CHINESE IN AMERICAN LIFE

Some Aspects of Their History, Status, Problems, and Contributions

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Foreword

It is a well-known fact that there are about fourteen million Chinese living abroad. Those residing in the United States constitute an important part of these "overseas Chinese." Their history, their status, their problems, and their contribution and achievements, especially in the past few decades, deserve the earnest attention of all public-spirited Americans and Chinese.

Unfortunately, few serious attempts have been made in recent years to search for and to present such desired information. By providing up-to-date material regarding contemporary Chinese immigrants and Americans of Chinese ancestry, the author, Dr. S. W. Kung, renders in this new book a valuable service in meeting an urgent demand.

Although the book is entitled *Chinese in American Life,* the scope of its contents also includes studies of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, as well as in Canada and Latin America, thus enabling us to obtain an over-all impression of the Chinese overseas. The frequent references to the Chinese in Hawaii are certainly useful and timely. It is there that racial prejudice is at a minimum. That a senator and a representative of Chinese and of Japanese ancestry, respectively, were elected to Congress in 1959 shows that the Orientals there are thought of as equals. They do not need to worry that they will ever be considered second-class citizens. Those who are skeptical whether the Chinese on the mainland of the United States can be assimilated into American society need only take a close look at the experience of its youngest state.

The important material and findings contained in this book represent the result of serious research pursued by the author over a period of several years. The value of the book is further enhanced by the well-selected footnotes, by some thirty explanatory tables, by fifteen noteworthy tables in the appendix, and by the selected bibliography and index. Such a publication could very well be used

as a source book, a textbook, or a reference book on overseas Chinese and on immigration law or policies.

Dr. Kung has collected a wealth of material about many so-called "old immigrants" who have sacrificed themselves in the true Chinese tradition for the benefit of the next generation. They are immigrants who have added some riches to American culture. His studies also reveal that in recent years Chinese scholars in America have made numerous contributions to science and to humanity. The names of Chinese scholars mentioned in the study as having made such contributions are most impressive. They naturally include the two young physicists Dr. Tsung-Dao Lee of Columbia University and Dr. Chen-Ning Yang of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, who have attracted world-wide attention because they were the recipients of the Nobel prize. But there are many others who have made notable contributions and deserve public recognition and appreciation.

Other facts revealed by the study are that Chinese immigrants, including engineers, scientists, teachers, doctors, and nurses, as well as laundrymen and restaurateurs, have rendered valuable service in meeting demands; and that, in turn, they have received many benefits from this country of their adoption; that Americans have much to learn from the Chinese civilization, especially in moral and spiritual values; and that the annual immigration quota of 105 for Chinese is exceedingly small and is not equitable because the standard country-of-birth formula used for European quotas has not been applied to the Chinese quota.

In order to understand Chinese immigrants and Chinese-Americans thoroughly we should make a comprehensive study of their problems. The Chinese are here to stay, and it is to the good of everybody concerned that they should be understood, not just by the scholars but by the general public. As Dr. Kung has rightly stated, he would feel very happy if some of the problems discussed by him could be used as a basis for additional study.

I had the pleasure of being associated with Dr. Kung in the years 1931 and 1932, when I was Director of the Bureau of Foreign Trade of the Chinese government, while he was, first, chief of the research department, and later editor of the *Chinese Economic Journal*. As a student of international trade, Dr. Kung has a unique interest in the subject of overseas Chinese. The annual remittances sent to China by the Chinese abroad constituted for many years very important items in China's balance of international payments, second only to the merchandise export. It is for this reason that we found it was necessary to pay special attention to the life of the Chinese abroad. After he left the bureau, Dr. Kung taught in a number of colleges

in Shanghai. He has written several books on international trade and on the world immigration problem. His connections with the Bank of China and, as a member, with the Foreign Exchange Stabilization Board, Central Bank of China, have given him much first-hand information for his studies of the Chinese abroad.

Such being the nature of this book and the qualifications of its author, it should be welcomed by Americans and Chinese, as well as by institutions concerned with contemporary Chinese and Chinese-Americans in the United States and in other areas having large numbers of Chinese residents. It is my considered opinion that a perusal of its pages will appreciably increase one's understanding of the overseas Chinese and of Chinese-American relations.

P. W. Kuo, Ph.D., LL.D.
Founder and Trustee Emeritus, China Institute in America, formerly President, National Southeastern University, Nanking, China.

Washington, D. C.
March, 1961

Preface

The author's interest in the subject of the overseas Chinese dates back to 1931, when he was with the Bureau of Foreign Trade, in Shanghai, as head of its research department, where a great deal of attention was being paid to the problem. Since 1939, he has made several trips to both North and South America, to Europe, and Southeast Asia, with the view of making firsthand contacts with the Chinese. The question always raised in his mind, as he made his survey, was this: What are the factors that have made the majority of the Chinese in those regions do fairly well, with all the odds against them almost everywhere?

The twin subjects of Chinese immigrants and of Americans of Chinese ancestry, the author realized, had not been fully examined. To be sure, in the second half of the nineteenth century, much was written pro and con about either accepting or excluding the Chinese, praising them as though faultless—which they are not—or condemning them as a race beyond the scope of salvation. Such bias and inconsistency much confused the public, resulting in the very grossest illogical generalities. In preparing this book, the author had no intention of dwelling at length upon the history of the Chinese immigration into this country. Rather, the aim has been to bring up to date the material for the study of contemporary Chinese immigrants and of Chinese-Americans in the United States. The author understands that many interesting aspects of the problem cannot be covered fully in a single volume. He will feel, therefore, amply rewarded if his efforts in this book serve to provide bases for further research.

The classification of Chinese-Americans and Chinese immigrants into different groups is certainly a delicate one. There are native-born and foreign-born Chinese-Americans; native-born of mixed parentage; first generation Chinese-Americans or immigrants; also persons of the second, third, or even fifth generation. There are those immigrants and their descendants who may be termed "old,"

since they came before the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act; and those that may be termed "new"—the ones who, while actually present in the United States, adjusted their status by taking advantage of the existing immigration laws. Again, "new immigrants" came to this country under the McCarran-Walter Act, the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, and later legislations. A number of them may represent simply the offspring of the second, or of a later, generation of the "old immigrants." There are those native born and reared in this country, as well as foreign born, who have been assimilated into American life; others, perhaps because of their different cultural backgrounds or because they experienced discrimination, have been rather more slowly absorbed. A few are trying hard to preserve their own way of life. On the other hand, before World War II a number of American-Chinese, especially if well educated, went to China to obtain employment, for the reason that in this country many fields requiring skill and training seldom were open to those of oriental ancestry. Some Americans still think that a Chinese is a Chinese, regardless of whether he was born in this country. The opening of occupational opportunities, the raising of social status, the increasing Chinese contribution in American society, the vast improvement in attitude toward Chinese which is reflected in the laws of the land, the gradual lessening of racial discrimination, but above all the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, were made possible principally by World War II. In a true sense, we can only make our study of the life of Chinese immigrants and of Chinese-Americans richer and more interesting by considering the period since the beginning of that war. Therefore, when in the text classification according to origin or nativity has to be made, it serves merely for convenience in grouping. At any rate, it does not matter whether people came from the province of Kwangtung, whence most of the "old immigrants" came, or from other parts of China. In the course of several more decades, the great majority of the Chinese in America will consist of native-born and naturalized citizens. As time passes, there will be less and less point in making group distinctions.

Carey McWilliams has stated that the Chinese are one of the few ethnic groups that have made important contributions toward the culture of California. Yet few treatises are available in making the story known. Perhaps an account of the life of the Chinese in California and elsewhere in the early days would be highly interesting towards evaluating the contributions made by the Chinese. On the other hand, when we discuss the contributions made by the Chinese since World War II, it is almost certain that a number of worthy cases must have escaped the author's attention. The estab-

lishment of criteria for determining exactly who have made positive contributions would be difficult indeed. One thing is certain: the "old" and the "new," the "native born" and the "foreign born"—all have accomplished much.

The author has received much assistance from friends—in the United States, Canada, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan—whose names are too numerous to mention. He is greatly indebted to Dr. P. W. Kuo, chairman of the Chinese Advisory Committee on Cultural Relations in America and a former president of the National Southeastern University; to Dr. C. F. Remer, professor of economics at the University of Michigan; and to Professor John M. MacGregor, chairman of the department of law in the graduate school of business administration, New York University, for reading the manuscript and for offering many helpful criticisms. He is indebted also to Dr. Anthony Koo, a professor of economics at Michigan State University, for suggestions on "Fallacies in the Official Statistics on Chinese Immigration"; to Professor Kwei Yu of the National Taiwan University for some information on litigation and court decisions; to Mrs. William Wilmet, an attorney at law, on the present status of Chinese immigration; to Dr. Maurice T. Price, a sociologist of many years' standing, on the Chinese community and the characteristics of Chinese population; to Dr. H. D. Fong of the United Nations in Thailand on "Chinese Abroad"; to Professor James O. Wettereau, assistant chairman of history, New York University, on Chapters 3 and 4 concerning history of Chinese immigration; to Professor Ralph W. Gilbert and Dr. Eugene Shen, psychologists, on the subjects of prejudice and discrimination; and to Mr. K. Y. Pao, formerly United States representative of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company, on matters related to the shipping trade. Mr. Ferris Luboshez, an attorney at law, expended much effort in collecting material and in making possible the author's analysis of the "Relief of Chinese Nationals through Private Legislation." Mr. T. C. Tsao, a senior research engineer of the Electronic Research Laboratory at Columbia University, has been most helpful on "intellectual migration." The author's appreciation is expressed to Miss Edith Lowenstein, editor of *Interpreter Releases,* American Council for Nationalities Service, who has made numerous suggestions for improvements in both form and content on Chapter 5 and 7, in relation to problems of Chinese immigration and court decisions. She suggested a number of modifications in interpretation and presentations which have been adopted. Any opinions expressed in the study are necessarily the responsibility of the author.

I am thankful for discussions on several specific subjects with

Dr. Howard G. Brunsman, chief of the Population Division of the Bureau of the Census; Mr. E. A. Loughran, associate commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; with the Federal Bureau of Investigation; with the Federal Bureau of Prisons; Bureau of Narcotics; National Office of Vital Statistics; Office of Health Statistics; Department of Health, Hawaii; and with the Canadian Bureau of Statistics. Appreciation must also go to my wife and to Miss May-Sun Wang who have helped me all around in improving the manuscript.

S. W. Kung

Rego Park, New York
March, 1961

Contents

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Some Aspects of Their History, Status, Problems, and Contributions

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The Chinese Abroad

Although this treatise deals primarily with the Chinese in the United States—their life here, their history in this country, their difficulties, their accomplishments—nevertheless it may not ignore the fact that they are to be found almost everywhere in the world, a great majority of them in Southeast Asia. The Chinese abroad are usually termed "overseas Chinese," or *hua-chiao*, which means Chinese sojourning abroad. Generally in Southeast Asia, census officials consider Chinese in the ethnographical sense. However, each country applies its own rules in determining ethnic and cultural grouping, and the term Chinese is often interpreted differently. Though Chinese born in the United States are legally citizens, the census lists them also as a separate racial group. We are concerned with the ethnic Chinese. We shall not deal with those who merely come and go, such as students, visitors, and governmental officers.

The Chinese have now for many centuries been in Southeast Asia: in Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, long before the British, French, Dutch, or Spanish occupied those places. This is evidenced by journals, accounts of travel, and other writings depicting Chinese pilgrims and priests or showing Chinese influence. Traditions say that even in prehistoric times the Chinese had infiltrated into Alaska, North America, and Mexico. The Immigration Commission records that the first Chinese arrived in the United States in 1820, and that a total of eleven came between 1820 and 1840; but according to report a Chinese person lived in New York as early as 1807. However, we know definitely that in 1847 three Chinese students came to the United States, one of whom in 1852 became naturalized.[1]

By about 1850 a considerable Chinese immigration began. Their migration to the United States, Australia, Hawaii, and Southeast Asia was greatly accelerated by the wanton devastation wrought by the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64). Since then, the Chinese have

been to a marked degree an emigrating people, at least until restriction and, eventually, exclusion blocked their way.

Because the Chinese immigrants have been almost everywhere in this world, they have had to cope with various problems in the countries in which they live. There were sparsely populated areas with natural resources and therefore little competition with the natives in Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other parts of Southeast Asia when the Chinese first moved there. So Chinese labor built the great rubber plantations and tin mines in Malaya, and Chinese enterprise contributed greatly to Singapore's becoming one of the world's great ports. The rapid economic progress in the United States mainland and Hawaii enables the Chinese to participate in the great opportunity offered to them. The competition is, however, very keen and the discrimination frequent. In Peru, in Jamaica, and in other parts of Latin America, there were less competition and less restriction suffered, and these factors explain why Chinese have been able to make great headway in business.

The countries in Southeast Asia before World War II, with the possible exception of Thailand, were under the control of colonial governments. The Chinese prospered economically in such areas by acting as liaison between the Europeans and the natives; however, they were mostly considered "second-class citizens" even though they had been born in the country in which they lived. One of the significant effects of the war was the creation in that part of the world of many independent countries. The emergence of many youthful nations found the Chinese even less happy. Their most urgent problem was assimilation, for the Chinese are often accused of being race-conscious, of shunning citizenship, and of failing, thus, in loyalty to their adopted country. Without doubt the Chinese are satisfactorily assimilable; the widespread intermarriages among *hua-chiao* and the natives demonstrate that. Nor do religious differences present a knotty problem. The question is whether the Chinese are really wanted.

Racial prejudice against the Chinese and other Orientals is, however, demonstrated fully in Australia and New Zealand, where it is extremely difficult for Chinese immigrants to gain admission. In Hawaii there is little prejudice, since Orientals, economically and politically, are on a par with other races. The fact that in 1959 an American of Chinese and one of Japanese descent were elected, respectively, a United States senator and a member of the House of Representatives is ample demonstration of equality. In Latin America, since the racial question has never been considered important, the Chinese do not suffer. Negroes and American Indians also enjoy equal status with immigrants from other lands. In Hong Kong there also seems to be less prejudice against the Chinese, chiefly because

of the overwhelming majority of Chinese residents as well as the proximity of their homeland.

Finally the quality and character of the average Chinese immigrants must carefully be considered. Being clannish and cooperative among themselves, they think of ways to avoid trouble. They are individualists, mind their own affairs, and are little inclined toward politics; they are for the most part intelligent, frugal, and industrious. Such characteristics sometimes bring them into disfavor with the natives. As Dr. Eduard I. Hambro has stated: "Perhaps these very qualities, as well as their high rate of reproduction, contribute to the widespread resistance to the admission of any large numbers of Chinese immigrants."[2]

For convenience in study and in order to group Chinese immigrants according to their present status, the Chinese abroad may be classified as: (1) Chinese in the mainland United States and in Canada, (2) Chinese in Hawaii, (3) Chinese in Latin America, and (4) Chinese in Southeast Asia and in Hong Kong. There are Chinese in Australia, New Zealand, and Europe as well as in Japan and Korea, but we shall exclude them from our analysis.

To assist our study of the Chinese in the United States, we think it useful to give certain highlights, as it were, of the Chinese abroad—their history, their present status—and to discuss a number of special features relating to Chinese immigration.

Early History of Chinese Immigration

Since Chinese civilization goes back more than four thousand years, the Chinese have had ample opportunity to utilize many forms of communication with the rest of the world. Chinese have journeyed in considerable numbers, by land and by sea, from very early times, for various purposes, such as commerce, religion, travel for its own sake, and the pursuit of knowledge. Their journeyings took them particularly into Southeast Asia, bordering closely on China. In early days, however, the Chinese abroad proved to be more or less temporary residents, and therefore they were not in the modern sense immigrants. Some two thousand years ago, according to Chinese history, vessels were sailing from southern China to Indo-China and to the Malay Peninsula; conversely, during the first and second centuries B. C., people of Southeast Asia frequently made voyages to the Celestial Empire. Near the end of the fourth century, a number of Chinese monks traveled to India to study Buddhism.

The Tang dynasty (618-906) marked a new era in Chinese expansion into Southeast Asia, because the Tang ruler embarked full sail on foreign conquest. Many territories, such as Amur, Korea,

most of Inner and Outer Mongolia, Chinese and Russian Turkestan, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bokhara, Fergana, and Annam, hitherto unknown to the Chinese rulers, acknowledged themselves to be under the suzerainty of Tang.[3] As a result of these expansions, trade assumed a greater importance than it had in the past. Hindus, Arabs, and Persians went to China to trade; Christian travelers, together with devotees of other faiths, received sympathetic toleration. During the seventh century, Chinese pilgrims in great numbers visited holy places in India and in Ceylon. Several chose the sea route instead of the overland way preferred by their predecessors through Tibet and Nepal.

After the fall of the Tang, the great dynasties were Sung (960-1279), Yuan or Mongols (1280-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Ch'ing, the Manchus (1644-1912). Throughout all those years, with only occasional interruptions, many Chinese were living in Southeast Asia. Long before the Dutch settled there, China had established lucrative trade with what was to become the Netherlands East Indies; likewise in Malaya, the Chinese had established settlements many years before its occupation by the British; in the Philippine Islands, Chinese residents had already become very influential before the Spaniards took possession. In Burma, in Indo-China, and in Siam, where the Celestial Empire had, in addition to its commercial intercourse, a strong political influence, Chinese immigrants had been well settled for many centuries.

Apropos of all this, we should observe with special interest the hitherto unprecedented naval activity of the Chinese in Southeast Asian waters from 1405 to 1433, under the command of that renowned eunuch, Admiral Cheng Ho. His powerful navy executed no fewer than seven highly successful ventures to Southeast Asia, penetrating as far as the coasts of Arabia and Africa. When he returned home after each expedition, he left many of his men behind on those distant shores. As a result of Cheng Ho's naval operations, many countries had been compelled to pay homage to the Ming emperor. Thus, for many years after, China succeeded in extending her mercantile interests through the seaboard states lying to the south.

With the fall of each dynasty, as Chinese history reveals, numbers of people fled as political refugees; when the last strongholds of the Sung dynasty were seized by the Mongols, some two hundred thousand faithful officers and their followers went aboard ship for Indo-China and contiguous regions. One reason for the Ming Emperor's sending Cheng Ho abroad so many times was to discover the whereabouts of the dethroned emperor of the once all-powerful Mongols.