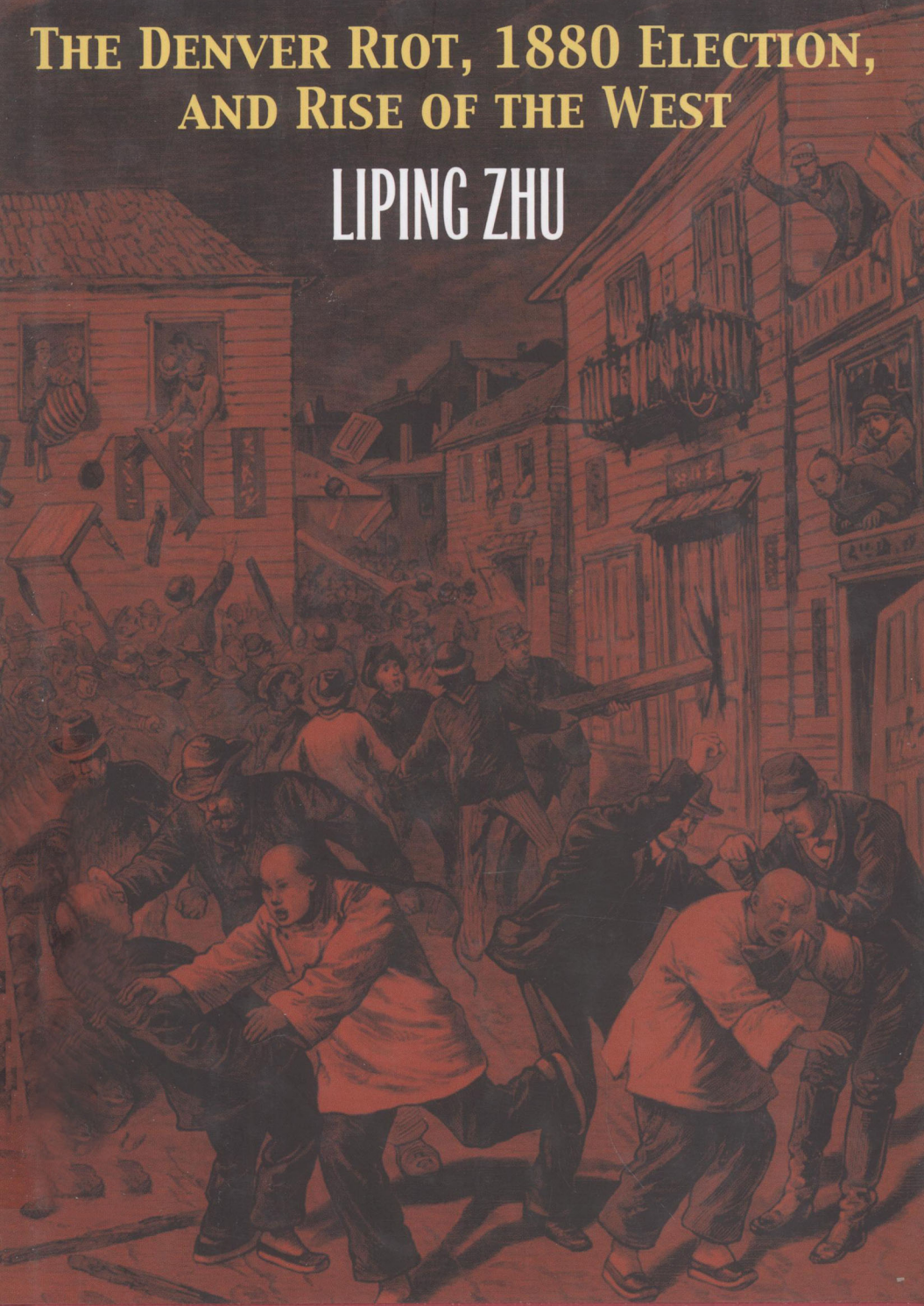


The Road to Chinese Exclusion

THE DENVER RIOT, 1880 ELECTION,
AND RISE OF THE WEST

LIPING ZHU



**THE ROAD TO
CHINESE EXCLUSION
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AND RISE OF THE WEST**

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CHINESE EXCLUSION**

To Joanna and Alex

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION OF CHINESE NAMES

In transliterating names from Chinese to English, there are two distinct spelling systems: Wade-Giles and pinyin. Historically, Euro-Americans used the Wade-Giles system for all Chinese names in both official documents and scholarly writings. The standardized pinyin system, first endorsed by the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, has become more acceptable and prevalent in most parts of the world. For example, in pinyin the word *Peking* is *Beijing*. Now pinyin has become the standard for spelling Chinese names in all academic publications.

The conversion from one system to the other does not make it easy for historians, who have no choice but to move continually back forth between the two. Since all Chinese names appearing in historical documents are transliterated under the old system, each scholar must come up with a practical solution for handling those names. In this work, I have chosen to use the pinyin system for all Chinese names and other terms. The original spellings that appeared in archives are kept intact only if no Chinese character for a particular name can be found. Otherwise, names of persons and places have been updated into pinyin, followed by Chinese characters whenever possible. In such a case, the name *Li Hung Chang* should properly appear as *Li Hongzhang* 李鸿章. To avoid any confusion, the original spellings of people's and places' names are included in the notes or in parentheses.

According to Chinese tradition, a person's family name always comes before his or her given name. All historical names in this work are presented in their original format and order.

**THE ROAD TO
CHINESE EXCLUSION**

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INTRODUCTION

Sectional conflict is a dominant theme in American history. Since its founding, the United States frequently has had to deal with the balance of political power among its different regions. The continual struggle over the national ideal of equality and the hypocrisy of privilege produced many significant and fateful events in the burgeoning nation. On a few occasions, such sectional crises even threatened the survival of the republic. Most often these threats to the Union were settled by compromises, the most egregious allowing the perpetuation of the “peculiar institution” of slavery, which eventually led to a murderous civil war. These historic and pervasive sectional compromises were characterized by complexity. Any changes in political boundaries, regional population, economic structure, and cultural orientation could easily trigger a round of clashes among competing regions. Political parties and politicians regularly enflamed sectional differences by manipulating the public with sensationalized, self-serving rhetoric. Each historical period has featured glaring issues that have led to memorable episodes centered on sectional conflict in the United States.

During the first hundred years after independence, almost all of the sectional conflicts occurred between the states—North versus South—of the Atlantic Coast. Two major issues crucial to each region’s existence—the tariff and slavery—relentlessly drove the principals into fierce political battles. These two central concerns fueled the Three-fifths Compromise, Alexander Hamilton’s economic programs, the Missouri Compromise, the Tariff Controversy, the Bank War, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the founding of the Republican Party, Bleeding Kansas, and eventually the Civil War itself. The westward expansion of the United States, another important aspect of the country’s development that was central to these and other national issues, added a new dimension to this North-South struggle. Whether in support of free states or of slave states, each side anxiously looked westward for political allies. As Frederick Jackson Turner, a great American historian and the father of the sectional thesis, in 1925 percep-

tively stated, "Each Atlantic section was, in truth, engaged in a struggle for power; and power was to be gained by drawing upon the growing West."¹ In other words, victory in sectional conflicts often depended on winning Western allies. By the mid-nineteenth century the North had done extremely well in this endeavor, gaining sectional partners from the Midwest to the Pacific Coast. The drastic and violent solution to this sectional conflict, the Civil War, although it was a resounding victory of the North over the South, caused great suffering in the young republic. Significantly, this Northern triumph and the subsequent Reconstruction era marked the end of the first period of American sectionalism.²

When the nation entered its second century, sectionalism was fundamentally transformed from a two-way rivalry between the North and the South into a three-way competition that now included the rising West. With its rapidly increasing population and economic growth, the West began to demand more political power and national recognition as it strove to free itself from colonial status under Eastern economic and political domination. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the West rose steadily to national political prominence through a series of political campaigns and events such as the anti-Chinese crusade, the Indian policy, the farmers' protest, the People's Party, the women's suffrage campaign, and the statehood movement. By the early twentieth century, the West clearly had achieved political equality with the other two regions. Frederick Jackson Turner acknowledged this seismic shift at the fiftieth anniversary of the end of Reconstruction: "In the political history of the United States since 1876, the West has played a leading role." Walter Prescott Webb, another famous historian of the West, concurred in his book *Divided We Stand* (1937): "The admission of New Mexico and Arizona in 1912 marked the end of the [North's] political domination." The rise of the West is arguably the most important feature in the second phase in the history of American sectional conflicts.³

Because scholars and officials have applied different criteria and concepts in defining the nation's regions, there is no consensus on the location of the eastern boundary of the American West. Most regionalists choose either the Mississippi River or the 98th meridian as the distinctive marker where the West begins. However, regional boundaries changed over time. In this study, I roughly divide the late-nineteenth-century United States into three main regions: the North, the South, and the West (see Map 1). The South includes all the slave states in the lead-up to the Civil War. The West



Map 1 Three Regions

covers all the territory between the Pacific Coast and an eastern boundary composed of the tier states from North Dakota to Oklahoma. All the rest I place in the North. In the late 1870s and the early 1880s, the North and the South each contained sixteen states and the West six, with ten more to come. This definition of the three sections is very similar to the one Webb proposed: “These dividing lines . . . nearly follow the country’s social, economic, and political history and its climatic and topographic lines.” Despite the subjective nature of these regional boundaries, this sectional map is designed to provide a necessary mental framework for a discussion of sectionalism in the late nineteenth century.⁴

During the rise of the American West, the effort to restrict Chinese immigration unexpectedly emerged as one of the first major political issues to unite the region. Anti-Chinese sentiment offered Westerners a convenient common political cause that targeted a relatively small group of newcomers who were intent on taking advantage of the thriving nation’s economic opportunities. California’s gold rush in the mid-nineteenth century had attracted tens of thousands of prospectors, including Chinese, from all over the world. Their initial success in the mining fields quickly established a beachhead for future immigrants. Investors and politicians immediately realized that the development of the American West demanded a large, afford-