

Chapter 1



Nineteenth Century Immigration: Chinese Women Came to the Gold Mountain

When I came to America as a bride, I never knew I would be coming to a prison.

—A Chinese women in Butte, Montana

American history tells of the odyssey of one group of newcomers after another who came from different shores. The nineteenth and twentieth century women who migrated to the United States came from diverse backgrounds, with different motivations for migration. Irish and German women grew to adulthood in agrarian settings. Eastern European Jewish women's lives revolved around centuries-old legal and moral religious institutions. Southern Italian women gave their energies and loyalties to the close, virtually self-sufficient extended family. Despite the differences among them, these immigrant women had one thing in common: all were driven by economic forces.¹

Why did Chinese immigrant women come to America? Were their motives for immigration similar to or different from non-Chinese immigrant women? Historians have completed a great deal of research on the immigrant motivations for Chinese men. Shih-shan Henry Tsai has pointed out that internal problems in China such as the rapid increase in population since the late seventeenth century and the land concentration had caused Chinese immigration to overseas. However, Ronald Takaki has stressed that Chinese immigrants called *Gam Saan Haak* (or "gold mountain guest") came to America "searching for gold mountain."² Roger Daniels has concluded that Chinese immigrants were pushed by such forces in China as political persecution and the lack of economic opportunity, and

were pulled by the discovery of gold in California.³ Yet, few have addressed the above questions about Chinese women. To find out the particular reasons for the immigration of Chinese women, it is important to first look at the social conditions for women in nineteenth-century China.

Social Conditions for Women in Nineteenth-Century China

The position of women may have been high in prehistoric China as reflected in Chinese mythology.⁴ However, Chinese women lost their power as the society became patriarchal before 2,000 B.C. The predominance of Confucianism in the Han dynasty and its reinforcement in the Song dynasty contributed to the rapid deterioration of women's position.⁵ Nineteenth-century China was still a feudal society dominated by Confucianism. In this society women were generally subjected to at least three types of restrictions: ideological, socioeconomical, and physical.

First, the traditional Chinese philosophy provided an ideological system in which women were believed to be inferior and therefore they had to subject to male dominance. According to the Naturalists, one of the ancient Chinese philosophic schools, the universe was formed by two basic elements: *yin* and *yang*. The *yin* elements included female, earth, moon, darkness, weakness, and passivity; the *yang* elements were male, heaven, sun, light, strength, and activity.⁶ Although *yin* and *yang* elements are naturally complementary and balancing, female and male were not considered equal, as indicated in Confucian teachings, which adopted and developed the Naturalist belief.⁷ Throughout history, Confucian ideas served as social norms and legal codes to regulate women's behavior and conduct.⁸ According to these Confucian norms and codes, a woman should possess "four virtues" of obedience, timidity, reticence, and adaptability. She should subject her entire life to the dominance of men; "an unmarried girl should obey her father and elder brother, a married woman—her husband, a widow—her son."⁹

The above ideological theory justified and perpetuated women's lower socioeconomic status. Women were excluded from civil service, a main source of income for the ruling class in China. Women were not employed outside the home except for occupations related to reproduction or providing amusement and sexual pleasure for men: matchmakers, midwives, entertainers, prostitutes, and procuresses.¹⁰ Although peasant women largely participated in house-

hold handicraft such as spinning and weaving in North China, and in farmwork in South China to help support their families, the income they earned from such activities went to the family, and only the male head of the family could dispose of it.¹¹

Physical restrictions such as footbinding were also social practices that reinforced the concept of women as weaker, and inferior creatures. The exact origins of footbinding are obscure. It may have begun with dancers at the imperial court during the Tang dynasty. By the Song dynasty, the custom was introduced among upper class women.¹² During the Qing dynasty, the custom had become a practice throughout Chinese society at large.¹³ At quite a young age, girls had their feet tightly wrapped and gradually bent until the arch was broken and toes turned under. The "lily foot," produced by such practice, crippled women to the extent that they could barely walk without support.

Scholars have argued that footbinding had strong erotic appeal to the Chinese male, and this sexual psychopathology made it a common practice in China and lasted until the twentieth century.¹⁴ The more serious concern behind footbinding probably was the control of women in a male-dominated society. This was indicated explicitly in *Nu Er Jing* [Doctrines for Women], one of the classical books about virtuous women. "Feet are bound, not to make them beautiful as a curved bow, but to restrain the women when they go outdoors."¹⁵

Chinese women were not the only subordinate women of this time. Similar cases were also found among women of other cultures. The women of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910) in Korea led very comparable lives. They, too, were subjected to the male control of their fathers, husbands, and sons. Their roles primarily consisted of reproduction, nurturing, caretaking, and homemaking.¹⁶ Likewise, the women of Meiji Japan were also subordinate in the male-dominated society. They were denied property ownership, legal representation of the family, public education, and voting rights.¹⁷ A recent study of German immigrant women by Linda Schelbitzki Pickle has shown that German women in the nineteenth century were stripped of rights for owning property and attaining education.¹⁸ Similarly, a work on Irish immigrant women by Hasia R. Diner has also pointed out that in nineteenth-century Ireland, girls had no chance to inherit family land, and women were ruled by their husbands and usually lived with their parents-in-law.¹⁹ Compared to women of other cultures, Chinese women not only endured ideological and socioeconomic constraints of the society, a trait common among women of most traditional cultures, but also suffered the physical abuse of

footbinding imposed by the male authorities. Therefore Chinese women had more obstacles to overcome than did their counterparts in other cultures when they decided to come to America.

Motives for Immigration

Similar to their counterparts from other countries, early Chinese immigrant women were "pushed" by forces in China and "pulled" by attractions in the United States. The "push" mainly came from natural disaster and internal upheavals in China in the 1840s and 1850s. The "pull" resulted from a strong desire for family reunion, economic pursuit, and the will for personal fulfillment.

The decades of the 1840s and the 1850s in China were full of natural calamities. The major ones were the severe draught in Henan in 1847, the flooding of the Yangtze River in the four provinces of Hubei, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang, and the famine in Guangxi in 1849. Flood and famine in Guangdong gave way to the catastrophic Taiping Revolution (1850-1864), which devastated the land, uprooted the peasantry, and dislocated the economy and polity.

Moreover, the importation of opium deepened the social and economic crisis. As a result of the Opium War, opium traffic practically became unrestrained. The volume of import rose from 33,000 chests in 1842 to 46,000 chests in 1848, and to 52,929 chests in 1850. The year 1848 alone witnessed the outflow of more than ten million taels of silver, which exacerbated the already grave economic dislocation and copper-silver exchange rate. The disruptive economic consequence of opium importation was further compounded by the general influx of foreign goods in the open ports. Canton was particularly hit due to its longest history of foreign trade and the widest foreign contact. Local household industries collapsed and the self-sufficient agrarian economy suffered. Those who were adversely affected became potential emigrants.

Guangdong and Guangxi were the regions where *Hakka* (or "guest people") lived in compact communities. The *Hakka* were originally residents of central China who migrated to Guangdong and Guangxi during the Southern Song (A.D. 1127-1278) period when the dynasty moved south under the Mongol threat. Their different dialects, habits, and mode of life made them social outcasts, and it certainly was difficult for them to mix or assimilate with the natives. Collision between the two groups was bound to occur. As people without deep social roots, the *Hakka* were more independent, daring, and prone to action than were the natives. The *Hakka*



Figure 1.1. Young Ng She and Young Sum Wood, wife and child of Chinese merchant Young Kwong Hoy of Hawaii, 1918. Courtesy National Archives-Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California. Note Young Ng She's bound feet.

provided a large proportion of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century, especially to Hawaii. It is important to notice the fact that *Hakka* women had more physical mobility with their natural feet than did other contemporary Chinese women, which enabled them to better endure the hardship of immigration.

According to Ronald Takaki, of the 25,767 Chinese in 1900 in Hawaii, 3,471 (or 13.5 percent) were females, but of the 89,863 Chinese on the United States mainland, only 4,522 (or five percent) were females. Takaki has claimed that ethnic differences helped explain the reason why more Chinese women came to Hawaii: most

Chinese immigrants to Hawaii were *Hakka*, whereas the Chinese immigrants to the continental United States were *Punti* (or "local people"). The *Hakka* did not practice footbinding, and hence these women had a greater mobility to travel and work abroad. He has also noted the encouragement from the Hawaiian government and the plantation owners for women to come, and the favorable attitude toward the Chinese from whites in Hawaii.²⁰

Among the pulling factors, the desire for family reunion played an important role from the beginning of Chinese women's immigration. The ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius firmly believed that the family was the basic and fundamental unit of social organization and that family integrity and harmony was essential for a functioning society. Only if family bonds and socialization were developed properly throughout China could social harmony reign. A passage from the *Great Learning*, one of the "Four Books" that formed the core of Confucian learning, conveys this set of assumptions:

By enquiring into all things, understanding is made complete; with complete understanding, thought is made sincere; when thought is sincere, the mind is as it should be; when the mind is as it should be, the individual is morally cultivated; when the individual is morally cultivated, the family is well regulated; when the family is well regulated, the state is properly governed, the world is at peace.²¹

This Confucian ideology affected most Chinese families. Thus maintaining family solidarity seemed to be a vital cause for Chinese women entering the United States. According to immigration records, among the thousands of women who were admitted to enter the United States between 1898 and 1908, more than ninety percent were joining their husbands or fathers in America.²²

In 1886, Kwong Long, a Chinese merchant residing in New York, went to China and brought his wife and daughter back with him.²³ In the same year, Lai Lee Shee came to San Francisco from Canton to meet her merchant husband, Lai Moow.²⁴

Many Chinese daughters also came to America to unite with their fathers who were American citizens or to marry Chinese merchants in the United States. Most Chinese immigrants during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century believed that it was safer and less expensive to raise their daughters in China, due to the anti-Chinese sentiment on the West Coast and their financial difficulties.²⁵ As soon as these daughters came of age, they would be brought to America for a prospective marriage. An article in an unidentified newspaper on July 12, 1888 in "Customs Case File Related to Chi-



Figure 1.2. Chinese bride, San Francisco, 1900. Courtesy Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

nese Immigration, 1877–1891” reported a story in which four Chinese girls came to America to join their fathers and to marry Chinese merchants. Lum Pink Hee and Lum Pink On, daughters of Lum Dock Fune, a Chinese merchant of San Francisco, and Ng Ah Hoe and Ng Ah Ying, daughters of Ng Hog Hoy, also a Chinese merchant from San Francisco, arrived in San Francisco on the steamer George W. Elder in July, 1888. Their entry to America, however, was

denied because they failed to provide certificates. They sued with a writ of habeas corpus in the United States circuit court and were granted the right to land. Ng Ah Hoe, who was twenty-one years old and had bound feet, and Lum Pink Hee were going to marry Chinese merchants respectively.²⁶

In addition to the desire for a family reunion, Chinese immigrant women were also driven by economic conditions to enter the United States. Ah Toy, one of the first Chinese immigrant women, arrived alone in San Francisco in 1849 from Hong Kong to "better her condition." She soon became the earliest and most successful Chinese courtesan in San Francisco. Men were known to line up for a block and pay an ounce of gold (sixteen dollars) just "to gaze upon the countenance of the charming Ah Toy."²⁷ She also became a well-known figure in the courtroom. Unlike most Chinese prostitutes who were taught to fear the police and avoid the courts at all costs, Ah Toy "was tremendously impressed with the American judiciary system and took many of her personal problems there for settlement."²⁸ She appeared in court a number of times to defend her profession and to sue those clients who paid her with brass fillings instead of gold.²⁹ To Ah Toy, America was really a "mountain of gold."

The lure of gold also led other Chinese women to become slaves or prostitutes. Wong Ah So, one of the early Chinese prostitutes in California, described her tragic experience. "I was nineteen when this man came to my mother and said that in America there was a great deal of gold. . . . He was a laundryman, but said he earned plenty of money. He was very nice to me, and my mother liked him, so my mother was glad to have me go with him as his wife. I thought I was his wife, and was very grateful that he was taking me to such a grand, free country, where everyone was rich and happy." But two weeks after Wong Ah So arrived in San Francisco, she was shocked to learn that her companion had taken her to America as a "slave" and that she would be forced to work as a prostitute.³⁰

Many merchant wives were also attracted by the economic opportunities in the United States. Mrs. C, a second generation Chinese American woman, recalled her family history in which her mother's marriage exemplified the common belief that America was a place full of gold.

My father spent many years to save enough money for his marriage. So when he had enough money to support a family, he was already a middle-aged man. He went to Guangdong, China to marry my mother when she was sixteen (my father was twenty-seven years older than my mother). . . . My mother was eager to

come to America. Influenced by her parents and other people, she believed that America was a great place.³¹

Some Chinese women came to the United States neither out of a desire for family union nor for economic pursuit. They sailed the Pacific Ocean for their own personal fulfillment. A few Chinese female students arrived in the United States as early as 1881.³² According to a survey conducted by the China Institute in America in 1954, the number of these students continued to increase after the turn of the century. Between 1910 and 1930, their population increased sixfold in direct proportion to the overall increase in Chinese student population as a whole (see table 1.1). Since the survey probably did not include all Chinese students in the United States, the actual number of Chinese female students in America was likely even greater than the number indicated in table 1.1.

Restrictions on the Entry of Chinese Women

Initially, very few women followed their men to the "Gold Mountain," and the Chinese communities in America were characterized as "bachelor societies" for a long time.³³ There are three main factors contributing to the shortage of women in Chinese immigration: (1) lack of financial capability of Chinese immigrant men, (2) restrictions from Chinese society, and (3) restrictive American immigration policies and their enforcement.

Many of the first Chinese male immigrants came to the United States as indentured, contract laborers, and coolies.³⁴ They relied on the credit-ticket system, under which they obtained their passage from Chinese merchants who were reimbursed by relatives of the travelers or by future employers. In turn, the newcomers worked for whomever extended the credit until the debt was paid. Given this situation, the early Chinese male immigrants had to leave their women behind.

Even after they paid the debt, their meager earnings did not permit them to support families in the United States. A laundryman, the typical Chinese immigrant in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, for example, made \$100 a month at most in the 1910s, which was not sufficient to support a family.³⁵

Some interviews of Chinese immigrants in the mid-1920s along the Pacific Coast conducted by researchers from the Survey of Race Relations project also revealed that financial constraint was a major reason for Chinese men not to bring their wives. As one wrote:

Table 1.1
Chinese Students in American Colleges
and Universities, 1900-1930
 (Number of Students by Year of Entry)

<i>Year of Entry</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Sex not Indicated</i>	<i>Total</i>
1900	3			3
1901	12		2	14
1902	7	1		8
1903	4	1		5
1904	18	2	1	21
1905	24		1	25
1906	55	4	1	60
1907	69	1	1	71
1908	64	6	7	77
1909	58	3	8	69
1910	90	6	11	107
1911	77	7	6	90
1912	69	4	6	79
1913	109	14	15	138
1914	155	16	19	190
1915	172	17	24	213
1916	143	19	19	181
1917	136	21	16	173
1918	183	26	20	229
1919	219	20	22	261
1920	322	26	47	395
1921	304	40	43	387
1922	307	49	47	403
1923	351	32	43	426
1924	322	32	29	383
1925	279	37	33	349
1926	266	42	33	341
1927	233	50	19	302
1928	237	43	26	306
1929	286	34	20	340
1930	248	40	28	316

Source: China Institute in America, *A Survey of Chinese Students in American Colleges and Universities in the Past Hundred Years* (New York, 1954), 26-27.

Not enough money to bring her over here. I would bring her here if I had enough money. She wants to come very bad.³⁶

In addition to the limited financial resources, restrictions in Chinese society also prevented Chinese women from coming to America. As discussed earlier, the ideological, socioeconomical, and physical constraints imposed on women in feudal China crippled

women and restricted all aspects of their lives. As a daughter-in-law, a woman was supposed to bear children and serve her husband and parents-in-law. Since Confucian ideas placed filial piety above all other virtues, a daughter-in-law should consider staying in China to serve her parents-in-law a greater moral responsibility than joining her husband in America. In addition to preservation of moral values, it also made economic sense for many parents of emigrant sons to keep their daughters-in-law in China. Some parents deliberately kept their daughters-in-law with them in order to secure the remittances from their sons abroad.³⁷ Immigration records also revealed that some Chinese women who came to America to join their husbands did so after their parents-in-law passed away.³⁸

The financial incapability of the early Chinese immigrants and the restrictions of Chinese society discouraged Chinese women from emigrating. Yet, a more important reason for the gross disproportion between males and females in Chinese immigrant communities was anti-Chinese sentiment among the American public which led to American exclusion acts. Scholars in Asian American studies have completed comprehensive research on the anti-Chinese movement in America in recent decades. Such scholars as Stuart C. Miller argued that hostilities toward the Chinese were a part of the general xenophobia of white Protestant Americans. Racists viewed these supposed fears, the belief that "Mongolia" blood was debased and the Chinese mind was politically retarded, and further Chinese immigration would threaten Aryan dominance in America. Other writers, like Elmer C. Sandmeyer, believed that economic considerations were most important in causing anti-immigrant feeling, particularly because Chinese laborers became unwitting pawns in American labor-management disputes during the series of economic recessions beginning in 1870. Cultural anthropologist Francis L. K. Hsu has seen the problem as a classic cultural misunderstanding: the majority of white Americans were ignorant of Chinese culture and their ignorance produced prejudice. On the other hand, because of the language barrier, different customs, syncretistic religion, and other traditions, the Chinese remained isolated from the whites. They tried to place a comfortable distance between themselves and the unfriendliness in the looks and acts of their co-workers or neighbors. Unfortunately, the voluntary Chinese separation stamped them with a badge of inferiority.³⁹

More recently, some historians have argued that restrictive immigration laws and their enforcement were mainly responsible for the shortage of Chinese women in Chinese immigrant communities. Vincent Tang claimed that beginning in 1882 a series of

immigration acts (1882, 1888, 1892, 1902, 1907, and 1924) successfully restricted the immigration of Chinese women. Since the exclusion acts did not define explicitly how the policy of exclusion was to be carried out, Tang further argued, "deportation sentences were carried out under the auspices of the Immigration Department with the sanction of the courts."⁴⁰ George Anthony Peffer's study asserted that even before the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the Page Law of 1875 had effectively kept Chinese women out.⁴¹ The Page Law of 1875 forbade the entry of Chinese, Japanese, and "Mongolian" contract laborers, and women for the purpose of prostitution. Supporting Peffer's argument, Sucheng Chan's findings further revealed that in the decade before the passage of Page Law, the state of California passed several pieces of legislation to restrict Chinese women. "An Act for the Suppression of Chinese Houses of Ill Fame," passed on March 21, 1866, denounced Chinese prostitution and penalized landlords who allowed their properties to be used for immoral purposes. In addition, "An Act to Prevent the Kidnapping and Importation of Mongolia, Chinese, and Japanese Female, for Criminal or Demoralizing Purposes," passed on March 8, 1870, made it illegal "to bring, or land from any ship, boat or vessel, into this state."⁴²

These exclusion laws effectively banned most Chinese women from joining their husbands. The records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service indicate that the majority of the Chinese women entering the United States between 1882 and 1943 were wives and daughters of Chinese merchants. They were exempted from the exclusion laws due to the nature of class prejudice in the American immigrant policy and the U.S. trade with China.⁴³

Despite the exclusion laws, many Chinese women were anxious to reunite with their families and to have a chance for a better life. They attempted to enter the United States by impersonating family members of classes exempted from the Exclusion Act—merchants and United States citizens. Some Chinese laborers, in order to bring their families to America, changed their status from laborer to merchant by faking a partnership in a grocery store.⁴⁴ Others were smuggled by train or boat from Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.⁴⁵

How Chun Pong's case vividly depicts how the smuggling was conducted. How Chun Pong landed in Vancouver, Canada, in 1899, where he worked as a laundryman for four years and then was smuggled to the United States by train. Later he moved to St. Louis to run a hand laundry until he was arrested in 1913 for smoking and dealing opium. In his testimony, he described his illegal entry to Harry C. Allen, the United States Immigration Inspector:

I boarded the train with a white man at Montreal. It was quite dark, and when I got in the car there was no one there except the white man and myself, when the train run about several hours until daylight and then the train stopped I don't know the name of the station. I was put in a small room on the train first and then I was brought out in the car where there [were] other passengers. And I left the train at New York City. . . . [I paid] \$130 to the Chinese smuggler [in Montreal] and he paid the white man.⁴⁶

After 1923, however, Canada and Mexico passed their own exclusion laws, which meant a double barrier for smugglers to overcome. Therefore, smuggling was not a commonly used method of illegal entry.⁴⁷

Immigration authorities responded by assuming all Chinese immigrants were guilty of fraudulent entry until proven otherwise and singled them out for prolonged detention and interrogation at entry points. During the period when the Angel Island Immigration Station was operating (1910–1940), immigration officials climbed aboard and inspected the passengers' documents each time a ship arrived in San Francisco. They allowed those with satisfactory papers to go ashore. "The remainder were transferred to a small steamer and ferried to the immigration station on Angel Island to await hearings on their application for entry. Although a few whites and other Asians were held at the detention center, the majority of the detainees were Chinese."⁴⁸

Even though some historians have compared Angel Island with Ellis Island and called it the "Ellis Island of the West," they were very different. Located in the Hudson River, Ellis Island was a symbol of America's immigrant heritage. In the late-nineteenth century, millions of immigrants left their homeland in the hope of making a fortune in the New World. In the forty years before the Civil War, five million immigrants poured into the United States; from 1860 to 1900 that volume almost tripled.⁴⁹ The "old immigrants," those who came from the British Isles, Germany, and Scandinavia before 1880, were predominantly English-speaking with some skills and wealth. The "new immigrants" from rural areas of southern and eastern Europe were poor, unskilled, unable to speak English, and mostly Italian Catholics and eastern European Jews. Conservative Americans saw the influx of new immigrants as a threat to American democracy and ways of life when the new immigrants crowded urban industrial cities. The American union leaders looked at the cheap immigrant laborers as strike-breakers. The racist nativists were afraid that the new immigrants would dilute the American Anglo-Saxon Protestant stock. Responding to the

anti-immigration cry, the federal government revised its immigration regulations. It opened the immigration station on Ellis Island on January 1, 1892 as more than seventy percent of all newcomers landed in New York, the country's largest port. Ellis Island ushered in a new era of immigration with each newcomer's eligibility to land now determined by federal law.

The screening first began on the steamships that reached New York Harbor. First- and second-class passengers were processed on boardship, but third- or steerage-class passengers were ferried to Ellis Island where they underwent medical and legal examinations in the Main Building. In this regard, both Ellis Island and Angel Island immigration stations were designed to handle more effectively the increasing volume of new immigrants. They discouraged the newcomers, especially the poor, through humiliating medical examinations, separate hospitalization, and intimidating interrogation.

The two immigration stations, however, differed in their respective functions. Ellis Island was merely a way station; for the vast majority of European immigrants, the processing took only between three and five hours. During peak periods at Ellis Island, as many as five thousand people each day would be checked, questioned, and sent on their way. First, the immigrants entered the Registry room inside the immigration building where they underwent a medical examination. Doctors, hired by the immigration station, removed their hats, peeled back their collars, and flipped up their eyelids with buttonhooks. Then, the immigrants were marked on their coats with chalk: Sc for scalp diseases, G for goiter, or CT for trachoma, a highly contagious eye disease. About twenty percent of the immigrants were chalk-marked and pulled out of line for further examination. The rest moved forward for questioning from immigration officials. The questions asked in this two-minute-long process included occupation, sex, marital status, place and date of birth, political orientation, destination, and job situation. Suddenly, about eighty percent of the new immigrants found they were free. Most of those detained for medical reasons were eventually released. Only two percent of immigrants were denied entry and deported to their home countries. These unfortunate people usually were unaccompanied women, children, the elderly, trachoma patients, and contract laborers.⁵⁰

On the other hand, Angel Island was set up as a detention center for Asian, mainly Chinese immigrants. The immigration detention center on Angel Island was a two-story wooden structure, where men and women were held separately. The duration of im-

prisonment was often months. Immigrants were first taken to a hospital for medical examinations. Those afflicted with parasitic diseases such as trachoma, hookworm, and liver fluke were excluded and deported. The rest were sent back to their dormitories to await the hearing on their application.⁵¹

Regardless of the validity of the Chinese arrival's legal documents for entry, a Chinese woman had to go through an extensive



Figure 1.3. Plaque in front of the Immigration Station, Angel Island, erected in 1978. The engraved Chinese characters say "Leaving home behind and being detained in wooden shed, looking for new life by the Golden Gate." Huping Ling Collection.

cross-interrogation on family, home life, and native village. The questions asked in the case of Wong Shee were typical of the cross-interrogation. Wong Shee was wife of Mark Tau, a native-born Chinese laundryman in San Francisco. In September 1920, she and her two young sons, Mark Woon Koey and Mark Woon Hew, came to America to join her husband and her elder sons, Mark Woon Nging and Mark Woon Noon. As soon as the ship arrived in San Francisco on September 1, Wong Shee and her sons were detained in the immigration station on Angel Island. During her hearing on

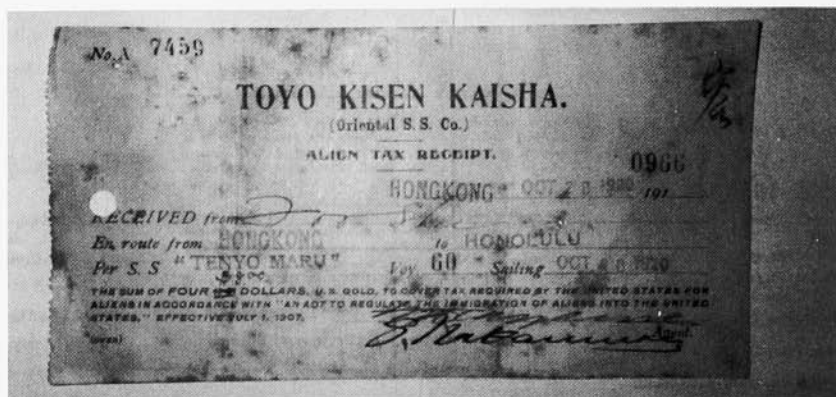


Figure 1.4. Chinese merchant wife Foa Shee's steamship ticket, 1920. Courtesy National Archives-Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.

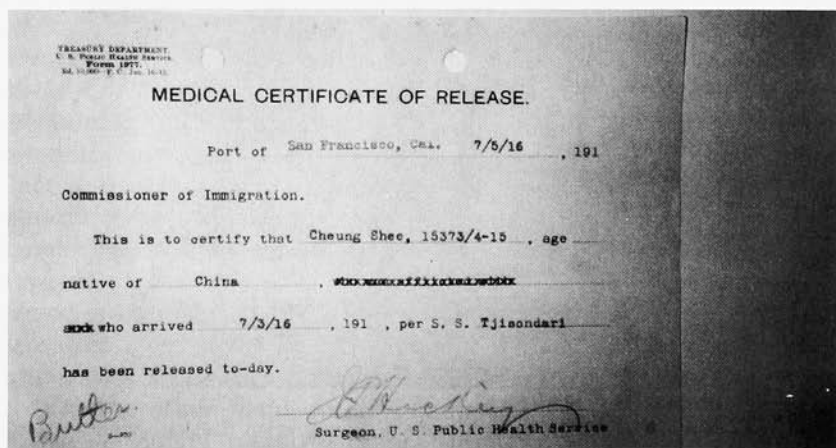


Figure 1.5. A Medical Certificate of Release issued to Chinese merchant wife Cheung Shee by the hospital on Angel Island Immigration Station, 1916. Courtesy National Archives-Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.

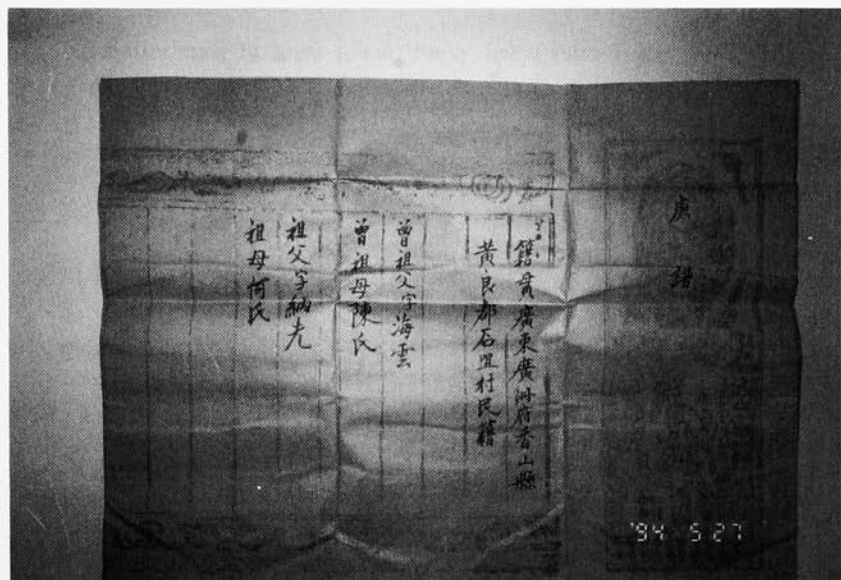


Figure 1.6. A family tree, served as marriage license brought by a Chinese immigrant woman, 1916. Courtesy National Archives-Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.

October 22, 1920, she was asked the following questions in an interrogation by immigrant inspector J. P. Butler:

- Q: Which way does the village face?
 A: It faces north.
 Q: How are the houses arranged in the village?
 A: Arranged in rows.
 Q: How many in each row?
 A: All in one row across the front of the village from head to tail.
 Q: Which one is your house?
 A: Counting from the east, mine is the second house.
 Q: Have you ever lived in any other house in that village?
 A: No.
 Q: Is there a wall around your village or any side of it?
 A: No.
 Q: Any trees or bamboo on any side?
 A: Trees and bamboo on both sides and a hill in the rear.
 Q: Any trees or shrubs of any kind in the rear?
 A: No.
 Q: What is in front?
 A: Nothing in front.
 Q: Has your village a fish pond?

- A: No.
- Q: Was there ever a fish pond in the front of your village?
- A: No.
- Q: Is there any ditch of water in the front?
- A: No.
- Q: Is there any low land in the front of the village in which the water remains?
- A: No.
- Q: Is there a fish pond on any side of your village?
- A: No.
- Q: Do you know what a fish pond is?
- A: Yes, it is a pond that holds fish but we have no pond in our village.
- Q: Is there any pond near your village which might belong to some other village?
- A: I don't know of any.
- Q: What kind of country is your village located on?
- A: It is farm land, level.
- Q: State the name of the village in the immediate vicinity of yours, as well as direction and distance.
- A: Gop Son village, two li east. Hock Bo to the west, two li. Lung Chee Hong, 21 li south. Lung Mee village to the north, two li.⁵²

In Wong Shee's case, Butler repeatedly probed Wong Shee on the question of the fish pond because Mark Tau, Mark Woon Nging, and Mark Woon Noon had respectively testified that there was a fish pond in their native village. After comparing the testimony of Wong Shee, her husband, and her sons, Butler found that there were no other discrepancies except on the fish pond. On this issue, Butler considered Mark Tau's statement that the pond was dry for most part of the year. Therefore, he concluded that there was no discrepancy on this point. Consequently, Wong Shee and her two sons were granted the right to land after almost two months' detention.

In another case, the applicant's testimony disagreed with that of the witness, and her entry was denied. Wong Yee Gue was the wife of Yee Home Sue, a native-born Chinese in New York.⁵³ On April 19, 1915, Wong Yee Gue arrived in San Francisco and applied for admission as the wife of a native. Two days after she was detained in Angel Island, she went through her hearings. Immigrant inspector A. M. Long found Wong Yee Gue's testimony contradictory to that of other witnesses. The issues dealt mainly with the questions of natural feet and the status of the neighbor in Wong Yee Gue's village. Long therefore recommended Wong Yee Gue's admission be denied.

Chinese Consulate General
San Francisco

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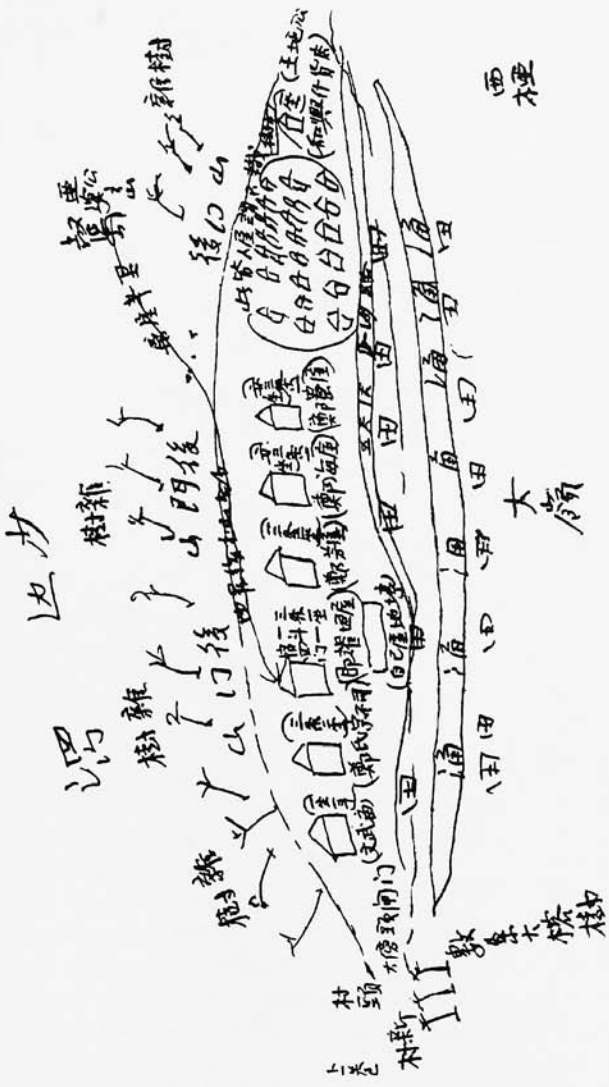


Figure 1.7.A. Map of village in China prepared by Chinese immigrants for interrogation by American immigration officials, 1927. Courtesy National Archives-Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.

