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Chinese Women as Cultural Participants and Symbols in Nineteenth Century America

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Chinese female immigrants were active cultural contributors and participants in nineteenth century America, yet Americans often simplified their roles into

crude stereotypes and media symbols. The early western accounts concerning females in China created the fundamental images that were the basis of the later stereotypes of women immigrants. The fact that a majority of the period's Chinese female immigrants became prostitutes fueled anti-Chinese feelings. This thesis investigates the general existence of Chinese prostitutes in nineteenth century America and how they were portrayed in the media. American attitudes toward white women and their images of Chinese women created the stereotype of all Chinese female immigrants as immoral. Thus, they became unconscious pawns of nineteenth century American nativist forces wanting to limit and prevent Chinese immigration based on prejudicial and racist attitudes.

This thesis explores how stereotypical perceptions and negative images of Chinese female immigrants changed when married women began to immigrate to America. Struggling against racial and sexual exploitation and harassment, these women worked to create a Chinese family life in nineteenth century America which maintained traditional Chinese culture. Simultaneously, others sought to assimilate their families into the dominant Anglo-American culture through the transformation and Americanization of traditional culture and thus laid the foundations for a subculture which blent aspects of the two. This thesis attempts to present the general experience of Chinese women

in nineteenth century America and the manner in which Americans portrayed it.

Secondary sources consulted for this thesis included materials describing the various roles of women in nineteenth century China and America and also Chinese immigration to the United States and Hawaii. Primary sources include samples of nineteenth century American magazines, newspapers, and novels authored by Chinese-Americans and indigenous writers. American diaries, memoirs, and correspondence, especially those written by Christian missionaries and their affiliates, also have been used. Finally, twentieth century biographies of Chinese and Chinese-American women proved most helpful with representative examples of traditional Chinese cultures as they were transmitted by Chinese women in late nineteenth century America.

The organization of this thesis begins with introductory information describing the roles of women in nineteenth century American and Chinese family life and in prostitution. It goes on to describe American preconceptions of Chinese women and culture prior to 1850. Chinese immigration and the American response to it will then be summarized. Succeeding chapters will discuss Chinese prostitution in nineteenth century America and the white response to it; Chinese women's involvement in the development of family life and the American response to it;

and women's roles in maintaining Chinese traditions, introducing American values, and building a new subculture. Finally, the American response to Chinese females as traditionalists, innovators, and builders will be described in order to show how Americans portrayed the complex roles played by female immigrants.

Chinese wives who adhered to traditional beliefs and customs unintentionally became the pawns of nativists who exaggerated cultural practices. American ignorance of Chinese traditions made it easy to misinterpret the customs transmitted to America and resulted in prejudice and discrimination directed at the immigrants. Chinese prostitutes unknowingly reinforced negative stereotypes, thereby fueling anti-Chinese sentiments. These women, too, became the pawns of nativists who created the image of all female immigrants as being immoral beings. American newspaper articles and popular magazine and book-length works of the nineteenth and early twentieth century often presented Chinese prostitutes as both criminal offenders and victims. Simultaneously, these sources emphasized that wives were abused, property of their spouses, slave-like, secluded and lonely, uncaring mothers and instruments of cruelty, and similar in behavior and physical characteristics. However, the negative perceptions of Chinese wives and mothers became more favorable toward the end of the nineteenth century.

CHINESE WOMEN AS CULTURAL PARTICIPANTS AND SYMBOLS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA

by

TINA MICHELE LANDROCHE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chinese female immigrants were active cultural contributors and participants in nineteenth century America, yet Americans often simplified their roles into crude stereotypes and media symbols. The early western accounts concerning females in China created the fundamental images that were the basis of the later stereotypes of women immigrants. The fact that a majority of the period's Chinese female immigrants became prostitutes fueled anti-Chinese feelings. This thesis investigates the general existence of Chinese prostitutes in nineteenth century America and how they were portrayed in the media. American attitudes toward white women and their images of Chinese women created the stereotype of all Chinese female immigrants as immoral. Thus, they became the unconscious pawns of nineteenth century American nativist forces wanting to limit and prevent Chinese immigration based on prejudicial and racist attitudes.

This thesis explores how stereotypical perceptions and negative images of Chinese female immigrants changed when married women began to immigrate to America. Struggling against racial and sexual exploitation and harassment,

these women worked to create a Chinese family life in nineteenth century America which transferred and maintained traditional Chinese culture. Simultaneously, others sought to assimilate their families into the dominant Anglo-American culture through the transformation and Americanization of traditional culture and thus laid the foundations for a subculture which blent aspects of the two. This thesis attempts to present the general experience of Chinese women in the nineteenth century United States and Hawaii and the manner in which Americans portrayed it.

Secondary sources consulted for this thesis included materials describing the various roles of women in nineteenth century China and America and also Chinese immigration to the United States and Hawaii. Primary sources include samples of nineteenth century American magazines, newspapers, and novels authored by Chinese-Americans and indigenous writers. American diaries, memoirs, and correspondence, especially those written by Christian missionaries and their affiliates, also have been used. Finally, twentieth century biographies of Chinese and Chinese-American women proved most helpful with representative examples of traditional Chinese culture as it was transmitted by Chinese women in late nineteenth century America.

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introductory information describing the roles of women in nineteenth century American and Chinese family life and in prostitution. It goes on to describe American preconceptions of Chinese women and culture prior to 1850. Chinese immigration and the American response to it will then be summarized. Succeeding chapters will discuss Chinese prostitution in nineteenth century America and the white response to it; Chinese women's involvement in the development of family life and the American response to it; and women's roles in maintaining Chinese traditions, introducing American values, and building a new subculture. Finally, the American response to Chinese females as traditionalists, innovators, and builders will be described in order to show how Americans portrayed the complex roles played by female immigrants.

The role of middle-class women in nineteenth century America was best illustrated by "True Womanhood," a phrase used by American writers of the period to describe the ideal woman of the mid-nineteenth century. "True Womanhood" was based upon the virtues of "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 1966, 152) which conferred on women the roles of wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. Christian piety was considered the basis of women's inner strength and the main source of other virtues. Protestant Christianity presented women as the foundation for morality in the family and attempted to

prevent their corruption from the outside world (Welter 1966, 152-153).

Purity was considered a natural feminine quality, made obvious in the behavior of respectable women. Fallen women, in contrast, were those who had engaged in sex outside of marriage. Women were to be submissive to their spouses in accepting subordinate roles as wives and mothers. The interaction of piety, purity, and submissiveness fostered the virtue of domesticity, which placed women's most important role in American culture as that of wives and mothers (Welter 1966, 151-162). This ideology helped to insure the economic dependence of middle-class women on husbands and home life.

The ideal of "True Womanhood" established women's worthiness as marriage partners and as moral guardians of the family. According to one San Francisco, California, newspaper, the ideal wife was "ever the constant attendant, the warm sympathizer, the home-advisor of man--faithful by his side in adversity, always with words of encouragement or gentle warning" ("Honored Be Woman! She Beams on the Sight, Graceful and Fair like a Being of Light" 1853, 2). Meanwhile, the ideal of American motherhood was equated "with patience, endurance, passive courage, finer sensibilities, and great sympathy" (Bullough 1973, 310). Furthermore, women's reproductive capacities tied them to the home as caretakers of children and simultaneously

justified their restriction from outside employment opportunities.

The ideal woman was "passive, modest, retiring, moral and instinctively maternal" and she was "asexual" (Goldman 1972, 140). Sexual satisfaction was not considered essential in marriage. Therefore, middle-class husbands could engage in extra-marital affairs while wives' activities were censored. Marriage offered women a sense of certainty and identity, economic support, sometimes social status, and maternity; for all this, women swapped sex. It was basically irrelevant whether sex proved satisfying or not. Women's sexuality was based upon the combined notions of ideal love in marriage and mythological feminine qualities, both encouraging female sexual naivete, fragility, attractiveness, and inaccessibility (Goldman 1981, 39-40; Simmons-Rogers 1983, 12-13).

Women who adhered to nineteenth century moral standards were rewarded with marriage. Meanwhile, women who deviated from the norm were punished with public ostracism and condemnation. American females were thus distinguished as "good" or "bad" with nothing in between. Women were either saints, innocents, wives and mothers, or they were sinners, temptresses, harlots and whores. "Good" or respectable women were "totally devoid" of sexual passions and "functioned as men's consciences" (Goldman 1972, 33). Females uplifted and guided men to a more

wholesome existence, so men in turn prevented contact between "good" and "bad" women. "Bad" women were those who engaged in premarital sex and/or extra-marital sex. Once a woman's sexual encounters were discovered, "she was permanently labeled as bad" (Goldman 1972, 33).

The sexual morality code of nineteenth century white America prohibited premarital sex and promoted sexual intercourse only in a monogamous marriage and strictly for reproduction. The existence of prostitution blatantly violated moral codes on all counts (Connelly 1980, 8-9). Although prostitution mocked "True Womanhood," it existed because of the ideal. Attempting to live up to the "good" ideal, wives were often unable and/or unwilling to sexually satisfy their husbands. Wives' inability to sexually satisfy their husbands implied their incompleteness as spouses and unintentionally pushed their husbands toward prostitutes for sexual satisfaction.

Nineteenth century American white males, it was believed, were the helpless victims of their own sexually aggressive energy. This belief supported the existence of prostitution and implied a sexual choice for women. Women chose to remain pure and sexually innocent, to yield to seduction, or to tempt men. Prostitutes, nineteenth century white middle-class Americans believed, betrayed their feminine innocence and gave in to unnatural sexual urges. If this was true, then prostitutes chose their own

downfall and sexual ruin and were therefore irredeemably condemned. Prostitutes "lived with the harsh judgment of society, intensified by their own intellectual and physical inertia" (Butler 1985, 154). They were also potential contaminators of society, compelling the segregation of "good" and "bad" women. Segregation reinforced respectable women's moral superiority and "bad" women's inferiority.

Prostitution directly opposed the feminine ideal espoused through the idea of "True Womanhood." Yet, during the last half of the nineteenth century, a new theory about prostitution developed as if juxtaposed to the ideal. This theoretical approach to prostitution rested upon the notion that women were the passive victims of a male-dominated social structure. Accordingly, they were protrayed as helpless sexual innocents who fell into "white slavery." The prostitute or fallen woman was "a direct victim, not only of male dominance in general, but of kidnapping, sexual imprisonment, starvation, and/or seduction in particular" (Dubois and Gordon 1983, 9). This theory was specifically applied to immigrant women, often depicted as victims who were "deliberately seduced so that they could be placed in bawdy houses" (Goldman 1972, 33).

Men patronized prostitutes because of the importance of feminine chastity among single women, the emphasis on masculine virility, the minimization of feminine sexuality in marriage, and the sexual abstinence of wives who refused

to have more children (Goldman 1981, 55-56). Ironically, it also appeared that prostitutes upheld ideal feminine qualities because sexually satisfied bachelors were considered less likely to seduce or attack respectable women.

The roles of nineteenth century Chinese women were similar to those of their American counterparts. Chinese ethics stressed that women obey their fathers before marriage, their husbands after marriage, and their sons in widowhood. Disobedient women disrupted the status quo by betraying their husbands, who were considered their guardians (Shi 1988, 34). A wife could not divorce her husband and adultery was severely punished. The Chinese family system was patrilineal, authoritarian, hierarchical, and patriarchal. In all cases, the individual was subordinate to the group.

Confucian tradition regulated family relationships and promoted social stability. For example, its morality placed women in the inferior yin element, "comprised of earth, moon, depth, darkness, weakness, and passivity--the negative in life" (Gales 1966, 36). Men, in contrast, were part of the yang element, made up of "heaven, sun, height, lights, strength, and activity--the positive in life" (Gales 1966, 36). Ancestor worship was tied to the yin-yang relationship because yin was associated with the spirit world. Ghosts maintained the same needs as they

when they were mortals. Male descendants met the ghosts' needs by performing sacrifices. It was illogical for a woman, part of the yin element, to perform sacrifices to deceased ancestors. Male heirs insured the worship of ancestors (Ayscough 1975, 6, 14-15). The necessity of male heirs granted women their most important role, that of mother. The birth of a son was greeted with joy by the family while the birth of a daughter met with disappointment (Smith 1983, 214). Because daughters were perceived as economic burdens, poverty frequently forced Chinese families to turn to infanticide of their newborn female infants. Some parents simply chose to kill the baby girl rather than raise her to be sold into slavery or prostitution.

Newborn girls who escaped infanticide lived secluded, structured lives, groomed in preparation for marriage and motherhood. Chinese tradition also taught women to be self-sacrificing, to choose death rather than dishonor (Ayscough 1975, 76, 267-281). Ideally, wives were to "chaste and yielding, yet calm and upright; . . . not talkative, yet agreeable; . . . restrained and exquisite" (Ayscough 1975, 286). Women who did not grow up to become primary wives often became secondary wives or concubines, since men had the freedom to engage in polygamy.

Concubinage was an old custom in China. It existed on the pretext that men had the right to take second wives if

their first spouse had not given birth to a male heir. In reality, the practice often provided men with a socially accepted way to satisfy lustful urges. The concubine usually was a pretty young girl whom the husband purchased from poor parents (Gales 1966, 43). Unlike the primary or principal wife chosen by the husband's parents, the concubine was selected by the spouse himself. This created a potentially explosive situation between the females of the household, since a wife had no right to deny her spouse a concubine.

Sexual morality in nineteenth century China prohibited women from engaging in premarital and extramarital liaisons and outlawed such behavior. For example, a married woman who had sexual intercourse with a married man received ninety strokes and a single woman received eighty. A married woman's sexual indiscretion dishonored her husband and therefore her punishment was greater than that of a single woman for the same offense. A wife who was an adulteress, moreover, received one hundred strokes and was additionally punished because her husband could sell her to anyone but the adulterer (Shi 1988, 46). Widows were supposed to refrain from sexual encounters in honor of their dead husbands. Widows were also not supposed to remarry because a woman had only one husband, while men could have many wives. Chaste widowhood brought honor to a family.

To insure the chastity of women, footbinding and seclusion were practiced. Respectable Chinese wives were kept secluded indoors from the outside world. This eliminated the possibility of meeting a man and beginning an affair. Footbinding served as a suppressive and restrictive mechanism for domination over women by lessening their movements and preventing unchaste wandering (Chan 1970, 230). Young girls of the upper-class, and some lower-class girls, were taught that bound feet were a prerequisite for marriage. Once married, footbinding prevented wives from disrupting the household because they were kept under the mother-in-laws' surveillance. Finally, seclusion and footbinding kept wives confined to unpaid domestic labor (Greenhalgh 1977, 13-15).

Chinese women also could be sold into slavery or prostitution, often by poverty-stricken parents or husbands. Prostitutes were not considered fallen women or sinful, since prevailing views approached prostitution as an economic necessity for families in need. By upholding the contract her family had made, a Chinese prostitute also fulfilled filial responsibilities of self-sacrifice and loyalty. Prostitutes, moreover, were considered suitable candidates for marriage as secondary wives. Marriage was possible if a patron fell in love with the woman and paid the brothel owner her purchase price (Ayscough 1975, 93). Once a Chinese prostitute married, she was expected to lead

a respectable life and could be accepted in society. If she was not rescued by marriage, a prostitute could be redeemed "if she bore herself in all other ways as a woman of virtue and longed for a husband and sons" (Gronewold 1983, 35). Again, Chinese women hoped for marriage to fulfill the ideal of spousal loyalty and motherhood.

Popular Chinese literature portrayed prostitutes as innocent and chaste in spirit, women who could become faithful and contented wives. Some Chinese even believed that prostitutes made better wives and concubines than women who had always been secluded and who might be more prone to sexual temptations (Gronewold 1983, 35). Chinese brothels even attempted to reproduce the family situation via internal terminology. Brothel madams referred to their charges as "adopted daughters" or "daughters" and prostitutes in turn called the madams "mothers" (Gronewold 1983, 9).

The roles played by nineteenth century women in China and the United States symbolized their inferiority to the male members of society. In both cultures women found legitimacy only in the family system as virtuous wives and mothers. Both China and America had existing systems of prostitution. However, the upper-class Chinese prostitutes did not simply sell sex but "were skilled in the entertainment arts" (Gronewold 1983, 5) such as music, painting, calligraphy, and poetry. The two cultures varied

in their beliefs about the women who engaged in prostitution, but women in both cultures were compelled to function within strictly applied social roles and expectations.

CHAPTER II

CHINESE IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA AND IMAGES OF CHINESE WOMEN

Chinese immigrants to America came to work on railroads or to search for California gold between the 1840s and 1882. During this time China experienced internal chaos created by western intervention, destruction of life and property because of recurrent warfare, natural disasters, chronic poverty, lack of land, overpopulation, and famine. To support their families in such dire circumstances, poor Chinese men left the southern provinces and other regions to seek labor in America. The majority of sojourners to America came from regions around the Pearl River Delta in the Kwangtung Province from the T'aishan district (renamed T'oishan in 1914), located southwest of the city of Canton (Chan 1986, 16; Lai, Huang, and Wong 1980, 18; Weiss 1974, 24-25).

Sojourners also worked in the California wine industry and in commercial fishing (Lai, Huang, and Wong 1980, 26, 29). Gradually, Chinese men drifted into other parts of the United States, including the South to work for planters, and to New England to work in shoe factories (Takaki 1989, 94, 95). Other Chinese migrated to the Midwest and worked in businesses where they did not compete

with white labor, thereby preventing racial hostility (Mason 1982, 161). Some sojourners continued to mine in areas where gold and/or silver strikes occurred, such as the Comstock Lode area in Nevada (Edwards 1985, 1-3).

Once railroad construction decreased, many of the laborers, combined with ex-miners, went to American urban areas in search of work and settled into separate Chinese communities more commonly referred to as Chinatowns. Chinatowns attempted to fulfill the social needs of the overwhelmingly bachelor communities (Lai, Huang, and Wong 1980, 42) by serving as traditional "transplanted cultural enclaves" (Chih 1977, 13). Chinatowns offered comfort to life's problems such as old age, death, etc., because the social environment supplied companionship for the Chinese residents who then turned to each other in difficult times (Lai, Huang, and Wong 1980, 42). Chinatowns also granted voluntary segregation from discrimination and prejudice. The Chinese traditionally stressed non-individualism, cohesiveness, and order; therefore, it was easier for them to maintain their cultural islands, even amidst nativist hostility.

Chinese women were very few in number and the existence of a bachelor society was evidenced by a man-to-woman ratio estimated in 1890 to be as high as twenty-seven to one (Lai, Huang, and Wong 1980, 40). The imbalance between the sexes occurred because sojourners saw little

reason to bring women over in large numbers because their stay was only meant to be temporary. The men sent money home to their families. Some even made trips back, sired a child or two and returned to America to work. Some wealthier merchants eventually brought their families over. However, most men were only able to send financial support home. To impoverished family members in China, the remittances meant their survival and bound the sojourner to the United States. Also, although their wages were considered high for the Chinese economy, they were low for the American economy, leaving many of them stranded in America.

It was not only because the sojourners considered their stay temporary that they did not bring their wives with them. There were a variety of other reasons. The seclusion of Chinese females discouraged women from travel abroad. Most sojourners married prior to emigration as a way to further maintain their ties to their homeland (Edwards 1983, 3). Moreover, a wife in China was in a sense a hostage because her husband's family kept her with them hoping to ensure the return of the absent husband (Takaki 1989, 37). The poor immigrants found it too costly to take their wives on a temporary trip. United States laws, specifically the 1882 Exclusion Act, prevented Chinese immigration, and men who were already in the country could not bring over their spouses.

Finally, nativist hostility and violence deterred men from bringing their spouses. For example, a New York newspaper, The World, contained an editorial signed by different Chinese men living in America. The editorial stated:

> The reason why so few of our families are brought to this country is, because . . . the frequest out-bursts of popular indignation against our people have not encouraged us to bring our families with us against their will. ("The Chinese Questions. Appeal of the Chinese Heathen and Christian Alike, to the President," 1876, 5)

The interaction of these factors discouraging women's immigration were not completely effective because women did enter the country.

Early female Chinese immigrants were single and only those who could earn money, including "prostitutes, laundresses, or seamstresses" (Chan 1986, 386), were worth transporting overseas. However, the earliest known female Chinese immigrant was a servant who arrived in San Francisco, California, aboard the Eagle in February 1848. The female servant was reportedly named "Marie Seise" and no Chinese name was given. As a child, she had run away from home, obtained employment with a Portuguese family and adopted Roman Catholicism. Later she married a Portuguese sailor (Yung 1986, 14) from whom Marie possibly obtained her name but this is uncertain. She was employed as a servant by Charles V. Gillespie, a returning American Protestant missionary. Marie was actually one of the first three permanent Chinese immigrants to the United States;

the other two were men (Condit 1900, 15; LaLande 1981, 11; McLeod 1948, 8; Melendy 1972, 15; Soo 1975, 250; Tung 1974, 7; Weiss 1974, 31; Yung 1986, 14). Americans reacted to Chinese immigration in varying ways and their responses to the female members were shaped by preconceived notions about women in China. Therefore, the earlier western perceptions of women in China will be described because these fundamental images served as the basis for later stereotypes of female immigrants.

Nineteenth century Anglo-Americans had certain perceptions of Chinese women long before they began to immigrate to America. American readers were "enlightened" by early writings of western visitors to China such as missionaries, diplomats, traders, and military personnel. To help convert the Chinese, Christian missionaries received the assistance of their wives and female congregational affiliates (McNabb 1907, 23, 94-95, 107), who also supplied information about China. These Christian cohorts "constituted a new type of inside dopester" (Miller 1969, 147). Women's accounts focused more on the family and the role of women and found an available audience through nineteenth century American women's magazines (Miller 1969, 147). Furthermore, considering themselves superior to others, westerners carried the white man's burden to instill superior cultural values among supposedly inferior peoples. Their tainted and superficial accounts

consisted of exaggerations which supported negative images. American accounts emphasized Chinese infanticide, parental cruelty, footbinding, the negative treatment of women, and the general characteristics of females.

Infanticide was presented as an example of barbarous behavior usually without mentioning that it was a symptom of poverty. Accounts of infanticide were often presented in missionary writings, and firsthand reports conjured up images that appalled Americans. For example, a magazine article entitled "The Condition of Heathen Females" which appeared in an 1840 issue of the Baptist Missionary Magazine supplied two firsthand accounts. The first was given by an American missionary, Reverend David Abeel, who reported: "Infanticide . . . is almost exclusively limited to the female sex" ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36). The second account was given by an English missionary, Reverend William Medhurst, who discussed his shocking encounter with a Chinese father who informed the missionary that he had three daughters: one he married off, one he killed, and the third he recently ordered smothered. Medhurst noted: "I was shocked at this speech--and still more at the horrid indifference with which he uttered it" ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36). Medhurst inquired how he could sanction such an act and the father responded: "Oh . . . it is a very common thing in China; we put the female children out of the way,

to save bringing them up; some people have smothered five or six daughters" ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36).

Additionally, there were suspect accounts which attempted to estimate the magnitude of infanticide, thereby reinforcing the perceived barbarity of the practice. A magazine known as The Harbinger contained a highly informative article illustrating this point. The unsigned author, a visitor to China who became acquainted with infanticide while in Amoy, was convinced that "this social evil exists in the province of Fokeen to an extent which would be incredible" ("Female Infanticide in China," 1847, 35). To prove his hypothesis, the writer visited local Chinese villages and then divulged his startling findings for readers. For example, inhabitants of one village were quoted as saying "out of six daughters it was customary to kill three; some murdered four, and a few even five out of the same number" ("Female Infanticide in China," 1847, 35).

Other more questionable estimates followed. A physician in New York names William W. Sanger briefly mentioned infanticide in his 1859 book, History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World. He commented that "at a place called Kea King Chow there were computed to be from five to six hundred cases every month" (Sanger 1859, 432). In an 1868 issue of The Presbyterian Monthly, an article reported differences

existed in the number of girls killed in various villages. The articles announced "that the proportion of female infants put to death, was from ten to seventy per cent of the births. Forty per cent of the girls in that district were murdered by their own parents" ("Chinese Infanticide," 1868, 13-14). Such accounts indicated a precise estimate of infanticide was unavailable.

The articles made it seem customary that Chinese parents killed at least half of their daughters. As if numbers were not enough to shock readers, writers included other peculiar details. For example, an 1856 issue of the magazine Littell's Living Age contained an article which reported that Chinese waterways and ditches were "strewn with the bodies of infants, that of course have been killed by their horrid mothers over-night" ("Foundling-Hospitals in China," 1856, 316). In addition, city streets were "said to have carts heavily rolling along them daily, to wheel away the dead and dying boys and girls thrown out by their unnatural parents" ("Foundling-Hospitals in China," 1856, 316). Another article contained a drawing with the following description:

> The illustration . . . is a sketch of a building covering a pit provided for the reception of the bodies of infants; a tomb for living babies! The heathen mother is disposing of her infant daughter by casting it through the hole in the tomb into the pit below. ("Chinese Infanticide," 1868, 14)

Even the particulars of how the babies were killed were

supplied. An unwanted female was killed immediately after her birth in one of five ways. She could be drowned, her throat pinched, suffocated by a damp cloth pressed over her mouth, choked with rice in her mouth, or buried alive ("Female Infanticide in China," 1847, 35; Sanger 1972, 432).

It was probable that American readers interpreted a mother's part, in what they considered a nefarious crime, as worse than a father's because she denied her maternal instinct to protect her young. Mothers either acquiesced in the murder of their babies or killed the infants themselves. Americans accustomed to the values of "True Womanhood," which placed great importance on motherhood, likely found it difficult to grasp how Chinese mothers engaged in and/or allowed the killing of their daughters. Almost as if attempting to explain why mothers allowed such a practice, a visiting western doctor stated:

> The abject condition of women in China, and the contempt thrown on them by the doctrines of their atheistical philosophers, tend to harden the hearts of wives and mothers, so as to induce them to acquiesce in the murder of their female infants. ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36)

Expansions of this early explanation occurred when a later magazine article proclaimed the source of the custom was the "unlightened state of their conscience, which fails to realize the flagrant enormity of a social crime with which

their moral perceptions have become blunted" ("Female Infanticide in China," 1847, 35).

Chinese daughters were increasingly portrayed as the victims of parental cruelty whether from infanticide, sale into slavery or prostitution, or neglect. References to parental cruelty were supplied by J. B. Jeter who compiled the memoir and letters of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck (Jeter 1848, 6) into a book titled A Memoir of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck, the First American Female Missionary to China published in 1848. Regarding the parent of a six-year-old girl, Mrs. Shuck commented: "Her mother, imitating the example of other heathen mothers, sold her to a Chinaman" (Jeter 1848, 6), who then sold her to a married couple. The couple used the child as a slave and cruelly abused her. Eventually, the girl was bought by an American who then gave the child to Mrs. Shuck (Jeter 1848, 6). A year later while in Macao, she reflected, "How differently are the children of the Chinese mother reared! The disease and misery to wich they are born are indescribable" (Jeter 1848, 112). About children, she alleged:

> They become ill, they suffer, they die, uncared for and unthought of. If they should happen to be blind or lame, or disabled from work, how joyfully will those, whose duty it is to befriend and support them, part from them forever, for the sakes of gaining a few dollars! (Jeter 1848, 112)

A Catholic missionary named M. Evariste Regis Huc in his 1855 two-volume book entitled The Chinese Empire:

Forming a Sequel to the Work Entitled "Recollections of a Journey through Tartary and Tibet claimed:

> "The young girl is simply an object of traffic, an article of merchandise to be sold to the highest bidder, without her having the right to ask a single question concerning the merit or quality of her purchaser" (Huc 1855, 1: 250)

Footbinding was also described as an example of parental cruelty and Chinese barbarity. The practice received a great deal of attention as detailed reports of the method of foot compression and physical appearance further indoctrinated Americans into the anti-Chinese prejudice. A Philadelphia trader named W. W. Wood in his 1830 book, Sketches of China: with Illustrations Original Drawings, sarcastically declared: "The excess to which compression is carried by many, is perfectly wonderful" (Wood 1830, 136). According to Wood, footbinding was "the unnatural confinement of the growing limbs of young children, who suffer this inhuman torture for the sake of fashion" (Wood 1830, 136). Footbinding was portrayed as a cruel custom inflicted upon daughters by parents who preferred suffering children to ostracism from neighbors.

In addition to the imposed deformity of girls' feet, Wood suggested that the effect of footbinding was "a

premature appearance of age, and decrepitude, . . . materially aided by marriage, contracted at at very early age" (Wood 1830, 137). In Wood's opinion, footbound women ended up "in the streets, lamed and tormented, by these only remaining badges of their former rank, and many of them scarcely covered, and all suffering from the accumulated miseries of want and deformity" (Wood 1830, 137). According to Huc, "it was truly pitiable to see the poor women, leaning on sticks, and hobbling along on their little goat's feet" (Huc 1855, 2: 236). In addition, he reported: "Chinese women, rich and poor, in town and country, are all lame; at the extremity of their legs they have only shapeless stumps, always enveloped in bandages, and from which all the life has been squeezed out" (Huc 1855, 2: 403-404). Apparently, the long-term effects of footbinding added to the hideousness of the custom for the American public.

Nineteenth century Americans also perceived Chinese women as being treated very poorly and this image was frequently relayed. For example, an article which appeared in an 1835 issue of Graham's Magazine described the lifetime roles of females as being equivalent to slavery. The article stated that women were "in all ages and states considered immeasurably inferior to men" and "considered by the laws of the country, as the born and appointed slave of man by nature" ("Condition and Treatment of Females in

China," 1835, 448). The article reinforced the image of females as degraded and dependent when it stated: "Rise; run; work; eat little; spend little; be silent; keep out of sight; obey; bear; and rather bleed, starve, and die, than dare to complain" ("Condition and Treatment of Females in China," 1835, 448).

An article in an 1840 issue of the Baptist Missionary Magazine further sustained negative perceptions through observational statements given by various visitors to China. For example, a visiting physician remarked: "By the ancient usages, woman is not allowed the rank of a moral agent; and from her very birth, marks of degradation commence and continue through life" ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36). Furthermore, the apparent worthlessness of women was symbolized for one female visitor because daughters were uneducated and husbands referred to their wives as "my dog" or "my worthless woman within" ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36). "Without education, crippled from infancy, closely immured, married without their consent, . . . sold by their parents, and often treated most unfeelingly," Reverend David Abeel commented, "we cannot wonder at the frequent suicides among them" ("The Condition of Heathen Females," 1840, 36).

The early images of the general characteristics of Chinese females were often derogatory in content. According to Wood, they were "generally very ignorant,

their instructions being principally in domestic affairs" and the wealthier ones reportedly spent "their time in music, smoking, and other accomplishments" (Wood 1830, 133). The women were portrayed as housekeepers who resided in filth. Mrs. E. S. Barnaby, in "A Visit to a Wealthy Chinaman" which appeared in an 1861 issue of the Ladies Repository, commented on the filthy appearance of even the wealthiest homes. She considered the homes of Chinese females "rude and plain, having very little semblance of comfort, . . . generally dirty, and with a disagreeable order about them" (Barnaby 1861, 144). In addition, she asserted that their "floors are sometimes greasy enough to slide on" (Barnaby 1861, 144).

The poorer females, who labored outdoors, were described as "very dark, los[ing] all that soft listlessness of expression, and delicacy of form, for which the higher classes are distinguished" (Wood 1830, 134). Poorer women were seen as having "masculine strength and manners," who "show[ed] themselves without the least reserve in all public places" (Wood 1830, 135). High-class Chinese women were described as "so covered with paint, that further than as objects of curiosity, they have few attractions for a foreign eye" (Wood 1830, 135). Their hair, according to Wood, was "remarkably neat, generally very long, and abundant, and dressed in a most elaborate

manner, . . . and . . . fragrant, and disposed with much taste and effect" (Wood 1830, 135).

Some Chinese customs were defended. For example, William Speer, the former Presbyterian missionary to China, wrote a book in 1870 called The Oldest and the Newest Empire: China and the United States based on his earlier experiences in China (Speer 1870, 3). His arguments about the "elevated position" (Speer 1870, 632) of women in China rested upon certain observations he made, including: women not attending public theatre; seclusion in the household; emphasis on chastity; and the respect given to grandmothers (Speer 1870, 632). Speer believed that "the relations of even the secondary wife, when one is taken in order to increase the number or children, is not abused to general licentiousness" (Speer 1870, 632). He further reported that earlier missionaries gave inaccurate descriptions and that later missionary ladies informed him that Chinese females were "interesting and pleasant" (Speer 1870, 632-633).

The media assisted in stereotyping Chinese women long before actual immigrants arrived on American shores. The first females who temporarily visited America were displayed for general public viewing at Chinese museums' exhibits as freak show attractions. Newspapers referred to the exhibition of a Chinese woman in New York in the 1830s named Afong Moy, a temporary visitor to the United States,

who "caused a sensation in New York just by posing amidst the exotic Chinese trappings in vogue at that time" (Yung 1986, 17). Another unnamed woman was displayed on Broadway as a freak in 1842 (Dillon 1962, 30). In 1850, the New York Times ran an article in the amusement section which mentioned Barnum's Chinese Museum. The article reported that Barnum had imported "a genuine Chinese lady and her attendants ("Chinese Museum," 1850, 2). She was described as a "celestial houri, who rejoices in the euphonic name of Pwan-Yekon," and who was "prepared to exhibit her charming self, her curious retinue, and her fairy feet (only two and a half inches long) to an admiring and novelty-loving public" ("Chinese Museum," 1850, 2). None of these women were immigrants to the United States, they were temporary visitors. These women served as genuine physical oddities for a small sampling of a curious American public.

Nineteenth century Anglo-Americans had certain perceptions of Chinese women long before they actually immigrated to America to live. The earlier western perceptions of women in China served as a basis for later stereotypes of Chinese female immigrants. These impressions were combined with the American media's early portrayal of the temporary female visitors who were displayed as freak show attractions. The responses by white to Chinese female immigrants were founded upon the various images presented and Anglo-Americans also reacted

in varying ways to Chinese immigration in general.

At first the Chinese were welcomed, and favorable "comments about Chinese industry and frugality" (Barth 1974, 150) appeared in various media accounts after 1850. For example, Harvey Rice in his 1870 book entitled Letters from the Pacific Slope; or, First Impressions wrote that they were "honest, industrious, and peace-loving people" (Rice 1870, 73). But when the California Gold Rush ended in 1852, the sojourners were the scapegoats for white miners, who were angry that the Chinese miners found gold in claims that had been deserted by Americans. White miners, possibly jealous and angered by the Chinese success, drove them from the mines into other occupations and many fled to Chinatowns to find employment and safety from white hostility. They were not the first immigrant group to form separate communities. Yet, voluntary Chinese segregation enabled "both Chinese and American derogatory stereotypes to develop, images which invariably made any assimilation of the Chinese into American society more difficult" (Weiss 1974, 34).

The very existence of Chinatowns incited nativist forces while reinforcing stereotypes. Typical of the negative stereotypes were the comments found in an 1854 news editorial in the New York Daily Tribune which stated: "They are uncivilized, unclean and filthy beyond all conception, without any of the higher domestic or social

relations" ("Chinese Immigration to California," 1854, 4). In addition, certain sexually deviant characteristics were ascribed to the Chinese which included: "lustful and sensual in their dispositions; every female is a prostitute, and of the basest order; the first words of English they learn are terms of obscenity or profanity, and beyond this they care to learn no more" ("Chinese Immigration to California," 1854, 4). Moreover, they were described as "clannish in nature," and "[p]agan in religion," and lacking in "honesty, integrity or good-faith" ("Chinese Immigration to California," 1854, 4).

Hubert Howe Bancroft, in his 1890 book entitled The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, supplied representative racist descriptions of the Chinese as "clannish, crowding themselves into close, filthy quarters; they work too much, loaf about the streets too little, and do not spend money enough" (Bancroft 1890, 265). Bancroft did comment that a "Chinaman . . . works diligently, and economizes" (Bancroft 1890, 269). But he quickly negated these economic attributes when he wrote: "[H]owever valuable such qualities may be regarded in our children, we do not like them in the imported heathen; we do not want the Chinese here to deprive our children of the great blessings of labor" (Bancroft 1890, 270).

Immigration to Hawaii posed a different situation to the Chinese males who chose to journey there. They

received some encouragement to bring their wives with them. In 1864, the editor of a local Hawaiian newspaper supported the importance of female spouses when he discussed the dangers of allowing male laborers to immigrate without their female counterparts. Favoring the immigration of laborers "without that controlling and softening influence which women, by God's will, exercise over man," he wrote, "would be to encourage vice and urge on the fearful evils originated by dissolute habits" (Takaki 1989, 38). In 1877 the same newspaper editor suggested that "[n]o Chinamen, . . . should be allowed henceforth to come here . . . unless they are accompanied by their women" (Takaki 1989, 38).

Christian missionaries stationed in Hawaii also supported the immigration of wives. In 1881 missionary Frank Damon proclaimed: "No surer safeguard can be erected against the thousand possible ills which may arise from the indiscriminate herding together of thousands of men!" (Takaki 1989, 38). Damon believed that wives held a definite controlling influence on male behavior. "Let the sweet and gentle influence of the mother, the wife, the sister, and the daughter be brought to bear upon the large and yearly increasing company of Chinese in our midst," wrote Damon, "and we shall soon see a change wrought, such as police regulations cannot produce" (Takaki 1989, 38).

Three years later Damon noted the short-sightedness of

not allowing families to immigrate together to Hawaii. He proclaimed that only married men with wives and children were normal colonists (Char 1975, 27). Other local residents in Hawaii probably maintained similar attitudes as the newspaper editor and missionary Frank Damon held because Chinese women were welcomed in Hawaii between 1850 and 1900. When Hawaiians did become concerned with immigration, they exempted women and children from the Chinese quota (Takaki 1989, 39-40). It was not until 1898, after the United States annexed Hawaii and imposed its Chinese Exclusion Laws, that immigration halted (Yung 1986, 36-37). Chinese wives played an active role in the development of family life in Hawaii during the early years of immigration which definitely differed from the early role of Chinese women on the American mainland.

The Chinese women who immigrated to America during the last half of the nineteenth century tended to be prostitutes. After 1850, more and more prostitutes entered America and the terms woman and prostitute were used interchangeably when referring to Chinese female immigrants (McClellan 1971, 40). By the 1870s and 1880s, Americans assumed all Chinese women who arrived in America were prostitutes and slaves. Instances of such presumptions abound. The Englishman William Hepworth Dixon, in the second volume of his 1876 book entitled White Conquest, which discussed the growth of the United States, wrote:

"Nearly every woman who obtains a license to leave Hong-Kong comes over as a slave, the property of masters, who sell her" (Dixon 1876, 2: 272). During the investigation conducted by the California Legislature in 1878, the following comment inferred prostitution: "And brought to this country for--. Of course we know the purposes for which they are brought here" (California Legislature 1971, 78). Even census schedules reflected similar assumptions. Between 1870 and 1880, about half of the Chinese women listed were reported as "prostitutes, whores, courtesans, or workers in the bawdy houses--depending on the census taker's terminological preferences" (Edson 1970, 60).

Furthermore, Americans identified Chinese women with slaves and this evoked strong sympathy in the antislavery regions of the nation. Dixon wrote: "They are slaves . . . . and a free American State is not at liberty to protect her streets against this moral leprosy" (Dixon 1876, 2: 278). Although he and others believed that women slaves were free once they landed on American soil, he questioned: "Who is to tell such a creature as a Chinese slave that she is free? Who is to explain to her poor intelligence what is meant by free soil?" (Dixon 1876, 2: 278).

As the anti-Chinese movement developed between 1850 and 1882, women became a special group of scapegoats. Chinese prostitutes violated the ideals of "True

Womanhood," no more than any other prostitutes in America, but they were considered far worse. Racial hostility underlined the presentation of Chinese women as the supreme violators of middle-class Americans' ideal of "True Womanhood." "I am constrained to state," wrote Chris Aspin while in Nevada in 1870, that "they are avowed without almost a solitary exception to have professionally bartered away the brightest jewel of a virtuous woman" (LaLande 1981, 268).

Chinese prostitutes supposedly posed a special threat to young boys not only through spreading venereal disease, but for the destruction of their proper moral training. Typical of the time period was the 1873 religiously moralistic and prejudicial work by M. B. Starr entitled The Coming Struggle; or, What the People on the Pacific Coast Think of the Coolie Invasion. "The early familiarity of small boys who are enticed to the dens of these women, or obliged to pass by them daily," Starr wrote about white boys, "breeds a contempt for their own mothers, and begets a low estimate of the moral virtues of their sisters" (Starr 1873, 31). Dixon, quoting an American, said that Chinese women were "brought for shameful purposes, to the disgrace of the community where settled, and to the great demoralization of the youth of those localities" (Dixon 1876, 2: 279).

Anti-prostitution movements occurred in the American

West for restriction, not abolition, of prostitution because the latter would have been ignored. For example, in 1855 a special committee was formed to gather information on San Francisco brothels and then suggest ways to abolish them. "These pest-houses," a local newspaper editorialized, "cannot in all probability be entirely eradicated from amongst us. Similar experiments have failed in other cities and would succeed no better here" ("Suppression of Houses of Ill Fame," 1855, 2). According to this particular editor, the only possible solution was for brothels to be removed from public streets because they were "necessary evils" and "driven into the by-streets, and dark alleys of the city" ("Suppression of Houses of Ill Fame," 1855, 2) to respect public decency. Clearly, prostitution was tolerated as a "necessary evil" if it remained hidden and was not flaunted at the public.

While prostitution was considered a necessary evil, contemporary sources took a negative view of the necessity of Chinese prostitution. For example, one San Francisco newspaper reported that the majority of these women were "demoralizing our youth, and laying the foundation of future disease and sorrow to an unlimited extent" ("Train and the Anti-Coolies," 1869, 3). In addition, the article noted, "The importation of these harlot slaves has already led to scenes of conflict on our wharves, . . . and threatens to assume gigantic proportions" ("Train and the

Anti-Coolies," 1869, 3). Chinese brothels were described in a San Francisco newspaper as "miserable Chinese dens" known for "loathsomeness and obscenity for which they are notorious" ("The Ill-Fame Ordinance," 1854, 2). Moreover, Chinese women were criticized by upright Americans such as Starr, who proclaimed: "These women have already become a nuisance in cities, mining, and railroad towns, that the public will no longer patiently endure" (Starr 1873, 31).

Christianizing attempts were wasted on these prostitutes, according to Starr, because, if a Christian male could not remain "pure in the midst of such company, how much more difficult for a heathen woman to become a Christian in such circumstances, having been accustomed to no other life from her youth up?" (Starr 1873, 32). As time passed, however, some Americans worked to convert Chinese prostitutes to Christianity. Such an example was supplied by Rev. Ira M. Condit, in his book The Chinaman As We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him published in 1900, who reported the case of a Mrs. Ching Yuen who had been brought to the United States as a slave and was sold from one owner to another until a Chinese merchant purchased her and married her in a Christian wedding ceremony. She later was baptized and joined a Christian church (Condit 1900, 139).

Chinese women were not solely blamed for their immoral existence in America; white men were also accountable

because they knew better based on acceptable American morality. An article found in a California paper stated that the "white men who patronize . . . Chinese females are worse than them, because these men are not uncivilized and understanding our customs, do that which they know is morally wrong" ("Train and the Anti-Coolies," 1869, 3). The article then suggested punishing "the men and let[ting] the Chinese women alone to the Chinamen" ("Train and the Anti-Coolies," 1869, 3). Serious repercussions from suggestions like this were highly unlikely considering the antipathy toward these women. American morality held a woman responsible for her own downfall because she chose sexual ruin; therefore, a Chinese prostitute chose her life of degradation. Men were considered victims of their own instincts; and if they had to patronize prostitutes, they should stick to racially approved prostitutes.

The numbers of Chinese women who immigrated to the United States between 1850 and 1900 were small and consisted mostly of large-footed women from the lower-class who had been orphaned or sold by their families and worked as prostitutes (LaLande 1981, 19). The lack of a sizeable influx of females enhanced nativist sentiments because Chinese immigration lacked families which Americans considered normal. At this time, Americans who saw Chinese women in public were accustomed to seeing prostitutes because Chinese wives and daughters were still secluded

according to tradition even in America. This tradition fostered derogatory stereotyping of Chinese females as being lewd and immoral. While such generalizing served to increase tensions, it also reflected the fact that the majority of early female immigrants were prostitutes. Therefore, the existence of Chinese prostitution and slavery in nineteenth century America should be discussed in greater detail along with the media presentation of women that fed negative stereotypes and shaped American perceptions of Chinese women in America.

CHAPTER III

THE CHINESE FEMALE PROSTITUTES

Chinese women were a rarity amongst the early immigrants to the United States and those who did enter the country often were prostitutes or slave girls. Chinese prostitutes came to the United States in two phases: first, those who came as free agents and, second, those as part of an organized trade in women which will be described shortly. The free agent prostitute characterized the early years of Chinese immigration before 1854 and most received white patrons only (Hirata 1982, 39). Many succeeded in accumulating enough wealth to leave the profession and return to China. Others remained in the United States as brothel owners or as investors in other businesses (Hirata 1979, 8; Hirata 1982, 39). After 1854 men tended to control the trade in women, especially when the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 increased their market value.

The term tong translated into English as association (Dillon 1962, 169). The tongs were secret associations or societies which developed in America (Gong and Grant 1930, 24; McConnell 1979, 140). During the 1850s, the tongs developed and were patterned after the clan and secret societies in China (Dillon 1962, 169; McConnell 1979,

140). These groups aided their members, founded recreation clubs, and took care of elderly members (McConnell 1979, 140). Suffice to say that the Chinese males who joined the tongs came from all levels and occupations in Chinatowns and that by the 1870s and 1880s there were no longer clan or birthplace admission requirements (Dillon 1962, 169-170). By the 1880s, the major tongs had become criminal organizations that competed with each other for control of "crime that yielded any considerable profit" (Dillon 1962, 171). Tong members were known as "boo how day," or "hatchet sons" (Dillon 1962, 18), or "hatchet men," or "highbinders" (Condit 1900, 70-71). The highbinders' involvement in criminal affairs and tong warfare was frequently reported in newspapers, thus drawing attention to Chinatowns.

Tongs were linked to the criminal activities of gambling, opium dens, and prostitution. Their involvement in prostitution consisted of buying, selling, and kidnapping Chinese women, as well as intimidating prostitutes to keep them in line. These secret groups also threatened men and others who tried to help females escape. The tongs even levied taxes on non-tong members who were brothel owners and imposed a weekly twenty-five cents tax on every prostitute. Clearly, the male-dominated groups made a profit from controlling prostitution. Late-nineteenth century tongs imported thousands of Chinese

prostitutes and slave girls. The Hip Yee Tong brought in six thousand women between 1852 and 1873, netting some $200,000 in profit (Hirata 1979, 10; Wong 1978, 24).

According to sociologist Lucie Cheng Hirata (1979), if a low-class prostitute with a career expectancy of four or five years saw seven clients a day and charged thirty-eight cents a client, she earned $850 per year and $3,400 after four years. The cost of maintaining this woman at subsistence level amounted to $8 per month or $96 a year. Obviously, owners made a large profit off the servitude of the woman (17). Chinese prostitutes "lived according to their owners' whim" (Goldman 1981, 77). Furthermore, their earnings and possessions belonged to the men who bought them. Except for the early free agents, Chinese prostitutes were not economically independent nor in control of their sexual services because they were not allowed to turn down any patron.

The profitability of prostitution encouraged its spread. Females had to be continually brought into the United States in order to meet the demand. These women were recruited in a variety of ways by Chinese procurers, who sometimes kidnapped Chinese women to sell in America. Daughters of wealthier Chinese were particularly victimized by kidnappers because of the higher market value in America for footbound females. For example, "Sue Mui, a very pretty, well-educated girl was kidnapped . . . , disguised

in men's clothes, . . . and stowed away" (Logan 1976, 38) aboard a ship bound for San Francisco. Sue Mui was smuggled into the city and sold for $3,300 (Logan 1976, 38).

Contractual agreement was another method of procuring a Chinese prostitute to work in America. The female named on the contract was indentured to sell her body for a specified time period, usually four or five years (Simmons-Rogers 1983, 34). A girl's family entered into the contract and received money or the girl herself was advanced money for passage to the United States. Either way, a contract was drawn up as proof of financial debt with the girl's thumb print stamped on the paper as signature. One representative sample of such contractual agreements, as supplied by George F. Seward, a former United States Minister to China, in his 1881 book entitled Chinese Immigration: Its Social and Economical Aspects should suffice and follows in its entirety.

> An agreement to assist the woman Ah Ho, because coming from China to San Francisco she became indebted to her mistress for her passage. Ah Ho herself asks Mr. Yee Kwan to advance for her $630, for which Ah Ho distinctly agrees to give her body to Mr. Yee for service for a term of four years.
>
> There shall be no interest on the money. Ah Ho shall receive no wages. At the expiration of four years Ah Ho shall be her own mistress. Mr. Yee Kwan shall not hinder or trouble her. If Ah Ho runs away before her time is out, her mistress shall find her and return her, and whatever expense is incurred in finding her, and returning her, Ah Ho shall pay.

> On this day of the agreement Ah Ho has received with her own hands, from Mr. Yee Kwan $630.
> If Ah Ho shall be sick at any time for more than ten days she shall make up by an extra month of service for any ten days sickness.
> Now this agreement is proof. This paper received by Ah Ho is witness.
> Tung Chee, 12th year, 9th month, 14th day. (October, 1873) (Seward 1970, 269-270)

Deception was another method by which Chinese women were obtained for the purpose of prostitution in America. Enticements included educational, employment, and marital opportunities, although the latter was probably more frequently offered, along with the possibility of wealth. One Chinese slave girl, Lee Yow Chun, voluntarily described to the United States Commissioner of Immigration in San Francisco how she had been tricked into going to America. Lee Yow Chun reported that she was sixteen years old and that her mother had met a go-between who acted for a wealthy San Francisco merchant wanting a wife from China. She stated: "The go-between having made her a present of $380 as coming from my intended husband, mother said she consented to take so little because I could only marry that merchant as a concubine" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 773).

In 1897, Lee Yow Chun left China bound for America and her future husband. However, she soon discovered that something was wrong. Upon her arrival in San Francisco, she met a man who told her she had to say he was her father. The man had a woman accompanying him who later

turned out to be a procuress. Sensing something was wrong, Lee Yow Chun refused to be landed. Immigration officials sent her to a rescue home until she could be returned to her mother in China (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 774). Other supposedly engaged Chinese females, unsuspecting of four play, answered immigrations officials' questions with the stories concocted for them, were landed, and entered a life of slavery and/or prostitution.

Another popular method for recruiting females for prostitution in America was outright purchase. Many poor families sold their daughters as acts of survival. One slave girl, Chun Ho, provided an account of her experiences to the United States Commissioner of Immigration in San Francisco in 1898. "When I was 19 years old," Chun Ho stated, "the mistress . . . of a noted procurer . . . who lives in San Francisco, . . . gave me glowing accounts of life in California" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 783). At which point, Chun Ho claimed, "I was seized with an inclination to go there and try my fortune, mother taking $200 Mexican and consenting to my going" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 783). Like other Chinese women who entered the United States after 1882, Chun Ho deceived immigration authorities to gain admittance.

Chun Ho was approved for admittance and landed in the United States because she claimed to be married to a San Francisco merchant and because she stated that her parents

also lived in that city. She was taken to the procurer's house and shown to prospective buyers. Eventually, Chun Ho was sold to a Chinese highbinder for $1,950. The buyer informed her that after two years she could redeem herself if anyone paid $2,100 to release her. Chun Ho was sold for $2,100 after two years but escaped to the Presbyterian Chinese Rescue Home with the help of the Home's matron, Donaldina Cameron. Chun Ho's ordeal did not end, because for over a year she was harassed by the Chinese man who had purchased her and who threatened to kill her if he did not get his money back (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 783-784).

Chinese prostitutes in nineteenth century America shared certain common characteristics and experiences. The female immigrants who engaged in prostitution were generally between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five (Hirata 1979, 21). After their arrival in America, the women were temporarily sheltered and then auctioned off to the highest bidder. A woman's sale was finalized when she put her mark on a contract which stated she had received a sum of money and was in return going to serve her master for a specified number of years (Longstreet 1968, 164; McLeod 1948, 159). Those females put up for auction went either with wealthy Chinese men as concubines, or to high- or low-class brothels, or possibly to mining camps (Hirata 1979, 13).

Women sold as concubines were secluded from the general public by their wealthy husband-owners. A concubine served her husband-owner, who could sell her to another man or to a brothel if he wanted to. If she had been well cared for, her resale value was probably quite high. Females sold to high-class establishments had sexual contact only with a few select Chinese patrons. The high-status prostitutes lived in upstairs apartments. These women provided entertainment, companionship, and sexual services for which they were well paid.

The high-class prostitutes wore beautiful clothing and jewels. Their beauty was enhanced by makeup. They "shaved off and replaced" their eyebrows with "a finely pencilled arch"; their mouths "painted a blood red," and their faces "smeared with white" (Wiley 1928, 74). Women working in high-status establishments usually had bound feet. The females usually found in these places had been kidnapped from wealthy families in China which practiced footbinding.

The money high-class prostitutes received for their services belonged to their owners. These women kept the gifts which they obtained from clientele and which granted a small amount of personal wealth. Although they were usually treated better, these prostitutes could be abused, used, and resold at any moment (Goldman 1981, 96; Hirata 1982, 43; McLeod 1948, 183; Simmons-Rogers 1983, 39-40). The upper-class brothels maintained the familial

nomenclature characteristic of their counterparts in China. Col. Albert S. Evans, in his 1873 work entitled A La California: Sketches of Life in the Golden State, reported that upper-class prostitutes were "under the immediate control of an 'old mother'" (Evans 1873, 286) or madam. The tong members who owned the prostitutes "asked their wives or mistresses or an older prostitute to manage them. Normally half of the earnings of the prostitutes would go to the mothers and half to the owners" (Hirata 1982, 44).

The majority of Chinese prostitutes in America found themselves condemned to life in lower-class establishments. Inhabitants of lower-class brothels charged patrons twenty-five to fifty cents a visit and they attracted both white and Chinese customers. The prostitutes found at this level were poorly treated by owners and clients, and sometimes they were even beaten to death (Hirata 1982, 43). There were two types of lower-status Chinese brothels, parlor houses and cribs, both of which were found in San Francisco.

The author Stephen Longstreet furnished a graphic description of parlor houses. Parlor houses "were the white man's idea of China," stated Longstreet, "choking in musk, sandalwood, bad teak, sleazy silk hangings, grotesque ceramic gods, scrolls and wall paintings" (Longstreet 1948, 159). Later, however, author Curt Gentry cited

B. E. Lloyd's interior description of the parlor houses: "Rich draperies of gorgeous colors fall in graceful folds from the arch of the chamber alcoves; the carpets are soft and pretty, the furniture quite costly, and the air is fragrant with delicate oriental perfume" (Gentry 1964, 151). The ostentatious aura of the parlor houses was sorely lacking in the cribs.

Cribs existed merely for quick sex. These were small shack-like structures built in rows along alleys or roadways. They usually consisted of one or two small rooms with a few furnishings, including, as one observer noted, "a bamboo chair or two, a washbowl, and hard bunks or shelves covered with matting" (McLeod 1948, 183). Other cribs contained more elaborate furnishings including "a small brass or iron bed and washstand, a tin basin, sometimes a real marble top on the stand. A coal-oil stove and a pot of hot water on it, a flask of carbolic for sanitation, some towels, and a chest" (Longstreet 1968, 272) for the woman's clothes. In addition, "there was always a strip of red or yellow oil cloth across the foot" of the bed because "the two bit and four bit crib customer didn't take his boots off" (Longstreet 1968, 272).

Whether at upper- or lower-class brothels, Chinese prostitutes confronted similar occupational risks. Since pregnancy was an overwhelming problem for women in difficult financial straits, some prostitutes were

compelled to resort to abortion, infanticide, and desertion as ways to deal with unwanted children. The Chinese brothel owner usually decided the fate of the women's pregnancy. If the prostitute bore the baby and it was a girl, she was the property of the brothel owner. The girl was retained by the owner, did household chores, and eventually was recruited into prostitution. Sometimes owners simply sold the child outright to another brothel keeper. According to Hirata (1979), most children of Chinese prostitutes in San Francisco managed to escape brothel life either by entering mission homes and/or adoption into Chinese Christian families, returned to China, or moved to another American locale (21). Of the native-born Chinese females who remained in San Francisco, the 1880 census manuscript reported: "250 U.S.-born women who were not classified as prostitutes, 227 were housewives, while the rest were students, apprentices, housekeepers, and seamstresses" (Hirata 1979, 21-22). Furthermore, Hirata wrote that although "not all native-born women were offspring of prostitutes, a number of them clearly were" (Hirata 1979, 22). More importantly, "the daughters of some indentured and slave prostitute-workers managed to become wage laborers and housewives" (Hirata 1979, 22).

Sometimes, the Chinese prostitute took matters in her own hands and tried to handle pregnancy on her own. The

Daily Alta California, a San Francisco newspaper, reported in 1852 that a Chinese woman had been charged with committing infanticide. The female baby had been sick and died and the mother gave two men money "to purchase a coffin and inter the body"; however, the two men "kept the money and threw the child away" ("Infanticide," 1852, 1). Besides pregnancy, other occupational hazards included: robbery, abuse, violence, murder, drug and alcohol addiction, and venereal disease, as well as "loneliness, depression, isolation, fear and despair" (Edwards 1983, 15).

Chinese prostitutes encountered violence in the form of physical abuse. Charles Frederick Holder, in his 1897 article "Chinese Slavery in America," reported that "mission managers" found women who had "been burnt with red-hot irons, dragged about by the hair, and had their eyes propped open with sticks" (Holder 1897, 294). Reports of physical abuse by owners were often supplied by first-hand accounts. A case in point was the story told by Gon Sing, a nineteen-year-old woman, who was rescued from a brothel in Sacramento, California. "I was punished and often struck by the owner of the house," Gon Sing stated, "and . . . I had bruises on my person at the time I was rescued" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 789).

Gon Sing reported that, "I was also threatened that if I even went to the home when they got me back again they

would kill me, but . . . I preferred death to remaining" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 789). Another slave girl, Gui Ngun, relayed her experience and the abuse she suffered at the hands of her owner and his wife. According to Gui Ngun, "they took a great big stick and beat me with it. . . . He gambled, and if he lost money he came home and beat me" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 791). Another rescued slave girl, Chun Wui "was blind, made so by being shut up in a chicken coop all night for punishment, and the vermin had destroyed her sight" (U.S. House of Representatives 1901, 791).

Violence and abuse sometimes resulted in murder. An 1869 San Francisco newspaper reported an example of a mysterious murder. According to the article, "the body of a China woman was discovered buried underneath a Chinese hovel" by a police officer "attracted to the locality by the stench, and upon tearing up the floor the remains were found not more than six inches below the surface" ("Probable Murder. Another Phase of Chinese Custom," 1869, 3). The piece continued: "It looks as though there had been foul play, and this is not the first or only case in which dead stowaways have been found under the same circumstances" ("Probable Murder. Another Phase of Chinese Custom," 1869, 3). The brief events surrounding the murder of a Chinese woman in San Diego, California, on 13 May 1872 were described by Patrick J. Healy, the compiler, and Ng

Poon Chew, a Chinese newspaper editor, in their nonprejudicial 1905 piece A Statement for Non-Exclusion as follows: "On Saturday night, two men, supposed to be teamsers, entered a Chinese house . . . and cut the throat of a Chinawoman. Three wounds were inflicted, and one of them severed the windpipe" (Healy and Chew 1905, 224). The woman was found but her recovery was doubtful and the two unknown attackers escaped (Healy and Chew 1905, 224).

Sometimes Chinese prostitutes were simply murdered right at their place of employment. A book titled The "Heathen Chinee" at Home and Abroad. Who He Is; What He Looks like; How He Works and Lives; His Virtues, Vices and Crimes. A Complete Panorama of the Chinese in America. By an Old Californian, published in 1882, reported an example of such a murder. According to this book, one night a prostitute stood in her doorway and an unknown Chinese male assailant shot her. The attacker "lodged a pistol bullet in her neck and a second in the groin, from the effects of which she died in about an hour" ([Trumble] 1882, 41). There was also the murder of Choy Gum. She was killed "by Fong Ah Sing, who, because of some trivial trouble with Choy Gum, a courtesan, shot her through the breast as the safest measure to prevent the quarrel going any further" ([Trumble] 1882, 43).

Chinese prostitutes existed in a very turbulent environment, one in which survival of the fittest

mattered. Conditions were sometimes so bad for the prostitutes that some actually ran to American police officers and clung to them pleading for help. For example, during the investigation conducted by the Special Committee on Chinese Immigration for the California State Senate in 1878, one San Francisco police officer testified: "These women dare not leave their places, they are so filled with fear of their owners. There have been . . . women . . . so badly beaten that they have rushed to the police officers for protection" (California Legislature 1971, 124).

For Chinese prostitutes, drug and alcohol addiction were not only occupational hazards but probably a method of momentary escape from their existence. The fact that some were addicted to drugs and alcohol was exhibited by the news accounts of arrests on charges of drunk and disorderly conduct. The Daily Alta California noted in 1853: "Chinese woman, drunk and disorderly, city prison, two days" ("Police Court--Before Recorder Baker. March 7," 1853, 1). The public misbehavior of Chinese prostitutes added a bit of local color (Goldman 1981, 132-133) to the news.

Venereal diseases were serious problems for Chinese prostitutes, especially the lower-class ones, because they were not allowed to refuse any customer even if he was obviously infected. Chinese prostitutes were blamed for the spread of venereal diseases, particularly the spread of

syphilis, to Americans. For example, in 1876 the "Address of J. Marion Sims, M.D., President of the Association," appeared in the Transactions of the American Medical Association. According to Sims, "ninety-nine hundredths of the Chinese women . . . are sold . . . for the purpose of prostitution--and . . . their presence . . . breeds moral and physical pestilence" ("Address of J. Marion Sims, M.D., President of the Association," 1876, 107). Moreover, Sims announced that, "boys eight and ten years old have been syphilized by these degraded wretches" ("Address of J. Marion Sims, M.D., President of the Association," 1876, 107). Venereal diseases combined with other occupation hazards eventually wore out the prostitute and left her unsaleable.

Once the woman was too old and/or ill, she was taken to a "hospital" and disposed of. The "hospital" consisted of "a shelf four feet wide and about a yard above the dirty floor, upon which there" were "two old rice mats" (McLeod 1948, 184). Once a prostitute had an incurable disease she went to this little room where she was "forced within the door and made to lie down upon the shelf. A cup of water, another of boiled rice, and a little metal oil-lamp" were "placed by her side" (McLeod 1948, 184). When the oil in the lamp ran out, those in charge unbarred the door and entered, finding the woman dead "either by starvation or from her own hand" (McLeod, 1948, 184).

Death in the "hospital" was how a prostitute's life might end, while others ended with the woman simply thrown out on the streets to fend for herself, and with no place to go she eventually died poor, hungry, and alone. Hubert Howe Bancroft, in his 1890 book The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: Essays and Miscellany, reported if the corpse was not properly cared for then the deceased's spirit would return to haunt the place (Bancroft 1890, 390), which would explain why Chinese prostitutes who were ill and possibly dying were sent out into the streets. He mentioned that Chinese prostitutes were buried in a special section of the cemetery after they died and their bones remained in foreign soil, unlike deceased sojourners, whose bones were sent back to China (Bancroft 1890, 390). Whatever the cause of death, the end result for Chinese prostitutes was always the same, because they "were less esteemed than men, and less apt to have relatives here to care for them" (Bancroft 1890, 390). The Chinese prostitutes often died as they had lived, unknown and unloved.

There were some Chinese women who chose to remain in prostitution even after their contracts expired. The 1880 census records of Silver City, Idaho, supported this premise because "enumerated Chinese prostitutes were on an average seven years older than those enumerated in 1870, which suggests that many of the 1870 Chinese prostitutes may have remained . . . after their indenture contracts"

(Simmons-Rogers 1983, 296) had been fulfilled. Women who managed to survive the terms of their contracts often knew little English and had no place to go. Most females seemed to prefer the isolated environment of Chinatowns in a society generally hostile to their presence. Even in their work, Chinese prostitutes were separated from their sisters because they worked in entirely separate brothels. As public women existing in the world of men, they lived an isolated and lonely existence.

Friendships were possible for women who lived and worked in the same establishment and/or side-by-side in cribs. Evans announced that Chinese slave girls and prostitutes were "frequently . . . seen walking together on the streets, hand in hand, like little Caucasian sisters going home from school" (Evans 1873, 285). Even joint suicide might be attempted as a way to escape from the misery of their existence. For example, one twentieth century source, discussing San Francisco, mentioned that in "1857 the city was shocked by the desperate attempt of two girls to escape their lives of slavery by throwing themselves into a well in attempted suicides" (Dillon 1962, 232). Further proof lies in the fact that escaped Chinese slave girls and prostitutes also helped others escape, especially to rescue missions.

Whether with a friend or solo, some Chinese prostitutes attempted to flee their existence, and methods

used included running away, marriage, and suicide. Running away was not always a feasible solution because women were unfamiliar with the English language and the country. These two factors were definite obstacles. Also, running away often brought the wrath of the tongs down upon the women as well as anyone who helped her.

Escape via marriage was possible for Chinese prostitutes because they were not as stigmatized by their occupation as their white sisters were and were therefore considered suitable marriage partners. Moreover, the shortage of available women forced Chinese laborers to accept prostitutes as wives. In other cases, prostitutes and slave girls who escaped to Christian mission homes were able to meet marriageable Chinese Christians. For example, Louis J. Beck in his 1898 work entitled New York's Chinatown: An Historical Presentation of Its People and Places, reported the story of Yen Moy, a Chinese girl bought in 1889 and taken to New York as a prostitute. After Moy served her contract, she wanted her freedom, which her master did not provide. She relayed her plight to other Chinese men who assisted in her escape in 1891 (Beck 1898, 108-109). "Miss Yen Moy was rescued" and "placed in the hands of . . . a Presbyterian missionary, . . . where she lived and learned . . . and was afterwards married to . . . a laundryman" (Beck 1898, 109).

Sometimes the missionary homes assisted the escaping

couple in other ways. For example, in 1873, a Chinese man named Yet Sung assisted three Chinese women in escaping from a brothel to the Methodist mission-house. Yet Sung proposed to one of the women and two of his friends proposed to the other two. They were all married. Weeks later Yet Sung and his new wife again sought protection in the Methodist mission-house because his wife's previous owner threatened to kill her if she was not returned or if he was not compensated $350 for her loss. The incident ended with the arrest of the owner's agents for conspiracy to commit extortion (Seward 1970, 272).

Sometimes runaway newly married prostitutes were recaptured or kidnapped. Husbands were threatened and intimidated into paying the previous owner in order to prevent their wives from being repossessed at any moment. The tongs especially did not hesitate to use legal or illegal forces to get their property back. Women were controlled in the Chinese subculture which developed in the United States and Hawaii and American laws were used by owners to regain control of their women. Rev. Ira M. Condit, in his 1900 book entitled The Chinaman As We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him, described the most common way the Chinese used the American legal system. Initially, charges were brought against the runaway woman for theft. She then could be arrested and imprisoned. Then either the charges were dropped or the owner paid her

bail and the woman returned to him (Condit 1900, 68).

A detailed example of how the American legal forces assisted the owners of Chinese women appeared in the Virginia City, Nevada, newspaper known as the Territorial Enterprise in 1879. According to the article, the woman was stolen from her owner by another Chinese man. The owner offered a reward for anyone who would assist him in getting his property, which had cost him $500, back. Meanwhile, the Chinese woman in question had fled with her lover to her lover's cousin for assistance. The cousin, named Sam, worked as a cook at the home of a Virginia City family where the police showed up in search of the woman. Sam, the woman and her lover were all arrested and taken to jail and placed in one cell. Later some Chinese men showed up at the jail and the officers asked the woman which man she would leave with. The woman promptly refused to leave with any of the men for fear they would kill her ("More Chinese Business," 1879, 3).

The Chief and his men attempted four times to get the Chinese woman to leave with different Chinese men. The woman continually refused to go. Sam and his cousin were then moved into separate cells. The woman was taken away screaming and, according to Sam, her cries were muffled by the Chief and his men. Sam and his cousin reported they did not know where the woman had been taken. The news reporter allowed the Chief a chance to defend his actions

and those of his men. The Chief basically told the reporter he was getting the woman back for her owner and the Chinese men involved were simply stealing her ("More Chinese Business," 1879, 3).

Chinese prostitutes were in some cases purchased from their owners by Chinese men who then married them. Purchase did not insure women's safety. Chinese women not already engaged in prostitution were targets of kidnapping by the tongs as an 1855 article in the Daily Alta California indicated: "The Marysville Herald says there was a row among the Chinese . . . on account of a party of Chinamen having sold a Chinese married woman, to some Shasta Chinamen" ("Row among the Chinese," 1855, 2). The article pointed out that those involved had been arrested.

In some cases, husbands retrieved their abducted wives as demonstrated by a news piece which appeared in an 1877 issue of the Nevada State Journal. A Chinese merchant in a town named Wadsworth had married. "The couple returned to Wadsworth," reported the article, "but last week two other Chinamen kidnapped Mrs. Ah Chung Lung, and secreted her in Truckee. The woman was recovered, and the kidnappers arrested, and are now in our jail" ("Kidnapping Affair," 1877, 3). In other cases, women were lost forever as another brief news account in a San Francisco paper implied: "A China woman named Boy Yet was abducted yesterday . . . , and no clue of her whereabouts has yet

been obtained" ("Notes from the Comstock," 1877, 8). In addition, another "China woman, abducted from Truckee recently, is supposed to be in this city, but she has not yet been found" ("Notes from the Comstock," 1877, 8). Apparently marriage did not insure a Chinese woman's safety.

Suicide was the final method of escape chosen by Chinese prostitutes and the common method chosen was drug overdose. "Easy access to laudanum, morphine, and opium made suicide fairly simple" (Goldman 1981, 133-134); and successful suicides were reported in daily newspapers. For example an article in an 1854 San Francisco paper reported that "a Chinese woman named Ah-Cum, . . . committed suicide by taking a large dose of opium" ("Suicide by Opium," 1854, 2). Another San Francisco paper printed an account of a suicide in 1855. Initially the article editorialized: "It is remarkable how prone the Chinese are to administer poison to themselves, as a remedy for the ills that flesh is heir to" ("Suicide," 1855, 2). After the brief comment, the details of the suicide were given. According to the news piece, a thirty-five-year-old female prostitute named "Ah Son was discovered dead in her bed, . . . the poor creature had swallowed opium" ("Suicide," 1855, 2).

Even runaway prostitutes sometimes chose death. One runaway prostitute hid in the Nevada hills until found with her feet frozen. Her feet were amputated and she refused

medication and food and died (Yung 1986, 19). Death was sometimes preferable to a life of hopelessness and harsh treatment at the hands of tong members, their owners, and patrons.

Chinese prostitutes adjusted to life in American Chinatowns as best they could considering the circumstances in which they lived. Survival was difficult but possible even in the harshest environments. The male-dominated tongs exploited Chinese females sexually for economic profit and as slave labor. Meanwhile, the existence of Chinese prostitutes reinforced negative stereotypes and fueled American anti-Chinese animosities. The prostitutes' activities and the environment in which they lived offered the media ample opportunity to present Chinese women in ways that enhanced nativist hostilities directed at the immigrants. Thus, prostitutes were simultaneously exploited by nativist forces that continually mentioned the negative aspects of Chinese prostitution. The portrayal of these women, whether collectively or individually, by the media reinforced stereotypical images upon which the American response to Chinese prostitutes was founded.

CHAPTER IV

PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHINESE PROSTITUTE AND THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

Chinese female immigrants to nineteenth century America became the unwitting pawns of nativist forces exploiting the racist and sexist aspects of Chinese prostitution in order to enhance American animosity toward immigrants. Anti-Chinese forces continually exploited the fact that the women were ethnically different, thus inciting racist hostility in whites. Nativists also repeatedly publicized the fact that these females were nothing more than chattel slaves to the men involved in Chinese prostitution, thus displaying the sexist aspects of prostitution. Media coverage of Chinese prostitution included not only the arrests of prostitutes, but also information about "murders and kidnappings, street fights and assassinations, escapes and suicides, extortions, and trials peopled with perjurers and false witnesses" (Barth 1974, 155). The early anti-Chinese rhetoric was generally applied to all immigrants; however, gradually nativist animosities were specifically directed at prostitutes and this resulted in attempts by whites to clean up Chinatowns. As one representative opinion found in a California newspaper feature asserted in 1855: "Oriental

females are an unmixed and unmitigated nuisance. They should be exterminated at once from the country and never another of their class be allowed to set foot here again" ("Immigrants--Social Evils," 1855, 2).

Chinese prostitutes were presented as worse than other prostitutes as shown by the response given when confronted with the question, "[W]hy not shut up the gilded palace of the American harlot as well as the low cabin of the inoffensive Chinese?" ("Immigrants--Social Evils," 1855, 2). The answer:

> It would be well if they could all be closed, but the latter are so much worse than anything existing elsewhere in the whole civilized world that people abroad, if they knew how grievous and offensive they are, may well hesitate to bring their families hither. ("Immigrants--Social Evils," 1855, 2)

By 1859, Chinese prostitution had been pushed from main streets to back alleys and roads. This shift marked a new development in prostitution characterized by male-dominated tongs buying and selling women, and highbinders (Barth 1974, 155) or hatchet men carrying out the criminal activities of the tongs (Condit 1900, 65-69). Additional characteristics associated with Chinese prostitution during this period included blackmail, corrupt public and immigration officials, special police forces, mission and rescue workers, and Chinese female slaves in bagnios (Barth 1974, 155) or brothels (McCunn 1981, 100; McLeod 1948, 182-183). This new phase directly influenced

nineteenth century American images of Chinese prostitutes. Stereotypical American perceptions could be found in the following excerpt from Prentice Mulford's article, "Glimpses of John Chinamen," in one magazine of the 1870s:

> In California the word "Chinawoman" is synonymous with what is most vile and disgusting. Few, very few, of a respectable class are in the State. . . . These can hardly be termed "abandoned women." They have had no sense of virtue, propriety or decency to abandon. They are ignorant of the disgrace of their calling: if the term may be allowed they pursue it innocently. Many are scarcely more than children. They are mere commodities, being by their own countrymen bought in China, shipped and consigned to factors in California and there sold for a term of years. (Mulford 1873, 225)

Other authors simply reinforced early images of Chinese women, although sometimes the tone of their writing appeared more sympathetic to the plight of the female slaves and prostitutes. In the 1890 book entitled The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: Essays and Miscellany, Hubert Howe Bancroft excused the prostitutes when he wrote: "It was through no fault of theirs that they were what they were. . . . The poor creatures were generally obtained by purchase . . . or forcibly abducted" (Bancroft 1890, 356). In an 1897 article, "Chinese Slavery in America," Charles Frederick Holder pointed out that deception was an approach used to lure females to America. Women were promised a rich husband and, "excited by the life of luxury and ease drawn" (Holder 1897, 291), they left China often never to return. In a 1908 article, "Chinese Slave Girls: A Bit of

History," Mrs. E. V. Robbins supported Holder's comment when she wrote: "Women are persuaded to come . . . with the promise of a husband here on arrival. The 'husband' pays a big price and locks her securely into a cell, and thus for many years brothel slavery has been perpetuated" (Robbins 1908, 101).

Press accounts often referred to Chinese prostitutes as 'moon-eyed damsels' and 'celestials' when the reporter wanted to be polite. At other times, written portraits simply called them 'whores' and 'harlots.' A California newspaper caught the condescending approach to prostitutes when it reported in 1852 that a Chinese man had filed a complaint with police because "he had been assaulted in the open street by the tongue of a fair moon-eyed daughter of the Celestial Empire" ("War in China," 1852, 2). Based upon this complaint "the female celestial, whose name is Assa, and whose nether limbs very much resembled in appearance a pair of short tongs sculling about two boats, was arrested" ("War in China," 1852, 2).

Such sarcasm could be found in an 1854 edition of San Francisco's Daily Alta California, which reported the following:

> Ah-hi, Ah-ho, Ah-ti, Ah-mi, Sol-la, and several other Celestial representatives with musical names, . . . were all thrown into bulk on the same charge--disturbing the neighborhood, "making night hideous" and being general nuisances. . . . This was one of the handsomest collections of pig-eyed beauties that could

> possibly be collected in this country or in any other. ("Recorder's Court--Before Judge Baker--June 26," 1854, 2)

The newspaper described the Chinese prostitutes as "pig-eyed beauties," subtly comparing them to a collection of stockyard animals. Such allusions were not uncommon. San Francisco's Daily Morning Chronicle reported in 1869 that "Ah Sow, for petit larceny, was sent up for one month, giving her time to cure her bacon" ("Ah Sow," 1869, 3).

Newspaper accounts of Chinese prostitutes as offenders often included references to the creation of public disturbances and to the robbing of clients. But they also portrayed those prostitutes as victims of robbery and violent crimes. Both perceptions were insinuated in many of the articles which appeared in different issues of the Daily Alta California. In 1853, the paper reported:

> Ow Ho, a little Chinese woman, about the size of a lump of indigo, was charged with robbing a gentleman with whom she had generously shared her bed, of a check of $300 and a note for $1300. As there was no evidence against her she was discharged. ("Police Court," 1853, 1)

On 12 March 1865, the paper revealed that "Ah Moey was convicted on the charge of stealing a $20 piece and a $10 piece from John Martin, who placed himself at her mercy, and was rightly served" ("Robbing a Greenhorn," 1865, 1).

A satirical account of two Chinese prostitutes accused of stealing thirty dollars from their client appeared in an 1855 issue. The paper noted that the patron involved represented himself in court and that his friend acted as a

witness for him. According to his friend, as they passed the domicile of the female defendants they were invited in by "Cum Chay and Ah Ho, . . . who possess a certain share of the questionable charms of their race" ("Chinese Testimony," 1855, 2).

Once in the dwelling, the man claimed he "was immediately enveloped . . . by the two damsels, and it was then and there that the ere [sic] was abstracted" ("Chinese Testimony," 1855, 2). Later when "asked which of the two girls had taken the money from his pocket; he replied that he could not tell, as both were kissing him at the same time. Lucky dog--his ignorance was bliss" ("Chinese Testimony," 1855, 2). A follow-up article reported that the two women "who were accused of insinuating their delicate hands into the celestial trowsers [sic] of Ah Chee, were discharged" ("Celestial Innocence," 1855, 2).

Sometimes the perceptions of Chinese women were presented through news reports which followed the escapades of particular Chinese prostitutes. For example, the Daily Alta California contained a series of news articles about a prostitute named Ah You. On 3 August 1853, the paper announced that "Ah You, the Chinese lady with 'the blue dress on,'" appeared in Court for contempt because she did not show up "on Saturday to answer to the charge of nuisance, in throwing out of her window, slops and other little--disagreeabilities. The daughter of the East was

fined $20" ("Police Court," 1853, 2).

Later, on 28 August 1853, the paper reported the female "of the blue dress order, was charged with kicking up a gr[e]at rampus [sic] at a house on Jackson [S]treet. The saucy looking little lady was fined ten dollars" ("[A Little Chinese Female of the Blue Dress Order]," 1853, 1). On 31 August 1853, it was noted: "Two celestial troliopes, . . . were charged with throwing dirty water out of a window upon the devoted head of brother Clang Wang; and then commenced heavy . . . Chinese slang" ("[Two Celestial Troliopes]," 1853, 1). Ah You and the other woman were each fined $10. Apparently, Ah You disappeared from the local gossip pages after the escapade described above. However, an 1869 article in San Francisco's Daily Morning Chronicle announced:

> A Chinese woman named Ah You, aged about thirty years, was yesterday examined and pronounced insane. She is quite turbulent and violent, the record says--breaks up pots and kettles, thinks people want to kill her, and constantly exclaims, "Sam mi! [S]am mi!" ("Insane Chinese Woman," 1869, 3)

Whether this particular Ah You was the same Ah You as mentioned in earlier news reports is unknown.

Chinese prostitutes were portrayed as victims as well as offenders. Once again, newspapers relayed this perception in various articles which appeared in the Daily Alta California. "Wm. Wayland fell a victim to his penchant for the Chinese style of beauty, and in an evil

hour did rob one of her jewel, a gold ear-ring," an 1854 article mockingly reported, "Having been 8 or 9 days in prison already, he was considered sufficiently punished" ("Petty Larceny," 1854, 2). On 29 August 1855, the paper announced that a man was in court because he stole "a silk dress and petticoat from a Chinese woman." However, "whether guilty of the charges or not must remain a question, as the evidence of the Chinese woman is inadmissible, and the ownership of the property could not be proven" ("Thieving with Impunity," 1855, 2) because the Chinese could not testify against whites in court.

Instances of assault against Chinese prostitutes also appeared in the newspaper. In 1853, the paper reported that, "James Mutch . . . was charged with striking a Chinese girl on the head with a bottle of gin. . . . and from appearances she was badly wounded" ("[James Mutch . . . Charged with Striking a Chinese Girl]," 1853, 1). Women were also abused by their countrymen. "Ah-Chung," the paper stated, "was charged with an assault and battery on a Chinese girl" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2). According to the article, the girl's mother owed Ah-Chung money, "so he went to her house and was dragging the girl off as security, when he was arrested" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2). The following day the outcome of the case was reported: "Ah-Chung, for an assault and battery on

a Chinese girl, was fined $150" ("Recorder's Court--Before Judge Baker--Feb. 14," 1854, 2). Again, on 5 April 1854 another assault was reported: "Chinn-Choy, for assaulting a Chinese woman, was fined one hundred dollars" ("Recorder's Court--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2).

Chinese prostitutes were also victimized by extortionists. In 1853, a San Francisco newspaper reported:

> Achem and Ahuni, two Chinese, for extortion, were continued for further hearing. It appears that these rascals are two members of a regularly organized gang who subsist by compelling the Chinese women to pay them the sum of $20 per month each, under threats of being murdered or having their houses burnt down over their heads. ("Police Court--Before Recorder Baker--Feb. 4," 1853, 2)

There were other court cases in which the prostitute involved was frightened into not testifying against her extortioner(s) which resulted in the woman being charged with perjury. A court case representative of this sort appeared in a San Francisco newspaper in 1854 when "A-Tuck, a male celestial was charged with robbing Ah-Ho, a female celestial, of ten dollars" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13th.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2). The paper commented that the robbery was "one of those extortions or taxes which an organized band of Chinese are in the habit of levying upon the miserable Chinese women" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13th.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2).

Then when the woman was called to give evidence, "she

denied any knowledge of the matter," and then she "refused to give any evidence against the man, being restrained through fear" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13th.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2). Her testimony was supported by some female "residents in the house," who "were sworn, but denied all knowledge of the matter" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13th.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2). However, these comments were all "contradicted by one of the officers who was present, she was arrested for perjury" ("Recorder's Court--Feb. 13th.--Before Judge Baker," 1854, 2). The next day the case was brought up again in Court. The woman and one of the female witnesses who was also charged the day before for perjury, both testified again that the woman did not know the man. The paper printed the Judge's comments implying the Court wanted to help them, but was unable to for self-explanatory reasons. The Judge announced that

> the object of arresting them had failed, as they had been discharged under a writ of habeas corpus, and had been under the same influence of intimidation that they had been previously. . . . There was no use in prosecuting the women for perjury, as they had plainly been under intimidation. ("Recorder's Court--Before Judge Baker--Feb. 14th," 1854, 2)

Furthermore, he stated that he would "discharge the case, and should not interfere with any more of the kind in future, as it was impossible to procure evidence against offending parties" ("Recorder's Court--Before Judge Baker--Feb. 14th," 1854, 2).

Chinese prostitutes were also the victims of

kidnapping. One such example should suffice, and appeared in a California newspaper, the Oakland Enquirer, on 9 March 1894 in the local news section of the paper. According to the paper, a young Chinese woman mysteriously disappeared from the Chinese section of town. Her name was Guch Yem and she was reported "to be only 18, quite pretty, and worth as much as $1200, and besides she had $400 in cash and $300 worth of jewelry with her" ("Strayed or Stolen: A Pretty Chinese Chattel Mysteriously Disappears," 1894, not paginated). It was surmised that she had "been spirited away or stolen by some smitten or speculating Celestial. The Sing Tong Company has offered $100 to anyone who can give any information as to her whereabouts or $300 for her return" ("Strayed or Stolen: A Pretty Chinese Chattel Mysteriously Disappears," 1894, not paginated).

The media also presented Chinese prostitutes as the unintentional instigators of tong wars, which often resulted in bloodshed and death. One instance of such an episode printed in an 1869 issue of the Daily Morning Chronicle reported problems developing among the Chinese males. A riot broke out one night and the next morning a fight occurred between two men and one was shot and killed instantly ("Another Chinese Murder. Two Chinamen Quarrel about Their Women--One Shoots the Other Dead," 1869, 3). Another example appeared in an article in an 1876 San Francisco paper, when a fight broke out in Chinatown

supposedly over a female and ending with one man dead. The following day the fight renewed and another Chinese man was killed. Later that same day, another fight started "ending in THE ABDUCTION OF FOUR FEMALES. Supposed to have been the original cause of the trouble" ("Chinese Riot at San Jose. Two Males Killed and Four Females Abducted--Suicide," 1876, 4).

An editorialized account of another tong fight over a prostitute appeared in a Columbus, Nevada, newspaper known as the Borax Miner. "She, the cause, rejoices in the cognomenial appellation of China Mary," the editorial stated, "His name is Sam Lee, a cook by occupation. He commenced talking loud, and the opposing heathen faction commenced firing their revolvers from all directions" ("Chinese Riot," 1876, 3). Although shots were fired and the police arrested some of the men involved, the editor reported: "We regret to be shorn of the gratification it would have caused us to announce the killing of a dozen or so of them, but the true fact is that only one was hurt" ("Chinese Riot," 1876, 3).

Often, the information reported in newspapers was exaggerated, misrepresented, and written for purposes of entertaining readers with racial preconceptions of the Chinese. For instance, an 1865 article in a California paper insinuated that when "a soldier, . . . stabbed a Chinese woman in the arm, in a drunken frolic in China

Alley" ("Convicted on Two Charges," 1865, 1), the incident was more of a lover's quarrel than assault and battery. Yet, the follow-up story took a different tone, suggesting that he had "stabbed a Chinese woman so as to nearly kill her one night last week, out of" his "clear unadulterated cussedness, and nothing else" ("Wholesome Fines," 1865, 1).

Another entertaining newspaper account appeared in the Silver City, Idaho, local news section of an 1874 issue of the Owyhee Avalanche. "Night before last a gay and festive Chinaman named 'Louis,'" the article stated, "eloped on the Winnemucca stage in company with an almond-eyed damsel belonging to another 'knight of the cue'" ("Trouble in Chinatown," 1874, 3). The next day the runaway woman's owner became aware of his financial loss as he had purchased her for $500. The owner was described to be "in a very disconsolate mood" ("Trouble in Chinatown," 1874, 3). In addition, it was noted that another Chinese man "took 'French leave' . . . leaving several of his countrymen in the lurch to the tune of $300, or $400" ("Trouble in Chinatown," 1874, 3). The closing comment of the reporter: "Frank, our Chinese cook, says that some Chinamen are getting to be 'too muchee bad, all same Melican man'" ("Trouble in Chinatown," 1874, 3).

Although newspaper accounts addressed the victimization of Chinese prostitutes, accounts of kidnapping, suicide, violence, abuse, and murder were often

trivialized, generalized, and satirized. An 1876 Reno, Nevada, newspaper, the Evening Gazette, presented such an account. The first half of the article granted no individual identity to the Chinese man and woman which the story was about because no names were used. Instead it used the standard names of John and Mary. Although the article did mention John's real name as Sing He, he was later referred to as Ling He. Later he was mockingly called Mr. He and his prospective bride as Miss She. Not until the very end of the article, when a small notation in smaller print noted the marriage of "Sing Hee to Ah Shee ("Lothario with a Tail," 1876, 3), did the woman's name finally appear.

This particular story began by noting that two Chinese men had created some excitement when they were running along the street with a Chinese woman between them. It was then pointed out that

> the lady in question was enamored of another pig-tailed brave, who felt matrimonially inclined. John, the love was about to consummate his long cherished desires this morning, when the owners of Mary, the loved, discovered the plot and swore a warrant for love-stricken John. ("Lothario with a Tail," 1876, 3)

John was arrested and Mary was taken to another town. "Mary, no doubt, mourned for her imprisoned John," stated the article, "while he, poor lad, gazed wildly through his prison bars, with eyes love-laden, and wondered why Mary came not to smooth his fevered brow and tender consolation

in his hour of need" ("Lothario with a Tail," 1876, 3). The kidnappers were caught and Mary and John married.

Chinese prostitutes also were accused of spreading particularly virulent forms of venereal disease, and syphilis was the disease usually implied (Miller 1969, 164). In an 1876 issue of the newspaper, the New York Herald, an editorial briefly implied that the existence of prostitution would cause "the introduction into our nurseries or schools of some new and horrible disease that defied treatment" ("The Heathen Chinee," 1876, 6). In addition, they would "contaminate the life of the nation" ("The Heathen Chinee," 1876, 6).

The New York newspaper, The World, also printed an editorial in an 1876 issue which asked: "If Chinese prostitutes are inoculating the gilded youth of San Francisco with the terrible diseases of ASIA, does not the fault rest with the gilded youth?" ("The Chinese Question," 1876, 4) Unlike the previous editor, most simply blamed Chinese prostitutes for the spread of venereal diseases. A California newspaper in 1876 printed an editorial concerned with anti-Chinese activities which included "expelling the six lewd women from town" ("Antioch and the Chinese," 1876, 1). In defense of this activity, the last line of the editorial stated: "We rid the town of six diseased Chinese prostitutes--that is all--and every

town on the Coast would do well to follow the example" ("Antioch and the Chinese," 1876, 1).

During the 1878 Special Committee on Chinese Immigration's investigation conducted for the California State Senate, one doctor testified that his patients who suffered from venereal diseases "think diseases contracted from Chinawomen are harder to cure than those contracted elsewhere, so they tell me as a matter of self-protection" (California Legislature 1971, 27). In addition the Committee noted that the "fact that these diseases have their origin chiefly among the Chinese is well established" (California Legislature 1971, 25). Further evidence of them being venereal disease carriers was given by Bancroft, who noted that they spread this "malignant disorder" (Bancroft 1890, 38) to white men and boys. Anti-Chinese forces exaggerated the spread of venereal diseases by Chinese prostitutes while virtually ignoring the spread of venereal diseases by other prostitutes.

Despite hostile accounts of Chinese prostitutes, the American press seemed to suggest that these women were necessary to prevent Chinese families from permanently immigrating to America. Simultaneously, prostitutes contradicted the white fear of a permanent Chinese population developing because Chinese prostitutes were possible marriage partners. The opportunity of sojourners marrying Chinese prostitutes lessened white fears of racial

intermarriages between white women and sojourners. The prostitutes served the sexual needs of Chinese men, and Anglo-Americans believed they also prevented sojourners from attacking white women.

Chinese prostitutes served the sexual curiosity and sexual needs of American males. White men believed there were antomical differences, specifically that their genitals were abnormally shaped, between these women and white females. J. W. Buel's 1882 work, Metropolitan Life Unveiled; or the Mysteries and Miseries of America's Great Cities, Embracing New York, Washington City, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and New Orleans, reported that he and his assistants actually conducted an investigation of the anatomical variations of Chinese women. "Being bent upon investigation, we enter and observe," wrote Buel, "paying four 'bittee' (fifty cents) for the privilege of witnessing the physical configuration of these . . . creatures" (Buel 1882, 276). He reported that, "our investigation justifies the assertion that there are no physical differences between the Chinese and American women, their conformation being identical" (Buel 1882, 276).

Even though Buel's findings showed no physical variations between Chinese and white females, brothels and cribs were maintained for American males. Apparently, some white men visited these prostitutes simply to have a look, only to discover that there were no real anatomical

differences between Chinese and white females. As early as 1855, the American public was aware that these prostitutes served other males besides the sojourners. An 1855 San Francisco newspaper editorial commented that anyone out walking in a certain section of town "will be compelled to see scores of white men dodging and peeping about the doors and windows, where courtesans of fair complexion are ensconced like spiders laying in wait for days" ("A Nuisance," 1855, 2).

The media also promoted a certain image surrounding the sexuality of Chinese women. The exotic image portrayed was often found in the physical descriptions of prostitutes. An 1851 issue of a California newspaper described a woman in Court as "a fair Chinese damsel with olive complexion, small feet and most unexceptionable turned up-at-the-corner eyes" ("Our Chinese Relations," 1851, 2). In the 1882 work entitled The "Heathen Chinee" at Home and Abroad. Who He Is; What He Looks like; How He Works and Lives; His Virtues, Vices and Crimes. A Complete Panorama of the Chinese in America. By an old Californian, A. Trumble described a prostitute as having "great purplish-black eyes brought out into high relief by . . . rings of rouge, and her voluptuous lips tinged with the rosiest pearl of a summer morning" ([Trumble] 1882, 26). In addition, she reportedly had "a superb figure of purely sensuous Oriental beauty" ([Trumble] 1882, 26). Their

exotic physical portrayal included descriptions of their "jet-black hair, . . . enhanced by . . . flowers arranged in curious designs on the back hair, while the smooth expanse of the front plaits is marked with broad bands of gilt" ([Trumble] 1882, 25).

The existence of prostitution offered an excuse for harassing the Chinese which carried over into legislative measures. In California, the legislation was designed to regulate, not rescue, these women. For example, San Francisco in the 1870s forbade crib prostitutes from standing in open doorways to solicit customers. However, these females would shut their doors and invite clients through their windows (Dillon 1962, 231). Sometimes the wording of an ordinance rendered it ineffective, as displayed in a San Francisco Court case. The case concerned six arrested Chinese prostitutes "charged with a violation of the City Ordinance, in keeping a house for purposes of prostitution" ("Houses of Ill-Fame," 1854, 2). This particular ordinance could conceivably control prostitution, because it forbid "the keeping of houses of prostitution and the renting of houses for that purpose" ("Houses of Ill-Fame," 1854, 2). It was ineffective because there "was no prohibition in regard to inmates, and the ordinance was so worded that although the Marshal had the right of arresting inmates, they could not be punished under the ordinance" ("Houses of Ill-Fame," 1854, 2).

Under this ordinance, there was no penalty attached to the prostitutes of brothels so the females were released ("Houses of Ill-Fame," 1854, 2).

The annoyance to Americans caused by Chinese prostitutes was symbolized by their arrest records. Most arrests between 1850 and 1870 in San Francisco's Chinatown were of prostitutes. Some were imprisoned and some were simply fined (Dillon 1962, 40-41). From 1865 to 1900, San Francisco's annual arrests of Chinese prostitutes "ran from as low as one to as high as 839 depending largely upon the degree of anti-Chinese feeling" (Gentry 1964, 150). In Portland, Oregon, Chinese females made up a large proportion of the arrests for prostitution. Between 1871 and 1885 they accounted for "41 percent" of the arrests, "while their part of Portland's female population probably never exceeded 10 percent" (Tracy 1980, 20) during the same period.

Justification for legislation directed at Chinese prostitutes was founded upon charges that they were filthy and to be avoided. A case in point appeared in an 1854 editorial in the Daily Alta California which stated: "A determined effort should be made to drive these disgusting specimens of humanity out of Dupont [S]treet at least, where they seem to have obtained a firm foothold" ("Piling In," 1854, 2). Some allowance for the immigration of Chinese was granted when the editor wrote that if they were

"industrious, laboring people, we might permit their peculiar appearance, their jaw-breaking jargon and even their filthy habits" ("Piling In," 1854, 2). However, the editor felt that Chinese prostitutes were "wholly useless and unproducing, and beside that an eyesore and a stench in the nostrils of the community, they are entirely unbearable within our city limits" ("Piling In," 1854, 2).

State and Federal legislation also attempted to regulate Chinese prostitution. For example, the California Legislature in 1870 passed an anti-prostitution law designed for the prevention of Chinese and Japanese female immigration. If evidence of "good" habits and character were provided, then the women were allowed in (Cheng and Cheng 1984, 9). However, prostitutes continued to enter California. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, meant to regulate the number of sojourners entering the United States, was also applied to females. Inadvertently, the Exclusion Act increased the monetary value of women (Mark and Chih 1982, 62-63). The decreased importation of females meant that the few that got into the country were worth more and therefore sold for large profits.

The existence of Chinese prostitution in America after 1850 fostered a twisted perception of the immorality of all female immigrants. The negative stereotypes and media symbols that developed at the time were used by nativist forces to enhance anti-Chinese feelings. Although the

majority of women entering the country were prostitutes, there were some who were not engaged in prostitution. Images of Chinese females changed when married women began to immigrate to America and family life began to develop.

CHAPTER V

FEMALE ROLE STEREOTYPES IN THE CHINESE-AMERICAN FAMILY

Despite major obstacles like racial and sexual harassments, Chinese women assumed the role of active cultural contributors and participants in the United States through their influence on the Chinese-American family. Once arriving in America, Chinese women rejoined their spouses. These reunions could be pleasurable. In one instance around the early 1870s, a Chinese woman landing in San Francisco recalled: "The morrow came and scarcely had I a glimpse of the bleak hills . . . when Chan Hay was by my side, joyfully saluting me and our boy who had become a man in the four years of our separation" (Pollard 1869-1876, 21).

In other instances, however, wives faced the initial disappointment of being reunited with spouses much older than they remembered. Even family members were surprised at how their male relatives had aged in America. In her 1977 autobiography, The Woman Warrior, Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts, Maxine Hong Kingston wrote of her aunt Moon Orchid's first meeting with and recognition of her brother-in-law. Moon Orchid recalled "a young man" who

had been "the ideal in masculine beauty, the thin scholar with the hollow cheeks and the long finger" (Kingston 1977, 138). But the man who greeted her was "an old man, . . . his hair . . . silver" with "bony fingers," and "bony wrists" (Kingston 1977, 138). Wives and relatives had memories of young men who dreamed of wealth and adventure; but often the men they met were instead older men worn down by a life of hard labor (Sung 1967, 158).

In other cases, the couples' first meeting took place on American soil when women, who had been married by proxy to men in America, were greeted by their new husbands upon their arrival. In either scenario, the Chinese sense of duty and obligations required that couples remain married even if they were dissatisfied with their reunion. The wife's sense of duty was often just accepted as a given. Sui Sin Far, in her 1897 piece "The Chinese Woman in America," commented on this sense of duty. "More constant than sentimental is the Chinese woman," wrote Far, "She loves him because she has been given to him to be his wife. No question of 'woman's rights' perplexes her" (Far 1897, 64). This passage suggests how obligations of duty prompted many unhappy wives to remain with disappointing or unloved husbands. Moreover, Chinese wives were disadvantaged by unfamiliarity with their new country, its language, and its laws. They lacked family and friends. They had only their husbands and possibly their children.

In some cases, spousal age differences may have been a problem for wives who were usually younger than husbands. In China, men sometimes found that women who were about the same age were either already married or were widows who were discouraged from remarriage. Therefore, older men who wanted to marry took younger wives. Also, for those males in America, the age discrepancy came about because husbands who could afford wives usually wanted young pretty women.

Theoretically, their youthfulness would enable females to make the long ocean voyage to America and also allow them to engage in the hard work required of them. Chinese women were aware of why younger wives were desired by sojourners; as one Chinese woman expressed: "These men, though well to do, want working wives. . . . perhaps not as good looking . . . but having health" (Pollard 1869-1876, 29), which enabled them to work longer. Being younger possibly meant that they had more reproductive years available in which to have sons. Finally, a husband who experienced financial difficulties or incurred debt could sell a pretty young wife as a slave or prostitute.

A few examples from the Delta region of California illustrate the disparity in age differences. Cong Low, who was forty-nine, was married to Seen Yoke, who was twenty-eight. Lim Ku, who was fifty-one, was married to Choy Yoke, who was twenty-six. Ah Jim, who was sixty, was married to Sim Choy, who was twenty (Chan 1986, 397-398).

Sam Wing Chee was forty-nine years old when he married his fourth wife, Kong Soo Lum, who was sixteen, in Fresno, California (Opper and Lew 1975, 49). Amongst the California Chinese, the typical married couple consisted of a wife fourteen years younger than her husband and the average age of wives ranged between sixteen and thirty years (Hirata 1982, 48).

Unfamiliarity with American customs and language posed another problem for Chinese wives. Based on census data, writers Lucie Cheng and Suellen Cheng (1984) found that Chinese women had the highest percentage of English illiteracy of all of California's racial groupings. In 1900, for example, more than 73 percent could not read or write English (6).

Female Chinese immigrants often suffered a decline in status upon arrival in America. While still in China, women had received remittances from their absent husbands. Wives were usually unaware of how their husbands made their living; they were accustomed to lives of ease because of the favorable rate of exchange from remittances. Some sojourners' wives, although they lived with their parents-in-law, had experienced a high social standing and leisure activities because they controlled the family finances and spent their remittances as they wanted (Sung 1967, 158). Money probably went toward household expenses,

supporting relatives, children's school tuition, and perhaps investments.

Very frugal husbands sent large and frequent remittances home (Lee 1960, 208). Thus they became represented by material symbols. Wives' "emotional reactions" to absent spouses "were correlated with these tangible possessions" (Lee 1960, 208), instead of with their husbands' physical presence or emotional attachment to them. Some sojourners were not as frugal with their money as they might have been, therefore their remittances were small.

In his 1869 piece entitled "Chinese Women in California," the Reverend Augustus W. Loomis supplied the account of one wife who went to America to join her husband against the wishes of her family and friends. When asked why she violated Chinese custom by venturing to a foreign land, "she answered that where the husband was there she had a right to be" (Loomis 1869, 349). "Moreover," declared the woman, "too little of his earnings found their way across the waters to his family; and . . . it was time for them to begin to save something for the season of old age" (Loomis 1869, 349-350). This particular woman took it upon herself to join her husband to help him manage his earnings.

Once in America, wives could be disillusioned when they found their husbands to be laborers, waiters, and

laundrymen (Chan 1975, 197). The heavy workloads husbands engaged in sometimes shocked and disappointed wives, who accused their husbands of exaggerating the goodness of life in America (Lee 1960, 207). Furthermore, wives were jolted from their sense of freedom from male control when their husbands quickly reassumed their traditionally dominant roles. Once in America, wives were immediately under their husbands' control again because spouses handled the money. Men paid the bills, rent, and did the shopping; therefore, wives now received no money.

American families, unlike those in China, often required the additional paid labor of wives, a change which symbolized a major shift in social status. In Chinatowns, where money did not have the same purchasing power as it had in China, wives had to adjust to minimal comforts because of the large amounts required to pay for rent, food, and other necessities (Lee 1960, 209). Loomis reported that one woman with her young son attempted "to support herself by little jobs of sewing, and making cigarettes" (Loomis 1869, 350). Meanwhile, this woman's husband worked for a mining company and sent money to her.

In the American view, because Chinese wives actively engaged as working partners and assisted in earning the family's livelihood, they assumed a higher status than they would have had in China. As author Betty Lee Sung (1967) has suggested, working for pay granted wives a greater

voice in both family decisions and deciding how money was spent (163). Furthermore, despite cultural limitations, Chinese females frequently proved successful in mobilizing their resources. In America, a wife who adhered to traditional clothing styles and collected gold jewelry was considered thrifty by other Chinese. If the family was confronted by financial difficulties or needed money for return passage to China, the jewels could be changed into cash (Lee 1960, 198-199). If valuable jewelry were not part of a wife's personal property when she married, she could obtain money for investment in it by sewing. Having pieces of jewelry represented security to the wife, who needed something to fall back on if she should become widowed. Also, sometimes wives simply did not trust their husbands or relatives to provide for their welfare (Lee 1960, 199).

The cramped living quarters in which Chinese couples resided may have created another problem. Chinatowns were originally bachelor societies which were unprepared for family settlement and were overcrowded and cramped. This was probably a major adjustment for wives accustomed to homes with inside courtyards and the open spaces of village life. Occasionally, husbands adjusted accordingly and knocked down walls of smaller rooms and formed larger rooms. Historian Sucheta Mazumdar (1984) described some wives as resourceful because they put up partitions or

curtains when they needed some sort of private space (32), especially when children arrived. Typically, living quarters were apartments located behind husbands' stores or laundries, or above restaurants. In addition to cramped quarters, the high rents charged by American landlords increased the wives' dissatisfaction.

Not only was the cramped housing of urban Chinatowns a problem, but so were the rough conditions of rural mining and agricultural communities which contained few conveniences. Life was lonely and difficult for Chinese wives in these rural areas. One woman with bound feet described how she lived in Butte, Montana, with her husband whom she had never met until she arrived in San Francisco. The winter climate in Butte was very cold and she remembered having to pump and carry water all the way to the family's wooden shack; a task made extremely difficult when the water froze. Her fine clothes and bound feet were definitely not conducive to the rough frontier life and made work difficult because her movements were severely hampered (Lee 1960, 191-193). Even in rural communities, such as the Sacrament-San Joaquin Delta of California, there were few Chinese wives. While Chinatown merchants provided the amenities of civilization, farmers provided a home which was often shared with a number of sojourners (Chan 1986, 399).

Elaborate Chinese mode of dress also presented a

problem because it they simply was not conducive to manual labor or movement. A typical description of a Chinese wife's clothing was supplied by Rev. William Speer in his 1870 work The Oldest and the Newest Empire: China and the United States. "The dress of a Chinese lady," wrote Speer, "consists of a short loose robe, confined round the throat with a narrow collar. The robe is worn over a long, full skirt," and the "sleeves are wide, and sufficiently long to fall over the hands" (Speer 1870, 92) to limit motion. In addition, wives usually had bound feet which made movement exceptionally difficult. Traditional dress caused an additional problem because it prompted Americans to portray Chinese women as too little and dainty and incapable of gainful employment.

Another problem occurred when Chinese couples realized they would never return to China to retire and die. A wife shared in the sojourner mentality by believing she would someday return home. Far pointed out that the wife "lives in the hope of returning some day to China" (Far 1897, 64). In addition, Far wrote: "She feels none of the bitterness of exile--she was glad to come to this country--but she would not be a daughter of the Flowery Land were she content to die among strangers" (Far 1897, 64).

Although the majority of Chinese couples maintained regular contact with their relatives in China and sent

remittances to help out, most of them never returned. A conscious awareness and maintenance of extended relationships symbolized the sojourner mentality. Early immigrants believed they would one day return to China and therefore often sent their children to China for a traditional education. This action guaranteed their children's future adjustment to a Chinese lifestyle without difficulty (Mazumdar 1984, 31). Upon the realization that they would never return to China, couples had to accept that all of their preparation and plans had been in vain.

Anti-Chinese hostilities also presented a problem for Chinese wives. In China, wives led secluded lives in the home and usually could not read; therefore, they were often unaware of the hostilities they would face in their new environment. If they were aware of the dangers, their image of the safety and security of Chinatowns was probably deceptively misleading. Chinatowns supposedly guaranteed safety from harassment and attack by whites. Yet even in their homes, they were not safe. In one incident, reported by author Judy Yung (1986), a white man abused a Chinese woman when he found no men at home with her (25). During the height of anti-Chinese hostilities, Chinatowns were bombarded, homes and businesses burned, and sometimes men and women were injured and killed (McClellan 1971, 61-62).

Besides anxiety about white harassment, Chinese wives feared harassment at the hands of their own countrymen.

Women were frequently the victims of kidnapping and/or threats of kidnapping. Although wives were probably on their guard even in the security of Chinatowns, kidnapping attempts occurred. Such an episode was reported in an 1862 issue of the San Francisco newspaper, the Daily Alta California. The news article reported that "Wan Bo, . . . attempted in vain to abduct the wife of a countryman, procured some gunpowder, with the intention of blowing up the wedded John's house, and then decamping with his wife" ("Arson," 1862, 1). After the 1882 Exclusion Act, wives were available targets for kidnapping by the tongs, who continually needed women for prostitution.

An additional problem for Chinese wives was the lack of leisure time available because of the amount of work they had to do. In China, the wealthier wives had been able to spend leisurely hours at home engaged in feminine pursuits such as needlework and music, but in America they were often too busy for such pursuits. Many wives worked at home earning money by "sewing, washing, rolling cigars, and making slippers and brooms" (Yung 1986, 30) while they cared for their family. Other females were employed as "clerks in stores, as waitresses and cooks in the restaurants, and they washed and ironed in the laundries" (Mark and Chih 1982, 66). Unlike wealthy merchants' wives, who had servants, laborers' spouses lacked domestic help and therefore spent most of their time working.

One Chinese woman remembered that her mother had been a first generation immigrant who raised twelve children and took care of unemployed relatives who lived with them at different times. In addition, the family lived in a mining town which meant her mother went to the river to do everyone's laundry. Her mother did this even though her feet were bound (Chih 1977, 28-29). Immigrant mothers were often remembered by their children as "hard workers and as the family enforcer" (Mazumdar 1984, 35) who carried out the fathers' wishes.

Sometimes spouses wanted to join their husbands in America but did not and when they tried without their husbands' consent they were not always welcomed. One such instance concerning her aunt Moon Orchid's experience was recounted by Kingston who wrote: "For thirty years she had been receiving money from America. But she had never told him that she wanted to come . . . she waited for him to suggest it, but he never did" (Kingston 1977, 144). Moon Orchid finally arrived in the country through the insistence and financial assistance of her sister Brave Orchid.

Once in America, Moon Orchid was told by Brave Orchid that he husband had married a second woman and had children and was living in Los Angeles. Brave Orchid wanted her sister to confront her husband and take her place as the primary wife. Brave Orchid insisted that her

brother-in-law had deserted his family (Kingston 1977, 144-145). "He didn't abandon me. He's given me so much money," stated Moon Orchid in her husband's defense, "I've had all the food and clothes and servants I've ever wanted. And he's supported our daughter too even though she's only a girl. . . . I mustn't bother him" (Kingston 1977, 145). In the end, Moon Orchid confronted her husband, much to his displeasure, as his comments showed:

> You weren't supposed to come here, . . . It's a mistake for you to be here. . . . You don't have the hardness for this country. I have a new life. . . .
> I have a new wife, . . .
> . . . go live with your daughter. I'll mail you the money I've always sent you. I could get arrested if the Americans knew about you. I'm living like an American. (Kingston 1977, 177)

After these statements, to his sister-in-law he proclaimed: "She has had food. She has had servants. . . . There wasn't anything she thought of that she couldn't buy. I have been a good husband" (Kingston 1977, 177).

In many instances, spouses who did come to America were either secondary wives or concubines who went with the husband as a companion while primary wives remained in China to care for the family. Far (1897) again supported this fact when she noted that some Chinese spouses were "merely secondary wives, the first consorts of their husbands being left in China" (64). For example, Lily Lum became a secondary wife. Lily Lum married a man named Hi

Loy Wong who had a primary wife already living in China to whom he never returned. She was an American-born Chinese woman who lived in California and married Hi Loy Wong who resided in Fresno. The marriage had been arranged by matchmakers and at the time of her marriage she was only thirteen years old. Hi Loy Wong was thirty-three years old (Opper and Lew 1975, 51).

Chinese men also practiced polygamy in America, which created a problem for secondary wives and concubines as it was not an accepted practice in American society (with the exception of Mormons). In the Delta area of California in 1900, for example, lived Ah Hat who was a fifty-year-old farm laborer with two wives, Ah Loke and Choy Won. Ah Loke was thirty years old and Choy Won was thirty-one years old; both women had arrived in America in 1890. Another example was that of Yet Mein, a thirty-four-year-old farm laborer in the Delta who also married two females. Yet Mein's wife Chuck Ee was nineteen years old and his wife Young Ou was thirty-one years old. Both females were American-born (Chan 1986, 397-398). While polygamy was apparently practiced in America among Chinese immigrants, it was not found as frequently as it was in China because of American animosity toward the practice.

Ex-Chinese prostitutes encountered a social problem from whites once they became wives. Although the Chinese generally accepted ex-prostitutes as respectable women once

they married, they were not accepted as such by the American general public. These women were considered to be irredeemably damned by Americans. For some females, adjustment to married life included less finery and leisure time which upper-class prostitutes might have had. Even if husbands were wealthy, the married ex-prostitutes' lives may have seemed more confined and secluded in comparison to their previous existence. These women faced the continual threat of kidnapping by tong forces, especially after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was passed and the cost of women went up.

Life in nineteenth century America was not wholly unpleasant for Chinese wives. In rural communities, for example, there were fewer formalized restraints imposed on wives. Chan See, a merchant's wife in Tuolumne County, California, was "often seen taking leisurely walks" (Yung 1986, 24-25). Some females exchanged food with their neighbors and assisted each other during emergencies (Yung 1986, 25). Also, more freedom was accorded to wives who assisted with the family income as noted earlier. Finally, lack of mother-in-law surveillance granted wives the freedom to manage their households without interference.

In America, Chinese wives found in theory that they had more freedom than they had experienced in China. Some wives saw their daughters educated along with their sons, though the sons still received preferential treatment.

Wives also discovered the possibility of remarriage in widowhood and divorce in an unhappy marriage (Chew 1926, 30-31). Sung (1967) believed, however, that the divorce rate for Chinese women remained low because they lacked the knowledge to seek a legal end to marital relations. Therefore, they ran away and cohabited with other men (162). Mazumdar (1984) believed that remarriage was not a typical choice simply because of Confucian values (47) to which nineteenth century Chinese immigrants adhered.

Some Chinese wives left America and returned to China because they simply could not overcome one or more of the disappointments and adjustment problems. Widows sometimes returned to China to their family and friends. For example, Gin Shen, wife of Gin Lin who lived in Jacksonville, Oregon, returned to China after her husband died. Prior to her departure she disposed of all her spouse's American property (LaLande 1981, 33). In some instances, entire families returned to China. For example, three Chinese families living in Butte, Montana, in 1879 returned to China during the first decade of the twentieth century. Each of these families had four children who also returned to China. Primarily, these families were interested in finding suitable spouses for their children and in parental retirement (Lee 1960, 187).

Other wives remained in America and overcame the disappointment and various adjustment problems they faced

and usually began their new lives in a similar way. Young wives, whether married by proxy or prior to the sojourners' departure for America, were greeted by virtual strangers when they arrived. The newly arrived spouses immediately accompanied their husbands to where they were to live. The environment in which couples lived depended on the type of work done by the husbands and the locale determined whether the wives' lives would be easy or difficult.

Whatever the environment, Chinese women were sexually discriminated against by their own countrymen's adherence to the traditional customs which maintained women's inferiority including seclusion, arranged marriages, instances of footbinding, and the importance of sons. Females were subordinated to men and once married, their roles were as wives and mothers. The fulfillment, importance, and expansion of these roles depended largely on the husband's financial success and whether they resided in urban Chinatowns or in mining or farming towns. In some respects, life in urban areas tended to be less difficult than life in the agricultural and mining communities.

Chinese women who lived with their husbands in urban Chinatowns were segregated from the general American public after their arrival. For a variety of reasons, these wives did not leave Chinatown once they had been escorted there. For example, Louis J. Beck, in his 1898 book entitled New York's Chinatown: An Historical Presentation of Its People

and Places, noted that "Chinese usage is strict in forbidding them to go upon the streets under any circumstances" (Beck 1898, 116).

Wives who went out into Chinatown did their utmost to remain hidden from view. Far, for example, commented that women in public hid themselves by "holding open fans before" (Far 1897, 62) their faces. According to Beck, a wife who travelled around Chinatown "must be taken in a carriage, even though her destination be only a block away" (Beck 1898, 116).

The Chinese custom of footbinding made movement outside the home difficult for females. Furthermore, wives lacked any cultural or language familiarity with Americans and some women never learned to read, write, or speak English, which made travel beyond the bounds of Chinatown uncertain. Many wives knew nothing of the environment outside the boundaries of Chinatown and some did not care to. Far believed the Chinese wife differed from other immigrant wives because "she seeks not our companionship, makes no attempt to know us, adopts not our ways and heeds not our customs" (Far 1897, 59). Far continued: "She lives among us, but is as isolated as if she and the few Chinese relations who may happen to live near were the only human beings in the world" (Far 1897, 59).

Increasing nativist sentiment prevented Chinese women from leaving the safety of familiar Chinatown. There were

very few Chinese families in America, which further isolated wives because there was a lack of female companionship. For example, there were only "two Chinese families . . . listed in the 1860 Los Angeles Census; in 1870 the number increased to 18, in 1880, 39 and in 1900, it was 59" (Cheng and Cheng 1984, 2-3). Many wives worked hard not only at home but in their husbands' businesses, which left little time to get acquainted with the outside world. Wives who lived in mining and farming areas were segregated for the reasons already mentioned and also because it protected them from white hostility and kidnapping by their own countrymen.

The combination of circumstances mentioned interacted to segregate and alienate Chinese wives from contact with American society. Many wives clung to and reinforced traditional attitudes and behaviors because they lived "in an alien inhospitable society" (Cheng and Cheng 1984, 9). Furthermore, the patriarchal "dominance and the consequent submission" of wives to their husbands' wishes "established and continued by both economic and social circumstances, characterized" (Weiss 1974, 33) Chinese family life in nineteenth century America hence increasing wives' segregation from American culture. The lives led by Chinese wives differed depending on whether they were merchants' or laborers' spouses.

Wealthy merchants' wives who, according to Hirata

(1982), were usually from a middle-class background (48), generally led secluded lives at home in which traditional customs prevailed. These women rarely left the confines of their home or apartment. If the family needed something at the store, the husband usually picked it up on his way home from work or the children were sent on errands. Mazumdar (1984) interviewed one woman who stated that her mother had only gone out of her home once in her lifetime (35). This was perhaps an extreme case but nevertheless representative of traditions being maintained.

Because of Chinatowns' overcrowded conditions, a merchant's wife lived "generally in the upstairs apartments of her husband's dwelling" (Far 1897, 62). One merchant's wife gave a detailed description of their apartment. "Our rooms were over my husband's store," the woman announced, "consisting of parlors, sleeping rooms, dining room [and] kitchen, all furnished elegantly [and] expensively in European style" (Pollard 1869-1876, 25). The woman concluded, saying that "I had never dreamed of such elegance" (Pollard 1869-1876, 25).

Some of the wealthier merchants provided their wives with household servants, cooks, and/or slave girls who did daily household tasks and cared for any children there might have been. The wives were then able to fill up their time with other activities. A merchant's wife engaged in needlework and created "representations of insects, flowers

and birds most dextrously wrought from silk and beads" (Far 1897, 62). This activity was useful because items were used for gifts for family and relatives and for decoration of her own and her family's clothing (Far 1897, 62).

Furthermore, a merchant's wife had the leisure time to spend beautifying herself with "flowers, natural or artificial" (Far 1897, 62) which she wore in her hair or on her clothing. Additionally, she spent "considerate pains on the plaiting of her hair" which she adorned "with flowers and large fantastic pins" (Far 1897, 62). Descriptions such as these "applied only to less than [1] percent of" the Chinese wives; the "rest led a much less comfortable life" (Hirata 1982, 49).

The lives of Chinese laborers' wives who, according to Hirata (1982) were usually from a peasant background (48), were much more demanding than those of the wealthy merchants' wives. Laborers' spouses cared for their husbands' and children's needs and managed the household. Furthermore, these women aided the family income by assisting in the family business. Sometimes boarders, usually two or three at a time, were taken in to supplement the family earnings. Other wives did piecework for subcontractors in their homes (Cheng and Cheng 1984, 7; Hirata 1982, 49).

A family's entire economic survival depended upon the labor of the entire family; therefore, the wife and

children were recruited to assist in the family business. Whatever the family business, "home life and family livelihood were often inseparable "(Mark and Chih 1982, 66). Immigrant parents probably hoped that through their hard labor their children might have an easier life and benefit from the opportunities America offered. Whether merchants' or laborers' families, Chinese family life in nineteenth century America was not an exact replica of family life in China.

In America, Chinese family units were nuclear, consisting of parents and children (Chew 1926, 23; Sung 1967, 162). This was an important factor in household management because wives were freed from their mothers-in-law and there were not three or four generations under one roof. For example, Hirata's (1982) research of California Chinese found no three generational families in the 1880 census manuscripts. However, she found a few rare instances of grandfathers living with their sons' families. She also found the typical family structure included the married couple with no children (48).

According to author Rose Hum Lee (1960), the average family size of Chinese immigrants before 1900 was 3.3 and after 1900 it was 6.4 people (190). The smaller family size avoided the additional transportation costs which a larger family paid for the return trip to China (Stephens 1975, 77). Also, smaller families occurred because male

immigrants had married later in life, at about age forty, or had been separated from their wives for a number of years. Besides, by the time some wives joined their husbands they had neared the end of their reproductive years (Lee 1960, 188). The smallness of Chinese families in America directly opposed the traditional importance placed on a large number of offspring, especially sons (Lee 1960, 198).

Another important aspect of Chinese family life in America was the existence of various types of families. Research historian Sarah R. Mason (1982) denoted four distinct family types. The first Chinese family type, and probably the most numerous throughout the nineteenth century, was the trans-Pacific family. In the trans-Pacific family, the wife and children lived in China while the husband worked in America and sometimes made periodic visits home. Husbands belonging to this category planned on returning to China to retire (163).

The second Chinese family type was the transplanted family. In the transplanted family, the husband brought his wife and children to America. The transplanted family may or may not have intended on permanently remaining in America. For obvious reasons, members in this category were more acculturated to America than the trans-Pacific family members (Mason 1982, 163).

The third family type found in nineteenth century

America occurred when two Chinese who already lived in the country married. Couples in this category were quite often American-born Chinese. Therefore, members of the third family type were more Americanized than the previous two family types. The fourth family type was established through interracial marriage (Mason 1982, 163). During the nineteenth century, the interracial marriage was the least accepted family type among the Chinese. "My people do not recognize these marriages with whites," one woman revealed, "We consider ourselves the superiors of all nations, and only marriage between ourselves retains our stature and respectability" (Pollard 1869-1876, 44). Of course, whites disapproved of interracial marriages also.

Although nuclear in arrangement, Chinese family life maintained certain traditional characteristics such as the discouragement of independent behavior in order to keep the family intact. Family members who acted independently were seen as selfish and lacking in parental gratitude. Mothers and fathers expected to be and were obeyed and filial piety minimized "intergenerational conflicts" so that "the family remained a cohesive social unit" (Weiss 1974, 32).

In her 1950 autobiography, Fifth Chinese Daughter, Jade Snow Wong supplied memories of her childhood which contained typical characteristics of Chinese family life in America. For example, unquestioning discipline was taught to children at an early age. "A little girl never

questioned the commands of Mother and Father," wrote Wong, "unless prepared to receive the painful consequences" (Wong 1989, 2). Parental explanation was unnecessary as Wong commented: "Only through punishment did she learn that what was proper was right and what was improper was wrong" (Wong 1989, 3).

Chinese family members hid any feelings considered destructive of the family's harmonious situation. Thus, restraint of emotions was emphasized in order to prevent disruption. Wives, mothers, and daughters all kept their feelings and emotions to themselves. Of her childhood Wong wrote: "Respect and order--these were the key words of life. It did not matter what were the thoughts of a little girl; she did not voice them" (Wong 1989, 2). Parental mechanisms to control children included the usage of guilt, shame and the continual reminder that individual behavior reflected upon the entire family (Sue 1973, 141).

Furthermore, in the Chinese family in America the father and daughter relationship was "formal and patterned on Confucian norms of filial piety and propriety" (Mazumdar 1984, 37). This relationship was not emphasized and daughters were to be seen and not heard. Because daughters were of less importance than sons, fathers theoretically did not extend favoritism to their daughters. Wong once reported: "I notice that Daddy is the only one who shows no partiality between daughters" (Wong 1989, 93).

In America, daughters' lives revolved around the Chinese household because they were expected to share in the housework, especially when their mothers worked. Older daughters also cared for younger siblings. Economic considerations often forced daughters to begin work at an early age (Mazumdar 1984, 36-41). Thus Chinese daughters assisted in the development of family life in America, sometimes as actively as did their mothers. The lack of contact with and knowledge of American ways during the nineteenth century perpetuated traditional roles for many Chinese wives, mothers, and eventually daughters.

The Chinese wives who remained and lived in nineteenth century America struggled against racial and sexual discrimination as they endeavored to create a family life. It was because of the roles these females filled that Chinese traditions were transferred and maintained in America. Some wives, however, were responsible for the development of an integrated subculture of Chinese and American values as well as acculturation into the American way of life.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHINESE WOMAN AS CULTURAL TRADITIONALIST AND SOCIAL INNOVATOR

When Chinese immigrants arrived in nineteenth century America, they carried with them a cultural tradition that reinforced the culturally defined acceptable roles for women as wives and mothers. In America Chinese culture subjugated women to traditional roles that were strictly confined to the home raising and educating children. Because of these roles women became influential catalysts in maintaining, transforming, or deserting traditional Chinese culture. Chinese men also preserved culture and were innovators, but their detailed involvement is beyond the scope of this Chapter. As catalysts, married females fell into two extremes: Chinese traditionalists and Americanized women. Between these two extremes were females who integrated various elements of Chinese and American culture, thus becoming the transformers of culture. The innovators laid the early foundations for the creation of a new subculture known as Chinese America. Wives were important to and actively involved in the development of Chinese family life via their involvement in the preservation, transformation and desertion of traditional cultural characteristics for American ones.

Married Chinese women who were the transmitters and preservers maintained traditional culture, pride and identity and trained their children in this way. Sui Sin Far, in the 1897 magazine article "The Chinese Woman in America," expressed the opinion that while a wife might have been curious about Americans and their customs, nothing could "change her reverence for the manners and customs of her own country" (Far 1897, 64). Far believed that a Chinese wife defended traditional customs with pride as the following scene she wrote exhibited:

> "Why do you do that in such a way?" she is asked, and her answer is, "Oh, because that is Chinese way."
> "Do it like this," she is told. She shakes her head smilingly: "No, that not Chinese way." (Far 1897, 64).

One of the Confucian practices transmitted by Chinese mothers was ancestor worship, because they were responsible for the care of home shrines. A home shrine, according to Far, was "a curtained alcove of an inner room" with "an incense vase, ancestral tablet, a kneeling stool," and "a pair of candlesticks" (Far 1897, 62). In the 'alcove,' the wife burned incense and prayed for the birth of a son, for her husband's kindness, and to return to China (Far 1897, 62). Traditional holiday celebrations, birth, marriage and death customs, were also taught to children. Daughters were taught to obey their fathers, husbands, and sons. Daughters also had their feet bound, were sometimes sold, and their marriages were always arranged (Lee and Lou

1984, 49) in America. Mothers were directly involved with all these practices and defended them. In Jade Snow Wong's 1950 autobiography Fifth Chinese Daughter, for example, her mother once during a discussion on arranged marriages proclaimed to her: "However much you may complain about our Chinese 'blind marriage' tradition, just remember that we never hear of divorces in China" (Wong 1989, 145). Wong's mother added:

> Women are brought up knowing what to expect, and knowing that their marriage to a suitable man will be assured by their parents. They take a long, patient view of life, and if they are uncomfortable as brides, they know that they will one day be mothers of sons, and one day be mothers-in-law. (Wong 1989, 145)

Chinese mothers wanted their children to learn about China because they considered their stay in America temporary. Parents believed they would one day return to China to retire and die and since their children would return also, it seemed necessary to prepare them for this event. Therefore, some children were sent back to China for a number of years to receive an education. Families unable to afford such distant education probably struggled financially to send their children to the Chinese schools that developed in the larger urban Chinatowns.

Chinese school taught the Chinese language and calligraphy, history, literature, and philosophy, all of which required a great deal of work. For children, Chinese school served as a social environment in which they met

friendly peers (Chih 1977, 33; Lee and Lou 1984, 52-54). Early "Chinese schools . . . were not open to girls" (Wong 1989, 14). The reason why girls traditionally did not attend school was explained by Jade Snow Wong's father. According to him, "Many Chinese were very short-sighted. They felt that since their daughters would marry into a family of another name, they would not belong permanently in their own family clan" (Wong 1989, 14) so education was considered wasted on them.

As the preservers of traditional culture, Chinese wives and mothers also attempted to maintain ties between relatives in China. This reinforced a direct connection to the homeland and mothers instilled this connection into their children. Some mothers remained entrenched in Chinese tradition because of their refusal to learn anything American. For example, traditionalists refused to learn the English language because it symbolized a loss of Chineseness to them. First generation Chinese women had little education and little contact with Americans, so in some cases inability to speak, read or write English simply reflected a lack of contact.

Traditionalists also refused to change their native dress-style. The wife's dress was "cut in a fashion designed centuries ago, . . . of a tunic, a pair of trousers and a divided skirt, all of finest silk and embroidered in many colors" (Far 1897, 59). According to

Far, a traditional wife was "deeply interested in all matters of dress; and, . . . even acknowledge[d] the American dress prettier than her own, but you could not persuade her to adopt it" (Far 1897, 64).

Chinese wives had little time for leisure activities but there was some time for a social life. Married females visited other married women when ones lived nearby. "Now and then the women visit one another," wrote Far, "They laugh at the most commonplace remark and scream at the smallest trifle; they examine one another's dresses and hair, talk about their husbands, their babies, their food, squabble over little matters and make up again" (Far 1897, 62). Older wives who had arrived earlier, sometimes assisted younger women with their adjustment to life in Chinatowns or in rural communities (Mark and Chih 1982, 67). Such activity also granted a chance for females to socialize amongst themselves while still remaining in the home hidden from public view.

Chinese wives in nineteenth century America were the innovators of a new subculture which modified and eliminated Chinese traditions and adopted aspects of American culture. Early female immigrants simply altered and discarded some customs to fit into the American scheme of things. These wives unconsciously led the way for the destruction of white stereotypes. Customs they abandoned included footbinding, infanticide, arranged marriages, and

limited education for daughters (Lee and Lou 1984, 50).

The acceptance and usage of the English language symbolized the emergence of a Chinese-American culture and the progression of the acculturation process. Wives often learned their English skills from church missionaries (Lee and Lou 1984, 52). "Once their children had become enmeshed in the American educational and social structure" (Gillenkirk and Motlow 1987, 16), any possibility of returning to China was eliminated. In Marie Antoinette Nathalie (Granier) Pollard's collection known as Letters and Papers, 1869-1876 and Lecture Notes, one Chinese woman recounted learning English at a missionary school when she was a child. "I need not tell you I asked permission to go to that school, nor that it was granted; and when I learned to spell d-o-g and h-o-r-s-e," the woman stated, "I began to consider my English education almost complete" (Pollard 1869-1876, 9-10). Chinese women learned to read and write English and by 1910 the amount of female illiterates had decreased to about 35 percent (Cheng and Cheng 1984, 6).

Conversion to Christianity acculturated Chinese wives into the American value system because it offered various opportunities to Chinese women besides religion. Christian missionaries made home visits and taught wives the Bible and English. Missionaries also opened schools for children who by law were barred from attending public schools. The wives of missionaries also helped Chinese women with

English, weddings, children's education, and with shopping for American-style clothes (Cheng and Cheng 1984, 21). Missionary women also took females on outings beyond the boundaries of Chinatown, aided widows, and provided care for children while mothers worked (Chih 1977, 64; Chih 1980, 64). Evidence of missionary females' involvement with Chinese women was supplied by Rev. Ira M. Condit in his 1900 book entitled The Chinaman As We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him. He wrote: "My wife has been regularly engaged in visiting among the Chinese women" (Condit 1900, 137). According to Condit, his wife taught "lessons in domestic and sanitary improvement . . . and scripture truths" were "explained and applied. . . . Other missionary ladies have done somewhat similar work" (Condit 1900, 137).

Chinese wives and their children joined American churches more often than their husbands because it assisted them with personal problems and allowed wives social contact (Lee 1960, 296). Some females met their future husbands with the help of Christian churches and/or missions and were wed in Americanized ceremonies. For example, Ching Yuen, a Chinese merchant, bought a woman whom he married in a Christian ceremony (Condit 1900, 138-139).

Christian churches and missions were the only formally organized groups for assisting Chinese women in

socializing. This could possibly explain why the number of Chinese females attending Christian churches gradually increased during the late nineteenth century. The Report of the Presbyterian Mission to the Chinese in California, published in 1881, for example, stated that the "proportion of females who attend the Sabbath morning service increases year by year. . . . and there is less aversion on the parts of the men to have their wives come out to church" (Report of the Presbyterian Mission to the Chinese in California 1881, 4). The decrease in aversion to wives attending Christian churches was possibly due to an increase in Americanization of both spouses which was breaking down Chinese traditionalism.

Chinese wives in nineteenth century America further transformed traditional customs with the food fed to their families. The preparation of food symbolized a link to Chinese culture. Traditional cooking techniques, such as stir frying, were used to prepare American food. While rice remained a preferred food, served at least once a day (Lee and Lou 1984, 61), the unobtainable Chinese ingredients were substituted with what was available for cooking. For example, they "used collard greens instead of Chinese broccoli" (Chih 1977, 30).

In addition, Chinese wives transformed traditional culture when they donned western-style clothes, which often were easier to work in. Female spouses also combined

American and Chinese home decor. Far described transformed apartments as "furnished in American style; but many Chinese ornaments decorate the tables and walls, and on the sides of the room are hung long bamboo panels or silk on which are painted Chinese good-luck characters" (Far 1897, 62).

Other evidence that Chinese wives actively transformed their culture occurred when they became wage earners. According to sociologist Lucie Cheng Hirata (1982), census recorders in California noted keeping house as an occupational designation for unemployed housewives (46). Wives were also found in various other occupational activities including "housekeepers, servants, laundresses, seamstresses, shoemakers, cooks, miners, and fisherwomen" (Takaki 1989, 121). Seamstresses usually worked at home and received their work from Chinese subcontractors and earned less than the standard two dollars per day wage. Other wives were engaged as servants to white families whom their husbands usually worked for as cooks. Wives engaged as servants were responsible for the household duties of washing, cleaning, child-care, and sewing and mending when needed. A few wives worked as servants to wealthy Chinese families (Hirata 1982, 47-50).

The Chinese wives who immigrated to Hawaii were mostly Hakka women who did not practice footbinding and who engaged in manual labor more easily than the wives who

immigrated to the mainland. Wives in Hawaii worked in sugar fields, rice paddies, and vegetable gardens. They also engaged in paid work similar to the wives on the mainland. They sewed, laundered men's work clothes, took in boarders, gardened, sold fruits and vegetables on the roadside, worked as house servants, and assisted husbands who owned businesses (Yung 1986, 36). A few wives even worked as midwives to earn extra money (Char 1975, 133).

The immigrant wives and mothers brought Chinese traditional customs with them to nineteenth century America. These women were actively involved in maintaining, transforming, or deserting traditional culture. Married females fell into two extremes: Chinese traditionalist and Americanized women. Between these two extremes were wives and mothers who integrated various aspects of Chinese and American culture. These innovators helped create a new subculture. Wives were actively involved in the development of Chinese family life as either traditionalists or innovators.

CHAPTER VII

PERCEPTIONS OF THE MARRIED CHINESE WOMAN AND THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

Chinese wives and mothers acted as the preservers and transmitters of traditions or they were the transformers and/or creators of a subculture that blended Chinese and American cultural characteristics. Their roles did not grant them freedom from white discrimination and harassment. Americans simplified the complex roles of wives and mothers into a variety of negative stereotypes and media symbols which further shaped white perceptions of Chinese women. American media accounts, including newspaper articles and popular magazine and book-length works of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasized that Chinese wives were abused, the property of husbands, secluded and lonely, slave-like, uncaring mothers and instruments of cruelty, similar in behavior and physical characteristics.

The perception of Chinese wives as victims of abuse at the hands of their spouses was occasionally supported by evidence reported in local newspapers. An early example of spousal abuse appeared in an 1851 San Francisco newspaper. "Ching, a moon-eyed Celestial, was charged with an assault

and battery upon Acum, his wife," the article stated, "who appeared in Court with a female companion, both dressed in unexceptionable Chinese bloomers" ("More Chinese Difficulties," 1854, 2). The paper printed a follow-up story the next day. "Ching, a genteel looking Chinaman, was fined ten dollars for beating Acum, an interesting little wife of his, dressed in blue drill pantaloons" ("Breakage in China," 1851, 2). The article's inclusion of extraneous details about the dress-style of the "little wife" and her living arrangements in Happy Valley trivialized the fact that she had been beaten. As if to entertain readers, the news piece continued:

> In the course of examination, some interesting pages in the history of the domestic manners and customs of the Chinese were opened. Ching and Acum live up in Happy Valley in a little shanty, in company with two or three dozen fowls, four litters of pigs, three no-haired dogs and several Chinamen. The neighbors testified that they made great noise, and were fighting continually and breaking their Chinaware, upon which Ching was fined. ("Breakage in China," 1851, 2)

Another very short newspaper story in a San Francisco paper reported an instance in 1862 in which a Chinese woman who had been beaten testified against her abusive husband in open court ("Beating of a Celestial Spouse," 1862, 1). The outcome of the case was not reported. Even Helen F. Clark's story "Mee Lee's Great Happiness," which appeared in her 1902 collection entitled The Lady of the Lily Feet, and Other Stories of Chinatown, conveyed the impression

that Chinese wives normally were the victims of spousal abuse. The two main characters of the story were Ing John and his Christian wife, Mee Lee. Equating Ing John's religious conversion with civilized behavior, Clark had him acknowledge: "I have beaten you many times, . . . but now the Jesus-god has put light into my heart, I will beat you no more" (Clark 1902, 43).

While Clark presented Mee Lee as an abused wife, she simultaneously reinforced an older stereotype of the Chinese being heathens. Her story reinforced the white perception of the superiority of Christianity over traditional practices, specifically in regard to the treatment of women. At the end of the story, she had Mee Lee declare: "Ing John never sell Mee Lee now. Never sell now. And baby girl safe too; baby girl safe too. Oh thank the blessed Jesus-god forever" (Clark 1902, 43).

Americans tended to perceive Chinese wives as the property of their husbands, a disturbing perception to a nation which had just completed a Civil War to end chattel slavery. In The Oldest and the Newest Empire: China and the United States, published in 1870, Rev. William Speer described women such as the Chinese as "degraded wherever the system of polygamy prevails, and wherever . . . men add to the number of their wives according to their wealth and rank" (Speer 1870, 92). All women were thought to have had some monetary value. Louis J. Beck, in his 1898 work New

York's Chinatown: An Historical Presentation of Its People and Places, asserted that a wife was purchased and therefore obeyed her husband who "may even sell her to another, if he so pleases, without offending any Chinese law or code of propriety" (Beck 1898, 115-116). George Amos Miller, who wrote "The New Woman in the Orient" in 1908 for an American magazine, drew the connection that a Chinese woman "without even a personal name, was but a bit of property" (Miller 1908, 505).

Both magazine and book-length works described Chinese-American women as people without identities. Some believed the Chinese practice of seclusion, keeping respectable women confined to the home away from public view, reinforced wives' status as property. For example, Beck believed this practice required wives to remain hidden so that their husbands would not be dishonored in any way. Hence, a husband who had been dishonored could justifiably divorce and sell his wife (Beck 1898, 35). Even Chinese mistresses, one account held, were "seldom seen, except by their owners or husbands, for Chinese usage is strict in forbidding them to go upon the streets under any circumstances" (Beck 1898, 116).

Writers like Clark pointed out that a wife's "seclusion was enjoined by Chinese decorum and custom, and for her to have done otherwise would . . . make her the subject of gossip and of contemptuous comment" (Clark 1901,

22). Clark believed that "few Chinese women had the courage to face this, even though they felt the custom to be wrong and foolish" (Clark 1902, 22). Clark's collection of stories reiterated her personal views for her readers. For example, in "The Wedding Bells That Ring for Ah Lon," she described the main female character's confinement to Chinatown. "Ah Lon was born in New York, but she had never been out of Chinatown, save once when she was five years old and was sick," Clark wrote, "Of the wide world beyond the little house in which she lived, Ah Lon knew nothing. Its great enterprises, its learning, and above all, its marvelous social customs, were all unknown to her" (Clark 1902, 72).

Americans considered the Chinese woman's adherence to the practice of seclusion to result in loneliness. In one story, "Joy Come," Clark portrayed sixteen-year-old Chun Lon's loneliness because of the custom.

> Chun Lon had only been down in the street once in a whole year, and that was when they went to make the customary New Year's visit to their cousin Hong Chy. So that with each passing month Chun Lon looked out from her little windows upon the great world outside with ever-growing wonder. (Clark 1902, 48)

Sui Sin Far [Edith Eaton], in her 1912 collection of stories entitled Mrs. Spring Fragrance, heightened the sense of solitary confinement by writing about a young crippled Chinese woman.

In her story, "The Chinese Lily," Far wrote of

Mermei's existence confined to her apartment since childhood, crippled as the result of an accident. Mermei spent her days embroidering in silence, waiting for her brother Lin John to return from work and dreaming of meeting someone to talk to. Mermei "knew nothing of life save what" she "saw from the upstairs window" which "looked down upon the street, and she would sit for hours, pressed close against it, watching those who passed below and all that took place" (Far 1912, 179).

Some Americans believed that practices like seclusion helped to create a slave-like existence for Chinese wives. One author, for example, considered the wife a household drudge who served the will of her lord and carried out his orders without question (Beck 1898, 35-36). Stereotypical comments reflected a general perception of Chinese wives as downtrodden beings. "She has no voice in the household matters and is not even permitted to eat her meals with her lord," Beck wrote, "but when he has finished his repast may regale herself on what he may have left" (Beck, 1898, 36). The wife's status was that of "a slave and a mere drudge, a nobody and of no account" (Beck 1898, 36).

The slave-like status of wives was a recurrent theme for the popular American writers of the last half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. A short story entitled "The Prize China Baby," which appeared in Mrs. Spring Fragrance provided a fruitful

example of this tendency. The story's lead character, Fin Fan, was a slave sold to Chung Kee as a wife. She assisted her husband in making money by winding tobacco leaves. Even after her baby was born, Fin Fan continued to get up early in the morning and go to bed late at night to accomplish the required work. She "never dreamt of complaining," wrote Far, "because though a wife, she was still a slave" (Far 1912, 215).

American newspapers and fictional treatments repeatedly presented Chinese parents as uncaring, specifically in the case of wives who assisted in the perpetuation of customs considered barbaric by Americans. Especially horrifying was the occurrence of infanticide among the immigrants and accounts of such incidents appeared occasionally in the daily tabloids. In one instance, a San Francisco newspaper, The Daily Morning Chronicle, reported in 1869 that a Chinese man carrying a potato sack had been stopped by a policeman who found the dead body of a one-year-old girl in its contents. The man took the police officer to the house where he had obtained the tiny body and the occupants all were arrested. The parents admitted they killed the baby by smothering it because "she 'cried too much, all time; they couldn't sleep,' so they killed her" ("Horrible Infanticide," 1869, 3).

This particular account sensationalized infanticide

for its readers by presenting the Chinese parents as uncaring. For example, the article noted that the child "was deliberately murdered by its inhuman, heathenish parents," adding that the Chinese were "in the frequent habit of murdering their female infants" ("Horrible Infanticide," 1869, 3). The comment at the end of the story editorialized: "Nice subjects to make American citizens of--the Chinese" ("Horrible Infanticide," 1869, 3). Curiously, the exact same story appeared about a week later in another San Francisco newspaper, the Alta California. This time, however, the basic facts appeared without sensationalism. The newspaper simply reported that the parents explained that the smothered child "cried too much" ("Chinese Child Smothered by Its Parents," 1869, 1).

A few months later, another San Francisco newspaper reported another case of infanticide. In this instance, the body of a two-year-old child was found in an empty lot by a group of playing children. The article maintained it "was impossible to ascertain if the corpse was that of a white child, . . . but the impression of the crowd seemed to be that it was a Chinese" ("Discovery of the Remains of a Child," 1869, 6). Accounts such as these supported the impression of Chinese parents as cruel and uncaring. Furthermore, parents themselves supposedly defended the custom. If the practice of female infanticide was broached, they reportedly gave similar responses such as:

"What . . . is the good of rearing daughters? When they are young they are only an expense; and when they might be able to earn a living, they marry and leave us" (Beck 1898, 42).

Americans perceived surviving Chinese daughters as creatures doomed to lives of unhappiness. Beck observed that "daughters are looked upon and treated as inferiors, incumbrances, chattels to be disposed of as soon as the time and fitting opportunity arrives" (Beck 1898, 39). In addition Beck wrote: "The female offspring . . . is considered an inferior being, upon whom parental affection is wasted. She is valued only at the price she will bring either as a wife or mistress" (Beck 1898, 107).

Daughters suffering from the footbinding process seemed to be another example to American observers of parental cruelty and heartlessness. After all, how could anyone reading the details of the physical descriptions of bound feet not feel pity for the girls undergoing the painful process and question the maternal care given. One such graphic account was given by Dr. Eugene Murray-Aaron, in his 1897 article "The Decline and Fall of the Great Toe: A Study in Evolution," who described the bound foot as "dwarfed and atrophied beyond the possibility of use" (Murray-Aaron 1897, 161). After two years of the binding process, "the flesh will have sloughed away, perhaps even one or two toes will have fallen off, and . . . from the

knee down will have become . . . mere bones covered with skin" (Murray-Aaron 1897, 161). This rendered the foot "practically dead and incapable of pain; and [it] will go into a slipper one inch wide by three inches long" (Murray-Aaron 1897, 161).

Newspapers and fictionalized accounts of footbinding built upon earlier accounts. For example, in a Denver, Colorado, newspaper known as The Daily News, a piece printed in a 1900 issue discussed footbinding. The paper supplied some exaggerated information such as stating that "as a baby the work of binding . . . feet begins" ("How the Dainty Feet of Celestial Women Show up under Camera," 1900, 10). In addition, the article reported that the "limbs above the foot become shrunken to the slender size of a child's wrist" ("How the Dainty Feet of Celestial Women Show up under Camera," 1900, 10). For added effect, various pictures accompanied the article showing bound feet in shoes and unwrapped to display the imposed deformity. Apparently throwing in one additional scare for readers, the caption under the unwrapped foot stated: "IF CHINESE DO THIS TO THEMSELVES, WHAT WILL THEY DO WHEN THEY APPLY THE GOLDEN RULE TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES?" ("How the Dainty Feet of Celestial Women Show up under Camera," 1900, 10).

Once again, Clark included stereotypical images concerning Chinese wives and mothers who, once converted to Christianity, deserted traditional customs such as

footbinding. In the story "Joy Come," for example, Clark graphically portrays the footbinding experience of the protagonist's mother. The author's personal attitude toward footbinding underlined the account. "When she was five years old she became a victim to the cruel custom of footbinding," Clark wrote, "Each toe, except the great toe, was pulled out of joint, the nail wrenched off, and the mutiliated stumps were bent under against the sole of the feet and bound there" (Clark 1902, 49).

Later in the story, Joy Come's mother moved to New York, converted to Christianity, married, and had a little girl. When Joy Come was four, her father ordered her to be foot bound. "That was the one thing which her Christian mother had determined should never be done" (Clark 1902, 52).

"Who Cly?" was another of Clark's stories which presented footbinding once again with the graphic details. In this story, surgeons were added as characters who operated on a little girl's feet. While operating on the girl, one of the surgeons commented: "'Look at that?' one said. 'They've torn off every nail. Look at those toes! There's not a whole bone in them. Great God!'" (Clark 1902, 97).

Americans perceived all Chinese wives as having similar characteristics. According to Hubert Howe Bancroft, who wrote an 1890 book entitled The Works of

Hubert Howe Bancroft: Essays and Miscellany, Chinese housewives delighted "in their noiseless step, quiet conduct, polite and unobtrusive manner, and neat appearance" (Bancroft 1890, 355). So not to dissuade the reader from the unfavorable qualities which wives had, he wrote:

> The neatness is allowed to be superficial only; politeness covers deceit; meekness is but cowardice, and an index of slavish subjection. Their economy sinks either into miserly greed, or springs under the promptings of vanity into extravagant recklessness. Their imitative powers are but mechanical, and have never risen to the inventive spirit of the Americans. (Bancroft 1890, 355).

Another example appeared in Clark's story "The Lady of the Lily Feet," in which she described Mee Lee's reaction to her arranged betrothal as emotionally reserved. "She had hidden her disappointment under the stoicism of her race, and went about her preparations patiently, if not gladly" (Clark 1902, 20).

Typically the same descriptors were applied to Chinese females as those used in 1873 by Albert S. Evans, in A La California Sketches of Life in the Golden State, when he supplied the following description of a Chinese wife: "Timid to the last degree she seems, and probably is, and she looks neither to the right nor the left, but keeps her eyes fixed . . . beneath her, as if anxious to avoid the sight of everything else in the world" (Evans 1873, 312). Later, a 1923 article, "In China Too," by author Pearl S.

Buck, a Chinese girl was described as "a tractable, meek, sweet-faced little thing" and as "a shy little thing, with eyes eternally cast down, and never a word to say unless pressed to answer a question, and then so faint a voice" (Buck 1923, 70-71). Of course, such terms reflected the fact that Chinese women as a group were physically smaller than white women.

Terms such as "shy" and "meek" repeatedly were used to describe Chinese women. Especially predominant in newspaper articles and fictional stories was the usage of the word "little" and any synonymous terms which automatically elicited a particular image. Evans, for example, described a wife as "a tiny creature," and "not more than four feet in height--slender and graceful of figure" (Evans 1873, 311). In the story "The Inferior Woman," which appeared in a 1910 issue of Hamptons magazine and in the book Mrs. Spring Frangrance, Sui Sin Far referred to "little Mrs. Spring Fragrance" (Far 1910, 730; Far 1912, 40). In "The Wisdom of the New," the wife named Pau Lin was called "little Pau Lin" amd "the poor little thing" (Far 1912, 69-70). Also, in "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," the wife named Pau Tsu was repeatedly described "as slender as a willow" and "a sweet little thing" and a "tiny bride" with "little arms and hands" and as having a "birdlike figure" (Far 1912, 146-148).

Married Chinese women were objects of curiosity whose

behavior was labelled as bizarre. For example, in John Day, Oregon, during the 1880s lived Charlie Po Kee and his wife, whom local residents referred to as Crazy Jane. Crazy Jane was hardly ever seen in public and every time someone approached her, she ran away. Such behavior left townspeople with the impression that she was unfriendly and odd, therefore she had to be crazy. In all likelihood, Crazy Jane was not insane but behaving according to the traditional practice of remaining hidden from public view. Because Crazy Jane was the only married Chinese female in John Day at the time, moreover, residents had no one else to whom they could compare her behavior (Barlow and Richardson 1979, 51-52).

Not only were the behaviors of Chinese wives sometimes perceived as strange, but their physical appearance was also a notable curiosity amongst Americans. For example, in an 1861 magazine article, "A Visit to a Wealthy Chinaman," Mrs. E. S. Barnaby, upon meeting some Chinese ladies, reported: "We found them dressed in their own peculiar style" (Barnaby 1861, 144). Furthermore, the primary wife "wore on the third and fourth fingers of her left hand nails about three inches long, protected by very elegantly-chased gold shields," Barnaby wrote, "[i]t of course makes their hands quite useless, and was to our eyes a deformity" (Barnaby 1861, 144). Mary E. Bamford in her 1883 magazine article, "Child Life among the California

Foot-Hills," expressed surprised excitement at her first glimpse of "a real Chinese woman trying to walk on her little feet" (Bamford 1883, 58). While much later Bancroft wrote about the "picturesqueness . . . of . . . a sleek little marketable wife with silver anklets and other jingling ornaments," whom he pointed out "to strangers as one of the many unique features of California" (Bancroft 1890, 309).

The physical details supplied by various writers conjured up an unfavorable image of Chinese wives. Bancroft believed that they were "proportionately lower in stature, and more squat of build. The monotony of figure is increased by the conservative dark blue dress, which adds neither to stature nor to grace" (Bancroft 1890, 311). In an 1894 magazine article, "Going with the Swim," Phil Weaver, Jr., presented a more colorful account when he wrote about "Chinese girls hobbling along in their clumsy slippers," while the "pink and blue silk crepe of their costumes was striking among the subdued colors of their more civilized sisters" (Weaver 1894, 418). While Sui Sin Far, in her 1897 magazine article "The Chinese Woman in America," favorably suggested "there are some truly pleasant to behold, with their little soft faces, oval eyes, small round mouths and raven hair," ordinarily she "does not strike the observer as lovely. She is however always odd and interesting" (Far 1897, 63).

Furthermore, Far equated the extensive time Chinese wives spent on their appearance with vanity. "Needless to say she is vain," Far wrote about the typical wife, who "paints and powders, dresses and bejewels herself for her own pleasure; puts rings on her fingers and bracelet on her arms--and carefully hides herself from the gaze of strangers" (Far 1897, 64). Vanity was arguable, but modesty was apparent. "If she has Golden Lily feet (Chinese small feet) she is proudly conscious of it; but should she become aware that a stranger is trying to obtain a glimpse of them, they quickly disappear under her skirt" (Far 1897, 64).

Despite many hostile and negative accounts, some American writers described Chinese female spouses in favorable terms. Rev. Augustus W. Loomis, for example, in his 1869 article "Chinese Women in California," complimented Chinese wives on hard work. "Were there more such wives amongst the Chinamen in California," Loomis wrote, "less of their earnings would be sacrificed at the gambling table, less time wasted in idleness, and less mental and physical vigor destroyed in opium smoking" (Loomis 1869, 350).

It would not be until the 1890s, when the Chinese were in general no longer considered a threat, that perceptions of wives and mothers would begin to become more favorable. Simultaneously, whites had come to view China as a place

into which American values should be instilled and business opportunities opened up; therefore, outright hostility was quelled (McClellan 1971, 120-121, 125-128, 137). Also, turn-of-the-century America offered liberating factors to Chinese women which gradually broke down stereotypical perceptions. American-born Chinese were growing up indoctrinated into the American value system. Wives were working as wage earners and gaining a sense of independence which broke away from traditional roles. However, not until well into the twentieth century did Chinese women find it easier to break with the old ways. Of course stereotypes still existed, but the fact remained that some women were chipping away at them.

Although American writers did not direct much outward hostility at Chinese wives and mothers, certain descriptions fueled anti-Chinese nativism. Presented as heathens, saleable property, slaves, uncaring mothers and instruments of cruelty, wives became important symbols for nativists looking to precent further Chinese immigration. Through the fulfillment of their traditional roles, wives unknowingly were part of the stereotyped perceptions of the Chinese. However, not all Americans perceived married females in a negative sense.

In Clark's stories, married Chinese women were repeatedly depicted as loving, caring, dedicated mothers. However, these wives and mothers were all Christian

converts. In her story "Mee Lee's Great Happiness," for example, a Christian mother named Mee Lee gave birth to a girl. Unlike other mothers who "would have bewailed the birth of a girl, looking upon her as contemptuously as men did," Clark wrote, Mee Lee "seemed almost glad when she knew that her baby was a girl, and took the little one to her heart as if she were the most precious gift her God could have given her" (Clark 1902, 41). When asked why she was so happy, Mee Lee responded: "If the Jesus-god gave me a boy he would worship your devil-gods. But I am glad he gave me a girl, for she will worship the Jesus-god" (Clark 1902, 41).

In another story, "Joy Come," Clark depicted Dong Ho as a Christian mother who had been sold as a slave. Later she married a man in San Francisco and then they moved to New York. The birth of her daughter Joy Come "filled the hungering heart full of tenderest mother-love," Clark wrote, "and from the beginning she sought to make her daughter's life all that her own had not been. Love and caresses were bestowed on the little one lavishly" (Clark 1902, 51-52). The story "Who Cly?" told the tale of a mother, Lin Ah, whose husband gambled and lost everything to Gong Gue. The husband killed himself and Gong Gue took Lin Ah and the little girl Ah Fah as payment and then sold Ah Fah as a slave girl, much to her mother's distress. Next he sold Lin Ah as a wife to another Chinese man whom

she "grew to love . . . passionately, but still her heart hungered for her child" (Clark 1902, 92). Lin Ah's maternal love was so strong that she began to search until one day she found and rescued Ah Fah.

In Sui Sin Far's [Edith Eaton] story "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," which was included in a 1912 collection entitled Mrs. Spring Fragrance, one Chinese wife was depicted as "Americanized" (Far 1912, 1) to the point where she even contemplated writing "a book about Americans for her Chinese women friends," because she found the "American people . . . so interesting and mysterious" (Far 1912, 22). Mrs. Spring Fragrance appeared less encumbered than others. She travelled alone without her husband and "was invited everywhere that the wife of an honorable Chinese merchant could go" (Far 1912, 6-7). The plot of the story revolved around Mrs. Spring Fragrance's involvement in a plan to get her young Chinese friend out of an arranged betrothal and married to the man the girl really loved. In the end, the two young people were married, while the merchant's wife experienced "pride and pleasure" (Far 1912, 22) at the success of her plan.

While Mrs. Spring Fragrance may have been an "Americanized" Chinese wife, Far often depicted her female wives along the stereotypical lines reflective of the time. For example, in "The Wisdom of the New," the wife Pau Lin was the traditional wife of Wou Sankwei. She "was

more of an accessory than a part of his life," wrote Far, "She interfered not at all with his studies, his business, or his friends, and when not engaged in housework or sewing" (Far 1912, 56), she would visit other merchants' wives. Characteristic of the traditionally oriented wife, "Pau Lin had shown no disposition to become Americanized" (Far 1912, 58), and she refused to learn foreign ways. Pau Lin's attachment to her traditional values was so strong that she proclaimed: "'Sooner would I, . . . that the light of thine eyes were also quenched, than that thou shouldst be contaminated with the wisdom of the new'" (Far 1912, 68). In the end, Pau Lin prevented her husband from Americanizing their son by killing the child.

In another story, "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," Far depicted another traditionally oriented wife who resisted her husband's attempts to Americanize her. Her husband, Wan Lin Fo, had prepared their apartment prior to her arrival from China. The apartment was "furnished in American style," but, as soon as she arrived, wrote Far, "she transformed the American flat into an Oriental bower, even setting up in her sleeping-room a little chapel, enshrined in which was an image of the Goddess of Mercy" (Far 1912, 148). Pau Tsu cried at her husband's "suggestion that she should take some lessons in English from a white women" and she did "not understand . . . why

it was required of her to learn the strangers' language and adopt their ways" (Far 1912, 150).

Furthermore, Pau Tsu wondered "Why, oh! why should she be constrained to eat her food with clumsy, murderous looking American implements instead of with her own elegant and easily manipulated ivory chopsticks?" (Far 1912, 150-151) Far described Pau Tsu's feelings as hurt when her husband bought her an American dress to wear and as horrified when, during an illness, he insisted she see a male physician (Far 1912, 152-154). Ironically, at the end of the story, Pau Tsu broke Chinese custom when she divorced her husband according to American custom (Far 1912, 156).

In general Americans still perceived Chinese women, whether wives and mothers or slave girls and prostitutes, in stereotypical terms. Nineteenth century American newspapers and fictional accounts reinforced such perceptions, which were the product of an oversimplification and stereotyping of the complex cultural roles of wives and mothers played by Chinese women. The complexity of their roles occurred because these women transmitted traditional Chinese culture to their children while they simultaneously assisted in the adoption of American culture by their families. As Chinese wives and mothers adopted American cultural beliefs and practices, they became more involved in the gradual breakdown of

traditional Chinese female roles and also American stereotypes.

No longer were Chinese wives perceived as the timid, docile, little creatures who catered to their husbands' needs. As wage earners, they were gaining their own identities and importance, perhaps not always as a separate being but definitely within the family as it existed. Some Chinese women broke free of the stereotypes that confined them to certain roles in American society and in the family system. A few of these women successfully, although often unintentionally, broke away from and/or modified traditional practices while they simultaneously eroded the negative images and/or perceptions held by Americans. The brief details concerning the lives of three Chinese women, Polly Bemis, Kong Tai Heong, and Ah Ho, should demonstrate that wives played an active and positive participant role in the developing Chinese American cuture of the nineteenth century.

Ruthanne Lum McCunn, in 1981, wrote a biographical novel entitled Thousand Pieces of Gold about the life "of Lalu Nathoy, later known as Polly Bemis" (McCunn 1981, 7). In her childhood, Polly's father had sold her to a bandit for "two bags of seed" (McCunn 1981, 50). The bandit later sold her to a brothel madam who then sold her to a procuress in San Francisco. The procuress sold Polly to a Chinese saloon owner named Hong Kong who lived in the

mining town of Warrens, Idaho (McCunn 1981, 84-106). Lalu Nathoy received her American name at her owner's saloon where she had to wear American-style clothes. Also, situated next door to the saloon she worked in, was the gambling hall which belonged to Charles Bemis (McCunn 1981, 116-128), who later played an important part in Polly's life.

Polly's life in Warrens was later recounted by her personal friend George J. Bancroft, who compiled China Polly (Lalu Nathoy) a Reminiscence during the early 1900s. He described Polly as having "pink cheeks" and "shy, modest ways" and "always industrious" and as a woman whom Charles Bemis eventually "took a personal interest in" (Bancroft [early 1900s], 2). Bemis' interest in Polly grew and he played her owner in a poker game in which he won her. He then gave Polly her freedom (McCunn 1981, 156-164). Although Polly had her freedom, she remained in Warrens and cohabitated with Bemis, who was white.

In 1894, Polly and Charles Bemis married and they moved to Salmon Canyon which was about eighteen miles from Warrens. A cabin was built and the couple moved in (McCunn 1981, 217-223, 309). "The Bemis farm contained only 15 acres of tillable land," Bancroft wrote, "but it would, and under Polly's industrious care it did" (Bancroft [early 1900s], 3-4) produce various fruits and vegetables. Polly also "got some chickens and some ducks and a cow" and she

"became an adept fisher woman" (Bancroft [early 1900s], 4). According to Bancroft, Polly "became strictly a one-man dog so far as her sexual relations were concerned (Bancroft [early 1900s], 4) after her marriage. Bemis died in 1922 and Polly died in 1933 (McCunn 1981, 267, 308).

During her lifetime, Polly acquired both Chinese and white friends, because as Bancroft wrote: "Her heart was too big and her sympathies too broad for her to confine her interests solely to her little farm" (Bancroft [early 1900s], 4). Two white men who lived across the river became the married couple's close friends (Bancroft [early 1900s], 4-5; McCunn 1981, 237-238).

Knowing that she had been sold and could not return home, Polly had to build a life in America. She modified her childhood training to survive and became acculturated via her involvement with various white friends and specifically because of her relationship with Charles Bemis, an interracial marriage frowned upon by both Chinese and whites of the era. Yet Bancroft wrote:

> The story of her many deeds of kindness, of her quaint but wise sayings, of her tender care of her husband as he became old and feeble, of her enormous capacity for work and her tireless industry would fill a book. Sufficient to say that this [C]hinese girl who started out in life as a dance hall girl became one of the most beloved women in central Idaho. (Bancroft [early 1900s], 5).

Another Chinese woman immigrant who became well known was Kong Tai Heong, who settled in Hawaii with her

husband. Her daughter, Ling Ai Li, wrote a biographical account of her life in 1972 entitled Life Is for a Long Time: A Chinese Hawaiian Memoir. Kong Tai Heong had been an orphan left at a Christian Mission in 1875 and the only thing found with her had been a slip of paper with her name and its meaning, "River of Elegant Fragrance," (Li 1972, 4) written on it. She attended the Canton Medical College where she studied medicine and where she also met her future husband, Li Khai Fai. They married after their graduation in June of 1896 and left for Hawaii the next day (Li 1972, 1-3). They arrived in "Honolulu on the 4th of July, 1896, just as the American flag was being raised . . . for the first time" (Li 1972, 32).

Unlike many other Chinese female immigrants, Kong Tai Heong had an education. People in Honolulu constantly referred to her by her own name, not her spouse's. At first she could only deliver babies. But Tai Heong broke tradition when she sought assistance from Rev. Frank Damon, who helped the couple get an appointment to see the President of the Republic of Hawaii. At the meeting, they inquired about taking medical examinations so they could practice in Hawaii. At the time, Tai Heong was only twenty-one years old. They each took and passed the medical examinations and received their licenses to practice medicine in October 1896 and opened their medical office in November of the same year (Li 1972, 44-100).

At first they did not have any clients because the Chinese community did not approve of a female doctor, and some Chinese disapproved of her using her own name and not her spouse's. While Kong Tai Heong seemed to observers to have broken tradition, she maintained some of the Chinese values. For example, about the birth of her first child, a girl, she expressed the following: "I was sorry that it was not a son, for it is the son who carries the family name into the centuries" (Li 1972, 124). Her husband, however, expressed that he was not unhappy that the baby was a girl. "From 1897 to 1914 she gave birth to thirteen children, eight of whom survived" (McCunn 1988, 75).

While her children and she continued her medical practice, Tai Heong came to an important decision. She decided it was her responsibility to Americanize her children and she began with their clothing, even though she herself continued to wear Chinese-style clothing (Li 1972, 232-233). In addition, she taught her children, both sons and daughters, to cook Chinese-style. Tai Heong and her husband eventually bought a home and sent their children to a school attended by white children. Later, their children were sent to American colleges and universities. Once again Tai Heong fell back upon traditional Chinese values. In a discussion about sending their oldest daughter to college, she told her husband to save his money to educate their male children. Her husband, however, informed her

that both their boy and girl children would be educated (Li 1972, 276-318).

In Robert Ripley's 1946 "Believe It or Not" newspaper column, Tai Heong was featured for having delivered the highest number of babies, an estimated 6,000, for any private practitioner (McCunn 1988, 75; Soong 1984, 238; Yung 1986, 39). During her lifetime, she participated in various community organizations and at age seventy-six Kong Tai Heong died (Soong 1984, 238-239).

Lucia C. Bell, in Ah Ho's Gold Chair: The Life Story of the Bible Woman of the Presbyterian Chinese Mission in Portland, Oregon printed in 1896, recounted the details of another woman's life. Ah Ho had been born in southern China and during her mother's illness she stayed at the Presbyterian Mission in Canton. From there she had been lured by a procuress who trained her to sing and made Ah Ho perform at various places. When she reached fourteen years of age, the procuress tricked Ah Ho into going to San Francisco, where she was then sold. While in San Francisco, she escaped to the Presbyterian Mission and the matrons of the home took care of her (Bell 1896, 1-12).

In 1882 Ah Ho moved to Portland, Oregon, with the intention of working for a Chinese family; however, "she found herself deceived and led into an evil den of the worst character, where she was closely watched to prevent her escape" (Bell 1896, 13). Again, she managed to escape

to another mission. She joined the First Presbyterian Church in Portland and worked for a Christian Chinese family. Later she married Dong Faiy, a Chinese Baptist, who lived in Portland. She assisted in rescuing other Chinese girls and women and was actively involved with the local Chinese mission home (Bell 1896, 13-15). Concerning Ah Ho's involvement in rescue work, Bell commented: "She is perfectly fearless in the work of rescuing Chinese women and girls from slavery, and has risked her life for their sakes more than once" (Bell 1896, 15).

Chinese women like Polly Bemis, Kong Tai Heong, and Ah Ho served as examples of immigrants who adjusted to life in a foreign country. Each was Americanized in various ways. Each overcame sexual and racial discrimination and achieved some measure of success in her new country via her own personal determination and innovation. However, not all Chinese women overcame the problems and adjustments they faced in America nor their own culture's role restrictions.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Chinese female immigrants, whether prostitutes or wives and mothers, were actively involved in nineteenth century America as both contributors and participants. The general existence of Chinese prostitutes and married women who immigrated to the United States and Hawaii has been investigated in this thesis. The ways in which both groups of female immigrants were portrayed has also been presented. The newspaper and fictional accounts often reflected the sexist and the racist attitudes of Anglo-America during the era. Also, this thesis explored how both Chinese prostitutes and married women were exploited by anti-Chinese forces and by their own male-dominated culture.

Chinese wives who adhered to traditional beliefs and customs unintentionally became the pawns of nativists who exaggerated cultural practices. American ignorance of Chinese traditions made it easy to misinterpret the customs transmitted to America and resulted in prejudice and discrimination directed at the immigrants. American newspaper articles and popular magazine and book-length works of the nineteenth and early twentieth century

emphasized that wives were abused, property of their spouses, slave-like, secluded and lonely, uncaring mothers and instruments of cruelty, and similar in behavior and physical characteristics. However, the negative perceptions of Chinese wives and mothers became more favorable toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Chinese prostitutes unknowingly reinforced negative stereotypes, thereby fueling anti-Chinese sentiments. These women, too, became the pawns of nativists who created the image of all female immigrants as being immoral beings. Nineteenth century newspaper accounts and popular magazine and book-length works often presented Chinese prostitutes as both criminal offenders and victims. Although the victimization of the prostitutes was often addressed in newspaper accounts, such pieces often appeared written for the entertainment of readers.

Even Americans who attempted to help the Chinese warped white perceptions because they maintained a racially superior attitude and condescending manner. Images of Chinese females were based upon and popularized by early overgeneralized and exaggerated media accounts. Thus, the early stereotypes developed and were later built upon by nativist forces hoping to end Chinese immigration to America. The ways the media presented women, whether prostitutes or married, enhanced the anti-Chinese

sentiments during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

However, as married women immigrated to America and worked to create a family life, American perceptions of Chinese women began to change. Although prostitution still existed, the active roles played by married females gradually led to a new image of immigrant women. Through their roles, married Chinese females maintained traditional values, introduced American ones, and assisted in building a new subculture combining aspects of both Chinese and American cultures. Not until well into the twentieth century would they begin to see the fruits of their labor as their daughters took advantage of the educational, occupational, and social opportunities America offered them.

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