resources," Library of Congress, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/>.

Thursday,” because of the death of two strikers and 64 injured people, and this continued with a four day strike in the Bay Area. By mid-decade, there were more than a hundred thousands of Americans that moved from the drought area to California, joining the migrant farm labor, even that these workers were already facing massive unemployment and low wages. Thanks to the President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, this helped the bad situation, and helped not only by funding new public works projects, but also regional development of bridges or power plants. When the decade ended, there was the threatening start of a war in the close future, and the Golden Gate International Exposition took place in San Francisco. The hard times were getting to its end when the World War II was getting closer.<sup>66</sup>

Initially Chinese Americans wanted to fulfil their dreams, and one day come back home to use their native language and work in Chinese medicine, however this was only their dream. A lot of factors, such as this worldwide depression of 1930s, the Sino-Japanese war happening in China (discussed later on) or becoming accustomed in America, persuaded them to stay in California. This change of acculturation can be depicted in movies of Hollywood, where Chinese American actors shot movies.<sup>67</sup>

### 2.7.1 The Golden Gate International Exposition

In 1939, San Francisco held another international fair, called the Golden Gate International Exposition, celebrating the city’s two new bridges: The San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. “The 800-foot statue of Pacifica personified the theme of the Fair, emphasizing unity between Pacific nations. But the dominating feature of the Island was the 400-foot Tower of the Sun, which competed in stature with the towers of the Bay Bridge nearby.”<sup>68</sup> There were garden courts that represented California’s mild weather, amusement zone, or the Chinese Village Gateway.

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<sup>66</sup> "Depression Era: 1930s: Depression," Depression Era: 1930s: Depression- Picture This, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://picturethis.museumca.org/timeline/depression-era-1930s/depression/info>.

"The Great Depression, 1929-1939," Calisphere, accessed April 28, 2017, <https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/t6/great-depression/>.

<sup>67</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 98.

<sup>68</sup> Jack Daley, "Golden Gate International Exposition 1939-1940," GGIE 1939 -1940, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.postcard.org/ggie01.htm>.



On the last day, every light was switched off, but only the illumination over the Tower of Sun stayed, so it could never be said that the Sun went out over San Francisco.<sup>69</sup>

## 2.8 The Second Sino-Japanese war

In the beginning of 1930s, Japan had the idea that they need to liberate China from the occupying European countries. In China, the so-called “the War of Resistance to Japan”, the conflict started already in 1931, by a Japanese incident in Manchuria (Northeast China). After occupying this area, Japanese proclaimed Manchuria as a state, and all of the Chinese, who lived there, became Manchurians. Later on, in 1937, Japan had the idea to liberate all Asia under one federation, so started to occupy more territories in China, and wanted to continue further South. In July 1937, the war officially started, because of the conflict between China and Japan over the occupied territory of Northeast China. Japan practiced an aggressive policy with the aim to create a better Asia. This caused serious threats to European and U.S. economic influences and interests. China did not have sufficient resources during the war, they received economic support from United States and the Soviet Union. When the Second Sino-Japanese War started, the United States imposed economic sanctions to the Japanese. In 1940, Japan meanwhile signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy. In 1941, Japan occupied French Indochina, leaving the United States out of the war. However, this did not last for long, because Japan had imperial goals in the Pacific as well, and this led untimely to a conflict with the United States. “The United States responded by imposing an oil ban which would suffocate Japan’s economy. For this reason, Japan strategized on how to remove the U.S. from the Pacific region so as to control the whole of Southeast Asia.”<sup>70</sup> This conflict led to the bomb attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 1941, and China became ally with the United States. Because of this fact, the Second Sino-Japanese War became World War II, and China declared war on Italy and Germany as well. Japan answered by attacking Hong Kong and destroying the aircrafts of Allied forces. After that, Britain together with the United States offered China financial support and set up their military air bases in the mainland of China.

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<sup>69</sup> Jack Daley, "Golden Gate International Exposition 1939-1940," GGIE 1939 -1940, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://www.postcard.org/ggie01.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> "Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945) Summary & Facts," Totally History Second SinoJapanese War Comments, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://totallyhistory.com/second-sino-japanese-war/>.

Nevertheless Japan was getting unstoppable by sinking Britain's two biggest warships in Singapore during an air attack, and China's military forces were getting weaker until April 1945. The Japanese were surprised by a successful Chinese offensive in August 1945, after that the Japanese had a lot of consistent victories. In August 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs over Japanese Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union continued the victories by attacking the Japanese in Manchuria, even that the Japanese Emperor Hirohito officially surrendered, the Soviet Union was able to completely destroy the Japanese army within two weeks. The war ended on September 9, 1945 after the capitulation of Japan to China and Allied forces by signing the capitulation in the United States Missouri battleship. This war played a big role in the Communist war against the Nationalist troops, when in 1949 the Communist Party won.<sup>71</sup>

For more than two years, the United States wanted to avoid the war. However, because Japanese attacked the U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbor, the United States did not have another choice but join the war. During that time, in the United States the depression was finally cured by the mobilizing of the world economy. This was thanks to millions of men and women, who joined the armed forces or went to work in well paid defense jobs. Somehow, the Second World War affected the United States deeply.<sup>72</sup> During the war, California changed the government to create a major manufacturing economy. Men and women from different ethnicities worked to support the wartime effort that the United States helped as Chinese Allies.<sup>73</sup>

It was not until 1943, during World War II, in which China was a U.S. ally against Japan, that the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act was signed by Congress granting Chinese naturalization.<sup>74</sup> This act served to "authorize for a limited period of time the admission

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<sup>71</sup> Ivana Bakešová, *Čína ve XX. století* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2001), 59-67.

"Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945) Summary & Facts," Totally History Second SinoJapanese War Comments, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://totallyhistory.com/second-sino-japanese-war/>.

<sup>72</sup> "The Great Depression and WWII Teacher Resources - American Memory Timeline- Classroom Presentation- Teacher Resources," Library of Congress, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/>.

<sup>73</sup> "Postwar Era, Suburbanization," California History: California State University Long Beach, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://calihist.weebly.com/postwar-era-suburbanization.html>.

<sup>74</sup> "History of San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," accessed March 9, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/index.html>.

into the United States of certain European displaced persons for permanent residence and for other purposes.”<sup>75</sup>

By the 1940s, an era of Chinese history in the United States was coming to an end, thanks to the involvement of America in the World War II. This change helped the position of Chinese in the society, and all the ethnic and minority groups as well. Nevertheless, there were still some sojourners who longed to return to China, and actually they did. On the other hand, since early 1895, there were some Chinese Americans in California who wanted to stay there and form their own community.<sup>76</sup>

The anti-Chinese attitude weakened when World War II started. This was caused by the connection of China with the Grand Alliance in the war. Even after the war the American attitude towards Chinese and China became more positive. Congress faced a big pressure now, to abolish many of the exclusion acts, which for many years did not give the Chinese civil rights or legal protection. In 1943 the Immigration Act of 1943 was passed by Congress (or the Magnuson Act). This act abolished all of the exclusion acts against the Chinese immigrants and granted them in the United States to apply for naturalization and allowed to immigrate 105 Chinese per year as well. More Chinese scholars were able to go to the United States for the purpose of teaching in the States.<sup>77</sup>

The immigration service and the federal courts were monitoring the immigrants carefully. According to the author, perhaps the most bizarre case of Chinese immigration was that of Mock Kee Song. Based on his American citizenship he made at least five round trips between the United States and China. During his trips he brought to the United States altogether five children, all of them were sons. After he wanted to make his sixth trip, the immigration service proclaimed that he was not American citizen, and in 1938 federal court took care of his deportation to China. Moreover it is hard to say how many paper sons and illegal immigrants entered California. Records from the official documents of United States immigration show that between 1883 and 1943 almost 95,000 Chinese entered the country - that is about 1,500 Chinese immigrants per year. Many of these immigrants were

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<sup>75</sup> "Displaced Person's Act of 1948 San Francisco Chinatown - The Largest Chinatown Outside of Asia," accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/1948displacedpersonsact.htm>.

<sup>76</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 98.

<sup>77</sup> "Chinese Immigrants," Immigration to the United States, accessed March 04, 2017, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/425-chinese-immigrants.html>.

former residents returning from China and many of those came for several times. “Admissions of Chinese were quite uneven; in the 1890s, about 15,000 came; in the next decade, almost 20,000; in the 1910s, nearly 21,000; in the 1920s, over 30,000; and in the 1930s, fewer than 6,000.”<sup>78</sup> The 1924 immigration law really affected Chinese immigration, because until the World War II there were not as many as of 2,000 Chinese entries per year. These numbers show that the Chinese exclusion was never total. However the steady decline of Chinese immigration to the United States is obvious. The 1924 immigration law made Chinese immigrants impossible to bring to the United States their wives. However from 1906 to 1924 there were in average 150 such women legally admitted, from 1924 to 1930 none of them were admitted. This is because of the fact that a 1930 act permitted to enter women who were married before May 1924.<sup>79</sup>

Since the early Chinese immigration to the United States until the 1940s, the majority of the immigrants were older men of the average age of 42, or even of 50 to 54 years old. This was a heavily male-dominated culture and it still was discriminated, segregated and Chinese were highly culturally different from Americans. All of these facts led to slow acculturation of the community. The Chinese were considered as a sojourner society since the 1880s. This period saw continual changes, Chinese became large-city urban like other foreign communities. Even though Chinese liked better to live in rural and small towns, they moved to large cities such as San Francisco, Sacramento or Los Angeles until the 1940s. The transfer to larger cities caused a reduction of the percentage of Chinese that lived in California or in the West in general even though there was the largest Chinese population in California in every census except of the period of 1920. In the nineteenth century the Chinese population went down slowly – in 1860 it was 9.2 of the population, in 1880 8.7 percent, in 1900 3.1 percent and by 1940 Chinese population sank into .6 of 1 percent.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 96.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 67-70.

## 2.9 Communist China and Its Impact on California's Chinese Community

Between 1946 and 1949, the Third Civil War took place in China. This war was between two political parties – the Communists (under the command of Mao Zedong) and Nationalists (under Chiang Kai-shek). Until September 1947, the war was advantageous for the Nationalists, who gained a lot of cities held by the Communists. They did not suffer so much about it, evacuated their population, moved to a different area, and after some time won again their cities. It was after the defeat of Nationalist troops in Manchuria, in September 1947, that the Communists took over the control, and started to win step by step in several battles, pushing the Nationalists to the South. Finally, in January 1949, the Nationalist's general Chiang Kai-shek proclaimed peace. The Communists agreed, and had several requirements acceptable for the Nationalists as a Party, but not for Chiang Kai-shek. That is why he gave up his command, and moved back to his native province in the South of China, then to Taiwan, where he started a new military base, because he wanted to win China again. In October 1949, Mao Zedong officially declared People's Republic of China, with the capital city of Beijing. The Communist rule began.<sup>81</sup>

After the Second World War, California launched thousands of housing projects in order to welcome back young soldiers from the war, and wished to return to normal life again. Between 1945 and 1949, “many parts of California reinvented itself once more to become a suburban town offering certain veterans the opportunity to fulfill their dreams of creating a picturesque family lifestyle.”<sup>82</sup> Especially San Fernando Valley became a real suburban area with housing, swimming pools, boulevards, and shopping centers. Newlyweds were prepared to start a family all throughout Southern California. Even the life changed after the war, when women were supposed to finish working in manufacturing jobs, and stay in the house to take care of the children while men went to work. However, this new suburban lifestyle was only for the White-Americans, Chinese and other immigrants were not able to live here, showing again a kind of segregation. This led to a utopian society among white Americans. After all, all of this new suburban living reflected the ideals, longing for peace and prosperity of the Americans. Moreover these utopian

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<sup>81</sup> Ivana Bakešová, *Čína ve XX. století* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2001), 102-111.

suburbs had Chinese restaurants, take out became very popular. It is part of the American fabric.<sup>83</sup> However, there were new acts that helped bring immigrants and their families together in America. The War Brides Act of 1945 and the G.I. Fiancées Act of 1946 permitted wives and children of veterans to go to the United States. The number of Chinese immigrants rapidly went up. Another law, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, allowed to Chinese women to come to the United States.<sup>84</sup> Because of the war situation between two political parties happening in China, Chinese women reacted to the new released Acts and moved to California to start living as a family again with their man, who already worked in California for several years. Thanks to these acts, they could be a family again.

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<sup>82</sup> "Postwar Era, Suburbanization," California History: California State University Long Beach, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://calihist.weebly.com/postwar-era-suburbanization.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> "Chinese Immigrants," Immigration to the United States, accessed March 04, 2017, <http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/425-chinese-immigrants.html>.

## CONCLUSION

From 1849 to 1949, Chinese immigrants to the United States were repeatedly perceived differently by white Americans. Firstly, they were received well, having jobs and earning money. Because of this fact, a large amount of new Chinese immigrants came to California due to earning a lot of money and better place for living. They found jobs in gold mining, building railroads, agricultural and factory work, and especially opening Chinese restaurants and laundry services. In order to support their families back in China, they took any jobs they were offered. Chinese immigrants escaped from their native country, where a war with European countries was happening. In 1882, this huge immigration wave resulted in the signing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which limited future immigration to the United States. Chinese faced ethnic discrimination and were pushed to the fringes of American society. However, they avoided many restrictions and immigrated to California anyway, even illegally.

Despite several acts limiting Chinese immigration, and despite almost constant racial and ethnic discrimination, Chinese living in California worked hard and somehow survived. It was not until the Second World War that Americans started to like Chinese immigrants, because the United States and China were allies in the war against Japan. The United States then accepted naturalization for Chinese immigrants. Finally, after a century of living in California as second-class citizens, Chinese immigrants could truly and officially call California home.

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