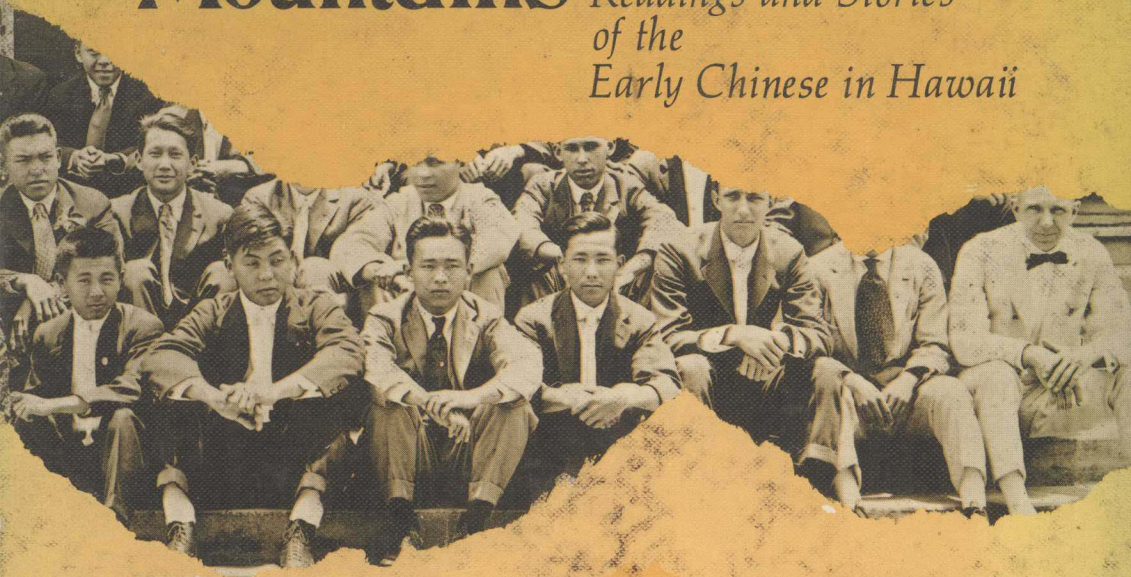
The Sandalwood Mountains

Readings and Stories of the Early Chinese in Hawaii



Compiled and edited by *Tin-Yuke Char*

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The University Press of Hawaii
Honolulu

Manufactured in the United States of America

First printing 1975
Second printing 1976

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Char, Tin-Yuke, comp.
The Sandalwood Mountains.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Chinese in Hawaii—History—Sources. I. Title.
DU624.7.C5C45 919.69'06'951 74-76375
ISBN 0-8248-0305-1

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檀香山先輩華人史

謝廷玉編著

To Wai Jane,
my wife,
who assisted me in
research and writing

Preface

With increasing interest in ethnic history, there is need for more pertinent and provocative materials on the various groups that make up the broad spectrum of America's people. One aspect of this vast subject is that of the Chinese in the Hawaiian Islands. In order to initiate a comprehensive approach to this subject, a variety of readings were selected and compiled, many of which are not easily available. Included are excerpts of printed articles, extractions from books, government documents, and a few news stories, each preceded by interpretative comments.

The readings were chosen principally from primary or older sources. A broad sweep of writings about the immigration period up to World War II was made before selection. The selection was made from the point of view of historical perspective. Some describe the experiences of the community into which the Chinese were thrust. Some lighter stories have been added for atmosphere rather than for their objectivity.

To broaden the scope of historical records, it is currently being suggested that oral histories of the immigrant generation or their earliest descendants be tape-recorded. Such oral histories, documented, are not yet available to complete the ethno-cultural picture of the Chinese in Hawaii. An editorial in *The Sunday Advertiser* expresses the need for such local history.*

> Have some of Hawaii's non-haole [i.e., non-Caucasian] racial groups dealt themselves out of meaningful future identity by not taking enough interest in their history?
>
> The question comes up in relation to a story last week by *Advertiser* writer Tom Kaser telling of the work of a historian

* "Completing Hawaii History," *The Sunday Advertiser* (Honolulu), 18 October 1970.

and a retired speech professor in collecting oral history interviews with significant people, both well-known and unknown.

These important efforts have been under way for a number of years. They deserve increased support.

It is very much a race with time to gather the impressions of older people involved in significant events or important periods of Hawaii's history. Bits of meaningful, unrecorded history die or fade from memory every year.

The oral history situation is part of a larger point about Hawaii's history—that it is quite incomplete in racial terms.

It is natural that the early writing of history of Hawaii was by haoles for haoles; some of it is very good from that viewpoint.

Still, as one authority points out, "Histories are generally the history of the power elite. And historians, like doctors, bury their mistakes."

In Hawaii's case it might have been more omission or preoccupation; but whatever the case, the Islands' history is said to need more multi-racial perspective both in terms of material available and those who present it.

This is of special importance here, of course, since our history is one of ethnic groups.

Various departments at the University of Hawaii and the Bishop Museum have been working to collect historical source material from racial groups.

But what's needed is a greater degree of private citizen awareness of the value of historical materials and viewpoints to the writing of future histories.

Various ethnic civic groups, for example, might do well to set up historical committees.

One aim would be to cooperate with University programs in seeking meaningful historical materials that might otherwise be lost. Fortunately, such programs are already under way in the labor unions.

History seems somewhat out of style with activist American youths these days.

But even in that context Hawaii may be something of an exception: many local youths appear increasingly interested in the Islands' racial history. Ethnic studies are a popular topic at the University, for example.

> Some of these youths, with their unique perspective and chance to talk with older immigrant family members, may be our historians of tomorrow.
>
> But for now it will take an active interest from all citizens to insure that the records all historians work with are as complete and representative as possible.

This work is meant to fulfill some of the historical background necessary to an understanding of the Chinese in Hawaii and thus to provide a basis for a meaningful oral history program of one of Hawaii's ethnic groups.

The first Hawaii-China contacts occurred soon after the discovery of Hawaii by Captain James Cook on 18 January 1778. A few Chinese adventurers—seamen, artisans, and traders on European and American vessels—stopped in the islands during the early period 1788 to 1852. Some stayed and established themselves in the islands. From 1852 on there was an influx of workers for the sugar plantations. Coffee, rice, and pineapple plantations also welcomed agricultural laborers. They were needed for a greatly expanding economy, and their immigration was actively solicited by government and planters. The migrants' original goal of returning home was often laid aside because of intermarriage with native Hawaiians or because of a liking for the way of life in Hawaii or because of news of turmoil in the homeland. Immigrant Chinese and their families lived side by side with people of many racial origins, absorbing some of their traditions as well as maintaining the customs brought from China. By World War II, the approximate cut-off point for the selections included here, many Chinese had already moved into the mainstream of American life. It is this story that I wish to document.

In this book there are many variations in the English spelling or romanization of Chinese words. They vary according to individual preferences, dialectal usages, and methods of romanization. A modified Wade-Giles system was used in some instances. Romanization of Cantonese dialects follows no consistent system. The many writers of the different selections in this book used what they thought were the best transliterations. I have referred constantly to the classical *Chinese Dictionary of Words and Phrases* (*Tz'u-Yuan*) and Dr. Lin Yutang's *Chinese-English Dictionary of Modern Usage* (*Tang-Tai Han-Ying Tz'u-Tien*) to verify meaning and usage.

For a ready reference to other data, see *The Chinese in Hawaii,* an annotated bibliography compiled by Dr. Nancy Foon Young, published with the support of the Hawaii Chinese History Center and by the Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawaii, 1973.

Acknowledgments

The editor is grateful to the Hawaii Chinese History Center, a community organization that participated by securing support from the following financial sponsors:

Chung Kun-Ai Foundation
Louise and Y. T. Lum Foundation
Chun Hoon and Lee Oi Chun-Hoon Memorial Fund
Mr. and Mrs. Ellery J. Chun
See-Yick Char and Chong-Fo Char Memorial Fund
Mr. and Mrs. Leong Hop Loui
Arthur Y. Wong and Margaret Au Wong

The library and archives staffs at the University of Hawaii (Hamilton and Sinclair Libraries), Archives of Hawaii, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society and Hawaiian Historical Society Libraries, Hawaii Bureau of Conveyances, Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Library, Hawaii Tax Map Division, and Hawaii State Library System have been helpful in many ways.

Chinese calligraphy is by Mrs. Chau-mun Lau, Asia Collection, University of Hawaii.

I am very appreciative of the skillful assistance from the editorial and production staff of The University Press of Hawaii. Dr. Bernhard L. Hormann, retired Professor of Sociology, University of Hawaii, read the preliminary draft and gave encouragement together with extensive and helpful suggestions as to contents and interpretations.

Permission and approval, where necessary, have been received for the use of other authors' works, for which I acknowledge my indebtedness.

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IMPERIAL CHINA'S POLICY OF SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION

A study of the history of the early Chinese immigration into Hawaii and other overseas areas begins with China's political and social climate in the nineteenth century and the Imperial Government's policy on emigration of her subject people. The Manchu Ch'ing rulers were then facing pressure from foreign powers to open up trade and diplomatic relations and to permit Chinese emigrants to be recruited in large groups for Western colonies.[1]

At this time, China's attitude in foreign relations was one of self-styled cultural superiority, of egocentrism with little interest in territorial occupation and economic exploitation of neighboring "tributary states." China was the Middle Kingdom ("Chung Kuo") surrounded by "barbaric, culturally inferior" neighbors. Emperor Ch'ien Lung's mandates in 1793 were in keeping with this viewpoint of cultural superiority and self-sufficiency.

In 1793 a British mission headed by Earl Macartney reached Peking. The Chinese considered this a "tribute-bearing" mission. They received the foreign visitors with utmost courtesy; the ceremony of the kowtow was waived in deference to Earl Macartney's objections. The Emperor granted an audience at his summer resort in Jehol, outside Peking.[2]

As a result of the mission, the Chinese Emperor prepared a message to his British counterpart.*

You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our

* Harley Farnsworth MacNair, "Ch'ien Lung's Mandates to King George III, 1793," in *Modern Chinese History: Selected Readings* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933), pp. 2–3.

civilisation, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial. Your Envoy has crossed the seas and paid his respects at my Court on the anniversary of my birthday. To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce.

I have perused your memorial: the earnest terms in which it is couched reveal a respectful humility on your part, which is highly praiseworthy. In consideration of the fact that your Ambassador and his deputy have come a long way with your memorial and tribute, I have shown them high favour and have allowed them to be introduced into my presence. To manifest my indulgence, I have entertained them at a banquet and made them numerous gifts. I have also caused presents to be forwarded to the Naval Commander and six hundred of his officers and men, although they did not come to Peking, so that they too may share in my all-embracing kindness.

As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty and cannot possibly be entertained. It is true that Europeans in the service of the dynasty have been permitted to live at Peking, but they are compelled to adopt Chinese dress, they are strictly confined to their own precincts and are never permitted to return home. You are presumably familiar with our dynastic regulations. Your proposed Envoy to my Court could not be placed in a position similar to that of European officials in Peking who are forbidden to leave China, nor could he, on the other hand, be allowed liberty of movement and the privilege of corresponding with his own country; so that you would gain nothing by his residence in our midst.

Moreover, Our Celestial dynasty possesses vast territories, and tribute missions from the dependencies are provided for by the Department for Tributary States, which ministers to their wants and exercises strict control over their movements. It would be quite impossible to leave them to their own devices.

MANIFEST DESTINY MEETS THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

In 1971 President Richard M. Nixon made his historic trip to Peking to normalize relations with the People's Republic of China. This event brought forth an article about another kind of exchange between an American president and the Emperor of China.

Emperor Ch'ien Lung's edict in the previous selection can be