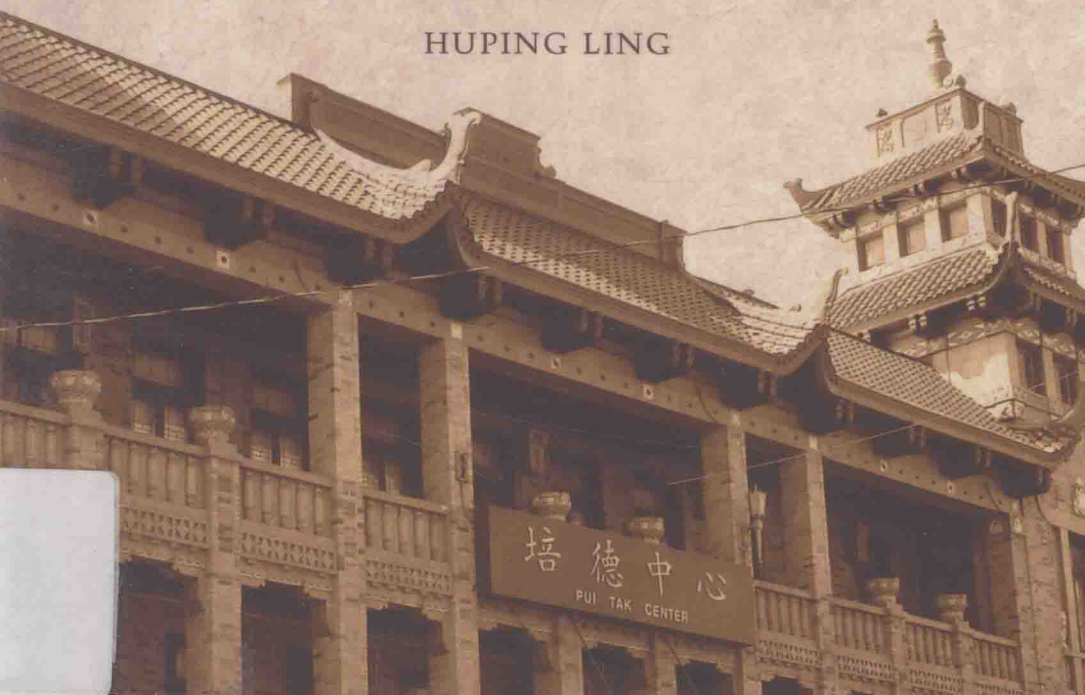




# CHINESE CHICAGO

RACE, TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION,  
AND COMMUNITY SINCE 1870

HUPING LING



# Chinese Chicago

RACE, TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION,  
AND COMMUNITY SINCE 1870

*Huping Ling*



STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

Stanford University Press  
Stanford, California

© 2012 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University.  
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Stanford University Press.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free, archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Ling, Huping, 1956– author.

Chinese Chicago: race, transnational migration, and community since 1870 / Huping Ling.

pages cm. — (Asian America)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8047-7558-8 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-8047-7559-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Chinese Americans—Illinois—Chicago—History—19th century.
2. Chinese Americans—Illinois—Chicago—History—20th century.
3. Chicago (Ill.)—Emigration and immigration—Social aspects.
4. Chicago (Ill.)—History—1875– 5. Transnationalism. I. Title.

II. Series: Asian America.

F548.9.C5L56 2012

305.8951'073077311—dc22

2011014089

Typeset by Bruce Lundquist in 11/14 Adobe Garamond

*Chinese Chicago*

## ASIAN AMERICA

*A series edited by Gordon H. Chang*

The increasing size and diversity of the Asian American population, its growing significance in American society and culture, and the expanded appreciation, both popular and scholarly, of the importance of Asian Americans in the country's present and past—all these developments have converged to stimulate wide interest in scholarly work on topics related to the Asian American experience. The general recognition of the pivotal role that race and ethnicity have played in American life, and in relations between the United States and other countries, has also fostered the heightened attention.

Although Asian Americans were a subject of serious inquiry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were subsequently ignored by the mainstream scholarly community for several decades. In recent years, however, this neglect has ended, with an increasing number of writers examining a good many aspects of Asian American life and culture. Moreover, many students of American society are recognizing that the study of issues related to Asian America speaks to, and may be essential for, many current discussions on the part of the informed public and various scholarly communities.

The Stanford series on Asian America seeks to address these interests. The series will include works from the humanities and social sciences, including history, anthropology, political science, American studies, law, literary criticism, sociology, and interdisciplinary and policy studies.

*A full list of titles in the Asian America series can be found online at [www.sup.org/asianamerica](http://www.sup.org/asianamerica)*

To Paul C. P. Siu  
whose work inspired this book

## Acknowledgments

The idea of writing a book on Chinese Chicago first emerged over twenty years ago, when I encountered Paul C. P. Siu's *The Chinese Laundryman* while working on my doctoral dissertation. Thirteen years ago, when I was writing *Chinese St. Louis: From Enclave to Cultural Community*, I felt that a comprehensive volume on Chinese in Chicago would be very helpful in making known the importance of Chinese communities in the Midwest. Research and data collection for this project have taken me to archives, libraries, museums, and community sites on both sides of the transnational migration. During this long journey, in both time and mileage, many individuals and institutions have provided me with invaluable assistance and support. Without their generous help, the book could not have been in its current form.

Jinan University in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China, where I have been an adjunct professor at the Institute of Overseas Chinese Studies since 2007, facilitated my field trip to *qiaoxiang*, the ancestral villages of overseas Chinese, in Taishan, Guangdong. Colleagues and graduate students from Jinan University, especially those from the Institute of Overseas Chinese Studies, inspired me with their intellectual energy and ingenuity. My gratitude first goes to Professors Gao Weinong and Chao Longqi of the institute for their hospitality, assistance in my fieldwork, and generosity in sharing sources and research outcomes with me; and I am also thankful to Mo Guangmu, a graduate student of Professor Gao Weinong, for researching data for me. Vice President Ji Zongan at Jinan University also offered hospitality and support during my stay at Jinan University in the summer of 2007.

Mr. Huang Deyi, director of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the town of Duanfen, guided my trip to the *qiaoxiang* of Duanfen and informed me about many families originating from Duanfen. Mr. Wang Minghui, division chief of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the People's Government of Guangdong Province, and Mr. Guan Xinqiang, vice-chairman of the Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese of Taishan City, provided invaluable assistance to my research. My deep gratitude also goes to Mr. Weng Songping and his family, Mrs. Mei Yuqing and her family, and to other local residents for welcoming me into their homes for interviews. I am also very thankful to Professor Mei Weiqiang of Wuyi University in Jiangmen City, Guangdong, who compiled the most recent *Meishi zongqin zupu* and whose scholarship has been invaluable to this book.

I am very thankful to the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, the Chinese Institute for Overseas Chinese History Studies, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Guangdong People's Government, the Overseas Exchange Association of Guangdong Province, and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the Fujian People's Government for providing assistance to my research and conference trips in China.

I am indebted to my colleagues and friends in the field of Asian American studies in the United States and Canada, who have encouraged me on this project, commented on parts or the entirety of the manuscript, and offered steadfast support: Ling Z. Arenson, Kendra Boileau, Shehong Chen, Yong Chen, Roger Daniels, Madeline Y. Hsu (for reading chapters and providing suggestions), John Jung, Peter S. Li, Wei Li, Jinqi Ling, Haiming Liu, Lisa Mar, Adam McKeown (for reading chapters and providing suggestions), Soon Keong Ong, George Anthony Pepper, Barbara Posadas (for editing chapters and providing suggestions), Yuan Shu, John Kuo Wei Tchen, Zuoyue Wang, Fenggong Yang, Phillip Q. Yang (for reading manuscript and providing suggestions), Xiaohuang Yin, Henry Yu, Renqiu Yu, Xiaojian Zhao, Da Zheng, Min Zhou, and Li Zong.

I am most thankful to the following individuals in Chicago: Delilah Lee Chan, Ian Roosevelt Chin, Joe Chiu, Grace Chun, Howard Chun, Helen Eng, Eugene Kung, Ruth Kung, Margaret Larson, David K. Lee, Albert Moy, Soo Lon Moy, Thomas O'Connell, John S. Rohsenow, Andrea Stamm, Loong-yan Wong, and Judy Zhu, all volunteers at the Chinese-American Museum of Chicago (CAMOC), for their friendship and hard work pre-



serving the Chinese American heritage in Chicago; Si Chen, branch manager of the Chicago Public Library Chinatown Branch, for assisting my research; and Esther Wong of the Chinese American Service League, Steve Brunton of the Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Leonard M. Louie of the Chinese American Civic Council, and Run-Hao Hu of the Southeast Asian Center for providing information about their organizations. I am especially grateful to Soo Lon Moy and John S. Rohsenow for reading chapters of the manuscript and for offering invaluable suggestions.

The following individuals have generously shared their life histories with me: Grace Chun, Howard Chun, Eugene Kung, Ruth Kung, David K. Lee, Tammy Sun Spencer, Wong Xiaoyu, and Ling Zhang from Chicago; Richard Ho, Don Ko, Annie Leong, Chung Kok Li, and Rachel Wang from St. Louis. I have also benefited from the interviews conducted by the aforementioned members of the CAMOC (the name of each individual interviewer appears in the notes): Celia Moy Cheung, Catherine Wong Chin, Ian Roosevelt Chin, Herman Chiu, Corwin Eng, Susanna Fong, Doc Huang, Yolanda Lee, Jenny Ling, Toungh Ling, Cho Tuk Lo, Rich Lo, Benjamin C. Moy, Dato' Seri Stanley Thai, Charles W. Tun, Lorrain Moy Tun, Harry Wu, and Henry Yee. I also want to thank Ruth Kung for sharing her interview of Lorraine Moy Tun and John Jung for introducing me to the CAMOC and for sharing his life history and writings on Chinese Americans. Without their generous participation, this book could not have been completed.

I am grateful to the staff members and officers of the following institutions and organizations: Asian Human Services Chinatown Office, Chaozhou Tongxiang Hui, the Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, the Chicago Chinese American Historical Society, the Chicago History Museum, the Chicago North Chinese School, the Chicago Public Library Chinatown Branch, the Chinese American Cultural Center, the Chinese-American Museum of Chicago, the Chinese American Service League, the Chinese Christian Union Church, the Chinese Community Center, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the Chinese Language School, the Chinese Mutual Aid Association, the Hip Sing Association, the Hong Men Zhigong Tang, the International Overseas Chinese Association Chicago Branch, the Lee Family Association, the Longgang Qinyi Gongsuo, Mercy Medical in Chinatown, Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Moy Family Association, the National Archives Records Administration—Great Lakes Region (Chicago), the Newberry Library, the On Leong Merchants and Laborers

Association, the Chicago chapter of the Organization of Chinese Americans, Pacific Global Bank, Pui Tak Center, Pui Tak Christian School, Rosehill Cemetery, the Special Collection of the Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, and St. Therese Chinese Catholic School.

The following Chinese or Asian American businesses have also provided assistance to the project: Anh Linh Restaurant; Argyle Medical Center; C. P. Louie Travel; Chinatown Smoke Shop; Chiu Quon Restaurant and Bakery; Dúc Hùng Video; Fat Lee Grocery; Heng Heng Jewelry; Hon Kee Restaurant; House of Fortune Restaurant; Kim Hing Jewelry; Oriental Gifts and Food; Pacific Realty, Inc.; Speed Kleen Laundromat; Thai Grocery; Three Happiness Restaurant; Tiên Giang Restaurant; and Việt Hoa Oriental Grocery Store.

Special thanks to Truman State University, my home institution, for providing me with Faculty Summer Research Grants and Sabbatical Grants; to Lori Allen of the Pickler Memorial Library for tirelessly acquiring numerous materials through interlibrary loans for me; to Winston Vanderhoof of Truman State University Publications for creating Map 1 for this book; and to my colleagues in the History Department for giving me endless support, especially to Jason McDonald, a scholar on American ethnicity and immigration, who read the manuscript and provided valuable insights, along with sharing bibliography on ethnic Chicago. I am deeply grateful to the History Department at the University of Missouri–Columbia for sponsoring the sabbatical leave during which I completed this book.

At Stanford University Press, two anonymous readers enthusiastically endorsed my manuscript along with excellent comments and insightful suggestions. Gordon H. Chang has provided steadfast support and encouragement; Stacy Wagner and Jessica A. Walsh have expedited the review process and have guided me through the final stage of the project. Christine Gever's judicious and intelligent copyediting has improved the manuscript immensely. Carolyn Brown and her production team worked with efficiency and professionalism. Together, they have helped transform my manuscript into this beautiful book!

My husband, Sami, has been my creative muse, candid critic, and resilient technical support throughout all my intellectual enterprises. Without his constant counsel, comfort, and companionship, I would not have been able to complete this book.

## A Note on Translation and Terminology

Although the Pinyin phonetic system based on Putonghua or Mandarin Chinese has been more widely used in recent academic writings, the earlier Wade-Giles system still persists. In this book, I have used Pinyin whenever the Chinese names of places occur, except those preferred transliterations of certain proper nouns, for example, “Canton” for “Guangzhou” (Pinyin). Regarding the names of Chinese people mentioned in the book, however, the situation is more complicated. While the English-language government records, archival manuscripts, and newspapers recorded the names of Chinese people based on their pronunciation in Cantonese or other local dialects without consistency, the Chinese-language sources provided the names in Chinese characters that are consistent in writing. While such variants make consistency in spelling people’s names nearly impossible, I have managed to arrive at some degree of consistency by using the original spellings cited in the English-language sources and Pinyin spellings based on Putonghua from the Chinese-language sources. Nevertheless, inconsistency is inevitable in some cases; for example, the surname “Moy” (according to its Cantonese pronunciation) also appears in its Pinyin form “Mei” in later chapters.

In addition, both the singular form “community” and plural form “communities” have been used in reference to the Chinese settlement in Chicago before and after 1912, respectively. Before 1912, it was primarily a single-sited community, located in the Loop area around South Clark Street. After 1912, when the majority of the Chinatown businesses and residents relocated to

the Cermak-Wentworth area, some still remained in the South Clark neighborhood. Since the 1960s, the expansion of South Chinatown, the emergence of suburban communities, and the revival of North Chinatown have resulted in multi-sited Chinese American communities. Moreover, the plural form, “communities,” also emphasizes the cultural, economic, linguistic, political, and social diversity among the Chinese in Chicago.

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>A Note on Translation and Terminology</i>	xvii
Introduction: Rethinking Chinese Chicago	i
1. Searching for Roots of a Transnational Community	12
2. Locating Chinatown, 1870s–1910s	24
3. Operating Transnational Businesses, 1880s–1930s	58
4. Living Transnational Lives, 1880s–1930s	98
5. Bridging the Two Worlds: Community Organizations, 1870s–1945	132
6. Connecting the Two Worlds: Chinese Students and Intellectuals, 1920s–2010s	172
7. Diverging and Converging Transnational Communities, 1945–2010s	205
Epilogue: The “Hollow Center Phenomenon” and the Future of Transnational Migration	242
<i>Notes</i>	249
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
<i>Index</i>	307

# Illustrations

## Figures

Old On Leong headquarters on Wentworth Avenue, 2008	13
Moy Dong Chow in an official outfit as a fourth-rank official, awarded by the Qing government, 1900s	31
Chin F. Foin and his wife, 1906	71
<i>Meijia dayuan</i> , or the Moy family compound, in Duanfen County, Taishan, Guangdong, China, 2007	85
Hong Sling family, ca. 1913	90
Hong Sling family, ca. 1908	90
Moy Tong Wee (Moy Dong Yee) and his wife Luke Shee, ca. 1906	101
The headquarters of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association on 22nd Place, Chicago, 2008	146
Chinese American population and male-to-female ratio, 1900–2010	207
South Chinatown, Chicago, 2008	219
Vietnamese Chinese grocery store and restaurant on Argyle Street, North Chinatown, Chicago, 2008	224

*Maps*

1	Chinese communities in Chicago	52
2	Community areas of Chicago	55

*Tables*

1	Chinese population in Chicago, 1870–2010	50
2	Chinese American population and sex ratio, 1900–2010	207
3	The Moy family reunion conventions, 1927–2006	238

# Introduction

## *Rethinking Chinese Chicago*

And each time I roam, Chicago is  
Calling me home, Chicago is  
One town that won't let you down  
It's my kind of town

—Lyrics by Sammy Cahn, music by Jimmy van Heusen

Chicago is a city of hope and promise. Situated in the heartland of America, favored with land, water, rail, and air transportation advantages, and populated by vibrant multiethnic communities, it attracts thousands of people from all across the country who seek to realize their dreams. Barack Obama, a graduate of Columbia University in New York, came to Chicago in the summer of 1985 and worked as a community organizer on the far South Side of the city, thus starting his political journey to the presidency. His historic victory in the 2008 presidential election was a spectacular manifestation of the fulfillment of the American dream through the promise of Chicago.<sup>1</sup>

The vast opportunities presented by Chicago were evident to newcomers even more than a century ago. The city has attracted hundreds of thousands of immigrants from around the world; since the mid-nineteenth century, Canadians, Germans, English, Irish, Scottish, Swedish, Norwegians, Poles, and Italians have poured into the city over time, making it a truly multiethnic community. For the Chinese who first arrived in the 1870s, Chicago offered a growing and attractive economic landscape. Here the Chinese initially established a small but lively community in the downtown Loop area (the downtown business district coinciding with the old cable car service area). Chinese grocery stores, laundries, restaurants, and community asso-



ciations sustained the residents of early Chinatown. Less than two decades later, the small Chinese community of nearly 2,000 was so successful that it sponsored the “Chinese Village” in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, taking the place of the Chinese Qing government, which was boycotting the fair in protest against the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The success of the Chinese Village helped promote China, Chinese culture, and especially the financial abilities of the Chinese merchants who financed the Chinese Village at a key historic moment when American politicians were debating US expansion into the Pacific.

The anti-Chinese sentiments prevalent in the country, embodied in the Chinese exclusion acts since the 1880s, affected relations between the Chinese and the larger society even in Chicago. In the 1910s, downtown property owners raised rents, making it difficult for Chinese businesses to survive and forcing the vast majority of the Chinese to move to the city’s South Side in search of cheaper properties. On the South Side, the Chinese soon established a new Chinatown, known as South Chinatown today, which remains a major tourist attraction of the city.

Since the 1970s, the influx of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia has revitalized the Argyle Street area on the North Side, which has become known as North Chinatown. Meanwhile, the suburban Chinese communities have also been growing rapidly. Today, more than 100,000 Chinese Americans live in the Chicago area. From the gift shops, grocery stores and supermarkets, restaurants and bakeries, herb stores, medical clinics, insurance agencies, real estate agencies, and accountants in Chinatown, to the Argonne National Laboratory, Fermi Lab, Abbott Laboratories, Motorola, the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the Illinois Institute of Technology, and many other research institutions, universities, and colleges in the suburbs and nearby, Chinese Chicagoans are making valuable contributions to the larger society.

What attracted the Chinese to Chicago? How did they integrate into this communications and commercial center? How did they survive in this multiracial and multicultural industrial “jungle”? This study attempts to address these questions by exploring the history of the Chinese in Chicago from the three Moy brothers to the present-day Chinese Chicagoans and their transnational links to the homeland.