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CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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# Introduction

The Chinese have been known for revering education. They have also demonstrated a strong desire to maintain their cultural heritage and ancestral bonds. The articles in this 2000 edition of *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* shed light on both the successes and difficulties of the Chinese in pursuing education and understanding their heritage.

In “Ethnic Chinese: The Past in Their Future,” Wang Gungwu provides a thought-provoking, global perspective on the overseas Chinese and their oft-expressed need to know their history. He rejects the notion that overseas Chinese have only two alternatives: to identify with Chinese history or to adopt the histories of the nations in which they are living. Wang asserts that there are two additional choices, each preferable to the original alternatives. First, he argues that overseas Chinese can transcend national boundaries by embracing a common human history, an approach that entails looking beyond ethnicity or nationality and seeing themselves as contributing to human progress. Wang’s second new alternative focuses on individualized, personal histories. Rather than seeing history only from the standpoint of being part of a group, a person can select parts of history that have special meaning to him or her.

May Wong participated in the 1998 “In Search of Roots” program, sponsored by the Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco in conjunction with the Chinese Historical Society of America. In her sensitively written piece, “My Journey: In Search of Roots,” she describes her own transformation from being a child in Napa, California, where she tried to ignore the fact that she was Chinese, to being a young woman in the Roots program on a quest to gain accurate information on her family’s history. She traces her search, which took her to the National Archives, then to China, and finally to her parents’ own memories.

Him Mark Lai’s “Retention of the Chinese Heritage: Chinese Schools in America Before World War II” meticulously details the evolution of Chinese schools from 1874 to the mid-1940s. The first Chinese-language school for Chinese children was in Hartford, Connecticut, but San Francisco eventually took the lead with the greatest number of Chinese schools and the largest enrollment on the mainland United

States before World War II. Lai discusses those schools but also focuses on the large number of Chinese schools in the territory of Hawai‘i. Throughout his article, Lai provides the historical context in which the politics and policies of the Chinese and United States governments—and the sentiments of Chinese American organizations—impinged on the curriculum offered in the Chinese schools.

Also included in this issue is Him Mark Lai and Ellen Yeung’s translation of “The Report Transmitting the Register of Schools of Overseas Chinese in North America to the Ministry of Education, Second Year of the Xuantong Reign Era [1910],” by Liang Qinggui, the imperial commissioner sent by the Qing government to promote Chinese education among Chinese in North America in the early twentieth century. Liang’s mission of encouraging Chinese in America to establish modern schools is discussed in some detail in Him Mark Lai’s article in this volume. Many of the principles that Liang spelled out in his report were continued in the policy of later Chinese governments toward education of Chinese abroad.

In “Excluded, Segregated, and Forgotten: A Historical View of the Discrimination Against Chinese Americans in Public Schools,” reprinted from the *Asian Law Journal*, Joyce Kuo examines the history and laws that affected Chinese American students in public schools in the United States. She concludes that Chinese Americans suffered from extraordinary racial hostility in education but did take much-needed steps to fight against that discrimination. Their community action and litigation through the courts, which required a great deal of patience and perseverance, took almost a century to bear fruit.

In two companion pieces—“The Wing Luke Asian Museum: Gathering Asian American Stories,” by Ron Chew, and “The San Diego Chinese Historical Museum,” by Murray K. Lee with Jennifer Fukuhara-Good and Alexander Chuang—we learn about the growth of two museums designed to maintain and perpetuate cultural heritage. The Wing Luke Asian Museum, in Seattle, has grown from a museum without any paid staff in 1967 to a community-based institution with twenty-one staff members and seventy-five volunteers today. One of the unique features of the Wing Luke is its pan-Asian American focus, in which



exhibits and programs draw on the histories of Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and other South Asian experiences in the United States. The Wing Luke Museum also relies very heavily on community involvement in its work.

The San Diego Chinese Historical Museum was dedicated in 1996 after considerable fundraising and negotiations with the city, community groups, and individuals. The Museum is

housed in a building formerly used as a church and dormitory by Chinese Americans in San Diego. Built in the California Mission Revival style, the building was moved to its present location shortly before the Museum's dedication. This article describes the numerous successes of the Museum as well as the challenges it faces in the future.

Chinese transliterations are consistent within each essay but not throughout the publication.

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# Ethnic Chinese

## The Past in Their Future

Wang Gungwu

I have had the privilege of attending many conferences on the Chinese overseas.<sup>1</sup> This is my saddest. Since we met in Hong Kong at the end of 1994, there has been a turnaround in the economic fortunes of much of the region. Most of those affected have become understandably more subdued. But nothing prepared us for the tragedy that befell those of Chinese descent in Indonesia in May 1998. Perhaps we should not have been so surprised. By the end of 1997, there were signs that the Indonesian economy was coming apart. Early in 1998, many Indonesians were talking about a return to the anarchic conditions of 1965. The fall in value of the rupiah had become most alarming. Fears of hyperinflation were matched by growing shortages in food and medicines. Hundreds of thousands in the urban centers had lost their livelihoods. There was widespread feeling that the country was on the eve of major change. Then came May 1998, and in three days—with four students killed and demonstrators on the streets of Jakarta, Solo, Medan, Surabaya, Palembang, and other cities—there was a complete breakdown of order. This led to the burning, looting, killing, and rape of citizens, largely those of Chinese descent.

There will be a special session during the conference on this subject, so I shall not dwell on the Indonesian tragedy.<sup>2</sup> Suffice it to say that many Chinese Indonesians found themselves reliving the past, with its fires, bodies on the streets, and their trading goods being carted away. There were, however, at least two main differences from earlier events of this kind. This time, all the Chinese victims were citizens of Indonesia, and this time, some of their wives and daughters were raped. This last was the worst kind of violence that could happen to any people, and it is something that has not happened to Chinese on this scale since the Rape of Nanking.<sup>3</sup> We all know how bitter the memory of that event has been for all Chinese. Chinese Indonesians were forced to relive the past from a different basic position and, as the families of traders, as an exceptional class of victims. This has led me to think about all the times that the ethnic Chinese in the region, and perhaps no less in other parts of the world as well, have had to ask the questions: Which parts of human history are they identifying their present with? Whose past should they choose if it is not one that they can determine for

themselves? Is it possible for them to reject history and start afresh to create their own past?

One should begin by asking what it means to identify one's present with history. It is interesting that the famous Indonesian novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer had a similar thought when he spoke in October 1998 on this subject. He did so in the context of the relaunch of his book *Hoakiau di Indonesia* (The Chinese in Indonesia), a collection of articles he wrote in 1959–1960 to tell the story of the evolution of anti-Chinese policies during the long period of Dutch rule. He had written it in response to the anti-Chinese legislation introduced under President Sukarno in 1959, namely, Government Regulation No. 10/1959, which Pramoedya called “the formal policy of racism.” The book he published was then banned. Although his speech in October was brief, he ended with a call for us to end such “crimes against humanity”—referring to the deadly riots in May—by turning to history. His article was called “Drawing on History for Harmony.”<sup>4</sup>

I have great sympathy with that. My study of the history of the Chinese overseas has led me to believe that confronting one's past is a necessary part of the community's growth and survival. That past began simply, when the Chinese were mostly merchants and sojourners. It became more complicated when they became *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) and were asked to become patriotic Chinese—that is, patriotic to the new republican nation of China that emerged after the fall of the imperial Qing dynasty in 1911.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the voices speaking to the Chinese have been much more confusing voices. Some demand that, as ethnic minorities in newly established nations, they choose between being loyal and submissive nationals of non-Chinese states (always living under conditions of trial and suspicion) or assert their Chineseness in one way or another. How they are to assert themselves is not clear. Should they concentrate on making money and not make waves? Or simply on studying hard to become scholars and scientists? Should they look to Chinese history or forget it altogether and admire only the history of their adopted nation?

Let me go back to the question of what it means for the Chinese—and here I mean not only those of Indonesia but



all ethnic Chinese living outside Chinese territories—to identify their future with history. If there is to be a past in their future, what kind of past should it be? The Chinese overseas have so far been limited largely to two choices: admiration for Chinese history, and acceptance of the national histories of the countries in which they have settled and made their homes. I shall outline the key features of these two choices and examine the tensions they have created due to having been presented on an exclusive, either/or basis.

The dominant ways of linking the past with one's future are:

1. That ethnic Chinese living overseas acknowledge the given or known history of their own community for as long as possible by reproducing what is approved and considered desirable. This can take many forms, the most notable of which are looking back at various aspects of Chinese history and identifying with selected parts of that history.
2. That they seek a new history together with their fellow citizens, mostly of different cultural and historical backgrounds, who are themselves also defining their own national pasts. This approach is more prevalent in some countries of Southeast Asia than in others. Most commonly, it is couched in terms of helping the efforts to rewrite their national histories.

Apart from these, however, there are two more inclusive ways of seeing the past that downplay both race and nation-state and that have become more feasible in modern times. The two are:

3. That ethnic Chinese reach out beyond all national borders to embrace a common human history, as befits an era of globalization.
4. That they weave their own personal pasts in an inclusive way. This is something that modern education and technology have begun to make possible.

Let me take each of these choices and consider how ethnic Chinese can use the past to better understand their present and their future. What I have to say is applicable to many parts of the world where Chinese have settled and found new homes for themselves. I concentrate here on those ethnic Chinese who choose to live in Southeast Asia, in terms of (a) those who draw on the past to plan their future and (b) those whose future has already been determined by the pasts with which they have identified.

#### THE COMMUNITY'S OWN PAST (A GIVEN OR KNOWN PAST)

The first two choices are made by the community, that is, the majority of ethnic Chinese living in a foreign country. It does not matter how large or small the community, in terms of

either numbers or percentages. Whether it is 75 percent of the overall population, as in Singapore, or less than 1 percent, as in many countries outside of Asia and North America,<sup>6</sup> the question is how members of the community use the past to express their aspirations and identity, both among themselves and with non-Chinese fellow citizens and the national authorities. In short, the stress is on each group's ability to get the majority of its members to identify more with the community and/or with the nation-state.

The most obvious way is something that the majority of Chinese abroad have easily understood and identified with for a long time. Through the community's given or known past, there has been the powerful tradition of reproducing as much as possible what each first-generation Chinese brought to the foreign land. He—and it was always a he until the end of the nineteenth century<sup>7</sup>—was obliged to turn to his family, village, or community past in China for the necessary signposts to dignify the new life he had to lead abroad. As traders or working men, the Chinese often traveled together and organized themselves through religious shrines and various forms of fraternal bodies. Most of those with little formal education had no clear sense of Chinese history as collective national memory. They did, however, know the names of their villages and were familiar with the family and clan practices of their respective districts. Theirs was primarily a male history devoted to the perpetuation of the patrilineal line. Some had families at home to whom they regularly sent remittances, even if they also set up local households of their own abroad. They normally observed the customary festivals and respected their dead comrades in strictly conventional ways. Most hoped to return to the familiar past they had left behind and troubled themselves little about local history except when that history impinged on their business activities and livelihood.

By the nineteenth century, the male society that they built up abroad was enriched by the few who were better educated. These brought with them the great stories about heroic men away from home. They had a minimal knowledge of the stories of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo Yanyi*) and the ideals of manhood on behalf of state and society found in that rich and extensive work. No less familiar were the stories of *Water Margin* (*Shuihu Zhuan*), also translated as *All Men Are Brothers* by Pearl Buck. No young male in China could have missed learning these stories in his youth.<sup>8</sup> Such tales not only offered stratagems for success and models of courage in adversity but also, directly or indirectly, set standards of moral values that were consonant with the traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, thus providing all the key features of approved behavior that Chinese immigrants would need in foreign lands.

Many of the long-term sojourners married local women and started new families, and some were led to settle. What past should their children have had? Wherever possible, the fathers educated their sons into Chinese ways that they

deemed essential to their community and also to their occupations. If they were wealthy, or had enough prospective students, they would engage tutors for the male children, teach them the Chinese language, and prepare them to live and work as Chinese. We have only fragmentary knowledge of what was taught, but it is clear that the basics of reading and writing led to an acquaintance with historical examples of proper behavior and with Chinese myths, legends, and even salient bits of dynastic history—not least with versions of the current dynasty and what it would demand of them should they ever go to China.

As transportation to China became much improved by the late nineteenth century, a few who were more privileged could go back, usually to their fathers' home towns or villages, to reinforce that education. For those who did not acquire enough skill in the Chinese language to learn through the original texts, there were the classic stories retold in the local languages that they grew up with, whether Vietnamese or Thai, Cambodian or Malay. In this way each generation tried to transmit parts of its mythologized history to the next, while also introducing Chinese literature to local readers and passing on some understanding of its traditional values. The volume of essays on *Literary Migrations*, edited by Claudine Salmon, provides ample evidence of the extent to which Chinese culture was maintained in this way.<sup>9</sup>

All this minimal knowledge of the Chinese past was to change with the rise of modern nationalism in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was especially true of areas where Western colonial powers openly discriminated against both indigenous peoples and the Chinese, but also wherever Chinese communities were large enough to support the establishment of modern schools based on models in Nationalist and Republican China. Tensions between China and the Powers, including Japan, helped to focus Chinese minds and pinpoint their newfound loyalty to the Chinese state. That it was no longer the hated Manchus who ruled the country but Chinese who hailed from familiar provinces, like Guangdong and Fujian, helped speed the process of national identification (whose aspirations most overseas Chinese, as *huaqiao*, could easily understand). The successive regime failures, whether under the warlords or the Nationalists, sharpened the commitment of some of those whose idealism led them to return to fight for China, while others were deterred from supporting what was corrupt and chaotic. But even as the divisions widened among various Chinese overseas who were prepared to be patriotic, the immersion in Chinese history remained significant for almost everyone who wanted to identify with it.

Over the first half of the twentieth century, more and more Chinese schools were established. These were invariably modeled on those in China and used textbooks published in China. During this period, the Chinese past was propagated with great effect. Here and there local authorities insisted on including bits of local history in the textbooks,

but the main thrust of Chinese history, biography, poetry, and romance dominated the lives of the communities abroad. This included the history of recent humiliations suffered by China, events that were deeply shared by Chinese abroad, especially those who had long been treated as inferiors because of China's weakness. The past was well integrated, however partially and selectively, into the consciousness of most overseas Chinese of at least two generations. The Chinese newspapers established abroad not only reproduced articles written in China but also began to carry locally written essays that projected visions of a stronger and more prosperous China of which every Chinese could be proud.<sup>10</sup>

There were, of course, contesting histories for those who were locally educated. For example, the royal histories of the Chakri dynasty in Thailand had to be taken into account by those Chinese who lived in Thailand, and the Chinese who had settled in Western colonies and who studied in colonial schools were expected to absorb a fair amount of the histories of Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States, if not a smattering of local indigenous history as well. But among those Chinese who felt deeply about the subject, these foreign histories were subordinate to the grander claims of China's new consciousness of its glorious past. The Chinese-educated, in particular, showed their admiration for the intellectuals and leaders, writers and artists in China who were both reviving the Chinese past and creating a new dynamic present to respond to modern needs. What was exhilarating to them was that the modernizing forces were able to reshape Chinese history. This could then help the next generation of young Chinese to discard what was obsolete and superstitious in their traditional past, while leading them to embrace what was progressive and scientific.

For some fifty years, most overseas Chinese could, if they wished to, contribute to the uplifting of China by scouring its great past for a new vision of China's future. The peak of this came with the Japanese invasion of China. Although most could do little when Southeast Asia itself was occupied by the Japanese, the record of overseas Chinese support for the national salvation movement was one that they could be proud of.<sup>11</sup> The Chinese past, whether modern or ancient, had thus become their own past. With this sense of history, their confidence in themselves was never greater.

It is well to note that this sense of the Chinese past and present was transmitted to children within the home by parents, relatives, and leaders of the community, then formalized and reinforced through school textbooks monitored by their teachers. Although we should not underestimate the strength of oral tradition in the transmission, it was formal schooling, particularly through highly politicized teachers, that became the main medium through which Chinese history sank deeply into minds of the young. In this way there was a reliving of a given or known past of one's own community through repeated telling. Added to other features of economic networking based on Chinese education, and the

social and cultural forces of genealogical identification with ancestral homes and districts, at least two generations of Chinese were able to reproduce what the community approved of and what it considered desirable for its future growth and development.

#### THE ADOPTED COUNTRY'S PAST ("OTHER PEOPLE'S" PAST)

The love of China's past has been seriously challenged in recent decades, most of all by the internal turmoil of the first three decades of the People's Republic of China, but also by the demands of local nationalisms and a changing, modernizing world. Ethnic Chinese everywhere have been expected to make different choices, the most immediate in many cases being whether or not to identify themselves with the new national pasts that were being constructed from local indigenous histories.

By the mid-1950s, it had become clear that immersion in the Chinese past had serious ramifications for those overseas Chinese who were so fascinated by China that they did not pay attention to the local indigenous past. This may have been understandable for temporary sojourners who had every intention of returning to China after a short stay in the region. But for those who were prepared to settle, the political and cultural reasons that induced them to give their full attention to the Chinese past often caused them to neglect local history completely. They had time only for local matters that directly affected their daily lives; the past that meant much to the local people was of little interest to them, and may even have been considered irrelevant.

When circumstances in the region changed radically—after the rise of local nationalisms, the withdrawal of colonial powers, and the communist victory on the Chinese mainland—the new states expected the Chinese who settled locally to identify with their national pasts. I have already mentioned Thailand, where, over time, the ethnic Chinese seem to have had little difficulty accepting Thai dynastic history as integral to their own history.<sup>12</sup> This has not been so straightforward for those who settled in the colonized territories. Colonial schools taught British, Dutch, French, or American national histories together with general histories of Europe. Where this was well done, it injected another view of the past among both local and Chinese students. As a result, the image of a triumphant Western civilization, together with a reviving Chinese civilization, combined to leave little room for local histories and even less respect for the past achievements of indigenous peoples.<sup>13</sup>

The source of such neglect of the indigenous past stems from a very important point in history. Although successful merchants may work closely with local political and economic elites in search of wealth and other benefits for their country, mere trading and narrow economic interests do not

lead to any identification with their past. It is entirely possible, as is obvious even today, that rich and powerful companies (like many multinational companies) that bring much wealth to a country can remain (and always be seen as) foreign, aloof, and alien. Economic investments alone, however much they contribute to a country's development, cannot make up for these investors' lack of political and cultural participation. True involvement in a country's history requires much more than wealth-making. It demands that the people concerned take on that history as their own.

This is the background of the state of confusion and indecision among most Chinese at the beginning of the nation-building era in Southeast Asia. Many Chinese hoped that economic activity and financial contributions would be enough to win the acceptance, if not the gratitude, of the local peoples. For those educated solely in Chinese schools, there had been virtually nothing to prepare them to understand how to approach the indigenous past. But even among those who had gone to colonial schools with the children of local elite and merchant classes, there were not many who paid attention to the parts of the local past that were especially meaningful to their local school friends. If anything, what they all shared was a common understanding of the European past, and perhaps a common resentment of European domination. But there was no opportunity to place what local peoples and overseas Chinese might have known about indigenous and Chinese histories into a perspective they could all draw on.

There were only two ways that ethnic Chinese could identify with local indigenous history. One was through common action during the course of national awakening, including siding with the anti-colonial movements led by the new generation of nationalists. The other was through education in the new national schools, in which the curriculum included a strong emphasis on identifying with the local past.

The first was especially significant. It happened in countries where there were violent rebellions against the departing colonial powers. We know of examples of such involvement in local politics in the Philippines at the turn of the century.<sup>14</sup> After 1945, we can point to some examples of ethnic Chinese who fought with, or actively assisted, Indonesian forces against the Dutch.<sup>15</sup> But when military action turned against the Chinese, such participation did not continue. Elsewhere, Malayan Chinese (including those of both Malaysia and Singapore) and the Chinese of French Indo-China found it difficult to separate their anti-colonial rhetoric and activities from the anti-imperialist slogans of the nationalist and communist movements in China itself. This was compounded by the fact that these powerful movements represented an international anti-capitalist force that claimed to be a major stage in the evolution of world history. Thus ethnic Chinese participation in the historic changes of the local anti-colonial and nationalist countries was uneven and varied considerably from time to time.



However, where there was active participation, the identification of ethnic Chinese with local history came more easily when it became clear that it was in their interest to do so. The best example of this was, of course, in Thailand, where there had not been colonial governments intervening in the relations between the Chinese and local peoples. But even where the colonial authorities did encourage Chinese separation from the locals, there were always some Chinese who were sufficiently integrated with their indigenous friends and neighbors to act together with them in times of trouble. Some examples can be found in Burma, Vietnam, and Cambodia, and they underline the fact that once overseas Chinese have consciously participated in the making of modern history for their country of adoption, they are ready to identify with that country's total history.<sup>16</sup> After acting together with local political and cultural organizations, they are likely to be both sympathetic to the ups and downs of the people's past lives and willing to share in their future.

For the rest of Southeast Asia, the Philippines had its present borders determined for it much earlier than did Malaysia and Indonesia, the other two countries of the Malay archipelago. Its consolidation by the Americans at the turn of the century gave it an historical focus that was greatly assisted by the valuable collection of documents edited by Emma Blair and James Robertson, completed in fifty-five volumes about ninety years ago.<sup>17</sup> That focus was easy to identify with, also because of the unitary foundations laid down by the powerful Catholic Church for some four hundred years. Most of the earlier Chinese communities in the country succeeded in finding their place in that environment. This ensured that the Chinese *mestizo* enjoyed recognition which, in turn, eased their acceptance in the newly independent country. Newer generations of Chinese immigrants met with greater difficulty because of Chinese nationalism and the application of American exclusion laws to the new colony, but there were, at least, clear precedents for accepting the Filipino past among even these Chinese.

The picture was more complicated, for quite different reasons, with countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Perhaps the most important single difficulty for ethnic Chinese was the fact that these countries were new and did not have a continuous history as distinct polities, with clear and firm boundaries, until the last half century. In the case of Indonesia, nation-building began with the revolutionary war of independence in the late 1940s, but the national borders were not finally settled until after the incorporation of West Irian in 1963 (if we consider East Timor, this came even later, in the 1970s).<sup>18</sup> For Malaysia, borders were finalized only in 1965, after the ejection of Singapore from the federation.<sup>19</sup> This was but a generation ago.

In both these countries, the second way of identifying with indigenous history was vital—that is, through education in national schools where the country's history is taught and learned together with the indigenous peoples them-

selves. This, of course, takes time—in some cases a generation or more. But when the national symbols are shared and internalized, ethnic Chinese can then address all issues in accord with local sentiment.

One distinct difference remains between the two countries, however. In Malaysia, ethnic Chinese participation beyond simple economic activities had been there from the start.<sup>20</sup> The British encouraged this, and most Chinese saw the importance of active involvement in political affairs. By so doing, Chinese shared Malaysia's brief history as a united country of thirteen federated states from the beginning. This sharing enabled the ethnic Chinese to look back on earlier periods of a more fragmented history with a large degree of recognition and pride. They could see their economic contributions as an inseparable part of the country's evolution. Thus, despite complaints against certain discriminatory policies, most Chinese seem willing to see their community's history intertwined with that of the country as a whole.

This has not been true of Indonesia. Some Chinese had supported Indonesian nationalists since the 1930s and 1940s, such as Lim Koen Hian and his colleagues of the Partai Tionghua Indonesia. Others fought with the nationalists during the revolutionary war, including those described by Pramodya Ananta Toer; among them were those who followed the national leaders into high office. By the beginning of the 1960s, most Chinese were prepared to see themselves as part of the Indonesian nation, including the leader of the Baperki, Siouw Giok Tjan.<sup>21</sup>

But the complex relations involving the governments of Indonesia, the People's Republic of China, and the Nationalists in Taiwan between 1949 and 1965 slowed down the process of participation. And then, after 1965, the policies of leaving Chinese largely out of all political and military office, along with the encouragement to confine themselves to economic activities, all hampered ethnic Chinese identification with the Indonesian past. It would be overly simple to say that this was one of the causes of their tragic experiences in 1998, but their lack of participation as full citizens certainly contributed to the ethnic Chinese being marginalized where the future of their country is concerned. This has made most of the ethnic Chinese there a people without a Chinese past—and with only an imperfect and incomplete local Indonesian past. This invites, in turn, the unfair accusation of a lack of commitment to the country. It might even push them back to a sojourning mentality again, to an unwelcome rootlessness.

The news from Indonesia must be discouraging to all those who care for the country's future. Perhaps the only bright note that has emerged from the post-Suharto period has been the news that ethnic Chinese are now determined to involve themselves in local affairs at all levels. If this is also translated into a deliberate acceptance of the Indonesian past and into joining their fellow citizens of different cultural and historical backgrounds in seeking to define that past, it may

not be too late for the ethnic Chinese to find a new place for themselves consonant with that of the Indonesian nation as a whole. But much will depend on how they are recognized as a legitimate *suku*-community in the country.<sup>22</sup>

I should add that, looking at the experience of the ethnic Chinese distributed around the world, Indonesia does seem to be an exceptional case. Elsewhere, again and again, Chinese communities have proved that they are willing to participate in local affairs when they have stayed long enough to understand the prevailing social dynamics. This has been true whenever there were opportunities to exercise their civic rights.

### A COMMON HUMAN PAST

The two choices I have described have created great tensions between ethnic Chinese and local communities, and even among the ethnic Chinese themselves, largely because they are choices that must be made in terms of exclusive categories that are invariably in contradiction with each other. But these two choices have also created difficulties because they have been perceived as acts involving whole communities.

I now turn to the two inclusive ways of seeing the past that have become more feasible in modern times—one among smaller groups, and the other largely by individuals. The first of these concerns groups of ethnic Chinese who seek to reach out beyond national borders to embrace a common human history, as befits an era of globalization. They have been open to educational and professional networks that emphasize a commitment to scientific progress and a common experience on the road to modern civilization. What this means is that, while everyone can identify with national history and/or one's own ethnic history, this does not preclude simultaneous loyalty to the history of human progress and to the hope that we can all become better than our forefathers. The assumption here is that all references to the past are not exclusive but can coexist. It helps, of course, if the problems of defining a national past are settled and national identity is secure. In particular, it is ideal when the ethnic Chinese communities are not in turmoil but have gained autonomy in their respective countries. In this way much of one's own national past can be taken for granted and attention can be given to a larger human future.<sup>23</sup>

I suspect that very few minority peoples in the world are in this happy position in their respective nation-states. Certainly, those in Southeast Asia at an early stage of nation-building have still to complete the primary task of shaping their identity and common destiny. It may seem premature to speak of their future in terms of the progress of mankind. Nevertheless, it would be shortsighted for countries to think always in narrow nationalist terms. It is in the enlightened self-interest of each country to encourage its talented people

to look beyond national borders and think in wider global terms. Southeast Asian nations, and their ethnic Chinese minorities, should be no less ready to do their part for modern development.

I suggest that there are at least two reasons why such a goal is consistent with enlightened national self-interest. First, the task of defining a national past that the dominant majority and the minorities can all share should ensure that a country's talents are more fully utilized. It has been shown that the varied talents of the ethnic Chinese can contribute significantly to human as well as national development. Such talents should not be wasted just because of their foreign origin. Instead, they should be more broadly harnessed, and the ventures of such ethnic Chinese toward the frontiers of knowledge and the acquisition of valuable rare skills systematically encouraged. Eventually, their achievements can be channeled toward advancing their adopted country's interests as well. The ethnic Chinese, loyal to their adopted countries everywhere, who have tapped the global sources of scientific and intellectual wealth have also been known to bring their contributions back to their respective countries. Such groups among the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia are no different. They can be loyal and simultaneously identify with the history of human progress. The benefits they can bring are not merely the economic wealth they can create but also the enriching human capital they can make available to their adopted countries at key stages of development.

Second, identifying with a larger human past does not contradict more specific loyalties to country or community. Those who have benefited from a modern education are capable of viewing the world on many levels. Thus while the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia might be asked to give greater priority to participation in national affairs than to their own communal concerns, there should also be considerable openness for those among them who are active in learning and working beyond the country's borders. Even if there is no official endorsement, many of them will seek other ways of responding to the challenges of modernization. These will include identifying with that part of world history that leads them to the mainstream of human progress. The reality is that globalization will make such an identification easier and more desirable for the ambitious and enterprising. If national governments fail to appreciate this, the risk of losing such talents because groups of ethnic Chinese prefer the larger human past to their narrower national pasts will become ever greater.

### PERSONAL CHOICE

I have moved away from ethnic communities to speak of smaller ethnic groups with shared intellectual and professional interests. Let me go further, to talk about personal choices. In the world of modern education and rapid com-

munications technology, it is now possible for individuals to weave their own personal pasts in an inclusive way. There are many ways this can be done. They can concentrate on their personal memories and be very flexible in choosing which of the pasts available to them to include in their own personalized pasts. Among ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, this could include bits of their cultural past as Chinese, including select parts of Chinese history, but also those parts of local national history that they can accept. It could extend to the histories of other countries and other continents, with the criterion for choosing each piece varying widely. For example, it could be primarily an aesthetic response to a particular feature of the human past, it could be wonderment at a scientific discovery or admiration of an act of unbelievable courage, it could even be the remarkable flowering of another country's national history. The point is that a personalized and inclusive past can be enlightening and liberating without threatening one's prior loyalties to community and nation-state.

This choice is not an easy one. It may even be tragic, especially if it is not understood by others. Because we are meeting in Manila, I am reminded of something that suggests how difficult it is to have a personalized past. About fifty years ago, I was told the story of a young Chinese-Filipino poet and artist named Homero Chiong Veloso. I never met him because he had cut his wrists and bled to death in the YMCA building before I arrived in Manila in 1950. I understood at the time that the poet did this to relieve himself of the need to adapt his memories to new realities, that he did it as a way of leaving a message about the pain of his private life being unendurable on the eve of great changes to his community and his country. It was a transitional period when, coming out of the Pacific War in 1945, new Filipino and Chinese nationalisms were challenging the identities of the peoples around him. I have never forgotten the story and still wonder sometimes what made him do that.<sup>24</sup> What was in his personal past that he could not face?

Traditionally, the people of China are not renowned for their reflective moods as individuals, and I believe this has also been true of the Chinese overseas. There is no great literature of remembering one's own past in autobiographies or memoirs. There is no tradition of getting up to tell an audience what one really felt about one's personal life, except when desperate for public redress and a chance to seek justice. More highly respected was a stoic silence about what one did, especially if one were successful. And it was wise not to bore people with an account of one's failures. From the few available writings about the personal past coming from the ethnic Chinese communities in the region over the past two hundred years, one cannot but feel that ethnic Chinese have carried this practice with them overseas.

This is changing, albeit slowly, as education opens up the literature of other people, especially through the power of the modern media.<sup>25</sup> All Chinese have been exposed for some

decades to people who are more open and who speak freely about their personal lives. That modernity not only stresses the worth of the individual and what is interesting about the unique features of each life, but has also brought in Freudian psychology to explain the universality of each individual's needs, the "I" in poetry and fiction which is far more penetrating and self-analytical than anything in the Chinese past. In addition, the freedom that is claimed in modern law, the protection of individual rights, and the myriad kinds of calls for democratic institutions have all helped to release the younger generation of Chinese from their inhibitions about their personal pasts.

This kind of personal release depends on the environment in which the ethnic Chinese live. In Southeast Asia, a general reticence has been reinforced by the suspicions and sensitivities of indigenous peoples and governments. And this has discouraged even modern ethnic Chinese from exploring their personal pasts in creative ways.

But times have changed. Communities and countries have to be more open. People as individuals can reach out. More ethnic Chinese want to choose their futures, and their choice of futures can be helped by knowing the various pasts available to them. And this leads me to link these pasts with their futures.

There is natural sentiment about the community's own Chinese past, and following the community's natural inclinations is both healthy and understandable. But it can be overdone. There can be too much of this past, so much so that the community depends on China for everything. The community then loses its ability to adapt, to learn on its own, to be creative and innovative under new and different conditions, like the rapidly changing conditions in each Southeast Asian country. If this happens, there is no autonomous future for the community. The danger is that it will become wholly passive and dependent, and increasingly alien in its adopted country.

It need not necessarily be so. A community can be independent in what it chooses from Chinese history and culture, which values are needed and how they can be improved. How to be modern as ethnic Chinese among non-Chinese cultures and peoples is a worthy challenge. If successful, it can demonstrate what such Chinese have to offer their adopted country, and what they have to contribute to the Chinese in China and elsewhere as well.

Of course, in the long run, learning and caring for the past of one's adopted country (that is, the past in each of the countries in Southeast Asia) is itself a natural historical process. If the process leads gradually, harmoniously, and voluntarily to assimilation, it is one to be welcomed, especially when the adopted country grows rich and strong in an atmosphere of equality and freedom. Ultimately, the community's own past will be integrated fully with the adopted country's past—and both Chinese and Southeast Asians could be enriched thereby.



In those societies that have found the desired balance between the individual and the society, there is room for personal autonomy. For the ethnic Chinese to enjoy that, they need to participate actively in all aspects of the life around them. Only by so doing can they determine where the limits are, and what they can do within those limits as well as what they can do to extend the limits. At each step, they will have to choose which bits of the past they want and need.

When I meet ethnic Chinese living in different historical conditions in various parts of the world, I am often struck by the number of them who have made their personal choices not like Homero Chiong Veloso when he decided to end it all, but more like Liem Koen Hian, Siouw Giok Tjan, and those described by Pramodya Ananta Toer who fought in the Indonesian revolution. Their motives today might be different, and their fates will certainly not be the same, but all of them are, in one way or another, better placed to choose their personal pasts to help them find their futures. Ethnic Chinese, not only in Southeast Asia, but everywhere, are likely to have more choices than any Chinese has had in the past. With new and better educational opportunities available to them, they should certainly do more for their futures than any of their predecessors could have.

#### NOTES

1. This is a revised version of the keynote lecture given at the Ethnic Chinese Conference held in Manila in November 1998.
2. Early accounts of what the Chinese experienced can be found in various essays collected in Geoff Forester and R. J. May, eds., *The Fall of Suharto* (Bathurst: Crawford House, 1998). For an assessment six months after the May 1998 riots, see Jamie Mackie, "Tackling 'The Chinese Problem,'" in Geoff Forester, ed., *Post-Suharto Indonesia: Renewal or Chaos?* (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999), 187–197. The Conference on Ethnic Chinese was organized by the International Society for the Study of the Chinese Overseas (ISSCO) and held in Manila on November 26–28, 1998.
3. On the sixtieth anniversary of the Rape of Nanking, Chinese scholars produced a large number of books that described the gruesome details of that event, notably the two volumes of pictures and documents edited by the Second National Archives and the Nanjing Municipality Archives, *Qin Hua Rijun Nanjing datusha tuji* [The Nanking massacre and the Japanese invasion of China], and *Nanjing datusha dang'an* [The Nanking massacre archives] (Jiangsu guji cubanshe, 1997). Another volume of documents (*shiliao*) edited by the Nanjing Library and a draft history (*shigao*), published by Jiangsu guji, is also noteworthy. In English, see James Yi, *The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs*, ed. Shi Young and Ron Dorfman (Chicago: Innovative Publishing Group, 1997), and Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). Chang's account has been further heightened by the publication of John Rabe's diaries, *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe (1882–1949)*, ed. Erwin Wickert, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Knopf, 1998).
4. Pramodya Ananta Toer (b. 1925) is famous for his novels, especially the Buru Quartet (*This Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps*, and *House of Glass*, all translated by Max Lane), which he wrote when he was a political prisoner (1965–1979). The new edition of his *Hoakiau di Indonesia* was published by Penerbit Garba Budaya in Jakarta. It was first published in 1960 in Jakarta, by Penerbit Bintang Press.
5. The significance in the application of the term "huaqiao" to the Chinese overseas is examined in my essays "The Origins of Hua-ch'iao," in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia* (St. Leonards, NSW: Asian Studies Association of Australia, with Allen & Unwin, new ed. 1992), 1–10, and "Patterns of Chinese Migration in Historical Perspective" and "Southeast Asian Huaqiao in Chinese History-Writing," in Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), 3–21 and 22–40.
6. Reliable figures for the numbers of ethnic Chinese are hard to get for Southeast Asia, except for Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei, where they are about 75, 28, and 15 percent of their respective populations. The other countries use nationality figures, and those still identifiable as Chinese range from 0.5 to 3 percent of the populations. The figures quoted of between 25 and 30 million Chinese in Southeast Asia, mostly originating from sources in China and Taiwan (and often repeated uncritically elsewhere), are no more than rough projections based on early pre-war census reports and later estimates. Figures for North America and Europe do not concern us here, but the numbers there are growing yearly and are more or less accurate; for careful estimates, see the chapters on various countries and regions in Lynn Pan, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).
7. In Southeast Asia, a small number of Chinese women did manage to leave China toward the end of the nineteenth century. For example, see Lim Joo Hock, "Chinese Female Immigration into the Straits Settlements, 1860–1901," *Journal of the South Seas Society* [Nanyang Hsueh-pao], vol. 22 (1967): 58–110. Also Joyce Ee, "Chinese Migration to Singapore, 1896–1941," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1961): 33–51. In most of North America and Australasia, female immigration was stopped before the end of the nineteenth century and not resumed until after the end of World War II; see Charles A. Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836–1888* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), 106–109, 215–277.
8. The two translations into English of these novels are *Water Margin*, trans. J. H. Jackson (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1963), 2 vols., and *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, trans. Moss Roberts (Berkeley: University of California Press and Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991).
9. Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia, Seventeenth–Twentieth Centuries* (Beijing: International Culture Publishing Corporation, 1987). Parts III and IV cover Mainland Southeast Asia and Insular Southeast Asia; of particular interest are the three essays by Claudine Salmon, 375–498. Many of the stories are also found in Vietnamese, Thai, and Cambodian, and their influence spread beyond the Chinese communities. Their wide availability in Malay is attested to by Salmon's 1981 bibliography, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography* (Paris: Editions de la Maison de l'Homme, 1981, Editions insulindiennes-Archipel, no. 3). For Thailand, see Craig Reynolds, "Tycoons and Warlords: Modern Thai Social Forma-

- tions and Chinese Historical Romance," in Anthony Reid, ed., *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (St. Leonards, NSW: Asian Studies Association of Australia, with Allen & Unwin, 1996), 115–147.
10. The experiences of Malaysia and Singapore illustrate the more complex issues of education and political loyalty in the region. The origins are clearly traced in Victor Purcell, *Problems of Chinese Education* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Truber, 1936); and Philip Loh Fook Seng, *Seeds of Separation: Educational Policy in Malaya, 1874–1940* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975). They are more systematically pursued after World War II by Tan Liok Ee, *The Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya, 1945–1961* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997). Three essays on later developments, by Sally Borthwick, Tan Liok Ee, and Sharon A. Carstens, respectively, are found in Jennifer Cushman and Wang Gungwu, eds., *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese Since World War II* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988), 35–59, 61–74, and 75–95.
  11. Wang Gungwu, "The Limits of Nanyang Chinese Nationalism, 1912–1937," in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia* (St. Leonards, NSW: Asian Studies Association of Australia, with Allen & Unwin, 1992), 142–158; Yoji Akashi, *The Nanyang Chinese National Salvation Movement, 1937–1941* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Center for East Asian Studies, 1970); and Stephen Leong Mun Yung, "Sources, Agencies and Manifestations of Overseas Chinese Nationalism in Malaya, 1937–1941" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1976).
  12. G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957).
  13. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1965, first published 1951); Douglas Murray, "Chinese Education in Southeast Asia," *The China Quarterly*, no. 20 (1964): 67–95; Francis Wong Hoy Kee, *Comparative Studies in Southeast Asian Education* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1971); Chai Hon Chan, *Education and Nation-Building in Plural Societies: The Malayan Experience* (Canberra: ANU Development Studies Centre, 1977).
  14. Antonio S. Tan, *The Chinese Mestizos and the Formation of the Filipino Nationality* (Manila: Asian Center, University of the Philippines Occasional Paper, 1983); Teresita Ang See and Go Bon Juan, *The Ethnic Chinese in the Philippine Revolution* (Manila: Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran, 1996); Isagani R. Medina, "Chinese Mestizos and the Ethnic Chinese in Cavite During the Philippines Revolution, 1896–1902," in *The Ethnic Chinese as Filipinos*, part 2, ed. Teresita Ang See, *Chinese Studies Journal*, vol. 7 (1997): 54–66.
  15. Li Xuemin and Huang Kunzhang, *Yinni huaqiao shi* [History of the Chinese in Indonesia] (Guangzhou: Guangdong Higher Education Publishers, 1987), chapter 7; also Twang Peck Yang, *The Chinese Business Elite in Indonesia and the Transition to Independence, 1940–1950* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1998).
  16. Assimilation through intermarriage in these countries occurred in similar ways to those in Thailand. This has enabled many Chinese to participate in local nationalist activities without being identified as Chinese, but detailed monograph studies to establish the extent of this phenomenon are lacking. For Cambodia, see W. E. Willmott, *The Chinese in Cambodia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1967), and his *The Political Structure of the Chinese Community in Cambodia* (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), which provides valuable background. Some general comments are found in Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* (see note 13 above) and Lynn Pan, *Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (see note 6).
  17. Emma H. Blair and James A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898* (Cleveland: Arthur Clarke, 1903–1907), 55 volumes.
  18. For the early period, see John O. Sutter, *Indonesianisasi: Politics in a Changing Economy, 1940–1955* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1959), 4 vols., and Merle C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2nd ed. 1993), parts V and VI.
  19. James Ongkili, *Nation-Building in Malaysia, 1946–1974* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985); Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1998).
  20. K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1965); Gordon Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2nd ed. 1970).
  21. For Lim Koen Hian (1896–1952) and Siauw Giok Tjan (1914–1981), see Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese, 1900–1977* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979). Pramodya Ananta Toer, in his *Hoakiau in Indonesia*, acknowledges Chinese support for Indonesian causes in his fifth letter (141–170), and mentions Injo Beng Hoat (or Goat, 1904–1962), editor of the daily newspaper *Keng Po*. Elsewhere, he praises the early contributions of Lie Kim Hok (1853–1912) to the Malay language. Biographical information about these men and others who were active in local affairs can be found in Leo Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese: Biographical Sketches* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 3rd ed. 1995).
  22. *Suku* is an abbreviation for *sukubangsa* and refers to an ethnic group that is part of a larger *bangsa*, or nation. I first discussed this issue in Wang Gungwu, "Are Indonesian Chinese Unique?: Some Observations," in J. A. C. Mackie, ed., *The Chinese in Indonesia* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1976), 199–210.
  23. For this and the following section, see Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, The 1997 Reischauer Lectures, forthcoming in 2000).
  24. Subsequent to this lecture, I learned that some of the art and poetry of Homero Chiong Veloso (d. 1950) has been recently published. I have so far not been able to obtain a copy of his work.
  25. Two recent examples of intimate writing about one's family or oneself in Southeast Asia are Lien Ying Chow, with Louis Kraar, *From Chinese Villager to Singapore Tycoon: My Life Story* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1992) and Hsuan Owyang, *The Barefoot Boy from Songwad: The Life of Chi Owyang* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1996). The records based on oral history collected by the Singapore National Archives are more revealing than the conventional Chinese biographical collections compiled this century in various parts of Southeast Asia. For examples of these records, see the work of Chan Kwok Bun and Claire Chiang See Ngoh, *Stepping Out: The Making of Chinese Entrepreneurs* (Singapore: Centre for Advanced Studies, National University of Singapore and Prentice Hall, 1994).

# Retention of the Chinese Heritage

## Chinese Schools in America Before World War II

Him Mark Lai

When Chinese immigrants established communities and began raising families in America, many still maintained ties, personal and otherwise, with individuals and groups in their former homeland. They also tended to continue to speak the language and to practice Chinese traditions and customs. As they raised families, they were concerned that their progeny retain this heritage. Chinese schools came into being to fulfill at least part of this need, especially with respect to the language. This essay covers the development of such schools during the Exclusion period and how it was shaped by different factors: racial discrimination in American society, nationalism from China, and adoption of Western culture by Chinese American youth. The major focus is on the Chinese communities of San Francisco and Honolulu, which became the principal centers for Chinese-language education on the United States mainland and the Hawai'ian Islands, respectively, during this period.

### PIONEERING EFFORTS

#### *United States Mainland*

Chinese communities began springing up on the U.S. mainland and the Hawai'ian Islands after the mid-nineteenth century. During this period the main preoccupation of Chinese immigrants was to adjust to and survive in the new environment. Thus they were most interested in acquiring skills such as an adequate grasp of the English language to help them in business and work and in social transactions.<sup>1</sup> As for the small number of Chinese children at the time, a few families that had the means would send their offspring to China for a Chinese education. The majority who stayed in the United States either learned Chinese from their parents, from private tutors hired by their parents, or not at all.

Formally established Chinese-language schools for Chinese children did not appear until some years elapsed. One of the earliest on record was the compulsory Chinese classes established in 1874 by the Chinese Educational Mission at its headquarters in Hartford, Connecticut, to ensure that the 120 Chinese youth sent by the Qing government to study in America would not forget their ancestral heritage. The cur-

riculum included instruction in the Chinese language and the Confucian classics.<sup>2</sup> These classes ended when the imperial government ended the Mission in 1881. However, the Mission had little interaction with the Chinese American community, and it is doubtful whether its Chinese school had any influence on the development of community Chinese-language schools, despite the fact that Chinese schools that arose in the community during the same period shared the same concerns about transmitting the ancestral heritage to the next generation.

San Francisco, on the West Coast, was the entry port for thousands of Chinese argonauts during the California Gold Rush in the mid-nineteenth century. The port city quickly became the site of a Chinatown that became the economic, cultural, and political hub for Chinese in California. Most of the few families among the Chinese in America also lived there. It was thus not surprising that the San Francisco community also pioneered the establishment of Chinese schools on the U.S. mainland. By the late 1860s, the school-age Chinese population had grown to about five hundred, and a growing need arose to establish such schools.<sup>3</sup> Information on early Chinese schools in San Francisco is sparse, but from the fact that the 1880 U.S. manuscript census lists more than a dozen Chinese teachers in San Francisco, one can safely assume that a number of privately established schools were already in operation no later than the 1870s.

During this period, parents' principal objectives for their offspring were that they learn to function in the Chinese language as well as master the fundamentals of arithmetic. Thus most schools were on an elementary level and used the same textbooks traditionally used in China, such as the *Sanzijing* (Trimetrical classic), *Qianziwen* (Thousand-character essay), *Baijiaxing* (Surnames of the hundred families), and the *Sishu* (Four books). The students were also taught practical skills such as letter writing and use of the abacus. Some schools, however, specialized in literature and history or subjects such as the Confucian classics, classical-style Chinese essays, *baguwen* ("eight-part style" essays),<sup>4</sup> Tang poetry, and so forth.

Most teachers were members of the literati who had been unsuccessful in the imperial examinations and had chosen to



go abroad. Some teachers were noted for their knowledge of the classics. One such scholar during the late nineteenth century was Master Chen Xinfu, who once taught American-born Liao Zhongkai, the trusted lieutenant of Sun Yat-sen in the Guangzhou government during the early 1920s.<sup>5</sup> Each school was usually identified by the teacher's surname, such as Li Guan (Li's Studio) and Zeng Guan (Zeng's Studio). The twenty to thirty students in each of more than a dozen schools that existed from the 1870s to the turn of the century attended classes from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. The monthly tuition was relatively expensive at \$4 to \$5, and thus out of reach of poorer families.

During this period, anti-Chinese sentiments were increasing in the American West, and Chinese were being excluded from many sectors of American society. After 1870 Chinese children were not admitted to California public schools. Although Chinese parents fought for their progeny's right to attend the schools, they were unsuccessful because the status of the Chinese in America continued to deteriorate. The ongoing controversy over Chinese immigration escalated from a local to a national issue and culminated with Congress passing the first Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.

Close on the heels of the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act, the Chinese minister in Washington, D.C., encouraged San Francisco Chinese community leaders to establish their own school, the Zhong-Xi Xuetang (Chinese and Western School). The original objective, as implied by the name, was to establish a school that taught both Chinese and Western subjects. For obvious reasons, the Chinese felt that they could exercise more control over the operation of a school that they themselves had instituted. However, the project evolved very slowly, and by the time the plan was submitted to the Chinese Minister Zhang Yinhuan for approval in 1886, a successful Chinese lawsuit had already forced San Francisco authorities to open a Chinese Public School for Chinese students in 1885.<sup>6</sup> In 1888 the community-established Jinshan Xuetang (Gold Mountain School) also opened for instruction. Classes were held on the second floor of 777-1/2 Sacramento Street. Shortly afterward the name was changed to Daqing Shuyuan (Academy of the Great Qing Empire). Because only limited funds were available in the community, the school curriculum was restricted to teaching the Chinese language and related subjects.<sup>7</sup>

Daqing Shuyuan was patterned after traditional schools in China. Classes gave instruction using classical works such as the *Youxue qionglin* (Jade forest of learning for the child), *Sishu* (Four books), and *Wujing* (Five classics). There was no set curriculum for the sixty-odd students. Each student was assessed a monthly tuition of fifty cents. On weekdays classes ran from 4:30 to 9:00 p.m., while on Saturdays they ran from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The principal teacher was usually one of the *huiguan* (native place association) presidents. The scholastic level of the academy approximated that of contemporaneous traditional schools in China, and some of its students had lit-

tle difficulty continuing their education when they went to China. One outstanding example was American-born Zhang Zhaoxiang (Oi-won Jung), who enrolled at the academy in 1892. Jung departed with his parents to Guangdong at the age of thirteen for further schooling. In 1904 he was one of the rare Chinese Americans who passed the imperial district examination and became a *xiangsheng* (*xiucai*, a licentiate of the first degree).<sup>8</sup>

Only a few communities outside San Francisco also established traditional schools. According to one source, in 1892 merchants Yan Xianyan, Mei Boxian (Moy Back Hin), Zhang Dunpei, and Tan Cheng started such a school in Portland, Oregon, which during the 1890s had the second largest Chinese community on the Pacific Coast. Classes were held in a rented room.<sup>9</sup> In 1901, Ho Boshu, Mei Yueyun, and others founded another school teaching fifty to sixty pupils that was reorganized to be the community-operated school a few years later. Sometimes Chinese teachers were recruited to come from China. This was the case with Ou Gongpei, who taught at one of the early traditional schools in New York City during the first decade of the twentieth century. This school was also reorganized as a community-operated school shortly thereafter.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Hawaiian Islands*

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Chinese population in Hawai'i grew as the local economy developed. Like Chinese on the mainland, at first some parents in Hawai'i sent their school-age children to China for an education, while others arranged to have their children privately tutored at home by traveling scholars.<sup>11</sup> By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, conditions were ripe for the establishment of Chinese-language schools in Honolulu, where a large Chinese population had congregated.

Developments on these mid-Pacific islands took a slightly different path from those on the mainland. As on the mainland, missionary English schools preceded Chinese-language schools. The first of these was the Bethel Mission School, founded by S. P. Aheong in 1869.<sup>12</sup> Other schools followed. Some also added Chinese-language classes. The earliest missionary-operated Chinese school on record was the Chinese Children's English School (also known as the Chinese Mission Day School), founded in January 1881 and located at the Fort Street Chinese Church. The initial enrollment was seventeen boys. In mid-1882, a government report mentioned Tang Peng Sum as "teacher of Chinese" at the school, and that the school had been given \$404.50 "for the education of 50 boys and two girls in the Chinese and English languages."<sup>13</sup>

Around 1883, missionaries Frank and Mary Damon asked Xue Man (Sit Moon) to start a short-lived Chinese class at the YMCA.<sup>14</sup> After its demise during the mid-1880s, another group of Chinese Christians reopened it as the Xunzhen