

### Book Reviews

quotes are recounted from reliable historical sources (139); these references are included but are not footnoted. A careful reading of pages 139-52 does provide an overview of which sections are reconstruction and which are conjecture. Nonetheless this reader still is plagued with questions about the authenticity and sources of particular quotes, descriptions, events, and details.

Whatever its flaws this compelling book details the complexity of four individual Wabanaki women living in very different historical contexts: a peacemaker (Molly Mathilde, ca. 1665-1717), a healer (Molly Ockett, ca. 1740-1816), a bitter witchwoman (Molly Molasses, ca. 1775-1867), and a celebrated dancer (Molly Dellis, ca. 1903-1977).

McBride has written an engaging book that brings history to life. It draws readers into the worlds of these women and powerfully depicts their experiences, sufferings, and joys. I came away from reading *Women of the Dawn* with lasting impressions of four strong female personages of the Wabanaki nation.

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**George Anthony Pepper. *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration Before Exclusion*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. xv, 167 pp., appendix, notes, bibliography, index, \$35 cloth, \$17.95 paper.**

*If They Don't Bring Their Women Here* by George Pepper is another significant addition to the skimpy repertory of books on the history of Chinese American women, which includes Judy Yung's *Chinese Women of America* (1986) and *Unbounded Feet* (1995), Benson Tong's *Unsubmissive Women* (1994), and Huping Ling's *Surviving on the Gold Mountain* (1999). Unlike the other volumes, Pepper's book focuses on the debarment of Chinese women from immigration to the United States before

the 1882 general exclusion of Chinese laborers. He argues that the cultural constraints imposed by the traditional Chinese joint family structure and the male sojourner mentality did not suffice to induce the protracted shortage of Chinese female immigrants and that the Page Law of 1875 and its enforcement played a more pivotal role in restricting the immigration of Chinese women. Using data from U.S. government documents, court records, and newspapers, he documents with some measure of success that although the Page Law literally forbade only the entry of prostitutes (including Chinese ones), the broader application of this law resulted in a *de facto* exclusion of Chinese female immigrants during the seven years prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Peffer also demonstrates how California's anti-Chinese press shaped and intensified the expanded application of the Page Law, how the anti-Chinese sentiment led to the possible overcounting of Chinese prostitutes in San Francisco in the 1870 and 1880 censuses, and how the *de facto* Chinese female exclusion engendered the lopsided development of the Chinese community. By piecing the scattered information together, this book enhances our understanding of the causes of the Chinese "bachelor's society" as well as the experiences of Chinese female immigrants before the Chinese exclusion.

Peffer is more successful in proving the effectiveness of the Page Law in curtailing the immigration of Chinese prostitutes than in substantiating the effect of the Page Law's implementation in debarring or reducing the immigration of non(c)prostitute Chinese women. The evidence for the latter is circumstantial, albeit not implausible. This weakness renders the *de facto* Chinese female exclusion assessment a bit shaky. Perhaps a more critical point that can be made is that the book offers few fresh insights into the subject beyond the key arguments and evidence already presented in Peffer's two articles published in *Journal of American Ethnic History* in 1986 and 1992. This book is au fond an elaboration and slight augmentation of the ideas in those two articles, and the publication of the book may be deemed a belated recognition of his contribution in calling scholarly attention to the importance of the Page Law in restricting Chinese female immigration. In light of what had been established and the book's claimed coverage of the

entire pre-exclusion era as couched in its subtitle, it would have been logical and fruitful to explore and document the role of legislation and government actions preceding the Page Law at the state and local levels in restricting Chinese female immigration.

These quibbles aside, this book provides by far the most systematic and detailed analysis of the effects of the Page Law and its enforcement on Chinese female immigration and makes a worthwhile contribution to the literature on the history of Chinese Americans in general and Chinese American women in particular. It is a book that no specialist in the field should miss.

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## **References**

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Tong, Benson. *Unsubmissive Women: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.

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