THE CHINESE

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The Chinese were among the earliest people to migrate to the Islands, following European and American traders and adventurers, arriving even before the missionaries of 1820. At one time in the 1880s Chinese were almost a quarter of the total population. Although forming only about 6 percent of the total population in recent decades, they have taken significant roles in agriculture, economics, politics, and education and participated readily in the social life of the community. Chinese men and women are enthusiastic supporters of the arts, music, and social welfare. Among Island groups, the Chinese have one of the highest median incomes.

Although there are social organizations largely Chinese in membership, there is no cohesive Chinese community. Chinatown, for example, has never since its earliest beginning been entirely occupied by Chinese. Today less than 20 percent of the residents of the 15 blocks of central Chinatown are Chinese. Chinese live, work, and play as do others in Hawai'i. Assimilation has been rapid.

Pioneers and Adventurers, 1788-1852

Soon after the Islands were made known to the world in 1778, European and American vessels on the China trade began to stop for provisions, to winter over, and to trade. Native Hawaiians were taken on some vessels as crew. From the China side, Chinese were recruited as carpenters, cooks, and crew. An early contact between Hawaiians and China occurred in 1787 when Chief Kaiana of Kaua'i left for Canton with Captain John Meares on the ship *Nootka*. Within a year, he and several other Hawaiians returned to the Islands. Among the crew on the return voyage were fifty or so Chinese workmen being taken to Nootka Sound to help build a 40-ton schooner. Later, when that new ship stopped in Hawai'i on its maiden voyage to China, Kamehameha I asked that a carpenter remain to help build a similar ship for him, and it is surmised that Chinese carpenters remained in Hawai'i in 1788. The next year Chinese crewmen on Captain

Metcalfe's *Eleanora* did stay in the Islands, and the Chinese community used that 1789 date to celebrate, in 1939, the 150th anniversary of the first Chinese arrival.

When it was learned that Island sandalwood could be sold in China, American traders came from the Atlantic coast with British printed cottons, broadcloth, and hardware to barter for sandalwood. While wood was being collected by agents, the ships went to the Northwest for furs to add to their cargo of sandalwood. The sandalwood trade lasted from 1792 to about 1830, when forests were depleted, but Chinese still call Hawai'i the "Sandalwood Mountains" (*Tan Heung Shan*).

On voyages from China when there was insufficient cargo the ships were sometimes ballasted with hitching posts, millstones, and paving slabs of white Chinese granite. The paving stones may still be seen in some downtown Honolulu sidewalks.

Most early Chinese adventurers were familiar with crude sugar production and when they saw sugarcane growing wild they naturally went about milling it, becoming pioneers in the sugar industry and serving also on embryonic plantations. Native Hawaiians and Anglo-Americans were friendly toward them, and they married Hawaiian women, founding families with many well-respected descendants. By the 1850s, sugar as the chief export crop dominated the economy and planters began to look to outside sources for cheap agricultural labor, bringing their first contract laborers from China in 1852.

Contract Laborers and Free Immigrants, 1852-1898

The Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society in August 1851 arranged with Captain John Cass to bring the first group of Chinese contract laborers and he recruited 180 men and 20 boys from Amoy, a southern Fukien port. On the long trip of fifty-five days on the British bark *Thetis* five died, so that only 195 arrived 3 January 1852. The contract was for five years at $3 per month in addition to passage money, food, clothing, and lodging. A second trip in 1852 by Cass brought 98 contract laborers, again from Amoy. Captain Cass also brought such new plants as kumquats, lychee, and pomelo.

Until this time there had been fewer than 100 Chinese among the foreign population of 1,962 in 1850. Chinese were mostly merchants, sugar masters, and shop-keepers. Arrival of the contract laborers was hailed with delight. They were looked upon as industrious, economical, and careful. *The Polynesian* published an *aloha* editorial January 1852 to welcome them, saying this new experiment in labor importation was of considerable importance to the Islands.

In December 1864 Kamehameha V recommended to the Legislature that government, not the private planters' group, assume responsibility for procuring foreign labor. The new Bureau of Immigration, established March 1865, appointed Dr. William Hillebrand Royal Commissioner of Immigration and sent him to investigate sources of labor in Asia. He found the Chinese the cheapest and most eligible for they worked hard and were more easily obtained. Hong Kong was chosen as the emigration port from which to recruit men from the Pearl River delta area of Hong Kong, Canton, and Macao, the area best known to China traders. The most convenient and major source was in nearby Heungshan district which, since 1925, has been called Chungshan to honor its native son, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, a sometime Island resident whose honorific name is "Chungshan."

With the boom in the sugar economy brought on by the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 which allowed sugar to be exported into the U.S. duty free, the need for Chinese labor was even greater. By 1884 a total of 17,937 Chinese made up 22.3 percent of the total population of 80,579. In 1886, of the total 14,539 sugar plantation employees, 5,626 or almost 40 percent were Chinese laborers, and there was agitation to restrict their immigration and look to other sources.

The Chinese labored in the sugar, pineapple, and coffee industries. Rice was another crop that owed much to their efforts, as owners of plantations and as employees. At its height of production in 1890, as many as 4,500 metric tons of rice were exported. Severe competition from rice grown in California, Texas, and Louisiana later led to decline of the Island industry.

Opposition to Chinese immigration increased. Restrictive legislation and the planters' search for other labor led to greater immigration by other groups. After Annexation in 1898, U.S. exclusion laws closed the doors to further Chinese immigration except for merchants, diplomats, clergymen, teachers, students, and immediate family of persons already here. Chinese on sugar plantations dropped to fewer than 4,000 in 1902, fewer than 1,500 by 1922, and to 706 in 1932. By 1959, fewer than 300 were on sugar plantations.

Isolated in plantation camps, early Chinese laborers followed their own life styles and the traditional practices of China. To meet the need for a gathering place, they established *wui-goon* (meeting halls), a form of fraternal lodge of the Hoong Moon type, sometimes called "Triads" or "Chinese Masons." As members were men in their prime, the idea of a sworn brotherhood with secret rituals gave significance to Kwan Dai as their patron saint, for he had been known for his loyalty to fraternity, chivalry, patriotism, and traditional morality. These buildings had shrines on the second floor or even third floor. To provide for the needs and wishes of women, the clubhouse or lodge sometimes had shrine rooms in the back for the worship of Kuan Yin, goddess of mercy, and other special deities. The chief concerns of the lodges were care for the elderly and sick, burial for the dead, and settling of disputes. Clubhouses on isolated plantation camps were for socializing and recreation.

At the same time as the coming of more and more contract laborers, an even larger number of Chinese came as free immigrants, on their own financially or assisted by family or fellow clansmen in China or Hawai'i. They were free to seek employment of their own choice, though many chose, nonetheless, to find their first jobs on plantations. In 1886 only 803 Chinese were classified as "contract" while 4,736 were listed as "free labor" on sugar plantations.

Among free immigrants more and more women and children came to join husbands and fathers. In 1884 only 5 percent of Chinese men had Chinese wives in Hawai'i. By 1900 the number increased to 6.9 percent and by 1920 rose to over 23 percent. Some women joined their men in the fields but these were relatively few. Chinese women took in sewing at home, raised vegetables and poultry, or became domestics. Free immigrants became intermingled with contract laborers who had left the plantations. Among both groups were those who returned to China, while others remained to find desirable occupations. Their savings bore fruit in small enterprises like peddling, cobbling, or in businesses like bakeries or coffee shops requiring little capital.

The relatively heavier concentration of Chinese in Honolulu generated two "umbrella organizations" to assume wider functions for their benefit: (1) The United Chinese Society or Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Society (Chung-wa wui-goon) and (2) Merchants' Association, which later became the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (Chung-wa sheong-wui). Other social organizations were formed according to regional or geographic affiliations of district, subdistrict, or village ties; surname or kinship organizations; trade guilds or occupational societies; societies for cultivation of literature, music, physical culture; China-oriented political parties; miscellaneous types including burial and cemetery associations, shrines and temples, language schools, and the Chinese press. Traditional Chinese societies in Hawai'i used the terms *hui-kuan*, *kung-si* or *tong* as parts of their names, but they did not engage in the illicit activities which erupted elsewhere in "tong wars" used to settle disputes that could not be taken to court.

Annexation to Statehood, 1898-1976

No Longer Sojourners: Chinese first came to Hawai'i as sojourners (*wah kiu*), to stay long enough to accumulate savings and return to the mother country. Favorable conditions, however, encouraged permanent settlement. Hawai'i, a frontier, was an open society which, after U.S. annexation, promised individual freedom, better social conditions, and greater economic opportunity. This social climate encouraged assimilation and Island-born Chinese soon were recognized as good examples of acculturation. They had the earliest opportunity among non-Caucasian immigrants to establish themselves and to earn fuller participation in a new, common culture.

The Role of Women: The women who left China for Hawai'i followed the tradition of "Three Duties of a Woman" (*sam-ch'ung*): obedience to father, to husband, and to son. And they observed "Four Virtues of a Woman" (*see-tuck*): chastity, proper speech, work, and demeanor. In the liberal social climate in Hawai'i, the status of women changed dramatically. National trends for equal protection and treatment of women prevail. More and more women find employment when they can leave their children in safe hands. It is now common for both parents to be employed, even to the extent of both being professionals, both with equally demanding responsibilities. There is increased family income with concomitant economic and social change for the family. Instead of being confined to the family or her own cultural group, the modern, educated Chinese woman has more social contacts with people of similar education and refinement. She finds satisfaction and growth in being a professional person, a political figure, or a participant in community organizations. She becomes concerned, with other Americans, about the serious social problems of a rapidly changing American society—child delinquency, divorce, drugs, dependence on welfare, etc.

Changes in Social Custom: Early Chinese arrivals maintained social institutions brought from rural villages or towns in south China. The strongest, an all-pervading one, was the family and kinship system based upon parental control. Some features, such as arranged marriages, were later discarded or modified to fit new social patterns. Some practices continued, although anachronistic and long-discarded in modern China. Some old marriage customs, such as trousseaux from the bride or "show of wealth" ceremonial packets of money (*li-see*) from the groom, and expensive nine-course dinner receptions are still maintained by some of the younger generation, probably because of peer pressures upon their parents from friends and relatives. The cost of expensive weddings is usually shared by parental negotiation.

Funeral customs have also changed. There is no overnight wake. There is increased use of non-sectarian, non-racial memorial parks with perpetual care and other conveniences. In rural areas of O'ahu and on Neighbor Islands are many abandoned Chinese cemeteries where weathered gravestones bear inscriptions of identity and home districts of the deceased. Ch'ing-ming (clean, bright) Festival, when "worshipping at ancestral graves" (*bai-san*) ceremonies are observed, occurs in April, now much modified and more like the American Memorial Day.

As to religious faiths and practices, the traditional religion of the early Chinese combined the beliefs of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism with some worship of the supernatural. Chinese immigrants made adjustment also to a society based on Christian beliefs. The 1840 constitution officially declared Hawai'i a Christian nation, but there was tolerance enough to allow Chinese temples and shrines. Some Chinese immigrants were already Christians, many more were converted after Chinese churches were established. There is no Confucian temple in Hawai'i, but a Confucian Society supports Mun Lun Chinese Language

School. Few of the younger generation use temples and shrines.

Two older Chinese Christian churches still offer bilingual services. Neighbor Island churches established by Chinese have mostly been closed or consolidated with other ethnic churches because of the population movement to Honolulu. The trend continues for neighborhood Christian churches to welcome all ethnic groups as one congregation.

Family Changes: Chinese tradition long favored four generations under one roof (*see-doi tung-tong*). Today it is rare for two generations to share a home. There is increasing use of retirement homes for elders, living apart from their children.

Hawai'i follows a national trend of interest in ethnic studies, searching for answers to "Who am I?" or "What is my ancestral heritage?" This may often involve greater family awareness. Chinese genealogy records (*gar-pu*) are based on male lineage, and immigrant fathers in Hawai'i usually reported only the birth of sons for family registers kept in ancestral halls in China. Today there is a trend to keep genealogical records in the Western style of family histories and to include both male and female lineage. To fulfill some of these needs, the Hawai'i Chinese History Center was organized in 1970 as a non-profit institution doing historical research—recording oral history, publication, conservation of worthwhile buildings, records, artifacts, photographs, and general dissemination of materials on Hawai'i Chinese.

Changes in Education and Schools: Chinese respect for education is well known. It was the means to higher economic, political, and social status. The people of China once exalted the scholar. While most early immigrants did not have formal education, they were offered opportunity through missionary efforts and many also became self-taught in Chinese and English. They gave their children the best possible educational advantages in the new land. In 1920, when school attendance was compulsory for children up to fourteen years of age and optional thereafter, 69 percent of Chinese children sixteen to seventeen years of age were in school as contrasted with 36.8 percent for all others of the same age.

Chinese language schools were established early, about 1910, for the study of the language and culture. They survive, patronized mostly by children of newest immigration and less by the Island-born. At one time the older generation looked to China for a few years of training in Chinese language, history, and culture for their offspring.

Changes in Immigration and Naturalization: Pro-Chinese sympathy in World War II led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign, on 17 December 1943, a bill repealing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, thereby correcting what he once called "an historical mistake." In 1965 new immigration laws abolished the old quota system and created a more liberal one for immigrants from Far East countries. New Chinese immigrants, mainly coming through Taiwan and Hong Kong, are now eligible for naturalization and citizenship, as are long-time alien residents who had been ineligible after annexation. Prior to annexation, Chinese could become naturalized Hawaiian citizens and, at one time, were encouraged to do so before marriage with Hawaiian women.

Changes in Social Organization: In monarchy days the United Chinese Society petitioned for franchise, i.e., voting rights, for the same privileges and rights accorded other residents. The society sponsored the Wai Wa Chinese Hospital, 1897-1907, which later became Palolo Chinese Home for old and infirm men. In recent years facilities have been added for women residents. State and federal programs have modified some of the welfare functions once assumed by Chinese societies. Leadership is now in the hands of the Island-born or bilingual persons. The United Chinese Society sponsors the annual Chinese Father and Chinese Mother-of-the-Year banquet and awards, has added English language classes for new immigrants, and offers help in the annual alien registration. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce, losing membership as old Chinatown stores closed, is now led by younger business and professional men. It helps sponsor an annual Narcissus Festival—and a "Narcissus Queen" contest—started in 1949 to bolster Chinatown business and Chinese culture, the narcissus being a symbol of the New Year. With urban renewal, other social organizations in old Chinatown or the area surrounding it have moved or are dissolving for lack of support. Some societies have added women's auxiliaries and youth divisions to attract more participation.

From China Politics to American Politics: Though far from the jurisdiction of Imperial China, Island Chinese supported efforts to overthrow the alien Manchu rulers and restore the Ming dynasty (*fan-Ch'ing* *fuk-Ming*) by participation in fund drives to support such revolutionaries as Dr. Sun Yat-sen—who made several trips to Hawai'i, his "typhoon shelter," to escape arrest and to raise funds and support. Those emigrating to Hawai'i had little or no national consciousness when they left China but in the Islands they felt a lack of support from their weakened mother country. Bemoaning her disastrous state, they rallied to Dr. Sun, contributing funds and some manpower. Dr. Sun was a compatriot from their ancestral district of Chung-shan, and, furthermore, he had spent some time in Hawai'i while attending Iolani School in Honolulu. Others were spurred to nationalism by such political thinkers as K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, both Cantonese, who had also sought political asylum in Hawai'i. They advocated retaining a monarchy at Peking but with sufficient corrective measures to right the wrongs of the Ch'ing government. The issues were heatedly discussed in the Chinese press and at mass meetings. Such issues became moot with time and disappointment with the Chinese Republic's inadequacies. In recent years the Hawai'i Chinese community has followed a dispassionate policy of economic and cultural contacts with Taiwan, while having some exchange with the People's Republic of China, in line with the 1972 U.S. normalization of relations.

Chinese, born and educated in Hawai'i, a part of America, have been active in local politics. The first Chinese elected to public office were K. C. Ahana and his brother, K. M. Ahana, elected in 1919 as treasurer and auditor, respectively, of Kaua'i County. The Hawai'i Chinese Civic Association was organized in 1925 under the leadership of college graduates returned from the American mainland where they had faced discrimination despite their American citizenship. At home they campaigned for Chinese candidates in local elections. In 1926 Dr. Dai Yen Chang became the first Chinese elected to the Honolulu Board of Supervisors. In 1927, Yew Char became the first Chinese elected to the Territorial House of Representatives and in 1929 Apau Paul Low was elected a Maui senator in the Legislature. A survey of the 1976 Legislature shows a good representation of Chinese (by their names, not by physical features) elected in a multi-ethnic population of which only 6.8 percent are Chinese. There were twelve Chinese legislators or 16 percent of the total. Senator Hiram L. Fong, of course, was in the United States Senate from statehood in 1959 to his retirement in 1976.

Economic Upward Mobility: Plantation life had its shortcomings for all ethnic groups. As unskilled laborers they performed arduous work and lived in isolated camps. At the end of their contracts they found they could make their fortunes faster by leaving the plantations for other occupations. As the first labor group recruited, and thus the first out of the fields, Chinese found better jobs. Their children, with better education, continued the way upward. Fortunately, because of rapid expansion of the economy, there was increasing demand for skilled and professional services.

The Future: Today's Chinese are no longer distinguishable, in thought and action, from other Americans in Hawai'i. They do not feel any need to stay grouped together nor even to remain in Hawai'i for their livelihood. Already at least a fourth of Hawai'i Chinese who receive their college or technical training on the Mainland remain there in promising positions. Some have a more international outlook, serving around the world in different capacities.

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