Anti-Chinese Discrimination in Twentieth Century America: Perceptions of Chinese Americans During the Third Bubonic Plague Pandemic in San Francisco, 1900-1908

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Abstract

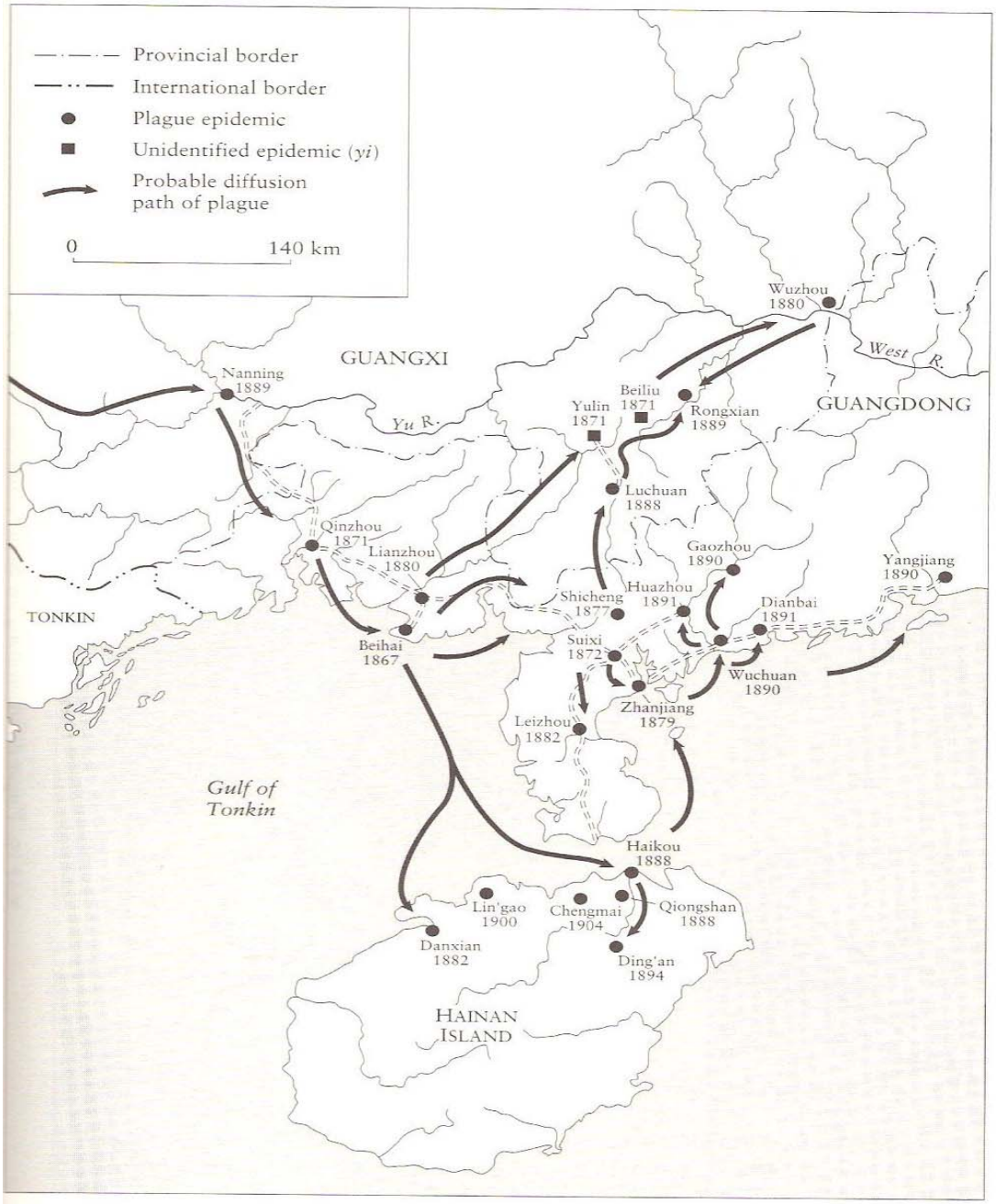
The bubonic plague arrived in San Francisco in 1900 during the third pandemic of the disease. After infiltrating the local rat population, the plague quickly spread to the Chinese region of the city known as Chinatown. Mainstream society blamed the Chinese for bringing the disease to America, but the reason why the plague was prevalent in this area was the unsanitary, overcrowded living conditions that existed here. The fact that the disease was believed to be "Asiatic" in nature had much to do with the pre-existing anti-Chinese attitudes that were present in the United States. These negative attitudes had been widespread since the Chinese began immigrating to the United States in large numbers following the discovery of gold in California in 1848. Mainstream society's reaction to the bubonic plague was not all that shocking. In fact, given the relationship that existed between Chinese Americans and the general population in San Francisco at the time, it was not surprising that the Chinese were targeted during the two epidemics, especially the first epidemic which lasted from 1900-04.

By utilizing personal letters, telegrams, speeches, political cartoons, and government documents the author will examine the mindset that existed prior to the plague's arrival. Conversations between Walter Wyman, the Surgeon General, and Joseph Kinyoun, the director of laboratory hygiene within the U.S. Marine Hospital Service, will help prove that the plague merely heightened pre-existing anti-Chinese sentiment. The author concludes that the Chinese were subjected to discrimination during the epidemic because they had experienced the same treatment prior to the plague's arrival.

Acknowledgements

Any significant project that one embarks on is only made possible by other individuals, and such was the case with this thesis. I would like to thank my thesis committee for having the time and patience throughout the entire writing and revising process. I cannot express my gratitude enough to my thesis director, Dr. Brian Bonhomme, for the endless hours he spent going over all of the fine details in regards to not only my thesis, but also all of the necessary formalities and deadlines that go along with such a project. The other two readers on my committee, Dr.Martha Pallante and Dr. Daniel Ayana, were also a tremendous help throughout the entire process. Their comments and suggestions helped make this thesis stronger.

I feel that this thesis has helped me broaden the scope of my research and I plan to continue with this topic upon entering a doctorate program. Upon saying that, wherever I may go to further my education, Youngstown State University, and in particular the History Department, will always hold a special place in my heart.



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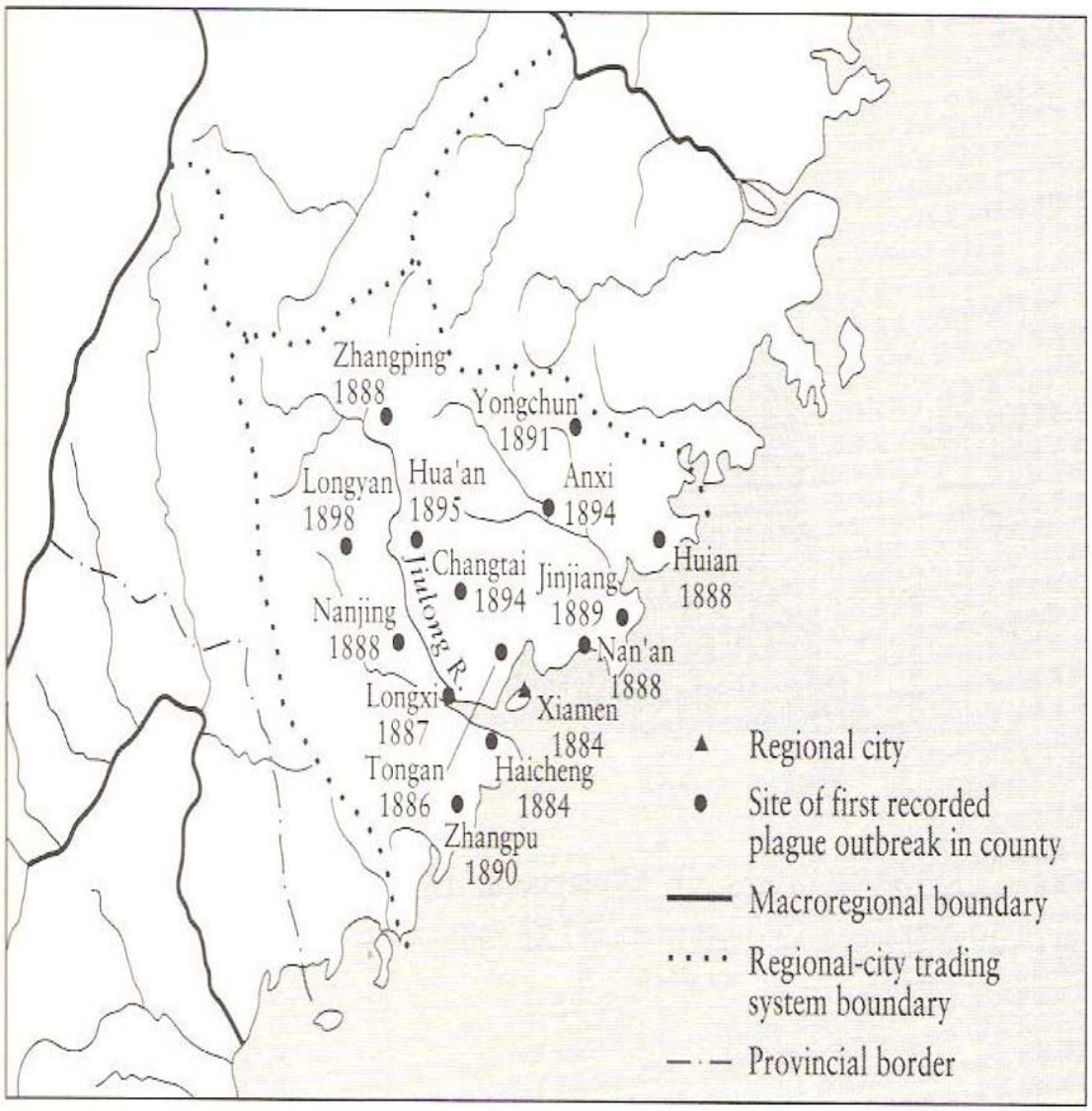

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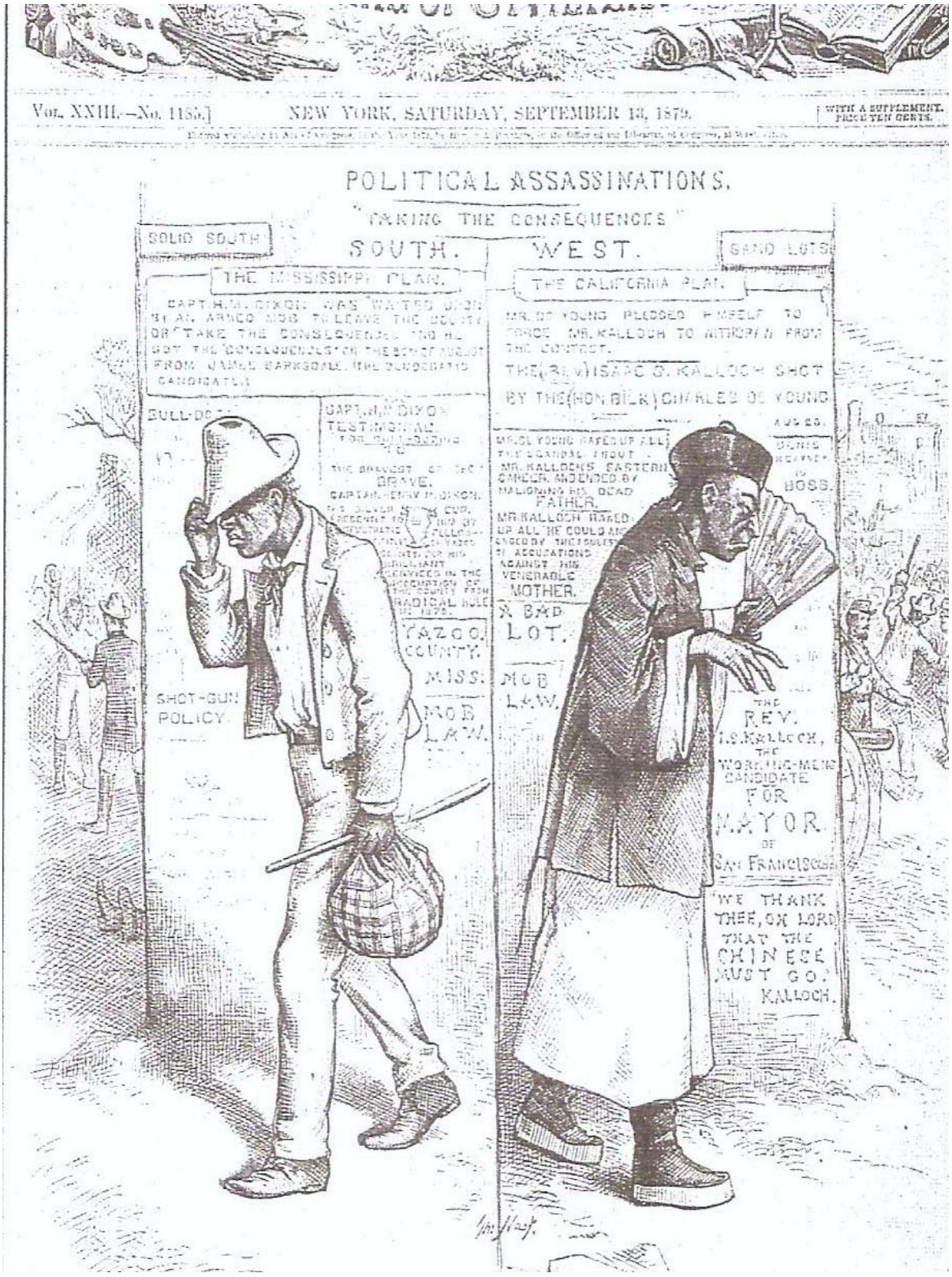
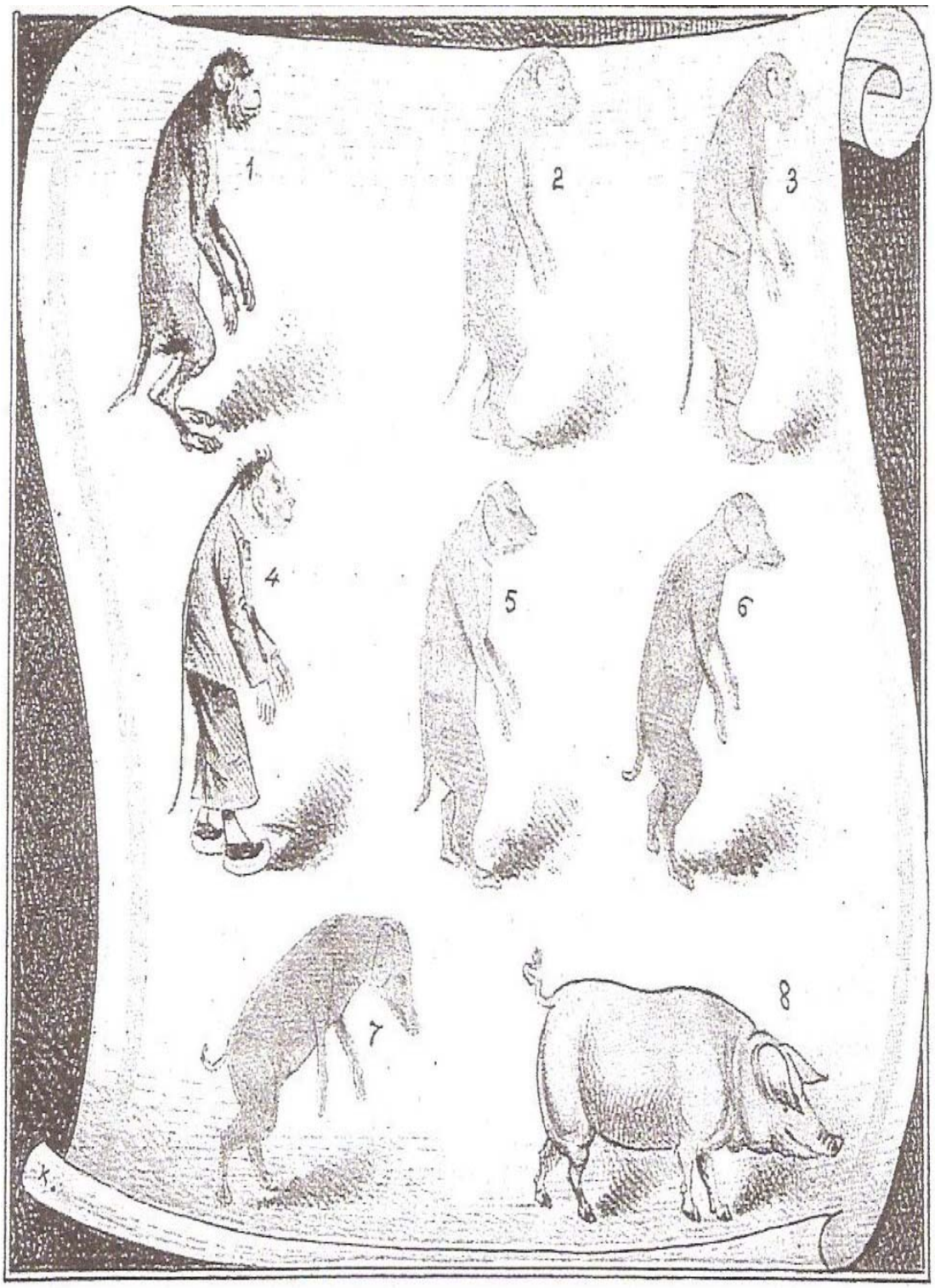
Vol. XXIII.—No. 1155.] NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1879. [WITH A SUPPLEMENT. PRICE TEN CENTS.





75 Darwin's Theory Illustrated—The Creation of Chinaman and Pig

Preface

This paper will discuss the two bubonic plague epidemics in San Francisco that occurred during the early years of the 20th century from 1900-08. The main focus will be the discriminatory practices implemented to eradicate the disease, which targeted the Chinese population living in a section of the city referred to as Chinatown. The perception of the Chinese was negative prior to the arrival of the plague, and the presence of the disease tended to accentuate negative attitudes directed at the Chinese. Thus, the government and public health response to the disease's arrival in San Francisco during the Third Pandemic was not really shocking. The plague emphasized the anti-Chinese sentiment that had been prevalent in the United States since the Chinese began immigrating to America in large numbers in the middle of the 19th century.

This thesis will look at the treatment of the Chinese during the two epidemics in San Francisco by focusing primarily on newspaper representation, telegrams, and plague conferences. There was a sharp distinction between the government and public health response during the two epidemics, largely due to the connection being made between the rat and flea in the diffusion process prior to the second epidemic, which lasted from 1907-08. Due to little being known about the plague's transmission prior to the first epidemic, which lasted from 1900-04, and the fact that most of the cases during this time were in Chinatown, it was not odd that the Chinese were blamed for bringing the disease to the United States. Also, the arrival of the plague emphasized the pre-existing negative perceptions mainstream society had of the Chinese and Chinatown. The connection between the rat and flea led to a better understanding of the disease but anti-Chinese

sentiment was still there despite this discovery; it just was not as blatant as it had been during the first epidemic.

This thesis will be organized into four main chapters. The first chapter will look at Chinese immigration to America during the middle of the nineteenth century and early discriminatory practices perpetuated by mainstream society, with a focus on legislation aimed at the Chinese. This chapter will also focus on the Chinese community and their advocates and the actions that were taken to combat such blatant discriminatory practices.[1] It is important to show that the Chinese were in fact proactive despite being the targets of discrimination. The Chinese believed it was their right as tax payers to utilize the court system, and they used this privilege frequently, which was important after the bubonic plague arrived in San Francisco. This chapter will also highlight the existing relationship between the Chinese and mainstream society in America, which was directly related to how public health and government officials reacted during the plague epidemics.

The second chapter will examine the history of the plague and its pandemics, with the main focus being the third pandemic. This chapter will discuss in detail the origins of the third pandemic and trace the progression of the plague bacillus from the province of Yunnan to the interior of China.[2] Some background information about the plague will be

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[1] Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994. This book details early court cases that were in response to discriminatory legislation directed at the Chinese community. In addition, the author discusses the repercussions from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, amendments and laws that were passed to wrap up any loopholes, and the Chinese response to such blatant discriminatory measures. Arnoldo De León, *Racial Frontiers: Africans, Chinese, and Mexicans in Western America, 1848-1890*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. This book examines early Chinese immigration and assimilation attempts. The author focuses on early white attempts that targeted the Chinese in response to the competitive job market and the Chinese reaction to them.

[2] Carol Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996). In her book the author traces the path the plague bacillus took as it made its way from the

discussed to give the reader a better understanding of the disease, including the method of transmission, conditions that must be present in order for the disease to spread and remain endemic in an area, the various forms the plague can take, and early scientific discoveries that helped scientists better understand the disease. Also, early Chinese documents that speculate the disease was prevalent well before the nineteenth century in the country, as well as the Chinese perception of disease and contagion, will be discussed.[3] This background information is important to the understanding of the Chinese response to the disease in San Francisco in comparison to the response of public health and government officials.

The third chapter will focus on the arrival of the bubonic plague on continental American soil. The two epidemics in San Francisco, 1900-1904 and 1907-1908, will be the time period examined. Newspaper accounts of the events that took place will be discussed, including the response of government and public health officials in contrast to the Chinese reaction. This chapter will discuss in detail the efforts taken by government and health officials in San Francisco to target the Chinese and make them the scapegoats during the epidemics. The response in San Francisco was quite similar to the reaction in Honolulu in 1899 when the plague first appeared in Hawaii.[4] Also, the Chinese utilization of the federal court system will be examined once again with the focus on two court

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Southwestern province of Yunnan to the interior of China before being transported worldwide via transportation routes.

[3] Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominick Wujuastyk, *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies*, (Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2000). The authors examine the perception of disease in early China including the beliefs surrounding their origins and their diffusion. They also discuss early medical writings that suggest the plague existed in China well before the 19th century.

[4] James C. Mohr, *Plague and Fire: Battling Black Death and the 1900 Burning of Honolulu's Chinatown*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). The author discusses the arrival of the plague in Honolulu in 1899 and the extreme eradication measures taken to combat the disease. Chinatown was burned to the ground; destroying businesses and homes. This drastic response was directly related to Chinatown being considered a "laboratory for infection."

cases.[5] This chapter will demonstrate how the arrival of the bubonic plague rehashed anti-Chinese sentiment that had subsided somewhat after the passage of the Geary Act in 1892.[6]

The last chapter will act as a conclusion in that it will bring the previous three together. The treatment of the Chinese during the third pandemic directly correlates to the history between the two countries, both prior to and during the nineteenth century. Also, the discriminatory practices and racial prejudices the Chinese were forced to endure was directly related to negative perceptions Americans had of the Chinese shortly after they began immigrating to the United States in large numbers. The San Franciscan response to the disease, and the treatment of the Chinese on behalf of government and public health officials, was not really shocking. In fact, given the relationship between the Chinese living in the United States and mainstream society, it was not surprising at all. The bubonic plague epidemics in San Francisco merely acted as a catalyst by highlighting existing cultural and social perceptions that had existed since the middle of the 19th century.

It did not take long after the Chinese began immigrating to the United States in 1848 for tensions to ensue between the existing white population and the Chinese community. In Arnoldo De León's *Racial Frontiers: Africans, Chinese, and Mexicans in*

[5] The Case of *Wong Wai* in 1900 focused on the Haffkine vaccine program the Californian government was trying to enforce on the Chinese. It was experimental and often fatal. Judge Morrow ruled in favor of *Wong Wai.* Later that same year, the case of *Jew Ho* was also heard by Judge Morrow. Judge Morrow ruled that *Jew Ho's* rights had indeed been violated during the quarantining of Chinatown.

[6] The Geary Act was named after one of its chief sponsors, Thomas J. Geary, who was a congressman in California. One of the chief components of the act was to prohibit Chinese immigration for another ten years. Also, every Chinese laborer already residing in the United States must apply for a certificate of residence within one year of the ratification of the act, thus creating an internal passport system. If after a year a laborer did not have a certificate they would be arrested and deported unless proper documentation could be verified. The Chinese arrested were not allowed bail and the crime was punishable by an entire year of hard labor. The Geary Act basically tied up all of the loose ends regarding Chinese immigration, thus left the white Americans feeling relatively confident that they had the upper hand.

Western America, 1848-1890, he discusses animosity that existed between white Americans and the Chinese. He provides a useful insight as to the mindset for this time period. Chia-ling Kuo's *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown: The Role of Voluntary Associations* looks at how the Chinese tried to assimilate into American society with the aid of the Chinese Six Companies, an organization created to not only maintain order in the Chinese community, but also to act as a mediator between the Chinese and the mainstream population. Philip P. Choy, Lorraine Dong, and Marlon K. Hom, editors of *Coming Man: 19th Century American Perceptions of the Chinese,* examine the perception of the Chinese through the use of political cartoons. Charles McClain also analyzes the effort made by the Chinese to fit in after they immigrated to the United States. In his monograph, *In Search for Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America,* McClain approaches this subject by examining court cases. All of these works have one thing in common in that they allow one to experience the social atmosphere that existed in nineteenth and twentieth century America.

It is also important to trace the origins of the third pandemic, mainly because many believe its origins were in China, which could explain the theory that it was an Asiatic disease. Carol Benedict does an excellent job of presenting background information as to how the plague became endemic in China, and how it spread on a global level in *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China.* Works, such as *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco* by Marilyn Chase, and *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco* by Susan Craddock,

take over where Benedict leaves off. Both examine the plague in the United States during the two epidemics between 1900-1908 and the negative perception of the Chinese.

The secondary sources provide a useful background as far as Chinese immigration, anti-Chinese legislation, the Chinese response to such discriminatory practices, and the existence of the plague bacillus itself in Chinatown. This thesis will merge the existing secondary material together by focusing on anti-Chinese sentiment in the presence of the plague. The Chinese had been victims of discrimination in America from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. Towards the end of the nineteenth century after legislation was passed such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Scott Act in 1888, and the Geary Act in 1892, white Americans did not feel the need to constantly target the Chinese, largely because they had accomplished what they wanted; prohibited further immigration to the United States from China. This is not to say that anti-Chinese sentiment died in America. It was still there, only not quite as blatant. The arrival of the plague brought old prejudices back into the spotlight. The Chinese were blamed for the disease being in America; it was even called an Asiatic disease. This thesis will show that the treatment of the Chinese during the two epidemics, especially the first one, was really not that extraordinary. Given the strained relationship that existed between Chinese Americans and white Americans, the discrimination the Chinese were forced to deal with was a predictable response. The presence of the disease merely acted as a catalyst by bringing pre-existing anti-Chinese attitudes back into the forefront.

Chapter 1: Chinese Immigration in 19th Century America

In order to fully understand how the Chinese were treated during the two bubonic plague epidemics in San Francisco from 1900-08 it is necessary to look at Chinese immigration to the United States during the middle of the 19th century. Mainstream society's perception of the Chinese was shaped during this time because this is when the Chinese became more visible in American society. At first, attitudes towards the Chinese were not as negative, but this changed as the 19th century progressed. The relationship that existed between the Chinese and mainstream society was complex because it was not completely negative; there were people sympathetic to the Chinese. Nonetheless, prior to the arrival of the bubonic plague it was the negative perceptions that tended to prevail, especially towards the end of the 19th century, which explains the treatment of the Chinese during the two epidemics.

The Chinese emigrated in large numbers from 1848-1882 to the trans-Mississippi West from the province of Guangdong,[1] which is located in the Southeastern part of China. There were many motives for the Chinese immigrating to the United States. Some reasons were political and economic due to the Taiping Rebellion and the First Opium War. Still, other reasons were beyond human control such as natural disasters in the form of floods and droughts. Upon their arrival they were often victims of discriminatory practices at the hands of mainstream American society. They were seen as too different because they were not willing to completely abandon their homeland culture and assimilate to the existing culture in America.

[1] The province of Guangdong can also be found spelled as Kwangtung in texts. There are two forms of Romanized Chinese. The first is Wade-Giles, which was used during the 19th and 20th centuries. The second, Pin Yin, was developed by the People's Republic of China in the 1950s and is the standard form used today. I will be using the spelling Guangdong, which is the Pin Yin form, throughout this thesis.

Several laws were put into effect which directly targeted the Chinese; most notably the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act, signed by President Chester Arthur on May 8, 1882, suspended Chinese immigration to the United States for ten years. The Chinese quickly learned how to utilize the federal court system as a form of protection against such discriminatory measures. In fact, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in San Francisco was extremely important to Chinese immigrants because it helped the people adjust to their new life in the United States, maintain peace within the Chinese faction of the city, and acted as a voice in all political, social, economic, and legal issues that arose between the Chinese and mainstream society.[2] The CCBA, known as the Chinese Six Companies to the Chinese, was made up of six Chinese associations that were incorporated under California law in 1901.The fact that the Chinese fought back against discriminatory practices, such as anti-Chinese legislation, which were quite common in 19th century America, showed that they believed they had rights as tax payers in America; they refused to become merely victims of racism.

During the years 1848-1882 the Chinese began immigrating to the United States, particularly to the California region, however, the reasons for their departure from their homeland can not be pinpointed to a single event.[3] Political issues provided an incentive for some people to leave their native soil. For example, the Chinese suffered a major blow when they lost the Opium War which lasted from 1839-1842. Ultimately, this war had devastating economic effects on China because the British mandated large

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[2] Arnoldo De León, *Racial Frontiers: Africans, Chinese, and Mexicans in Western America, 1848-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 42.

[3] For more on Chinese immigration and the recruitment of the Chinese as cheap laborers see Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006) and Frank Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002) and Estelle T. Lau, *Paper Families: identity, Immigration Administration, and Chinese Exclusion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

indemnities on the country, and replaced Chinese merchants involved in the textile industry in Canton.[4] China was forced to import English products such as textiles which competed with native products. Small farm owners also suffered directly as wealthy, large farm owners in Guangdong slowly absorbed their smaller plots in an effort to create larger plots of land.[5] The end result was that many farmers were forced from their land with nowhere to go and no source of income. Many migrated to America in search of a more stable economic life. The Taiping Rebellion[6], a civil war in China which lasted from 1850-1864, was another event which forced the Chinese to leave their homeland. Peasants and farmers from the Toishan , Hoi Ping, Yan Ping, Sun Wei, Shun Tak, Nan Hoi, Pum Yui, and Chung Shan districts in the Guangdong Province migrated to new areas, including California, when interregional trade was destroyed and agricultural output was reduced which ultimately caused a widespread famine.[7] In addition, natural disasters that occurred during the middle of the 19th century, such as a major drought in 1851, a devastating flood in 1852 and a combination of drought followed by heavy rains in 1854, also drove people from their homeland to America. The result of such natural

[4] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 11.
[5] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 11.
[6] The Taiping Rebellion was a widespread civil war in southern China which began in 1848 and ended in 1864. It was led by Hong Xiuquan against the ruling Qing Dynasty. The fall of Nanjing in 1864 destroyed the Taiping regime but the civil unrest was not over. There were still several hundred thousand Taiping rebel troops that continued to fight, including more than a quarter-million Taiping rebels fighting in the border regions of Jiangxi and Fujian. Finally,in August 1871 the last Taiping rebel army led by Shi Dakai's commander, General Li Fuzhong was completely destroyed by the government forces located in the border region of Hunan, Guizhou, and Guangxi. The total death toll during the Taiping Rebellion is estimated to be twenty million people, including civilians and soldiers. Most of the deaths were not directly attributed to the actual fighting during the rebellion however; diseases such as the plague and famine played a prominent role. For more on the Taiping Rebellion see James Chester Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion: 1850-1864* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963) and Robert Paul Weller, *Resistance, Chaos, and Control in China: Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts, and Tianamen* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).
[7] Chia-ling Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown: The Role of Voluntary Associations* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), 2.

calamities was widespread famine because there just was not enough food to support the existing population.

Other historians do not view the situation in China as quite so desperate and dismal. Although the Opium War was in fact detrimental to China's native textile industry, and Chinese merchants were forced to seek employment in other sectors such as the rural and market economy, and land dispossession occurred frequently, there are historians who argue that these practices were nothing new; they had been a factor among the poor in China well before the mid 19th century.[8] The people adapted to these changes by importing goods and food products that they needed and sold crops they produced for a profit. Famine was certainly a factor but it can be argued that it was never extreme enough to drive such a large number of Chinese from their native land. The death toll from the Taiping Rebellion would have reduced the population significantly in China, which would have actually provided more food for the survivors.[9] Another factor worth noting is the interconnectedness of the world at this time. The 1848 discovery of gold in California attracted thousands of Chinese, mostly Cantonese from the province of Guangdong, to the United States.[10] They came with a vision that their hard work and sacrifice would bring them success, especially with their experience as day laborers, skilled craftsman, and merchants. [11] In fact, the Chinese were often recruited as a major source of cheap labor.

There were many Chinese who willingly came to America for economic reasons. A Chinese man named Mr. Low described how his father immigrated to America in

[8] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 11.
[9] The death toll for the Taiping Rebellion is estimated to be close to 20 million.
[10] Philip P. Choy, Lorraine Dong, and Marlon K. Hom, editors, *Coming Man: 19th Century American Perceptions of the Chinese* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1994), 19.
[11] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 12.

search of a better life; “Father couldn’t make a living in China and our relatives looked down on him, so he went to Hong Kong and worked at a *gam saan jong*, which was a local kinship association. Later he was smuggled aboard a ship and came to the United States.”[12] Others, such as Gong Ting Shu, were forced to come to America. A member of his family told this account of how their ancestors came to California:

> One evening our Great-Grandfather went out for a walk in Canton. We’re not certain of the date, but it was sometime before the 1870’s. His name was Gong Ting Shu and he was already married with at least one son. The Ching guards started chasing him, as he was a Ming loyalist and anti-Ching. He ran across the city to escape the guard, but couldn’t get away. Finally, desperate, he leapt into the Pearl River. Luckily for him, or maybe not so luckily, he ended up rolling into a small boat that was there. The next he thing he knew he woke up and he was in the middle of the ocean. What happened was that he had fallen into a boat that was looking to hijack Chinese as laborers. Maybe they hit him over the head when he landed in the boat, but all he remembered was that he jumped into the river to get away from the people chasing him and the next thing he knew he was on a large ship headed for the United States. Anyway, he never got back to China. Instead he ended up in California.[13]

There was an opportunity to make profits by forcing Chinese to travel to the United States to work. Also, encouraging the Chinese to become willing candidates proved quite lucrative as well. Two U.S. companies; the Pacific Mail Steamship Company and the Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company, began to take Chinese immigrants to America on a bimonthly basis in 1866.[14] Chinese immigration to the United States was encouraged by the promise of wealth which can be seen from the following handbill distributed by an American shipping company:

> Chinamen have become richer than mandarins there. Pay first year, $300, but afterwards make more than double. One can do as he likes in that country. Nobody better nor get more pay than he does. Nice rice, vegetables, and wheat, all very cheap. Three years there will make poor workmen very rich, and he can

[12] Estelle T. Lau, *Paper Families: Identity, Immigration Administration, and Chinese Exclusion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 64.
[13] Lau, *Paper Families*, 62.
[14] Lau, *Paper Families*, 63.

> come home at any time. On the ships that go there passengers will find nice rooms and very fine food. They can play all sorts of games and have no work. Everything nice to make man happy. It is a nice country. Better than this. No sickness there and no danger of death. Come! Go at once. You cannot afford to wait. Don't heed the wife's counsel or the threats of enemies. Be chinamen, but go."[15]

Despite the promise of riches to be made following the discovery of gold, Chinese immigration remained relatively low during the 1850s. At this point there was only slightly more than four thousand Chinese living in the United States.[16] There have been two main reasons attributed to such low numbers of Chinese immigrants during the 1850s compared to other ethnic groups such as the Mexicans. The first was the strong sense of loyalty most Chinese felt towards their native country.[17] Most felt a strong sense of pride toward their homeland and did not wish to uproot themselves or their families. Second, the policies followed by the Ch'ing (Qing) government discouraged anyone from fleeing the country and plotting the dynasty's demise from abroad, particularly from countries such as Taiwan.[18] The dynasty was weakening and they were forcibly clinging to their power. They were so determined to keep the people from leaving and so paranoid that they may go that the punishment was death by decapitation.[19] Still, some Chinese decided to immigrate to the United States in search of wealth and prosperity. In 1868 there was a drastic increase in Chinese immigration to the United States, largely due to the Burlingame Treaty.

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[15] Lau, *Paper Families*, 63.
[16] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 22.
[17] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 22.
[18] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 22.
[19] The Ch'ing (Qing) government was weakening and believed the only way to hold onto their power was to utilize the threat of violence. They feared their dynasty would be overthrown if the people were allowed to immigrate to other countries. Taiwan was adestination that was a particular concern for the regime.

In 1868 American diplomat Anson Burlingame negotiated a treaty in Washington, D.C. with secretary of State William H. Seward which guaranteed free immigration and legal protection to Chinese people in America.[20] The Burlingame Treaty was an amendment to the Treaty of Tientsin which was signed in Washington in July 1858.[21] There were two main provisions to the Burlingame Treaty which were of significance to the Chinese living in California. First, the United States and China recognized "the inherent and unalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of the free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects, respectively for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents."[22] Second, it was stated that all "Chinese subjects visiting or residing in the United States, shall enjoy the same privileges, immunities, and exemptions in respect to travel or residence, as may there be enjoyed by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nation."[23] The result of the Burlingame treaty was that the Chinese government eased up on the immigration restrictions that had been previously in place. The United States publicized the need for cheap labor to work in the trans-Mississippi West which resulted in sixty four thousand Chinese immigrants coming to America.[24] Many were recruited for the construction of the first transcontinental railroad; the Union Pacific-Central Pacific which was completed

[20] David L. Anderson, "The Diplomacy of Discrimination: Chinese Exclusion, 1876-1882", *California History*, Vol.57 No.1 9Spring, 1978), 32.
[21] The Treaty of Tientsin was an agreement between the United States and China signed on June 18, 1858 which promoted peace and commerce between the two countries. It observed the basic human rights between the two countries.
[22] The Burlingame Treaty, July 28, 1868, art. V, 16 Stat. 740 in Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 30.
[23] The Burlingame Treaty, art. VI, 16 Stat. 740 in Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 30.
[24] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 22.

in 1869. In addition, the Chinese made up the bulk of farm laborers who helped convert swamp areas into farmlands.[25]

The first Chinese immigrants to leave their homeland and come to America were already well suited to deal with the hardships that awaited them. They were used to hard labor where they worked the land and lived in poverty. They were familiar with extreme weather conditions and not having household items such as comfortable sleeping accommodations. Unsanitary conditions such as outside privies, floorless huts, and lack of baths were the norm in Chinese communities.[26] Having only encountered people of similar backgrounds prior to immigration acted as a disadvantage for the Chinese; they were unfamiliar with American social practices and the majority of the people could not speak English. Being members of the working poor class in their homeland meant they were not strangers to the violence and oppression that was often directed at the underprivileged. They were familiar with subordination to an upper class but realized it was necessary to remain civil since their economic well-being was dependent on mainstream society. If they were not tolerated in the economic sector it would most certainly be devastating to them financially.[27]

In the 1870s 123,000 more Chinese immigrants came to the United States.[28] As stated earlier, close to ninety percent of the Chinese immigrants lived in California, with one fourth living in San Francisco alone. The actual numbers of Chinese had more than quadrupled; in 1860 there were around 2,700 Chinese and in 1870 there were 12,000.[29]

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[25] Choy et al, *The Coming Man,* 19.
[26] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 24.
[27] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 45.
[28] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 22.
[29] Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America,* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 43.

They occupied a wider array of jobs during the 1870s. For example, they became active in urban industry manufacturing shirts, shoes, boots, and cigars.[30] The Chinese were definitely finding their niche in American society in the employment spectrum. They gravitated towards industries such as clothing and leather goods because these trades had been largely abandoned by Caucasian entrepreneurs. The commercial laundry trade had been introduced by the Chinese in the early days of the gold rush largely because it seemed no one else was interested in this line of work. In fact, as early as 1852 a San Francisco newspaper pointed out that commercial laundering was largely associated with the Chinese population.[31] The Chinese became such a visible force in this line of work that legislation aimed directly towards them began to surface during the 1870s.[32] By 1870 there were close to 2,600 Chinese laundrymen in California of which 1,300 were located in San Francisco.[33]

There was competition between the Chinese and other demographic groups such as African Americans and Mexicans in the job sector. Low paying jobs such as laying railroad track became the subject of rivalry among immigrant groups because job opportunities were limited. At times the competition for jobs turned violent. For example, in Calabasas in 1882, a group of Mexicans attacked a Chinese railroad camp. Assaults like this were successful in that employers decided that Chinese workers were a liability

[30] Choy et al, *The Coming Man,* 19.
[31] *Herald,* April 12, 1852, p. 2, col. 3.
[32] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 48. San Francisco proposed a laundry ordinance in 1873 that changed the existing laundry license in the city. The previous fees on laundries ranged from $2 to $15, depending on how many vehicles were used. The new proposal suggested that laundries which did not utilize horse-drawn vehicles should pay an even higher fee. The fact that the Chinese did not use horse-drawn vehicles signifies that this ordinance was aimed directly at them, especially since they made up the majority of workers in this trade.
[33] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 47.

and switching to Mexican, Indian, and white workers would produce a greater profit.[34] There was also tension between African Americans and the Chinese. The Chinese were perceived as being an obstacle to the black community's goal in achieving political equality because they outnumbered African Americans ten to one.[35] The fact that the Chinese were visible in larger numbers led the black community to believe their voices would be heard over theirs. Also, there was the fear that the Chinese children would be integrated into the white education system and African Americans would be left out. For this reason spokesmen for the black community denounced the Chinese as "a people with alien sentiments and as ones of no benefit to the country."[36] At times the Chinese became victims of violence at the hands of African Americans. On October 31, 1880 a fight broke out in a Denver tavern between two pool players; one white and one Chinese. A mob of whites, and a few African Americans, went into Chinatown and destroyed businesses, particularly laundry establishments since they were synonymous with Chinese culture. One Chinese resident, Song Lee, died after being dragged through the streets where he was beaten and kicked repeatedly.[37]

By 1880 the Chinese population in the continental United States was 105,000 which only accounted for two percent of the total population. This comparison was significantly higher when looking solely at California; here the Chinese made up ten percent of the total population.[38] As the 1880s progressed there were was an even greater influx of Chinese immigrants; at this time there were 132,000 people of Chinese descent living in the United States with ninety percent of them settling in the west coast states,

[34] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 48.
[35] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 30.
[36] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 30.
[37] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 33.
[38] Choy et al, *The Coming Man*, 19.

particularly California. [39] The Chinese now made up one fourth of all the mining workers, one sixth of all the farm workers, one half of all the garden workers, and one third of all the fisherman.[40] Also, the Chinese continued to dominate in the commercial laundering business, and would continue to do so throughout the nineteenth century.

It was a common belief that the Chinese who immigrated to America were of a lower class and they were looked down on by mainstream society. This mindset persisted despite the existence of some Chinese entrepreneurs who managed to carve out an existence by opening institutions needed in their communities such as funeral homes, drug stores, and mercantile establishments.[41] Those who did not own their own business contributed to the frontier economy indirectly by buying domestic and imported goods and paying property taxes.[42] From the beginning the Chinese were not seen as being American because they were different. In 1854 the California Supreme Court stated:

> [The Chinese are] a distinct people, living in our community, recognizing no laws of this State except through necessity, bringing with them their prejudices and national feuds, in which they indulge in open violation of law; whose mendacity is proverbial; a race of people whose nature has marked as inferior, and who are incapable of progress or intellectual development beyond a certain point, as their history has shown; differing in language, opinions, color, and physical conformation: between whom and ourselves nature has placed an impassable difference.[43]

Public perception did not change towards the latter part of the 19th century which can be seen from the following comment by the United States Supreme Court in 1889:

> The difference of race added greatly to the difficulties of the situation…They remained strangers in the land, residing apart by themselves, and adhering to the customs and usages of their own country. It seemed impossible for them to assimilate with our people or to make any change in their habits or modes of

[39] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 14.
[40] Chia-ling Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown,* 2.
[41] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 66.
[42] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 65.
[43] Lau, *Paper Families,* 41-42.

> living. As they grew in number each year the people of the coast saw…great danger that….our country would be overrun by them unless prompt action was taken to restrict immigration.[44]

There were negative connotations associated with being Chinese in America and this perception carried over into all aspects of society. They were seen as politically, economically, and culturally inferior to mainstream society and white Americans did not see them as equals; even the portion of society who were sympathetic to the Chinese.

The Chinese came to America seeking employment and found jobs in diverse sectors, but they did so as free individuals, contrary to what most Americans believed at the time. Most of the Chinese immigrants came to the United States via the credit ticket system which lasted from 1852-1882. For the most part the people entered the system voluntarily because it was a realistic, practical way to get to America. They received a credit ticket from a local entrepreneur, usually in the province of Kwangtung. Upon receiving the credit ticket the potential immigrant had to pledge to work until the *entrepreneur* lending the money had been reimbursed with interest. Usually the obligation was paid in full within just a few short months upon the immigrant's arrival into the United States.[45] The fact that the Chinese were often referred to as "*coolies,*"[46] which is a term that signifies an individual was of a slave or lower status, was definitely a misconception.

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[44] Lau, *Paper Families,* 42.
[45] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 13.
[46] The term *coolie* was often used to describe someone who hired to work in low-paid, unskilled jobs such as manual laborers, rickshaw-boys, and day laborers. Usually this term was designated for people living in China (prior to 1949), India, and other countries of eastern and southeastern Asia. The name was also used for unskilled workers who signed contracts to work in America, South Africa, and Australia. The workers included Chinese, Indians, Malays, and Negroes, who worked the hardest jobs on plantations and in mines. The institution of contracted coolies arose during the 1830's and 1840's, after the abolition of slavery in the British, Dutch, and French colonies. This practice continued to expand throughout the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Eventually the term coolie became synonymous was the word slave.

After the immigrants departed from their homeland, most often from Hong Kong or Canton, they faced a long voyage filled with many perils. The ones who were lucky enough to survive the horrid conditions aboard the America bound boats, such as poor ventilation, improper diets, and exposure to the elements, arrived on the West coast. It was estimated that mortality rates were as high as ten percent on the long voyage from China to America.[47] The San Franciscan port was the main destination and it was here that the immigrants were met by fellow countrymen who had made the journey before them. These people could be friends, relatives, or contractors who formed an association that developed during the 1850s as the Chinese began to arrive in the United States in larger numbers.

The association of friends, relatives, and contractors would eventually become the Chinese Six Companies when the six associations incorporated under the laws in California in 1901.[48] In English it was known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). The organization initially got its name because of the six districts from where most of the Chinese entering the United States originated. Later, a seventh district was added to the list. Ning Yung, Kong Chow, Shin Hing, Hop Wo, Yan Wu, Young Wo, and Sam Yup became the model of social organization that was patterned in other major cites in the United States such as New York. The Chinese congregated to sections of major cities that became known collectively as Chinatowns. The CCBA's main concern was the protection of the Chinese against unjust laws and practices and

[47] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 13.
[48] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 14.

maintaining social order and organization within Chinese districts.[49] They acted like an extended family for the immigrants who had left their natural families behind.

The Chinese valued family and kinship. In fact, their immediate family and their extended kin formed the basic economic unit in traditional China.[50] Thus, it was not surprising that the Chinese immigrants first formed a "fong"[51] upon their arrival. As the number of people in the fong increased they formed a larger family unit known as a "tsu."[52] The tsu was an ancestral association that performed sacrificial rituals, held conferences, and settled internal disputes. The Chinese who came to America wished to recreate the tsu organization from their village in China in their new home in the United States. For the most part the tsu functioned the same with one major exception. In China the tsu was much more powerful because it dominated politics on a local, state, and national level. In the United States the tsu was largely excluded from national politics but remained influential on the local and state level.[53] Representatives of the Chinese community were allowed to speak out on behalf of the Chinese people, but they were not directly involved in making decisions that affected mainstream society.

The type of social organization, known as voluntary associations, that existed in US Chinatowns developed in Southeast Asia during the 19th century. The combination of family, district associations, and secret societies existed in Chinese communities in the homeland for one main purpose. They acted as a means of expression for those who were not content with government policies, but did not have any political clout. The 19th

[49] Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown,* 20.
[50] Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown,* 20.
[51] The term fong signifies the smallest family unit.
[52] Tsu refers to a patrilineal association which includes all who are descended from a distant ancestor on the male side of the family.
[53] Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown,* 21.

century saw the end and eventual fall of the Ch'ing (Qing) dynasty in China which resulted in the decline of the existing political structure.[54] As a result, the voluntary associations developed as a form of self-government, particularly in areas where central government was no longer effective. The associations acted as a source of unity for the people who were now without a strong government regime following the decline of the Ch'ing dynasty. They acted as the voice of the common people who had been the target of unfair and unjust practices at the hands of the larger society. In addition, they helped maintain a level of desirable behavior within the Chinese community. Eventually, the individual associations consolidated and became a solitary structure that functioned very much like an inner government for the Chinese community, particularly after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the direct result of the renegotiation of the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, which had everything to do with the white American perception of Chinese immigrants. Despite the large number of immigrants white Americans still constituted ninety percent of the total population in just about every Western state and territory and they did not wish to relinquish their political and social superiority on the frontier.[55] The mainstream white population was able to deter minority groups from achieving equivalent economic success because they were the employers and business owners in society. The fact that they had all of the political power worked to their advantage because the Chinese did not have a voice in central governmental affairs. They were able to utilize weapons such as threats of dismissing a worker from their job

[54] Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown*, 17. The Ch'ing (Qing) dynasty ruled from 1644-1912. The collapse of the dynasty brought an end to over 2,000 years of imperial rule in China and ushered in an era of political and economic instability along with widespread civil disorder.
[55] De León, *Racial Frontiers*, 4.

and, on extreme occasions, violence to maintain their superiority. This escalated on several occasions and the Chinese became victims of mobs, riots, and lynchings at the hands of whites. For example, the Rock Springs Riot of 1885 in Wyoming.[56] The Tacoma Riot of 1885, the Seattle Riot of 1886,[57] and the Snake River Massacre in Oregon in 1887[58] all targeted the Chinese population. Although violence was not uncommon, it was not the only way mainstream society attempted to control the Chinese.

The fact that the majority of the Chinese worked for white employers after they arrived to America proved to be an obstacle for them. First, the wage scale was set by prominent white employers and was deliberately set low to insure the impoverishment of the workers.[59] Other factors such as the supply and demand of the marketplace and the degree of skill a worker had also contributed. Besides the aforementioned violence, whites also used other tactics to try to control minority groups; the threat of losing their jobs and paying back the debts they incurred at the company stores also acted as deterrents for the Chinese to question authority. In addition, white Americans represented the demographic majority in mainstream society and this acted as an obstacle for the

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[56] The Rock Springs Riot (also referred to as the Rock Springs Massacre) occurred on September 2, 1885, in the present-day American city of Rock Springs, Wyoming, located in Sweetwater County. The riot was the result of racial tensions and labor disputes between Chinese immigrant miners and white immigrant miners. The Union Pacific Coal Department opted to hire more Chinese miners at a lower wage which angered the white miners because they were being passed over for jobs. By the time the rioting had ended at least 28 Chinese miners were dead and an additional 15 were injured.

[57] The Tacoma Riot of 1885 occurred in the present day state of Washington. In October of 1885 angry protestors insisted that the Chinese be made to leave the area. In early November a large group of white rioters, lead by then Mayor Jacob Robert Weisbach, and backed by the Tacoma police department forced Chinese immigrants onto a train headed out of the city to Portland.
On February 7, 1886 an angry mob of white protestors, lead by Seattle's Knights of Labor rounded up the city's Chinese immigrants and forced them the port where ships were waiting to transport them away. Watson Squire, Washington's governor, along with the police department, attempted to stop the riot but to no avail. One person was killed and four others wounded when the Home Guards fired into the crowd to gain control. Eventually, with the assistance of the state militia and federal troops the riot was stopped.

[58] In 1887, in an area known as Hells Canyon located along the Snake River in Oregon, a group of white men attacked, murdered, and mutilated thirty one Chinese men. Although three men were brought to trial, nobody was ever convicted of the heinous crimes.

[59] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 53.

Chinese who did not want to merely accept the status quo. Often, they maintained a united front when vying for skilled and desirable positions in the workplace. In doing so, they sought to displace skilled or experienced minority workers.[60]

Not every member of mainstream society saw the Chinese as an ethnic group that should be subjected to discrimination, however. Those who employed the Chinese considered them to be diligent, quick learners, obedient, and willing to take on work that was considered menial and disagreeable.[61] Charles Crocker, a superintendent for Central Railroad said the following:

> [The Chinese] are equal to the best white men, We tested that in Summit tunnel, which is the very hardest granite. We had a shaft down in the center. We were cutting both ways from the bottom of that shaft. The company was in a very great hurry for that tunnel, as it was the key to the position across the mountains, and they urged me to get the very best Cornish miners and put them in the tunnel as to hurry it, and we did so. We went to Virginia City and got some Cornish miners out of those mines and paid them extra wages. We put them into one side of the shaft, the heading leading from one side, and we had Chinamen on the other side. We measured the work every Sunday morning; and the Chinamen without fail always outmeasured the Cornish miners; that is to say, they would cut more rock in a week than the Cornish miners did, and there it was hard work, steady pounding on the rock, bone-labor. The Chinese were skilled in using the hammer and drill; and they proved themselves equal to the very best Cornish miners in that work. They are very trusty, they are very intelligent, and they live up to their contracts.[62]

The Chinese themselves proved to be resourceful and adaptive to their new home. They were not afraid to call mass meetings to discuss issues they did not agree with, write petitions, mobilize the electorate around specific issues they found to be unfair, conduct voter drives, or campaign for political posts.[63] The Chinese believed they had every right as tax paying American citizens to utilize the judiciary system and took full advantage of

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[60] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 55.
[61] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 58
[62] Brett H. Melendy, *The Oriental Americans* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), 48.
[63] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 37.

that right. Thus when laws were passed that directly targeted them, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, they were quick to respond and retaliate. The Chinese began using the court system as a weapon against discrimination as early as 1852, just shortly after they began immigrating to the country.

At first, Chinese immigrants were not seen as a threat because their numbers were not large enough to be considered intimidating to the wider California population. After their numbers began to grow in the middle of the 19th century the perception of the Chinese changed. The Chinese were heavily concentrated in California's mining districts, such as those in San Francisco, and it did not take long for their presence to be considered a nuisance. The resentment felt by white Americans did not go unnoticed either. It was as early as 1852 that a San Franciscan newspaper reported that leaders of the Chinese community in California, fearful of the growing hostility between the Chinese and mainstream society, sent notification to China stating that further immigration was not wise.[64] There was tension between the two groups because of the rivalry for jobs. The Chinese were hired frequently because they were willing to work for lower wages. The general population perceived this to be a threat to their livelihood and acted accordingly. In April of 1852 there was a report issued by the Assembly Committee on Mines and Mining Interests declaring the Chinese to be "the evil threatening the well-being of the mining districts."[65] This was in response to the large number of people belonging to the Asiatic race who were employed by the mining district. John Bigler, a Democrat and the third Governor of California, reiterated this fear in a message he delivered to the legislature regarding the tribulations associated with Chinese immigration. Governor

[64] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 9.
[65] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 10.

Bigler suggested that it was necessary to curb Chinese immigration via two main avenues. First, he recommended that Congress enact a bill making contracts for coolie labor unenforceable.[66] Second, he deemed it vital that Congress ratify a state taxation program that would target the Chinese and discourage immigration.[67] Unfortunately, Governor Bigler was not alone in his anti-Chinese perceptions and beliefs. In fact, the first anti-Chinese laws were proposed in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Foreign Miners' License Tax[68] passed in May of 1852 was a revival of an 1850 law aimed specifically at immigrants. This law required anyone who was not a citizen to pay a monthly fee of $20.00 to work in California's mines. Ironically, the new law was worded in such a way as to insinuate that it was aimed to protect foreigners; "an Act to provide for the protection of foreigners and to define their liabilities and privileges."[69] The license fee was set at $3.00 per month and specified that the money collected be spilt equally between the state and the counties where the mines were located. Deputies were assigned to collect the tax and access to the courts was denied to anyone who did not have a license.[70] The main purpose of this tax was to target the Chinese who were already living in the United States even though it did not specifically single them out. Other legal means instigated by mainstream society, such as the commutation tax,[71] was meant to discourage Chinese immigration altogether.

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[66] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 11.
[67] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 11.
[68] The California legislature ratified a law in 1850 that targeted all foreigners, including Chinese. The law required that anyone who was not a native-born citizen of the United States, and had not taken the steps to become a citizen, to pay a fee of $20.00 a month for the privilege of working in California's mines. It was a response to Governor Bigler's statements regarding the large number of Chinese working in the mining districts.
[69] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 12.
[70] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 12.
[71] This act required that a list be prepared of all the passengers aboard a vessel. In addition, the owner of the vessel had to post a $500 bond for each of these passengers. The bond was figured by the payment of

As stated earlier, the Chinese were not afraid to utilize the court system if they felt they were being treated unfairly. They believed that since they were tax payers they had every right to utilize the United States democratic system.[72] One of the first acts to be challenged was the Foreign Miners' License Tax. In 1861 a Chinese laundryman from El Dorado County named Ah Pong was imprisoned for opting to not pay the tax. This was in response to the 1861 revision stating that all foreigners were required to pay the tax whether they were miners or not. Ah Pong was sentenced to work on the county roads until his "debt" was paid off, refused to do so, and was imprisoned for twenty days. The state supreme court decided that Ah Pong was wrongly imprisoned and was not liable to pay the tax just because he was living in a mining district.[73] Other challenges were soon to follow.

In 1863 a statute was passed which forbade any Chinese person from testifying against someone who was white.[74] Gradually, this extended to everyone. That is until 1865, during the People v. Awa hearing. The California Supreme Court reversed a manslaughter conviction on the grounds that a key eyewitness, who happened to be Chinese, was not allowed to testify.[75] The fact that the accused had not been white provided the loophole needed to overturn the case. Nevertheless, the supreme court decision opened up the possibility for Chinese testimony during court cases. Eventually, the validity of the statute itself was questioned under the equal protection clause of the

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$5 to $50 per passenger. Mentally ill or disabled passengers demanded a higher bond. This was added onto the original price of passage and immigrants ultimately felt the full weight of the tax.

[72] De León, *Racial Frontiers,* 41.

[73] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 25.

[74] The 1863 statute specified that the Chinese could not testify against anyone who was white. This eventually extended to all ethnicities. Justice Lorenzo Sawyer, an American lawyer and judge who was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1860 and served as Chief Justice from 1868-70, was the man who handed down the decision in the *People v Awa* case. He stated that the Chinese testimony should be heard because the opposing party in the case was not a white person.

[75] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 29.

Fourteenth Amendment.[76] In addition the Civil Rights Act of 1866 also declared that all American citizens had equal civil rights, regardless of race or color. In 1868, Judge R. R. Provines decided that the equal protection clause in the Fourteenth Amendment was broad enough to include the Chinese.[77] Thus, the decision handed down in *People v Washington*[78] favored the plaintiff, Ah Wang, who had been the victim of robbery. The sole witness was Chinese and Judge Provines stated that the testimony was admissible and relevant despite the man's ethnicity. This was a major breakthrough for the Chinese population. Opposition to current legislation and proposals for new legislation aimed at treating foreigners fairly was not always initiated by the Chinese.

In June of 1869 the House Ways and Means Committee, accompanied by Republican Senator Roscoe Conkling and ex-Senator Benjamin Wade, also a Republican, visited San Francisco.[79] Representatives of the Chinese community along with prominent white businessmen met with the visitors. It was during this meeting that Fung Tang, a Chinese merchant, spoke on behalf of the Chinese community. He expressed his concern that the Chinese were still waiting for the just and equal protection the Burlingame Treaty had guaranteed in 1868,[80] citing such laws as the commutation tax.[81] As luck would have

[76] Section I of the Fourteenth Amendment states; All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or the immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.
[77] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 34.
[78] In *People v Washington* the defendant, who was a mulatto, had been accused of robbery by Ah Wang. This was based on the testimony of a single witness who was Chinese. The testimony was thrown out because of witness' ethnicity. In 1868, the testimony was admissible after Judge R. R. Provines decided that the 1863 statute was not violated since the accused was not white. He also stated that equal protection clause in the Fourteenth Amendment was broad enough to include the Chinese.
[79] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 37.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

it Senator William Stewart of Nevada decided to endorse the plight of the Chinese and proposed a bill on the floor of Congress on May 20, 1870:

> We are inviting to our shores, or allowing them to come, Asiatics…For twenty years every obligation of humanity, of justice, and of common decency toward these people has been violated by a certain class of men—bad men…It is as solemn a duty as can be devolved upon the Congress to see that those people are protected, to see that they have the equal protection of the laws, notwithstanding that they are aliens…If the State courts do not give them the equal protection of the law, if public sentiment is so inhuman as to rob them of their ordinary civil rights, I say I would be less than a man if I did not insist…that this provision shall go on this bill…and that we will protect the Chinese aliens or any other aliens whom we allow to come here, and give them a hearing in our courts; let them sue and be sued, let them be protected by all the laws and the same laws that other men are.[82]

Senator Stewart made it clear that he was an advocate for equal rights for all United States citizens, including minorities such as the blacks and the Chinese. His proposal was enacted into law as Section 16 of the Civil Rights Act of 1870.[83] Unfortunately, not everyone felt the same way that Senator Stewart felt. In fact, the ratification of the Civil Rights Act of 1870 was met with opposition. State officials continually tried to extract the Foreign Miners' Tax from Chinese workers and Chinese testimony was still viewed as inadmissible. The Chinese simply refused to give in to such unfair demands; they demanded that their rights be recognized under Section 16. They continued to utilize the court system and continued to win small but substantial cases. For example, on December 10, 1870, a federal grand jury in San Francisco decided that the sheriff of Trinity County was in violation of Section 16 of the Civil Rights Act of 1870; he had tried to force a Chinese man named Ah Koo to pay the $4.00 because he was a miner.[84] Despite such small victories and the efforts of prominent men such as Senator Stewart there were many

[82] 41st Congress, second session, *Congressional Globe* (1869), p. 3658.
[83] Civil Rights Act of 1870 (The Enforcement Act), ch. 114, 16 Stat. 140 (1870).
[84] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 40-41.

who did not believe minorities should receive the same benefits and have the same rights as white Americans. The revision of the California Constitution provides an excellent example.

The original California Constitution had been adopted in 1849, largely in the aftermath of an influx of immigrants in response to the gold rush. Still, at this time, there were only close to 50,000 people and mining was the main industry that existed.[85] California had changed quite a bit during the following three decades so it was only natural that the existing state constitution needed to be updated to deal with the new industries in the state and the flood of immigrants. Coincidentally, the revision process began at a time when anti-Chinese sentiment was escalating and the anti-Chinese movement had reached its peak. One group in particular, the California Workingmen's Party, was quite active in the anti-Chinese movement and believed that the convention to amend the constitution was directly related to Chinese immigrants.[86]

The California Workingmen's Party was founded by a man named Dennis Kearney who had arrived in San Francisco from Ireland in 1868. Prior to 1877 he had not really shown much concern for the Chinese being present in the United States, but by 1877 he had taken on a leadership role in the anti-Chinese movement. He was known for his vibrant speeches and his endorsement of violence to rid the city of the Chinese if peaceful measures did not work.[87] The Chinese were undoubtedly troubled by Kearney's antics, especially the cries of "The Chinese must go!" reiterated repeatedly among his

[85] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 79.
[86] *Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of California* (Sacramento, 1880-81) 1:637.
[87] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 80.

supporters.[88] Although the California Workingmen's Party was one of the most prominent groups advocating anti-Chinese measures, they were by no means the only group doing so. Anti-Chinese sentiment was so visible that the United States government decided that something needed to be done to appease the masses. The result was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

In many ways the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was a reversal of the Burlingame Treaty, negotiated by American diplomat Anson Burlingame and Secretary of State William H. Seward. The treaty was passed in 1868 and was designed to offer the Chinese the freedom to immigrate to the United States. As discussed earlier, prior to the treaty, immigration to America was forbidden by the Chinese government, with strict penalties and repercussions for doing so. The main goal of the treaty was to improve diplomatic relations between the United States and China. The fifth and sixth articles of the Burlingame Treaty guaranteed free immigration and protection to the Chinese already living in America.[89] As the last quarter of the nineteenth century began it became clear that it would be difficult to uphold the treaty and satisfy the majority who supported the anti-Chinese movement. In 1876 the Tsungli Yamen, the Chinese foreign office, addressed this very issue with George Frederick Seward, an American minister living in China. Minister Seward did not recognize this as a problem at the time. Seward was somewhat caught in the middle between China and the United States. On one hand, he wanted to appease the majority of his countrymen who believed that exclusion was the only realistic option to curb the Chinese immigration problem. On the other hand, he knew that a national anti-Chinese law would threaten diplomatic relations between the

[88] Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p.65.
[89] Anderson, "The Diplomacy of Discrimination", 35.

United States and China if it were to be passed.[90] Seward's concerns went unheeded by the American government.

In January of 1879 the Fifteen Passenger Bill was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives. This bill limited the number of Chinese passengers who could be brought over by one vessel to just fifteen. This was clearly an attempt to try to curb Chinese immigration to the United States.[91] President Hayes vetoed the bill on the grounds that China wished to revise the Burlingame Treaty. James Angell, who was the former president of the University of Michigan, was sent by President Hayes to Peking as the new American minister plenipotentiary to negotiate a modification of the treaty.[92] The result of Angell's visit to Peking was a new treaty signed on November 17, 1880. Under the new treaty The United States reserved the right "to suspend for a reasonable period of time, but not absolutely to prohibit, the coming of Chinese laborers into the United States."[93] As of July 19, 1881 the new treaty was recognized and enforced and Congress quickly sought to discuss provisions regarding the issue of immigration. The first set of provisions sent to President Chester Arthur in March of 1882 asked for the suspension of Chinese immigration for twenty years and demanded the creation of an internal passport system as a method for differentiating between Chinese laborers who were entitled to live in America and those who were not.[94] President Arthur vetoed the initial set of provisions but realized he needed to agree to something to appease the restless Congress. Thus, on May 6, 1882, President Arthur signed the revised bill into law. Under the new treaty the

[90] Anderson, "The Diplomacy of Discrimination," 35.
[91] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 147.
[92] Anderson, "The Diplomacy of Discrimination," 39.
[93] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 148.
[94] Ibid.

period of suspension for Chinese immigration was reduced from twenty to ten years and the passport restriction was eliminated.

Although Chinese immigration had now been halted, there were still white Americans who were not happy. Sinophobic newspapers such as the *Evening Post* were quick to point out that the new treaty did not solve the problem of the Chinese who were already living in the United States. In addition, the paper established that the treaty "will not prevent the Chinese from washing our soiled linen, manipulating our cigars, manufacturing our shoes, making our clothes, baking our bread, cultivating our fields and gardens, or grading our railways."[95] The paper suggested that quality white workers were needed to replace the Chinese in all of the job sectors, including those jobs occupied by Chinese servants. The Chinese refused to merely accept the conditions of the new treaty and challenged the new law in federal courts.[96]

Most of the court cases tended to fall into three major classes. The first group of cases stemmed from pleas of former residence prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many of the plaintiffs were able to prove they had indeed been a resident of the United States prior to the signing of the law. The second group were the Chinese who claimed they had the right to be in America based on documents provided by the Chinese government attesting to their merchant status. The law prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States but did not target Chinese merchants, mainly because they did

[95] *Evening Post,* April 22, 1882, p. 4, columns 1-2

[96] Following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 the Chinese brought many cases before the district and circuit courts in California. One example is the case involving Chin Ah On, who was a Chinese merchant claiming he had a valid certificate issued by the Chinese government, and therefore had every right to be in the United States. Another example is the case of Low Yam Chow, another Chinese merchant, who also claimed he should be permitted to reside in the United States. The court eventually ruled that Low Yam Chow was authorized to be in America. In addition, the courts ruled that Chinese merchants were not the target group for the Exclusion Act, it was the laborers. Thus, merchants should be permitted into the United States regardless if they had a certificate or not. Cases such as Chin Ah On and Low Yam Chow were commonplace following the ratification of the Exclusion Act.

not resemble as much of a threat due to them occupying unwanted niches in the merchant economy such as in the clothing, laundry, and leather industries. The third group were the children of Chinese merchants who claimed they had every right to be in the United States since their parents were not excluded under the new law. Following the months after the new law was passed there were so many cases flooding the district and circuit courts that it was difficult to handle the judiciary duties.[97]

The United States government decided to take another look at the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to rectify all of the loopholes. In July of 1884 President Arthur signed into law a series of amendments passed in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. In particular Section 4 of the 1882 act was altered so that a laborer's certificate must show the individual, family, and tribal name of the laborer in addition to when and where he had pursued his profession.[98] More weight was placed on the certificate because now it was the only thing that could be entered as evidence as to a laborer's right to re-enter America. Certificates now became more important to non laborers such as merchants, in order to gain entry or re-entry into the United States. Just like certificates issued to laborers, the same rules now applied to non-laborers; the certificate was the single most important documentation that verified a person's eligibility in the United States. The main exception for non-laborers was that peddlers and fisherman were now excluded from merchant status and the United States now reserved the right to refute any certificate they chose.[99]

In addition to the 1884 amendments to the Exclusion Act of 1882 there was other anti-Chinese legislation geared towards excluding the Chinese. The wave of violence

[97] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 158.
[98] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 159.
[99] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 160.

aimed at the Chinese from during the latter 1880s, such as the Rock Springs Massacre in 1885, helped convince the Chinese government that the United States was not a safe, hospitable environment for Chinese immigrants. The United States government, urged on by the anti-Chinese movement, used this in their favor. Congressman William Scott of Pennsylvania, who was also the chairman of the Democratic National Campaign Committee, introduced a bill that expanded on the 1882 Exclusion Act. The result was the Scott Act, signed by President Cleveland in October of 1888, which prohibited the immigration of all Chinese workers to the United States.[100] This act made it illegal for a Chinese person to visit their homeland and return to America. There were cases that came before the court but the Scott Act left little room to maneuver on behalf of the Chinese, especially the laborers.[101] Another law would soon follow that was perhaps even more discriminatory toward the Chinese.

The Geary Act, issued in 1892, took Chinese exclusion to a whole new level. The Geary Act was named after one of its chief sponsors, Thomas J. Geary, who was a congressman in California. The Act prohibited Chinese immigration for another ten years.[102]Also, every Chinese laborer already residing in the United States must apply for a certificate of residence within one year of the ratification of the act, thus creating an internal passport system. If after a year a laborer did not have a certificate they would be arrested and deported unless proper documentation could be verified. The Chinese

[100] Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown*, 3.
[101] In the case Chae Chan Ping v. United States in 1888, Judge Lorenzo Sawyer decided that Chae Chan Ping, who was a Chinese laborer wishing to return to the United States, must return to China, thus upholding the Scott Act. Chinese merchants faired a little bit better, however, under the Scott Act. In the case of Lau Bew v. United States, Chief Justice Fuller decided that Lau Bew, a Chinese merchant, was to be discharged from custody because he was able to provide the proper documentation. Fuller was upholding the 1884 Amendment which stated that every Chinese person, other than a laborer, was entitled to enter the united States with the proper certificate issued by the Chinese government.
[102] Kuo, *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown*, 3.

arrested were not allowed bail and the crime was punishable by an entire year of hard labor.[103] The Chinese and sympathetic white Americans were appalled at the blatant discrimination of the Geary Act and acted quickly.

On September 9, 1892 the Chinese Six Companies issued a proclamation criticizing the Geary Act:

> The Geary Act is an unjust law and no Chinese should obey it. The law degrades the Chinese and if obeyed will put them lower than the meanest of people. It is a cruel law. It is a bad law. Read it and see how cruel the law is to our people. See how mean and contemptible it wants to make the Chinese. We do not want the Chinese to obey it. In making the law the United States has violated the treaties. They have disregarded our rights and paid no attention to their promises, and made a new law to suit themselves, no matter how unjust to us. No Chinese can read this law without a feeling of disgust. Many whites say the law is not right. Let us stand together. We hope all will work with us and then we can and will break this infamous law.[104]

In addition to the proclamation the Chinese Six Companies wanted to raise $100,000 in order to hire the best eastern lawyers they could to represent the Chinese community against the Geary Act.[105] Also, on September 22, the Chinese Equal Rights League, a newly formed organization, organized a mass meeting at the Cooper Union to speak out against the new law. Over 100,000 people, including Chinese and whites alike, showed up in support of the new organization and its agenda.[106] In addition to mass protests the Chinese again flooded the court systems with case after case. At first their efforts were somewhat futile but towards the end of the nineteenth century there were two victories which held a degree of significance.[107] The Chinese had been proactive throughout the

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[103] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 202-203.
[104] *Morning Call*, September 20, 1892, p. 8, columns 1-2.
[105] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 205.
[106] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 206.
[107] In 1896, the Supreme Court decided in the *Wong Wing v. United States* case that the clause in the Geary Act pertaining to punishment by hard labor was unconstitutional. People who were exposed to such punishment were entitled under the Fifth and Sixth Amendments to a jury trial. Also, in 1898 during the

anti-Chinese movement in the United States, despite the wave of laws aimed specifically at them during the 19th century.

Although there were a variety of reasons why the Chinese immigrated to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a common thread connecting the people; they all wanted a better life for themselves and their families. At first, white Americans were receptive to the Chinese entering the country, largely because they were willing to fill menial jobs nobody else wanted for cheap wages, but, this mindset did not last long. The Chinese were seen as a threat to not only white workers, but also to black and Mexican workers, because they were hired by employers more frequently due to their willingness to work for lower wages. In addition, the Chinese proved themselves to be quite adaptable in the employment spectrum because they filled vacancies that were not desirable to others such as the laundering business. Nevertheless, the hospitality originally extended to the Chinese did not last and it did not take long for anti-Chinese attitudes to become prevalent in American culture.

Laws that specifically targeted minority groups, including the Chinese, were commonplace during the nineteenth century. The earliest laws, such as the Foreign Miners' License Tax in 1852, required that all foreigners pay a tax to be able to work in the mine. This affected the Chinese most because they were the ethnic group that had the largest number of people employed in the mines. With the escalation of the anti-Chinese movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century, there was also a tendency for laws to be more precise and detailed; leaving absolutely no uncertainty as to whom the legislation was aimed. Later laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the

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Wong Kim Ark v. United States case, the Supreme Court rendered the decision that under the Fourteenth Amendment a person who was born in the United States was indeed a citizen.

amendment to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1884, the Scott Act in 1888, and the Geary Act in 1892, all encompassed not only the laborers but also other sectors of the Chinese population. They were designed to prohibit Chinese immigration to the United States and deliberately targeted the Chinese as a race. Despite mainstream society's blatant attempts to discriminate against the Chinese, they refused to play the role of victim and continued to utilize the court system.

Throughout the anti-Chinese movement in the nineteenth century the Chinese remained proactive and refused to accept the laws that were ratified. They utilized the federal court system because they felt it was their right as tax payers in America to be granted the rights outlined in the Constitution. Every attempt to further discriminate against the Chinese was met with a flood of cases. They were not always successful but they repudiated the alternative which was to go along with the discriminatory practices. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) acted as the voice of the Chinese people when they were targeted and treated unfairly. The CCBA demanded that the Chinese people be heard in court because that is what the Chinese community expected and commanded of them. With every discriminatory piece of legislature that was passed the Chinese and the CCBA continued to fight back. This persevering attitude was crucial in helping the Chinese retain their cultural identity while assimilating to American culture at the same time. Throughout the nineteenth century the Chinese population was aided by the CCBA but this was not the case in the twentieth century. The power and the prestige of the CCBA began to wane significantly towards the end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Chinese people no longer saw the organization as being beneficial; largely because they suspected the

CCBA of catering to only the wealthiest members of the Chinese community. This did not deter the Chinese in their pursuit for equality and fairness, however. Their persistence in demanding equality certainly proved useful with the arrival of the bubonic plague in San Francisco in 1900.

Chapter 2: The Origins of the Bubonic Plague During the Third Pandemic

It is relevant to examine the early stages of the third pandemic and trace the diffusion of the plague bacillus from the Yunnan province in China to other continents. The fact that the plague was believed to have its origins in China aided the perception that it was an Asiatic disease. The negative attitudes directed toward the Chinese when the plague arrived in San Francisco stemmed from two things. First, the relationship that existed between Chinese Americans and mainstream society in California was strained from the mid 19th century onward. Second, the disease was believed to have originated in China so it was not a stretch to place the blame on the Chinese living in San Francisco's Chinatown for the spread of the disease in the city.

The bubonic plague has a long recorded history and has reached pandemic proportions on three separate occasions.[1] The first two have been studied extensively because of the high mortality rates that accompanied them and the social and economic consequences that followed.[2] The mortality rate during the third pandemic did not reach the magnitude it did during the first two, but it was significant for other reasons. By the end of the third pandemic the disease had managed to infiltrate every continent except Antarctica, largely due to more efficient and extensive transportation routes. Transportation methods such as the steamship helped make the world more interconnected by significantly reducing travel time. The third pandemic was believed to

[1] Although the first two plague outbreaks did not technically reach every continent, they are still considered to be pandemics due to the extensive and devastating effects that they caused.

[2] For more information on the first pandemic see William Rosen, *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire, and the Birth of Europe* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), Lester K. Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977). For more information on the second pandemic see G.G. Coulton, M.A., *The Black Death* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1929), Geoffrey Marks, *The Medieval Plague: The Black Death in the Middle Ages* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), William M. Bowsky, ed., *The Black Death: A Turning Point in History* (Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1971).

have originated in the Yunnan province in China, located in the Southwestern part of the country; an area that was thought to have been endemic[3] for the disease since the 1770s. The disease spread from the Western frontier in Yunnan to more populated regions in the eastern part of China, particularly Canton and Hong Kong. The plague then spread beyond China's borders, resulting in new permanent reservoir areas, one of which was the Western United States.

Although the bubonic plague has reached pandemic status on three separate counts, there was speculation of earlier occurrences of the disease. Manetho, an Egyptian historian who lived at the beginning of the third century, B.C., described a disease resembling the plague during the reign of most of the Egyptian kings.[4] The disease also occurred in Athens from 429-431 B.C.E. and was noted by prominent scholars of the time such as Hippocrates and Thucydides. It was estimated that one third of the population in Athens was decimated by the disease.[5] Africa was another location where the disease was also prevalent, with references made by Rufus of Ephesus to its existence in Libya in the third century B.C.E. Here the disease was said to have killed a million people.[6]

The first recorded pandemic was the Plague of Justinian which infiltrated the Eastern Roman Empire between 541 and 542 A.D.[7] There were eighteen outbreaks of the plague from 541-750 A.D., which was an average of one outbreak every 11.6 years.[8] It

[3] The term endemic refers to a disease existing permanently in a population but not causing many deaths.
[4] Walter Wyman, "The Black Plague," *The North American Review,* Vol. 164, No. 485 (April, 1897), 441.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Myron Echenberg, "Pestis Redux: The Initial Years of the Third Bubonic Plague Pandemic, 1894-1901," *Journal of World History* 13 no 2 (Fall, 2002): 430.
[8] Lester K. Little, editor. *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105.

was estimated that 25,000,000 people died during the first recorded pandemic.[9] From the Byzantine sources that were found, historians have determined that the plague bacillus more than likely came from Egypt and North Africa, then moved to Syria, Mesopotamia, Iraq, India, and China.[10] All of these areas showed a similar characteristic in that their climate was suitable for the plague bacillus. Not much was known about the disease at this time so people merely speculated as to what caused it. Many believed it was the sign of the apocalypse and a punishment for sin. These beliefs carried over to the mindset of the next pandemic around six hundred years later.

The second pandemic was known as "The Black Death" and occurred during the fourteenth century. It has been argued that the second pandemic began in China and famines that occurred in 1333, 1334, 1337-42, and 1345-47 were cited as the primary cause of its spread.[11] It began in Western Asia and spread to the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. The first European region to be affected was the Port of Caffa on the Black Sea in 1346. From here it moved to Constantinople via trade routes and then quickly infiltrated Europe beginning in 1347; moving into Spain, France, England, Scandinavia, Germany, and Poland. The number of fatalities was estimated at between one quarter and one third of the total population of Europe, or twenty million to twenty five million people, during the fourteenth century alone.[12] The plague continued to claim

[9] William Rosen, *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire, and the Birth of Europe*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 3.
[10] Little, *Plague and the End of Antiquity*, 104.
[11] G. G. Coulton, *The Black Death*, (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1929), 8. Other scholars also cite famine as one of the causes for the spread of the plague, for example, Geoffrey Marks, *The Medieval Plague: The Black Death and the Middle Ages*, (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc, 1971), 41-43.
[12] Echenberg, "Pestis Redux," 430. The death toll slightly varies from source to source, for example, Michel Drancourt and Didier Raoult, "Molecular Insights into the History of the Plague," *Microbes and Infection* 4 (2002), 105-106 states that the number of fatalities were between 17 and 28 million, which was between 30-40% of the population at the time.

lives from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, but did not reach pandemic proportions again until the latter part of the nineteenth century.[13]

The third pandemic originated in the Southwestern region of China in the wild rodent reservoir[14] in the late eighteenth century, probably in the 1770s. It is argued that from the Yunnan Province in China the plague began to spread to more densely populated areas in the center and southeastern regions of the province between 1772-1830.[15] Over the remainder of the nineteenth century the plague continued to spread throughout China; through Guangxi and Western Guangdong in the 1860s and 1870s, the Pearl River Delta in the 1890s, and finally across the Taiwan Strait to Fujian, Taiwan, parts of Zhejiang, and coastal cities such as Shanghai and Yingkou.[16] Historians refer to the year 1894 as the beginning of the third pandemic because this is when the plague began to spread outside of China's borders. From Hong Kong and Canton it spread throughout Asia, Africa, Western Europe, Hawaii, and South America in 1899, then Australia in late 1899, early 1900, and continental American soil in 1900.[17] The outbreak

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[13] Wyman, "The Black Plague," 442-443. Throughout the fifteenth century the plague occurred frequently. In fact, the first quarantine establishment was founded during this time in relation to the plague. Throughout the sixteenth century the plague epidemics continued to claim lives. Particularly worth noting are the 50,000 fatalities at Lyons in 1572, and the 70,000 fatalities at Venice in 1576. In the seventeenth century the plague persisted in Europe. Naples recorded a horrific epidemic in 1656 where it was estimated that 300,000 died within a five month time span. Another epidemic worth mentioning is the great plague of London which occurred from 1664 to 1665. Here the fatalities totaled 68,596 which was fifteen percent of the population. The eighteenth century again saw repeated plague epidemics in various locations throughout Europe. In Marseilles between 40,000 to 60,000 died, in Sicily in 1743 between 40,000 and 50,000 died, and in 1771 the plague reached Russia, killing approximately 50,000 people or one fourth of the total population. During the nineteenth century the plague receded slightly in the East with sporadic epidemics; Greece in 1828, and Egypt off and on from 1833-1845. After 1850 the bubonic plague fluctuated between the East and the West, occupying countries such as China, India, Russia and Afghanistan.

[14] Wild rodent reservoir refers to the natural habitat of rodents such as rats, ground squirrels, marmots, prairie dogs, and mice. All of these animals are instrumental in the spread of the plague.

[15] Carol Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1.

[16] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 2.

[17] U.S. Public Health Service, Division of Sanitary Reports and Statistics, Brock C. Hampton, *Plague in the United States,* (Washington D.C.: Public Health Reports, Vol. 55, No 26, June 28, 1940), 1143.

of the plague during the late nineteenth, early twentieth century was truly a pandemic because it literally affected every continent.

In order for the plague bacillus, *Yersinia pestis,* to exist and thrive in an area there first needs to be a natural plague reservoir or sylvatic plague foci region. In other words, the bacillus needs to be enzootic among the wild rodent population. Basically, enzootic refers to the plague existing within a rodent community but not causing many deaths. Occasionally, the rodents die off in large numbers, and when their deaths can be attributed to the plague, it is called an epizootic. Plague epizootics can have extremely high mortality rates among wild rodents. For example, prairie dogs are highly susceptible to the plague and can experience deaths anywhere from 85-100%.[18] These results were obtained from a field study that was done during the summers of 2003-04 in the Thunder basin National Grassland area of Wyoming. Ninety five percent of the black-tailed prairie dogs died.[19] Another interesting find from the field study was that half of the survivors developed antibodies to *Yersinia pestis* which indicates that immune response, not plague avoidance, was the primary reason for the animal's survival. Epizootics are considered to be serious because they can lead to epidemics in humans if they are not contained. The disease tends to be transmitted to humans during this time because the fleas are looking for new hosts. Epidemics occur in smaller, isolated areas while pandemics affect the human population on a world wide scale.[20] In order for the plague to reach pandemic

[18] Jonathon Pauli, Steven W. Bushkirk, Elizabeth S, Williams, and William H. Edwards, "A Plague Epizootic in the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*)," *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 42, no 3 (2006): 74.
[19] Pauli et al, "Plague Epizootic in the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog," 78.
[20] William T. Hubbert, William F. McCulloch, and Paul R. Schnurrenberger, *Diseases Transmitted from Animals to Man,* (Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1975), 156.

proportions there needs to be a large enough wild rodent population to act as both primary and secondary hosts, both of which were abundant in China.

The two most common hosts for transfer of the bubonic plague to humans in history are the black rat (*Rattus rattus*), and the common brown rat, also known as the Norwegian rat, (*Rattus norvegicus*). These two species are found just about everywhere in the world and are mostly concentrated throughout coastal cities. For this reason the plague in China needed another animal, a primary host, to penetrate the interior of the country and widen its foci area. The wild rodent population proved to be reliable hosts for the plague because they lived in areas where rats did not. The rodents that are considered to be primary hosts for the plague in China are Daurian ground squirrels (*Citellus dauricus*), located on the Manchurian Plain, , the Oriental vole (*Eothrnomys miletus*) and the field mouse (*Apodemus chevrieri*), both living in the Western Yunnan Transverse Valley, which is about 230 square miles in the Hengduan Mountains of Southwest China, and the yellow chested rat (*Rattus flavipectus*), found in an area called the Southern China commensal rat plague focus region, which encompasses areas of the Yunnan Transverse Valley, Leizhou Peninsula, and Southern Fuji.[21] Only a few individual rodents die off every season because they tend to be highly resistant to the plague bacillus. The rest of the animals carry the infected fleas with them, thus making the plague enzootic. As mentioned earlier occasionally epizootics do occur, and when they do the importance of secondary hosts becomes clear. Due to the high mortality rates of the primary hosts during an epizootic, secondary hosts are needed to sustain the plague during this time.

[21] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 6-7.

Rodents such as marmots, prairie dogs, gerbils, mice, voles and shrews have also been identified as reservoirs for the plague bacillus.[22] They are considered to be secondary hosts because they tend to be more localized and do not inhabit large geographic areas. They are dependent on primary hosts and not able to sustain the plague bacillus independently for long periods of time. Often the animals are not as communal based and do not live in densely populated burrows. In addition, the wider range of distribution and reduced amount of contact among the species makes it more difficult for the plague to migrate to new areas. Their importance becomes crucial when the primary hosts' numbers drop dramatically during plague epizootics because they help sustain *Yersinia pestis* in the enzootic form. Although China had an abundance of wild rodents, which made it an excellent focus area for the plague, it also had ideal climatic conditions which also proved to be necessary to sustain the plague.

The reason why enzootic reservoirs existed in China has everything to do with the climate. The average yearly temperature in the aforementioned reservoir areas is 14.5 degrees Celsius which is approximately 58 degrees Fahrenheit.[23] In addition, the relative humidity is 68.2 percent and the annual precipitation is 810.6 centimeters which makes China's climate extremely hospitable to the plague bacillus and its vectors.[24] The mild climate allows the plague to exist all year but, generally speaking, the plague season is identified as beginning in June and July. More cases tend to be reported during late summer and early fall, usually August and September, because this is when the plague reaches it zenith. October is the month that the number of cases drops dramatically.[25] The

[22] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 4.
[23] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 20.
[24] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 21.
[25] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 22.

climatic conditions were favorable in China for the disease to be endemic but other factors helped the disease spread to the country in the first place.

Areas that had been previously isolated from one another now had contact due to increased interregional and intraregional trade. Anytime new groups of people come into contact with each other there is also the introduction of new diseases, which can have devastating results for previously unexposed populations.[26] In his book, *Plagues and Peoples*, William McNeill used the terms "macroparasitism" and "microparasitism"[27] to explain the spread of germs and disease from one place to another. The balance between microbe and host is ever-changing in the face of natural disasters and war and equilibrium must exist on the micro and macro level.[28] For example, when the Mongol empire was at the height of its power between 1279-1350, movement across Asia via the caravan routes also increased. The Mongols were credited with establishing a web of communication that stretched from Karakorum to Kazan and Astrakhan on the Volga, to Caffa in the Crimea, to Khanbaliq in China as well as the areas that were found in between.[29] Not only did the caravan routes bring new groups of people together, they also brought wild rodents into contact with diseases such as the plague. Over time the disease became enzootic among the wild rodent population, largely due to their communal

[26] Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press,1972) provides an excellent example of how new diseases being introduced into an area can have devastating results. In this work the smallpox epidemic that claimed over ninety percent of the American Indian population after Columbus "discovered" the New World is detailed.
[27] Microparasitism refers to the tiny organisms such as viruses, bacteria, or multi-celled organisms that find their food source with humans or animals. Three outcomes result from this contact; either the organism is killed by antibodies in the host, the parasite kills the host, or both the host and the microbe live and the host becomes a carrier. Macroparasitism refers to any event that brings new groups of people together for the first time.
[28] William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples,* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 25-26.
[29] McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples,* 163.

nature. Their burrows provided the perfect environment for the plague bacillus to survive the severe climatic conditions that existed in Siberia and Manchuria.[30]

So far, it has been established that China had the necessary conditions to sustain the plague; climatic conditions were favorable, a substantial wild rodent population existed that provided primary and secondary hosts, and early caravan routes brought the rodents in contact with the plague bacillus. There was another important factor that was responsible for the spread of the disease in China. There were economic changes in the country that promoted demographic growth and stimulated the movement of people to and from areas that previously had little contact with one another. During the eighteenth century there was an economic transformation in the Yunnan province due to the increased interest in copper mining. In 1705 the government began regulating the copper mining industry. Old mines were revived and new mines were opened which increased copper production in the region. After 1723 the copper industry began to take off which promoted the flow of people from the interior to the Southwestern region of the country. In fact, between 1750 and 1800 approximately 300,000 miners from areas such as Sichuan, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangdong, Hubei, and Shaanxi migrated to the Yunnan province in search of work.[31] The Yunnan province was transformed from being a rural hinterland to an area of urban towns as the population continued to increase. In 1775 the registered population in Yunnan was slightly over three million and the annual rate of population growth was around seven per thousand.[32] This number continued to rise

[30] McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples,* 163. McNeill argues that in all probability the plague was enzootic among the wild rodent population in the Himalayan borderlands between China and India. He contends that the rodent population, the infected fleas, and the plague bacillus made up a complex community that allowed the disease to thrive.
[31] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 25.
[32] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 26.

throughout the eighteenth century, escalating to twenty per thousand by 1795.[33] In the early nineteenth century population growth subsided somewhat, but by this time the large influx of people had already altered the rural landscape that was prevalent prior to the reinvention of the copper mining industry.

As the population grew in the Yunnan province there was also an increase in interregional and intraregional trade. Caravan trade routes emerged that linked the province with provinces to the east such as Guizhou, Guangxi, and Tonkin (Vietnam), to the north in Sichuan, and to the northwest in Burma.[34] Even though trade routes increased, intraregional and interregional trade was still somewhat limited and slow due to the rough topography of the Yunnan province. This is why rivers were so vital to trade because they helped speed up travel time. In fact, two of the major routes which led from the Southeastern region of Yunnan to Canton were navigable waterways; the first followed the Yuan River, which flows through Vietnam into the Tonkin Gulf, the second followed the You River which passed through Guangxi into Guangdong.[35] China was fortunate to have products to export such as salt, copper ore, and Pu'er tea that were in demand and commanded a price that was well worth the long distance travel.[36]

The influx of people to and from the Yunnan province—due to commodities that were in demand—also brought disease to the area. The first recorded epidemic in China was in 1772 and outbreaks continued to occur until the late 1790s, but they were more or less confined to the western region of the Yunnan province. The decline of the plague in the late eighteenth century was directly related to the economic shift the region was

[33] Ibid, 26.
[34] Carol Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 27, Map 4.
[35] James Lee, "State and Economy in Southwest China, 1250-1850," 94, 335.
[36] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 28-29.

experiencing. By 1760 the copper mines were depleted but productivity remained high until the late 1780s due to massive state subsidies.[37] Copper mining was halted by the end of the eighteenth century due to increased price and reduced demand of the once viable resource.[38] Population growth also slowed down because not as many people were moving to the area in search of jobs in the copper mines. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the disease began to spread beyond this region, however. The trade caravans were responsible for aiding the transport of rats and fleas between the eastern and western regions of the Yunnan province. Epidemics were recorded in Baiyanjing and Yaozhou in 1801, Chuxiong, Kunming, and Yiliang in 1803, Xinxing in 1804, Qujing and Anning in 1805, and Zhanyi and Yuanjiang in 1806.[39] Roads that lead to Jianshui also permitted the spread of the plague into the southern portion of China.[40] The plague was prevalent in China at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A witness account in the *Suiyangxian zhi,* the county gazetteer of Suiyang, states that during the 1811 epidemic in Shiping, Those seen in the morning were dead by evening…in the space of one or two days, several people in the same family were all dead."[41] Epidemics were recorded in the following areas throughout the Yunnan province during the early nineteenth century; Yongbei, Yaozhou, and Mengzi in 1816, Zhanyi in 1819, Jingdong, Yuanjiang, and Songming in 1820, Qujing in 1823, 1825-26, Yunlong, Heyang Dengchuan, and Langqiong in 1825, Xundian and Mengzi in 1827, Anning in 1828, and Heyang in

[37] Lee, "State and Economy in Southwest China," 279-82.
[38] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 34. As copper became harder to find the price increased. As a result the demand for copper diminished because people were not willing to pay the escalated prices for something they had been able to previously get much cheaper.
[39] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 27, Map 7.
[40] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 32.
[41] *Suiyangxian zhi,* (Gazetteer of Shiping County) 1938, 34: 18b-19b. Quoted in Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 33.

1830.[42] A map of the Yunnan province for this time period reveals that all of these localities were connected via caravan trade routes. Also, after 1825 there is a decline in recorded epidemics. In fact, between 1844-52 there were only four recorded epidemics in Yunnan; Chuxiong in 1844-45, Menghua in1846-47, Dali in 1851, and Heyang in 1852.[43]

The drop off in recorded epidemics during this time span can not be attributed to one reason alone. The depletion of the copper mines did in fact play a part because not as many people were moving in and out of the area. Population growth also slowed to an average annual rate lower that the national average of seven per thousand despite the recorded rate of increase between 1775 and 1825.[44] The effects of the waning copper industry and the declining population growth acted together after 1825 to help slow the progression of the plague throughout Yunnan. This would be a temporary setback however, because from 1854 onwards the plague would prove its resilience by not only increasing its foci area in China, but also reaching pandemic proportions once again. There were economic and demographic changes in Yunnan during this time that attributed to the spread of the disease.

It is important when tracing the connection between the bubonic plague and Chinese immigration into America to remember that economics played a key role in the Chinese coming to the United States. During the early part of the nineteenth century opium was slowly becoming more important to Yunnan's economic prosperity. It was not until after the copper industry had suffered a huge blow and the mineral had ceased to be a major export that opium became a major cash crop. After 1840 opium gained importance and became the export that was responsible for the economic prosperity of

[42] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 27, Map 9.
[43] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 27, Map 10.
[44] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 35.

Yunnan.[45] Originally, opium was grown in the mountains of the Yunnan for medicinal purposes during the Tang dynasty.[46] The British East India Company[47] created a larger market for the drug in China after they introduced opium from Malwa, a region in Punjab and parts of Haryana between the Sutlej and Yamuna **ri**vers in India and Patna, the current capital of the Indian state of Bihar.[48] It was more expensive for the British to import opium into China which made the drug unobtainable to most of the population. Also, the opium imported from Malwa and Patna were of a lower quality than the opium cultivated in the mountains of Yunnan. Thus, it became popular to grow the drug on a larger scale in China, especially after the demand for the crop increased beyond the Yunnan province.

There were not many traders who were willing to transport opium due to the dangerous terrain and long travel distance from the mountains in Yunnan to the interior and back. There were many transportation routes that were utilized by the traders. For example the city of Kunming, located in the eastern portion of the Yunnan province, was connected to cities such as Luoping, Mengzi, Guangnan, Wenshan, and Pingxiang via overland trade routes.[49] Navigable waterways were an even bigger asset because they helped link eastern Yunnan to cities in other provinces, thus increasing interregional trade. For example, the Red River connected Yunnan to Tonkin in Southern China, the

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Jonathan Spence, "Opium Smoking in Ch'ing China," in Frederick Wakeman Jr. and Carolyn Grant eds., *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China,* 143-73 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 151.
[47] The British East India Company was an English company formed with the purpose of exploiting trade with East Asia, Southeast Asia, and India. The company was present in India from the early 18th century until the mid 19th century and in China during the 19th century. The British became involved in illegal opium trading in China after it was introduced by merchants in British India into China in retaliation for China's prohibition laws. The First Opium War, which lasted from 1839-1842, and the Second Opium War, which lasted from 1856-1860, were in response to the illegal opium trafficking on behalf of the British. The Chinese lost both wars and opium became a major commodity in China.
[48] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 51.
[49] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 54, Map 14.

You River connected Yunnan to the province of Guangdong located in Southeastern China, and rivers such as the Yu, Xun, and the Xi also helped spread the opium trade further east.[50] The Gulf of Tonkin was utilized to continue the trade route from the city of Haiphong in the Tonkin province to Canton[51] in the Guangdong province.[52]

All of the routes between Canton and Yunnan were extremely long and difficult to navigate. The journey from the Xilin terminus of the You River to Canton was approximately 830 miles along a treacherous waterway filled with rocks, sandbars, and rapids.[53] In addition, waterway transportation was often hindered by torential currents during the rainy summer season. As a result, there were not many merchants willing to take the risk in transporting opium. One thing in the merchants' favor was the high selling price of opium and the increased demand for it east of Yunnan. Although this helped thwart the high transportation costs associated with the opium trade, the danger in the long distance travel was not lessened. A traveler named Archibald Colquhoun was witness to the opium trade along the West River system from Guangxi[54] to Yunnan in 1882 and his testimony offered proof to this. The opium trade was "in the hands of a small number of adventurous trading spirits, who face the dangers and the fatigues of the journey from Canton to Yunnan undauntedly for the sake of the heavy profit made."[55] Although the opium cultivated in Yunnan was transported to locations nearby in the east such as Mengzi, Luoping, and Guangnan at first, gradually it began to transported to

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Canton is the capital of the province of Guangdong. In traditional English documents Canton is also referred to as Guangzhou.
[52] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 54, Map 14.
[53] Inspectorate General, *Decennial Reports*, 1882-91, 647 in Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 54.
[54] Guangxi is located in southwest China between Guangdong, Guizhou, Hunan, and Yunnan provinces. It shares a border with Vietnam in the southwest and the Gulf of Tonkin makes up the southern border.
[55] Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chryse: Volume I*, London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1883, 148. in Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 55.

provinces along the coast such as Guangdong and Tonkin. Opium acted as a stimulus that encouraged interregional movement from the mountainous Yunnan region where it was grown to the interior and coastal regions. Evidence in the form of witness accounts and travel reports has suggested that the opium trade started taking off around 1840.[56] As a result, there was more traffic along the roads and waterways that connected the Yunnan province to the coast, especially the West River and its tributaries in the Pearl River Delta area in Guangdong.[57]

The increase in the opium trade was not the only thing that helped increase the spread of the bubonic plague in China; the Muslim Rebellion[58] that lasted from 1856-1873 also played a major role. It began as a local argument in 1854 between Han and Muslim miners in the Chuxiong prefecture and escalated into large-scale violence on May 19, 1856 with over one thousand Muslims being massacred in Kunming.[59] The Muslims established a separate government under Du Wenxiu, leader of the Panthay Rebellion,[60] in the western portion of Yunnan in Dali. There was also a second rebel force led by Ma Rulong, a Chinese muslim, [61] that pressured Qing forces in Central and Eastern Yunnan. In 1862 Ma Rulong allied his troops with the Qing government which brought a short-lived period of peace that lasted from 1862-68.[62] After this brief period of nonviolence Ma Rulong and the Qing troops forced the Muslims to surrender. It was

[56] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 55.
[57] Ibid.
[58] The Muslim Rebellion is also known as the Panthay Rebellion or the Du Wenxiu Rebellion.
[59] Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ungchih Restoration, 1862-1874,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 113-17.
[60] Du Wenxiu (1823-1872) was born in Yongchen and was the leader of the Panthay Rebellion, also known as the Du Wenxiu Rebellion or Muslim Rebellion, during the Qing dynasty. After his suicide he was beheaded by Qing troops.
[61] Ma Rulong was a Chinese muslim who rebelled against the Qing dynasty along with Du Wenxiu. Later, he and his rebel forces surrendered to Qing troops and helped defeat Du Wenxiu and his muslim rebels. Afterwards, he was known as the most powerful military officer in the Yunnan province.
[62] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China,* 39.

during this period from 1868-72 that there was a lot of movement of troops between Kunming and Dali due to continuous warfare.[63] The rebellion finally ended in 1873 when Dali was captured and Du Wenxiu committed suicide.

The Muslim Rebellion was important for two reasons. First, population growth was drastically reduced. The recorded population in Yunnan prior to the onset of the Rebellion in 1830 was 6,553,108.[64] The province experienced a period of growth up until the middle of the nineteenth century, following the upsurge in commercial traffic with the opium trade. By 1850 the recorded the recorded population was 7,375,503 but this number plummetted to 2,982,664 by 1884.[65] A number of factors directly and indirectly related to the Rebellion were responsible for the demographic change. Besides mortalities from actual warfare, famine, emigration and epidemic disease also claimed lives. "Three in ten died in the war, one in ten died from epidemics, and one or two in ten fled. Only four or five out of ten are left."[66] The same trend can be said about the Taiping Rebellion, a civil war in Southern China which began in 1848 and ended in 1864. Most of the 20,000,000 deaths were not linked to the fighting, but rather to disease and infection

Although there were other diseases present during and after the Muslim Rebellion and the Taiping Rebellion such as typhus, dysentery, and cholera, there is historical evidence to suggest that bubonic plague was perhaps the most prevalent. Several provincial gazetteer accounts describe the reemergence of a disease that had appeared in the early nineteenth century.[67] Other witnesses gave a similar description. For example,

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] *Menghua xianxiang tuzhi*, (Gazetteer of Menghua county), Guangxu edition, population section, in Carol Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 39.
[67] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 40.

an 1867-68 French expedition in the Yunnan led by Doudart de Lagrée described a large number of dead rats that were found in an opium den.[68] In addition, the description of lumps found in lymph nodes in the armpit and groin offer further proof that it was the bubonic plague. The following testimony by William Gill, a traveler passing from Dali to Burma confirms the suspicion of plague:

> "The main road…passes through the plain of Fu-Piau [Pupiao] which had been entirely depopulated by an extraordinary disease, of which symptoms were like those of the plague and which had, during the months of August and September, carried off upwards of a thousand people. Our informant added that there was no one left except a few poverty stricken wretches, who could not afford to move. A traveller who was stopping at the same inn with us at Yung-Ch'ang [Yongchang], and who left with us for T'eng-Yueh [Tengyue], said that he had passed through the place in July; that at that time there were scarcely any inhabitants left, and that the dead bodies were lying about unburied. Now he said that the disease had ceased at that place, and had moved in a more southernly direction to Niu-wa where it was raging. In describing the symptoms, the people said that a lump like a boil…suddenly appeared on almost any part of the body. In twenty four hours, [the victim] died."[69]

Gill's testimony also supports historical evidence that the plague was present in Western Yunnan before moving southward. Evidence also suggests that the plague was present in Western Yunnan prior to the nineteenth century. A young poet named Shi Daonan (1765-92), a native of Zhauzhou county described the scene in eighteenth century Yunnan in his poem "Death of Rats:"

Dead rats in the east,
Dead rats in the west!
As if they were tigers,
Indeed are the people scared.
A few days following the death of rats,
Men pass away like falling walls!
Deaths in one day are numberless,
The hazy sun is covered by sombre clouds.
While three men are walking together,

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[68] Ibid.
[69] William R. E. Gill, *The River of Golden Sand: Being the Narrative of a Journey Through China and Eastern Tibet to Burma,* (London: John Murray, 1883), 272.

Two drop dead within ten steps!
People die in the night,
Nobody dares weep over the dead!
The coming of the demon of pestilence
Suddenly makes the lamp dim,
Then it is blown out,
Leaving man, ghost, and corpse in the dark room.
The crows crow incessantly,
The dogs howl bitterly!
Man and ghost are as one,
While the spirit is taken for a human being!
The land is filled with human bones,
There in the fields are crops,
To be reaped by none;
And the officials collect no tax!
I hope to ride on a fairy dragon
To see the God and Goddess in Heaven,
Begging them to spread heavenly milk,
And make the dead come to life again.[70]

Shi Daonan's poem discussed one of the main elements that historians look for when determining the presence of bubonic plague; a large number of dead rats followed by human mortalities. The poem suggested that the plague was endemic and enzootic in China at this time which led to epidemics and epizootics.[71] This was written well before the cause of the disease was known.

The disease itself was not fully understood in 18th century in China. The existence of diseases was blamed on things the Chinese believed to be beyond their control. For example, epidemics were thought to be triggered by the emperor's transgressions against the will of Heaven.[72] By blaming the misconduct of the emperor

[70] Shi Daonan, (1765-92), "Death of Rats" cited and translated in Carol Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 23. This poem is part of longer one entitled "Tian yu ji," mentioned by Hong Lianji in his collected works (1877-79).
[71] Endemic is defined as a disease being restricted or peculiar to a specific area. Enzootic refers to a disease being prevalent in a rodent community, but not causing many deaths. Epizootic is defined as a disease causing a large number of deaths among a rodent community.
[72] For more on the belief that the Emperor was responsible for epidemics and natural catastrophes see Lawrence I. Conrad and Dominick Wujuastyk, *Contagion: Perspectives from Pre-Modern Societies*, (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2000).

for the existence of disease, the people were able to make sense of what was going on around them and transfer any guilt they may have had for their own indiscretions. In addition, many blamed demons and gods and hung talismans in their portals to offset infection.[73] Again, the blame was placed on something that was beyond the control of the general population. It is important to note that although the idea of disease and contagion could not be fully explained in 18th century China, the people believed infections could be transferred from person to person. They believed the origins of a disease fell into three categories. The first was internal, which was brought on by emotions such as anger, grief, shock, love or fear. The second was external, which was brought on by the wind, cold, heat, dryness, or dampness. The third was all other sources that were neither internal or external such as overeating, starvation, sexual dissipation, parasites, tigers, demons, and broken limbs.[74]

Early writings also suggested that disease and infection could transferred from person to person. For example, two authors of 12th century medical writings, Cao Zhi and Chen Yan, argued that the two factors that were most likely to cause disease were extreme weather conditions and emotions. According to the Chinese, there were two major categories into which they placed diseases. The first was cold damage disorders (*shanghan*) which can be traced back to the theories of Zhang Ji's (Zhang Zhongjing, 196-220 C.E.) *Shanghan Iun* (Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders)[75] Cold damage disorders were based on climatic configurations; wind, cold, heat, moisture, dryness, and fire, which did not cause harm if they occurred in a seasonal manner. If the regular order of the seasons was altered or climatic conditions were extreme then it was possible for

[73] Conrad and Wujuastyk, *Contagion*, 3.
[74] Conrad and Wujuastyk, *Contagion*, 4.
[75] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 103.

disease to enter through a person's pores and work its way inward.[76] The second, warm damage disorders (*wenbing*), stemmed from the theories of Wu Youxing, who wrote *Wenyi Iun* (Treatise on Warm Factor Epidemics) in 1642.[77] This theory did not center around extreme climatic changes. Instead there were a number of things that could cause disease and they could be present during any season. They could enter the body through any opening, thus the mouth, nose, and pores could all be avenues for transmission. The fact that warm damage disorders were associated with many people becoming sick at the same time linked them to contagious disease moreso than cold damage disorder.

The Chinese did not have a definitive word for contagion but it was clear that there was a sense of contracting a disease if one was exposed. For example, Zhang Jiepin (1563-1640) traced epidemics to fiery exhalations that could infect entire households and villages.[78] Breathing in noxiuos miasmas from the deceased or the sick could be avoided by simply plugging one's nostrils with sesame oil and cinnabar according to Li Ting's *Introduction to Medicine* (*Yixue rumen,* 1575).[79] It was believed that a person became sick via contaminated air that emanated from the ground and the bodies of the dead. Although there was little mention of disease transmission in medical literature in China, the idea that disease was transferred from the sick to the healthy was not disputed. Early writings offered evidence that the Chinese did believe diseases were passed on in this way.

The fact that the Chinese did believe in the idea of the diffusion of disease made it easier to explain the progression of the plague bacillus. As stated earlier it was believed

[76] Conrad and Wujuastyk, *Contagion*, 6.
[77] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 104.
[78] Conrad, *Contagion*, 8.
[79] Ibid.

that the plague was endemic in Western Yunnan before it began to spread into other regions. From 1854-96 there were epidemics recorded in many cities in Western Yunnan; Menghua in 1854, 1861, 1864-67, and 1890, Lijiang in 1856-67, and 1890, Yongbei in 1858, 1873, 1881, and 1889-94 and Heqing from 1879-88 to name a few.[80] Other areas in Yunnan were also affected about the same time which does show the diffusion of the plague. For example, in Western-Central Yunnan from 1854-86 cities such as Baiyanjing in 1854, 1856, 1862, 1872-74, and 1876-86, Chuxiong in 1854 and 1856-83, Guangtong from 1871-73 all recorded epidemics.[81] Southwestern Yunnan also recorded epidemics from 1860-90; Ning'er in 1860, 1862, 1871, and 1874, Talang in 1861, 1865, and 1871, Jingdong from 1876-77, and Xinping in 1890.[82] Eastern-Central Yunnan recorded epidemics from 1856-76 in cities such as Chenggong from 1856-74, Xinxing, and Kunyang from 1871-73, and Kunming in 1863, 1865, and 1871-76.[83] In addition, Northeastern Yunnan listed cities such as Luquan in 1863-64, Luxi, Lu'nan, and Nanning in 1871-72, and Luliang in 1871-72 and 1897-98 as having epidemics present.[84] Lastly, Southeastern Yunnan recorded epidemics from 1871-93 in Shiping in 1871,

[80] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 41, Table 6.
[81] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 42, Table 7 taken from the map folder of Emile Rocher, *La province Chinoise du Yunnan*, 2 volumes, Paris: Lerous, 1879.
[82] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 44, Table 8 taken from the map folder of Emile Rocher, *La province Chinoise du Yunnan*, 2 volumes, Paris: Lerous, 1879.
[83] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 44, Table 9 taken from the map folder of Emile Rocher, *La province Chinoise du Yunnan*, 2 volumes, Paris: Lerous, 1879.
[84] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 46, Table 10 taken from the map folder of Emile Rocher, *La province Chinoise du Yunnan*, 2 volumes, Paris: Lerous, 1879.

Mengzi in 1872-93, and Qiubei in 1872-73 and 1876-78.[85] The maps show a clear progression of the plague across the province of Yunnan from 1854-98. From Yunnan the plague diffused into other provinces due to the migration of people via trade routes.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the bubonic plague began to appear in other provinces such as Guangxi and Guangdong via the Yunnan-Lingnan trade route. From 1867-1904 the plague began moving southward into cities such as Beihal in 1867, Zhanjiang in 1879, and Wuchuan in 1890.[86] Also cities located on Hainan Island also experienced the plague; Danxian in 1882, Lin'gao in 1900, and Chengmai in 1904.[87] What is important to note is that during the latter half of the nineteenth century the plague was not only progressing southward but also toward coastal cities. The Xiamen regional city trading system helped spread the plague even further between coastal cities such as Zhangpu, Haicheng, Xiamen, Nan'an and Huian and cities located in the interior such as Zhangping, Yongchu, Longyan, and Hua'an from 1884-98.[88] The Fuzhou regional city trading system had a similar effect between coastal cities such as Fuzhou, Luoyuan, and Xiapu and interior cities such as Gutian, Zhoudun, and Yongfu from 1888-1932.[89] The plague tended to diffuse somewhat slower across overland routes due to physiographic boundaries while the plague progressed quicker along maritime routes because the barriers were significantly reduced and ecological conditions were more favorable.[90]

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[85] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 47, Table 11 taken from the map folder of Emile Rocher, *La province Chinoise du Yunnan*, 2 volumes, Paris: Lerous, 1879.
[86] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 67, Map 18.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 67, Map 24.
[89] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 89, Map 25, Table 17.
[90] Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, 97.

The plague which had been endemic in Western Yunnan prior to the nineteenth century had now increased its foci area to include all of Yunnan and other provinces such as Guangxi and Guangdong. It was a gradual process that was quite complex that happened as regions were brought into contact with each other. Early caravan routes utilized to move people and goods from one region to another also helped diffuse the plague. There was not just a singular means of diffusion, however. Overland routes such as the Yunnan-Lingnan trade system used to transport opium were often physiographically dangerous and cumbersome. Although this meant there were not many participating in the actual movement of goods, the point worth making here is that there was still movement. Navigable waterways removed many obstacles that hindered overland travel and was substantially quicker, often cutting travel time in half. The Xiamen and Fuzhou trading systems helped spread the plague throughout the southern coastal cities in China rather quickly because they were maritime transportaion systems. Trade routes were important but there was more to the diffusion of the plague besides the transportation of the *Yersinia pestis* from one area to another.

Plague diffusion, as shown, was rather complicated and often involved more than one process that overlapped with other factors. For example, it would not have mattered if the plague bacillus was transported to a region if ecological conditions were not favorable to sustain it. Thus, climatic conditions needed to be within the bacillus' biological limitations in order to ensure its survival. Climatic conditions also needed to compliment the needs of the primary and secondary hosts as well. Economic transformations such as the development of the copper mining industry and the opium trade helped increase the movement of people to and from new areas. Catastrophic events

such as the Muslim Rebellion also helped perpetuate the movement of people. It was the movement of people and the plague bacillus along with favorable ecological conditions that helped the plague spread as it did. Plague diffusion was not a haphazard process that could not be explained, nor was it something that could be explicated easily. It was multifaceted which would prove to be a benefit to *Yersina pestis.* Many factors determined its spread which meant that many factors would need to be addressed to control the disease as well. The plague reached pandemic proportions at the end of the nineteenth century, largely due to the fact that efforts to eradicate the disease had failed. The bubonic plague generated fear within a population because there was a lot that was not known about it at the end of the nineteenth century. It was under these circumstances that *Yersina pestis* first encountered continental American soil in San Francsico's Chinatown in 1900.

Chapter 3: The 1900-08 Bubonic Plague Epidemics in San Francisco

The third pandemic surfaced at the end of the nineteenth century in 1894 and originated in China; particularly Canton and Hong Kong. The plague emerged from the wild rodent reservoir in the Himalayan Borderlands between China and India around 1855 and was transported quickly by British steamships throughout the empire.[1] Within a few years the plague spread throughout most of Asia; it reached India in 1896, Vietnam in 1898, and Japan in 1899. By 1900 the international global trading network helped spread the plague as far as Hawaii and San Francisco. Unlike the first two pandemics which caused vast death tolls wherever the plague struck, the number of deaths varied greatly with the third pandemic. By 1950 15,000,000 deaths were attributed to the plague with the majority in densely populated areas in India, China, and Indonesia.[2] In other areas the death toll was substantially lower; Europe recorded 7,000 deaths between 1899 and 1950, Central and South America documented approximately 30,000 during the same time span, and the United States attributed close to 500 deaths in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Arizona, and New Mexico combined.[3] The unbalanced number of deaths was uncharacteristic for the bubonic plague given the devastation of the first two pandemics in virtually every area the plague encountered. Overall, the number of deaths was considerably lower during the third pandemic. The fact that it occurred around the same time as the acceptance of the germ theory and the advancement of new sciences such as microbiology and bacteriology was not coincidental. William McNeill has credited control of the plague by international teams of doctors as "one of the most

[1] Myron Echenberg, "Pestis Redux: The Initial Years of the Third Bubonic Plague Pandemic, 1894-1901," *Journal of World History* 13 no 2 (Fall, 2002): 431.
[2] Echenberg, "Pestis Redux," 432.
[3] Ibid.

dramatic triumphs of modern medicine."[4] Thus the significance of the third pandemic was not astronomical death tolls, but rather the global impact it had.

The third pandemic was significant because of the vast geographical scope that it covered. Unlike the previous two bubonic plague outbreaks, it was a pandemic in every sense of the word; it affected countries world wide. According to Myron Echenberg there are three main reasons to study the third pandemic despite its low death tolls and somewhat rapid containment.[5] First, it had key environmental consequences. When it began, the natural foci areas for the plague were in the Himalayan foothills of Central Asia and the steppe region in Mongolia, located in Northeast Asia. By 1950 the plague bacillus, *Yersinia pestis,* had acquired additional foci reservoirs on every continent of the globe, including the Western half of the United States. In fact, forty percent of the continental United States has a thriving population of *Yersinia pestis* living among burrowing wild rodents.[6] The infected area starts at the Pacific Ocean and continues to Kansas, Texas, and parts of Canada and Mexico.[7] The significance of the plague increasing its foci region was this; it meant that as the plague moved towards the interior from coastal regions, more animals were being affected by the plague bacillus.

Second, the third pandemic provided historians with a myriad of examples to study urban social history on a global scale. Although it was true that each of the areas was characterized by unique cultural differences, they shared the same basic features of urbanization at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cities such as Hong Kong,

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[4] William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976). 134.
[5] Echenberg, "Pestis Redux," 433.
[6] Charles T. Gregg, *Plague! The Shocking Story of a Dread Disease in America Today* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 2.
[7] Charles T. Gregg, *Plague: An Ancient Disease in the Twentieth Century* (Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press, 1985), Figure 1, 2.

Bombay, Alexandria, and San Francisco had all been altered by industrialization, the expansion of world trade, and immigration, including the overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions associated with migrants. It also provided an opportunity to analyze existing trends on a macro and micro level. For example, the third pandemic helped showcase anti-Chinese sentiment that had existed in the United States since the nineteenth century, which will be the main focus of this chapter.

Third, the most recent pandemic occurred at the same time as the bio-medical revolution which coincided with a more modern, scientific approach to disease and medicine.[8] There was simply a better understanding of the disease than there had been during the Plague of Justinian and The Black Death. Conflicts between scientists and politicians were characteristic of this time period. Scientists felt it was their duty to battle diseases on a global scale because they now had information available to them that could help prevent the spread of infection. Municipal, state and national authorities often were more willing to look the other way and ignore preventive measures, especially if they felt the measures would inhibit economic growth in their respective cities, states, or countries. The two epidemics that occurred in San Francisco from 1900-1908 will be the focus of this chapter because it falls into each of Echenberg's three criteria; the environmental landscape was transformed; global and local social patterns and tensions were highlighted; and there was a strained relationship between public health and government officials and Chinese Americans.

First, the plague is an extremely contagious disease that can be found in three different forms. The first kind, and the most common, is the bubonic plague. It is characterized by large, painful swellings called buboes in the lymphatic glands located on

[8] Echenberg, "Pestis Redux," 433.

the groin or armpits. The bubonic form of the plague kills sixty to seventy percent of cases left untreated within two to six days.[9] The second form, known as the pneumonic form, attacks the lungs and causes rapid breathing and expectoration of blood. This form is highly contagious because it can be spread directly between humans through droplets in the air coughed up by those who are infected. Untreated, the pneumonic form is one hundred percent fatal.[10] The third form is the septicemic form. The plague bacillus invades the victim's bloodstream and multiplies rapidly causing disorientation and unconsciousness immediately. Like the pneumonic form, left untreated the septicemic form is also one hundred percent fatal.[11] Except for the pneumonic form the bubonic plague is dependent on the presence of the microbe, the flea, and a substantial rodent population. In order for humans to generally come into contact with the plague certain criteria must be met first.

There were three criteria that each of the three pandemics had in common which enabled the plague bacillus to be transferred to humans. First was the presence of a permanent reservoir where the microbe, *Yersinia pestis*, the flea, usually the rat flea *Xenopsylla cheopis*, and a non-susceptible rodent population cohabitated together. Next, a highly susceptible population of rodents that habitually commuted in between the reservoir and the human population needed to come in contact with the non-susceptible population. Finally, the new rodent hosts needed to die in large numbers and be close enough to human communities so that their plague-infected fleas would abandon their

[9] Philip A. Kalisch, "The Black Death in Chinatown: Plague and Politics in San Francisco, 1900-1904" *Arizona and the West* Vol. 14 no 2 (Summer, 1972), 114.
[10] Kalisch, "The Black Death in Chinatown," 114.
[11] Ibid.

lifeless bodies in search of human hosts to feed.[12] Thus, humans are not necessarily part of the life cycle of the plague, only accidental victims. This pattern was also seen in nineteenth century China when the plague bacillus spread from the western part of the Yunnan province to other provinces located in the east, south and north. It was not any different in 1900 when the plague arrived on continental American soil.

It was ironically during the Chinese Year of the Rat in 1900 that the bubonic plague arrived on continental American soil aboard the Japanese steamship *Nippon Maru*. It was March 6, 1900 that the first human case of plague was recorded in the United States in San Francisco.[13] The body of a forty one year old Chinese man named Chick Gin,[14] who worked as a lumber salesman and had been a resident for sixteen years, was found in the basement of a flophouse at 1001 Dupont Street located in Chinatown.[15] An assistant physician, Dr. Frank P. Wilson, became suspicious after viewing the body and informed , San Francisco's chief health officer, A. P. O'Brien.[16] O'Brien then made a call to Wilfred H. Kellogg, the city bacteriologist, and told him he suspected plague was the cause of death. Kellogg also suspected plague as the cause of death because of the appearance of the body. He took samples from the swollen lymph glands to Dr. Joseph J. Kinyoun, the chief quarantine officer and the director of laboratory hygiene and infectious disease within the U.S. Marine Hospital Service. Kinyoun and Kellogg inoculated a guinea pig, a rat, and a monkey with the substance found in the lymph nodes

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[12] Echenberg, "Pestis Redux," 434.
[13] Marilyn Chase, *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco* (New York: Random House, 2003), 16.
[14] The Chinese victim's name has also been listed as Wing Chung Ging in public health reports. See Chase, *The Barbary Plague,* 16 and Shah, *Contagious Divides,* 120. Newspapers have used the name Chick Gin. See *San Francisco Examinier,* March 7, 1900 and *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 8, 1900
[15] Kalisch, "The Black Death in Chinatown," 113.
[16] Susan Craddock, *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 127.

of Chick Gin. Nothing was confirmed right away, which led to San Francisco's Board of Health being ridiculed. There were jokes that referred to the city's board of health as the "bubonic board of health" and Kinyoun was branded a fraud.[17] Newspapers targeted Kinyoun and printed poems designed to mock his credibility:

> Have you heard of the deadly bacillus,
> Scourge of a populous land,
> Bacillus that threaten to kill us,
> When found in a Chinaman's gland?
>
> Well the monkey is living and thriving,
> The guinea pigs seem to be well,
> And the Health Board is vainly contriving,
> Excuses for having raised the deuce.[18]

The ridicule aimed at Kinyoun was short-lived, however. The initial suspicion of plague that was shared by Kellogg and Kinyoun was confirmed a few days later. On March 11 the guinea pig and rat died and the monkey's death soon followed. The post-mortem appearance of the animals resembled the plague, and cultures from the animals showed the plague bacillus, *Yersinia pestis,* was present.[19] The presence of bubonic plague had been confirmed in San Francisco and the city was about to experience an epidemic that it was not prepared to battle.

Even before the existence of plague was confirmed by the deaths of the laboratory animals, the city of San Francisco imposed a quarantine on Chinatown. This decision was made by city health officials, at the insistence of Dr. A.P. O'Brien, the night of March 6, 1900, shortly after the death of Chick Gin. The quarantine was focused on the Chinese and conspicuously excluded the white residents and business owners in Chinatown.

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[17] Chase, *The Barbary Plague,* 29.
[18] *San Francisco Bulletin,* reprinted in Chase, *The Barbary Plague,* 29 and Gregg, *Plague*: *An Ancient Disease,* 40-41.
[19] *San Francisco Bulletin,* March 9, 1900.

During the early morning hours on March 7, thirty two police officers were sent to Chinatown with the instructions to remove all of the white people from the infected area, cordon it entirely, and allow no one except white police officers to leave, and no one at all to enter the infected area.[20] Thus, by noon on March 7 Chinatown was officially sealed off from the rest of the city.[21]

Although the idea of a quarantine[22] was not a novel one, the nature of the quarantine imposed on San Francisco's Chinatown was rather uncharacteristic for two reasons. First, the quarantine was to be enforced around the entire area of Chinatown. Usually, a quarantine centered around an individual ship, home, or a rather small area that was suspected of harboring an infectious disease. Second, a quarantine was customarily enforced following the outbreak of a disease where several people were infected. In the case of Chinatown on March 6, 1900, there had been only one solitary case; and that had not even been proven to date.[23] The San Franciscan decision to quarantine Chinatown was somewhat unusual, but not entirely so if one looks a bit deeper. Mainstream society's negative perception of the Chinese were directly reflected in the decision to quarantine the area.

The prevailing attitude towards the Chinese and their living quarters was rather negative. The district was known as being overcrowded and filthy; as being the hub of

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[20] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and race in San Francisco's Chinatown,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 120.
[21] *Examiner,* March 7, 1900, p.4, col.1.
[22] The term quarantine was derived from *quarantenaria*, which means forty days. Quarantine was the first line of defense against infectious disease. Although there is some speculation as to what the exact date of utilizing quarantine procedures was, most historians agree that the idea of a quarantine was a Venetian practice that first occurred in the coastal Italian city states during the fourteenth century. For more on this subject please refer to Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the 'Immigrant Menace,"* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 24-30 and George Rosen, *a History of Public Health,* (New York: MD Publications, 1958), 63-69.
[23] Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 236.

dread diseases of all sorts.[24] Thus, it was not really a surprise that bubonic plague could exist in Chinatown. Public health officials felt they were acting on the best interests of the city to quickly contain the area so that the disease could not spread further. The *San Francisco Chronicle,* the city's leading Republican daily newspaper, reported that "no greater calamity can befall a city than the visitation of plague. Even the suspicion of one is sufficient to terrify the community, paralyze commerce, turn away strangers, and prevent even the visits of neighbors and friends."[25] Naturally, the Chinese opposed the quarantine because it directly affected them financially. A Chinese newspaper called *Chung Sai Yat Po* was quick to publish articles under headings such as "Blockade is a Violation of the Law" stating that "According to the epidemic prevention laws a yellow flag should be planted in front of an epidemic-inflicted house, or the house should be encircled by tapes to warn people off. But never have we heard of blocking an entire town."[26] It was not just the Chinese community who were angered by the quarantine, however. White businesspeople, politicians, physicians, newspaper editors, and people who employed the Chinese were also against the quarantine. In fact, on the morning the Health Department announced the quarantine, the following was printed in the *San Francisco Chronicle:*

> The white employers of the Chinese awoke to find that there was nobody on hand to prepare the breakfast. The chef at the Palace Hotel waited in vain for the dozen or more Chinese under his order to appear, and a similar state of affairs developed in nearly every place where Chinese were employed. The central telephone in Chinatown was kept busy for hours making connections for angry citizens who were trying to get a trace of missing servants. Chinese stores were open, only to be closed again when proprietors learned that trouble of an unknown character had befallen the place. Chinese by the score braved the anger of the police officers and tried to make their way outside and though some of them

[24] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 236.
[25] *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 8, 1900, p.6, col.4 in McClain, *In Search of Equality, 237.*
[26] *Chung Sai Yat Po,* March 8, 1900 in McClain, *In Search of Equality, 237.*

were showed back abruptly, others would journey to the ropes, only to receive like treatment.[27]

Employers were upset that their businesses were not functioning due to the absence of their employees. The *San Francisco Examiner* printed the following poem which describes how the quarantine directly affected the housework industry; a job sector that employed many Chinese:

Scorn not the humble Chinaman
Throw not his uses down
For, as I live, we miss him when
He stays in Chinatown
When happy Yip and Yello Sin
Quit the domestic scene
We have to do his work ourselves
And damn the quarantine

So ere's to you, yellow Hop Sing Fong
We're sorry that you're took
You're a poor benighted 'eathen, but
A first-class fancy cook
They say your deeds are bloody and
Your morals are unclean
But goodness how we miss you
When you're held in quarantine.[28]

The poem demonstrates a few key points. First, white employers consider the work done by the Chinese to be of a subservient level. They were upset over the quarantine, not because the Chinese had been singled out and made to be the scapegoats during the epidemic, but because the quarantine directly affected their business. Second, the perception of the Chinatown as being unclean, as being a place that was considered to be separate from the rest of the city, was revealed also. Third, in the second stanza, the negative perception of the Chinese people themselves was clearly shown. Chinese

[27] *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 8, 1900 in Howard Markel, *When Germs Travel: Six Major Epidemics That Have Invaded America Since 1900 and the Fears They Have Unleashed,* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 47.
[28] *San Francisco Examiner,* March 9, 1900, p.6, col.4.

principles were being questioned by describing them as having unclean morals and committing acts deemed unacceptable.

The general consensus regarding the quarantine in the Caucasian community was not one of unanimous approval; there were sympathetic members of mainstream society who argued on behalf of the Chinese. One thing that was agreed upon was this; Chinatown was seen as having filthy, overcrowded conditions which is why the quarantine was approved. After all, it was best that city officials be seen on the side of over vigilance given the serious nature of the plague.[29] The idea of the plague spreading beyond the borders of Chinatown was incomprehensible so drastic measures were needed. It was necessary to quarantine the entire area because "plague rats know no frontiers."[30] The quarantine was seen as a way to separate the residents in Chinatown; "them", from the recognized majority in San Francisco's society, "us." The fact that the majority of the victims were Chinese provided further proof that Chinatown was a "laboratory of infection" and needed to be separated from the rest of the city.[31] Walter Wyman, the third Surgeon General of the United States from 1891 until his death in 1911, even suggested that the plague was an Asiatic disease prior to the San Franciscan epidemic.[32] In his report of the disease published in 1897 he said:

> "the death rate varies in different epidemics, and is estimated at from fifty to ninety percent. It varies, however, according to nationalities. From the official reports of the epidemic in Hong Kong in 1894, the death rate of the several nationalities was as follows: Chinese, 93.4 %; Indians, 77%; Japanese, 60%; Eurasians 100%; and Europeans, 18.2 %. The relatively small percentage of deaths among Europeans is attributed to the European blood and stamina, to the treatment and confidence in the European medical attendant."[33]

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[29] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 237.
[30] L.F. Hirst, *The Conquest of Plague: A Study of the Evolution of Epidemiology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 407.
[31] Joan B. Trauner, "The Chinese as Medical Scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905," *California History* 57 no 1 (Spring, 1978): 80.
[32] Walter Wyman, "The Black Plague," *The North American Review*, Vol. 164 No. 485 (April 1897): 446.
[33] Wyman, "The Black Plague," 446.

Wyman does not hide the fact that he believed people of European descent to be above succumbing to a disease such as the plague. He argued that the small percentage of European deaths was credited to their blood and stamina, as well as them being technologically advanced in the medical field.[34] Wyman's beliefs were common for this time period and represented the mainstream mindset that existed in the early twentieth century. Much of this had to do with the disease not being fully understood.

Prior to 1894 the plague bacillus was called *Pasteurella pestis,* but its name would be changed after the rod shaped bacillus was identified by two scientists. Alexandre Yersin, a Swiss bacteriologist, and Shibasurburo Kitasato, a Japanese bacteriologist, were responsible for independently identifying the plague bacillus in 1894. Since Yersin provided a more detailed analysis of his hypothesis, experimentation process, and end result, the name of the tiny microbe was changed to *Yersinia pestis.* Although this was an important discovery, it only answered one third of the answers surrounding the transmission of the plague. The role of the rat and the flea had yet to be discovered.

At the time Wyman wrote his report the role of the rat and its fleas in the plague cycle had not been fully understood. There was a connection finally made between the rat and the plague by Rupert Blue, the head of the Marine Hospital Service, following the death of a fifty three year old woman named Marguerette Saggau in 1901.[35] Blue came to the conclusion that rats must somehow be involved because Saggua and her family lived "only one block north of Chinatown, a distance easily covered by rats and their

[34] Wyman, "The Black Plague," 446.
[35] Chase, *The Barbary Plague,* 105.

migration."[36] Rats had always been linked to disease but their role in transmitting infections to humans was not fully understood. Wyman suggested that rats became infected in Oriental countries because they came into contact with miasmatic emanations from the soil due to their snouts being close to the ground.[37] In his 1897 report he did not mention the rat as a player in the transmission of the plague. In fact, he contended that there were three ways the plague bacillus entered the human body: through inoculation, through an external wound or abrasion; respiration, by inhaling the dust from infected houses; and introduction into the stomach, by imbibing infected fluids or eating infected foods.[38] In a later report Wyman mentioned that "it is very possible that the fleas that infest rats, and which notoriously leave their bodies as soon as the cadavers become cold after death, may by their bites infect other rats but the bites of the insects play a very small role."[39] Again, the role of the flea was downplayed despite an experiment conducted in 1897 by Paul-Louis Simond.

Paul-Louis Simond was a Pasteur Institute scientist working in India who wanted to prove his hypothesis that the existence of the plague in rats and people had a common transmitting agent; he theorized that the agent was the flea. He placed two rats side by side in separate cages; one was healthy and one was infected by the plague bacillus. There was not any physical contact between the animals but a grid allowed fleas to hop back and forth. Within six days of the first rat's death, the second rat died also. Simond speculated that the fleas had left their original host after its death. He was able to prove his hypothesis by looking at blood samples from the second rat; *Yersinia pestis* was

[36] Rupert Blue, Personal letter to Surgeon General Walter Wyman, September 25, 1901, NARA, Records Group 90, Central File 1897-1923, Box 616, File 3 of 3 in Chase, *The Barbary Plague,* 105.
[37] Wyman, "The Black Plague," 448.
[38] Wyman, "The Black Plague," 447.
[39] Walter Wyman, *The Bubonic Plague,* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 25-26.

indeed present. Simond was scorned by his colleagues and his findings were not accepted until 1906 when the British plague commission in India confirmed his results.[40] Wyman also ignored Simon's findings. Instead he continuously referred to the disease as being Asiatic in nature. He blamed the poor diet of Asians as being a primary culprit for their susceptibility to the plague. In his 1897 report he stated the following:

"It may be because the people are so badly fed, and fed only on rice and other grains which contain very little protein. As compared with wheat, oats, Indian corn, and rye, rice, by the protein standard, is the poorest food of them all. Additional credence may be given to this theory from the fact that plague so often accompanies famine. Other conditions are known to favor it, such as overcrowding and filth…where these conditions prevail, with faulty nutrition added, the disease is persistent."[41]

Wyman failed to look beyond the perception that the disease could possibly have other causes and failed to see the disease as a general problem that affected all of society. Instead, he targeted a particular race and offered proof of his theories by attacking specific cultural aspects such as their diet. The final figures for the 1900-04 epidemic in San Francisco seemed to confirm Wyman's claims: 121 cases and 113 deaths; of the deaths four were Japanese, 107 were Chinese, and only two were white.[42]

This was not the first time the Chinese had been targeted as the source for disease. San Francisco suffered four smallpox epidemics in the years 1868, 1876, 1880, and 1887.[43] It is important to address the smallpox epidemics because the perception of the Chinese during this time was similar to what it was during the plague epidemics. The Chinese were already a marginalized group and associating them with a deadly disease

[40] Chase, *The Barbary Plague,* 105-106.
[41] Wyman, "The Black Plague," 447.
[42] Shah, *Contagious Divides,* 150.
[43] The mortality rates for the first two epidemics in 1868 and 1876 were significantly higher than the latter two outbreaks; approximately 30 percent of the victims died compared to 18 percent of the 507 victims in 1880 and 12 percent of the 568 in 1887. For further literature on the smallpox epidemic see Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 57-63 and Susan Craddock, *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 81-87.

that was feared city-wide only intensified the hatred and fear that already existed. The smallpox epidemics during the 19th century had a lot in common with the plague epidemics that occurred at the start of the 20th century.

At the start of the 1868 epidemic Issac Rowell, the health officer in San Francisco, did not pinpoint the Chinese as being the source of the smallpox infection. It was the Anti-Coolie Association that originally targeted them as being the carriers because smallpox was relatively "unknown among the Caucasian race."[44] Those who were to hold the title of health officer after Rowell believed that the disease had its origins in China and thrived in San Francisco's Chinatown.[45] Worth noting is that smallpox originated outside of Chinatown in at least three of the four epidemics.[46] The disease became synonymous with the Chinese which is reflected in an 1885 committee report which attempted to exclude Chinatown physically from the rest of San Francisco.[47] The majority population wanted to separate themselves from the threat of disease by disassociating and disconnecting Chinatown from other communities. The fear of smallpox permeating across community borders played a key role in the attempt to isolate Chinatown. The Health Officer during the 1880-81 epidemic, J.L. Meares, had the following to say:

> Poisoned with the contagion of smallpox, coming in daily contact with our citizens, as servants, as laundrymen, and as ordinary laborers; manufacturing (as I have seen) clothing, slippers, etc. in the very house and in the very room in which a Chinamen was dying in the advanced stage of this disease: in short, coming in contact with our people generally as no other class of our inhabitants do, they are a constant source of danger to the health and prosperity of the entire community.[48]

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[44] *Daily Alta California,* "The Chinese on the Pacific Coast: The Statement of the Anti-Coolie Association," June 24, 1869 in Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 58.
[45] Shah, *Contagious Divides,* 58.
[46] Craddock, *City of Plagues,* 4.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Municipal Reports of San Francisco, 1881, 253-54 in Craddock, *City of Plagues,* 82.

Meares directly targeted the Chinese as being unclean and made it very clear that there should be limited or no association with them. He felt that being in close contact with the Chinese was detrimental to the well-being of San Francisco. This mindset would continue into the fourth smallpox epidemic which began in 1887. However, as can be seen by the following letter in 1886, written by an anonymous author, the negative connotations associated with the Chinese had by now diffused beyond the board of health to include the mainstream population:

> As if the presence of these barbarians among us, depriving our workmen of employment, and causing our boys and girls to grow up idleness…was not a sufficient evil, they have been the cause of the pestilence which now "stalketh at noonday" through our streets, claiming as its victims our best and most enterprising citizens, and, entering our homes, lays low those who make home dear to us. Shall we stand supinely by and see Death triumphing over those we would so gladly save, and let this accursed race still hold their filthy and disease-breeding dens of infamy in the heart of our city?...Extraordinary cases of evil demand extraordinary means of prevention and removal of them…Our citizens should organize and make these infamous wretches migrate outside of the city's limits.[49]

This letter shows the fear and hatred directed towards Chinatown and the Chinese as a race. As stated earlier, not everyone disliked the Chinese; there were people who defended them. The letter reflects the more conspicuous, blatant attitudes directed toward the Chinese on behalf of the general populace. The statements made by the author reflect the belief that the Chinese were responsible for taking away jobs that rightfully belonged to the mainstream population; an idea that formulated shortly after the Chinese came to the United States in large numbers during the 19th century.[50] The perception of the Chinese throughout the letter is quite negative. The Chinese are blamed for the deaths of "those we would so gladly save" and are referred to as the "accursed race" because they

[49] "People's Open Illustrated Letter," San Francisco, May 1, 1886 in Craddock, *City of Plagues*, 84.
[50] Chapter 1 of this thesis focuses on the discrimination of the Chinese in the workforce which began during the mid 19th century.

were perceived as being below mainstream society; as being a group who could be easily discarded. The end of the letter even suggested that the Chinese be removed forcefully from the city; an idea that would continue to gain momentum throughout the remainder of the 19th century.

Government and health officials referred to Chinatown as a place that was filthy and needed to be raised up to an acceptable standard. Artist renditions of Chinatown showed the community as being dark, crowded, and decrepit. The community appears to be cluttered with people filling virtually every space available. The people were painted in a negative light also; they appear to be poor and be engaged in medial labor.[51] This was in sharp contrast to the portrayal of mainstream society from the same time period. The setting is spatial, complete with trees, flowers, and open air. The people were dressed in clothes that symbolized they came from wealthy descent and their gathering was one of leisure, rather than labor oriented.[52] Chinatown was not portrayed in a positive light in Municipal Reports that were submitted either. In fact, Health Officer C.M. Bates gave the following description of Chinatown:

> The great majority of [the Chinese] live crowded together in rickety, filthy, and dilapidated tenement houses like many cattle or hogs…In passing through that portion of the city occupied by them, the most absolute squalidness and misery meets one at every turn…Apartments that would be deemed small for the accommodation of a single American, are occupied by six, eight, or ten Mongolians. Nothing short of an ocular demonstration can convey an idea of Chinese poverty and depravity.[53]

The Chinese community was associated with overcrowded conditions and filth; qualities that did not measure up to the hygienic standards put forth by the San Franciscan Board of Health. Again, the Chinese were labeled as being beneath other members of society.

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[51] Craddock, *City of Plagues,* 76, Figure 2.2.
[52] Craddock, *City of Plagues*, 77, Figure 2.3.
[53] C.M. Bates, Municipal Reports 1869-70, 233 in Craddock, *City of Plagues,* 79.

As can be seen from the above passage the separation between the Chinese and mainstream society went a little deeper. Bates referred to the Chinese as "Mongolians," not Americans, which directly correlates to how the Chinese were perceived by mainstream society. This mindset was common at the time; the Chinese were not recognized as being Americans despite living in the United States, and despite having been a recognizable immigrant group from the mid 19th century onward. This negative perception of the Chinese was not an invention of the latter part of the 19th; it developed early. In fact, from its inception in 1854, it was not uncommon for the Board of Health to link the fear of infectious disease with the filth and squalor associated with Chinatown.[54] The San Franciscan Board of Health used Chinatown as an example of what they did not want the city to become. By doing this they justified the aggressive reforms and sanitation measures put in place to maintain a level acceptable hygiene city-wide. Chinatown always fell well below what was acceptable due to the overcrowded conditions that existed which were beyond the control of the Chinese. They were not accepted in other parts of the city; there was always an attempt to separate them from mainstream society. Aaron A. Sargent, a Californian Senator, described the desire to segregate the Chinese from the rest of society in his 1876 speech:

> Experience has shown that Chinese population expels all other, as inferior currency expels all better kinds. The process has been going on for years, notably in San Francisco…A landlord will rent a single house on a street to Chinamen, who at once crowd it to repletion with their compatriots. They take ordinary rooms, say of ten feet in height, put in a false floor halfway to the ceiling and crowd both floors with bunks, and as many human beings as can be pressed into the space sleep therein. The atmosphere becomes fetid, and a sickly smell pervades the neighborhood, which causes the tenants of the houses to the right and left to vacate. These houses cannot be again rented to white persons, the rents fall, and finally the Chinese get possession. This process goes on in each direction until the whole street is abandoned to the Chinese. The property has fallen in value, becomes dilapidated and offensive, and the street is as much dedicated to

[54] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 74.

Chinese uses and lost to any other class of residents as if it were a street in Hong Kong or Canton.[55]

Sargent made it clear that it was imperative to segregate the Chinese from mainstream society. He painted a bleak picture of what would happen if measures to isolate the Chinese were not met. Sargent's speech reaffirmed existing prejudices by suggesting the United States would become less American by allowing communities to resemble those in Hong Kong or Canton. Sargent conspicuously labeled the Chinese as an unwanted class of people in the same speech when he said "no class of population (the white, the Negro…the Spaniard)…can endure contact with these squalid denizens…Even the lowest classes of society flee."[56] There are two things worth noting from Sargent's quote: First, Blacks and Hispanics were not perceived as being equal to Whites. This was apparent because he referred to them as being part of the "lowest class." Second, the Chinese were not even recognized as being part of the lowest class. Sargent marginalized them by suggesting that even the lowest members of society do not want to be in close association with them. Political cartoons during this time echoed this perception.

It was not a secret that many people who belonged to mainstream society viewed the Chinese as being a lower class of human. One artist's rendition, published in *The Wasp* in 1877, reflected this negative perception brilliantly. The cartoon was titled "Darwin's Theory Illustrated—The Creation of Chinaman and Pig." The artist, listed simply as K, portrayed the evolution of a primate, to a Chinaman, and finally to a pig in eight stages. Quite noticeable in the artist's rendition of Darwin's theory was the fact that the Chinaman and primate looked very similar. The Chinaman and the primate are standing in the same position; hunched over, arms outstretched. In addition, the

[55] Aaron A. Sargent, Speech to the United States Senate, May 2, 1876 in Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 74.
[56] Ibid.

Chinaman's braid was drawn to resemble a tail. This was degrading in its own right but K took it one step further and suggested that the Chinese were synonymous with pigs. This directly related to the belief that sanitation was largely overlooked in Chinatown to the point that it was filthy and decrepit.[57]

Another artist, Thomas Nast, was more blatant about the message he was trying to convey. His cartoon, published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1879, was called "The Nigger Must Go and the Chinese Must Go: the Poor Barbarians Can't Understand Our Civilized Republican Form of Government." Nast targeted the blacks in the South and the Chinese in the West as a source for societal problems. Nast suggested that the Chinese were not civilized because they were not able to understand the American government system. The fact that he referred to the American system as "our civilized Republican form of government" also suggested the Chinese were not considered to be citizens or to be civilized; they were seen as being separate from mainstream society.[58] The idea of them being separate and being a group that should be segregated, was prevalent when the plague arrived in San Francisco in 1900.

Even before the plague arrived in San Francisco's Chinatown, there was an epidemic in Honolulu in 1899. The Chinese district in Honolulu was believed to be the source of infection, and public health officials quickly assessed the problem in hopes of eradicating the disease.[59] Nathaniel B Emerson, Francis R. Day, and Clifford B. Wood

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[57] K, "Darwin's Theory Illustrated—The Creation of Chinaman and Pig," *The Wasp,* November 11, 1877, p. 217 in Philip P. Choy, Lorraine Dong, and Marlon K. Hom, editors, *Coming Man: 19th Century American Perceptions of the Chinese,* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 111, Plate 75.
[58] Thomas Nast, "The Nigger Must Go and the Chinese Must Go: The Poor Barbarians Can't Understand Our Civilized Republican Form of Government," *Harper's Weekly,* September 18, 1879 in Philip P. Choy, Lorraine Dong, and Marlon K. Hom, editors, *Coming Man: 19th Century American Perceptions of the Chinese,* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 117, Plate 80.
[59] James C. Mohr, *Plague and Fire: Battling Black Death and the 1900 Burning of Honolulu's Chinatown,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

were physicians who ran the Republic of Hawaii's Board of Health. They led the clean up efforts in Honolulu's Chinatown in an attempt to eliminate the plague from the city. Following the death of Sarah Boardman, a white woman, plague awareness was heightened and this created a more frenzied approach to eradication measures. Press releases reminded Hawaiians that "the plague does not always respect white skin."[60] The three physicians determined that immediate action was needed to stop the plague before it could claim any more white victims. They decided that in order to cleanse Chinatown and abolish the presence of plague it must be "purified by fire."[61] Thus, on January 20, 1900 the infected areas of Chinatown were scheduled to be burned. The inhabitants were evacuated and the fire was initiated as planned at the request of authorities by Chief Hunt. Hunt and his crew appeared to have everything under control until there was an abrupt shift in the wind pattern which was uncharacteristic for the time of day and season.[62] Strong gusts replaced the light breezes which created a downdraft that transformed the controlled fire into what resembled a blast furnace. A fountain of burning embers that reached sixty feet quickly ignited buildings beyond the scope of Hunt and his men.[63] Efforts to put out the fire failed and by the time the fire had burned itself out that night, the inhabitants of Chinatown had lost all of their living quarters and seventy six other establishments, including temples, churches, theaters, warehouses, stores, and offices.[64] An eyewitness recalled the tragedy:

"The frenzy of the Chinese and Japanese[65] residents was pitiful to observe. They fled to the streets, lugging away at bundles too heavy for a man to ordinarily carry, but the keen

[60] Mohr, *Plague and Fire*, 122.
[61] Mohr, *Plague and Fire*, 122.
[62] Mohr, *Plague and Fire*, 126.
[63] Mohr, *Plague and Fire*, 126.
[64] Mohr, *Plague and Fire*, 134.
[65] The Japanese were seen as being more complacent with authorities than the Chinese. They were more likely to receive the Haffkine's vaccine in order to leave Chinatown and travel outside of the city.

excitement of the moment gave them the strength of two men. Women with strained eyes and tears rolling down their cheeks clung to little children and babes, in wild excitement, searching everywhere to find a place of safety. Few carried more than a change of clothing for their babies…Every one was making a supreme effort to flee from the fire-fiend that destroyed their homes and household goods."[66]

After the fire, the district was rebuilt, but in a much less densely fashion mainly for the following reasons; remapping, new sanitary laws, and housing regulations. Although some Asians were able to reestablish their businesses in Chinatown after the fire, many moved to other areas in Honolulu during the first decade of the 20th century.[67]

The fire did not stop the spread of plague as health officials had hoped it would. In fact, from 1900-1910, there were one hundred and seventy new cases of plague in Honolulu.[68] Despite the persistence of plague in Honolulu, the San Francisco Board of Health and the California State Board of Health regarded the fire as a remarkable success and lobbied for the burning of San Francisco's Chinatown.[69] The Chinese were able to prevent this from happening by enlisting the help of the Chinese Six Companies.[70] They challenged the proposal successfully by citing the Fourteenth Amendment.[71] They also discussed alternate measures to counteract the plague with the San Francisco Board of Health. Although the Chinese Six Companies were willing to dispute policies and

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[66] *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu), January 22, 1900, 1 in James C. Mohr, *Plague and Fire: Battling Black Death and the 1900 Burning of Honolulu's Chinatown,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.
[67] Mohr, *Plague and Fire,* 193.
[68] U.S. Treasury Department, C. R. Eskey, *Epidemiological Study of Plague in the Hawaiian Islands,* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, October, 1934), 2.
[69] Mohr, *Plague and Fire,* 198-199
[70] The Chinese Six Companies was also known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA).
[71] Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment states; All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

regulations that discriminated against the Chinese, the power they had once had in 1880 had dwindled considerably by 1900.

The Chinese Six Companies were supposed to represent those who did not have a voice in political affairs such as laborers and small merchants. They had lost some of their credibility over time because the very people they represented had lost trust in them; this was especially true during the last decade of the 19th century.[72] Part of the reason for the lack of trust was the assurance that the Geary Act[73] would be overturned: a promise that never materialized. Also, laborers and merchants were not comfortable with the fact that the Chinese Six Companies were willing to negotiate with city officials to find common ground when addressing issues. Finally, the laborers and merchants thought those who were more dominant in the social sphere, such as physicians, journalists, and politicians, were more likely to have their needs addressed by utilizing the political ties they had. In addition, any grievances they may have had were more likely to be included in newspapers. Despite the dwindling of the Chinese Six Companies' influence with the political system and its somewhat tainted reputation among the Chinese community, it still remained an important ally to the Chinese. Its influence would prove to be vital once again when the plague arrived in San Francisco in 1900.

Government and health officials were anticipating the arrival of the plague after it was known it was in Honolulu. The Public Health Service expected the plague to diffuse from Asia to Chinatowns along the Pacific Coast.[74] Immediately after learning plague

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[72] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 123.
[73] As stated in chapter 1, the Geary Act was passed in 1892. It followed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and prohibited Chinese immigration to the United States for an additional ten years. Also, the Geary Act required all Chinese to apply for a certificate of residence within one year after it was passed, which created an internal passport system. Any Chinese person still without a certificate after one year of the act's ratification faced being arrested and deported.
[74] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 128.

existed in Hawaii, Wyman ordered surveys to be conducted in local Chinatowns. His purpose was simple; he believed it was not a question of if but when the plague would arrive, and he wanted to be prepared to battle the disease. The survey was led by Charles E. Decker, a public health officer in San Diego during the months of January and February in 1900. Decker reported what Wyman feared; "bad sanitary conditions…in Chinatown rendered the city vulnerable to plague."[75]

Prior to the death of San Francisco's first victim, Chick Gin, on March 6, 1900, Wyman suggested precautionary measures be taken to avoid a plague epidemic. He recommended house-to-house inspection, the thorough cleansing and disinfection of both infected homes and those that were suspected of harboring the plague bacillus, removing the sick to hospitals, redirecting the healthy to "refuge camps; an idea that he kept rather vague, and waging a war against rats and other vermin associated with filth.[76] Wyman also endorsed the use of an experimental vaccine called Haffkine's prophylactic and a new serum developed by Alexandre Yersin, one of the discoverers of the plague bacillus.[77] On 8 March, before Chick Gin's death was determined to be plague related, Wyman sent a telegram urging that the following measures be taken if plague was indeed present; Chinatown should be disinfected using sulfur, any person exposed to plague should be treated with Yersin's serum, and all residents of Chinatown should be inoculated with the Haffkine's vaccine.[78]

On 11 March the diagnosis of plague was confirmed by Joseph Kinyoun. The Board convened to decide what must be done to prevent the spread of infection. Lawyers

[75] Charles E. Decker, Letter to Walter Wyman (Surgeon General), San Diego, January 19, January 23, January 31, and February 2, 1900 in Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 129.
[76] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 239.
[77] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 240.
[78] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 240.

who represented the Chinese Six Companies and the Chinese Consulate were also present at the meeting and offered their full cooperation. The attorney for the Chinese Six Companies, the former Judge D.J. Murphy, even offered to supply volunteers to assist in Chinatown's inspection. Cleansing and disinfecting measures continued to be exercised throughout the spring, but new deaths—four between May 11-13 alone—were believed to be linked to the plague, which caused a considerable amount of panic. [79] Wyman felt it was time for the federal government to become more actively involved. He sent the following telegram to Kinyoun:

> Chinese consul-general, San Francisco, will be wired to use his influence to have the Chinese comply cheerfully with necessary measures and consult with you as representative of the United States Government. Confer with consul general. Have about 20,000 Haffkine on hand; will be shipped tomorrow. If Gassaway has any get it. Suggest advisability of following measures: One man in supreme charge; subordinates in charge of divisions. Cordon suspected area. Guard ferries and R.R. stations with reference to Chinese only; house-to-house inspection with Haffkine inoculation; Chinatown to be districted. Pest hospital in Chinatown, using some substantial building. Suspects from plague houses to be removed to a suspect house in Chinatown, or, if you deem necessary to Angel Island. A disinfecting corps. Destruction of rats. Inspection of railroads and outside territory.[80]

Wyman made it perfectly clear that all of the anti-plague measures were aimed at the Chinese and suggested that mass inoculation was necessary. The Chinese Six Companies agreed to help with the inspection process as well as the inoculations. However, the Chinese community distrusted public health authorities and were adamant about refusing the vaccine and allowing their homes to be inspected.[81]

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[79] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 243-44.
[80] Walter Wyman, telegram to Joseph Kinyoun, May 16, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-),* Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 19.
[81] Joseph Kinyoun, telegram to Walter Wyman, May 19, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-),* Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 21.

They believed that those in authority were making matters seem much worse than they really were. Some even thought that it was the health officials who were making people in their community sick. They had no intention of subjecting themselves to the Haffkine vaccine, especially after many who had voluntarily received the vaccine became extremely ill. Wyman acknowledged this in a telegram to Kinyoun where he stated "reported here that the few Chinese who were inoculated were taken very sick and in dying condition."[82] This did not stop Wyman's and Kinyoun's attempts to inoculate the Chinese though. In a telegram, also dated 23 May, 1900, Kinyoun said that they 'have offered alternative of requirements of regulations, but always advised inoculations preferable."[83] In the same telegram, Kinyoun stated that they "have issued certificates of travel to those who have been inoculated. Never have insisted any one taking it—purely voluntary."[84] Withholding travel certificates from those who had not been inoculated was an attempt to coerce the Chinese into receiving a vaccine that was experimental and potentially dangerous. The Chinese were not willing to submit to the public health officials' demands and the Chinese Six Companies believed violence would erupt if the matter was pursued. The following cable was sent to the Chinese minister in Washington on May 18 on behalf of the Chinese Six Companies and Consul General Ho:

> Authorities insist inoculation, even by force, all Chinese object, would rather go back to China than subject. They say there is no plague at all. Please use your influence at once have authorities have officers here to facilitate matters as they intend to commence at once. If they inoculate by force there might be trouble and bloodshed and may lead to serious complications.[85]

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[82] Walter Wyman, telegram to Joseph Kinyoun, May 23, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-),* Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 25.
[83] Joseph Kinyoun, telegram to Walter Wyman, May 23, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-),* Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 25.
[84] Ibid.
[85] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 248.

A Chinese language circular was posted on the eve of the Haffkine inoculation campaign also:

> It is hard to go against an angry mass of people. The doctors are about to compel our Chinese people to be inoculated. This action will involve the lives of us all who live in the City. Tomorrow…all business houses large and small must be closed and wait until this unjust action is settled before any one be allowed to resume their business. If any disobey this we will unite and put an everlasting boycott on them. Don't say that you have not been warned first.[86]

The Chinese Six Companies and the Consul General continued to request that the residents of Chinatown cooperate with officials but their pleas went unanswered. Businesses closed and refused to open to prevent health officials from entering with their supply of the vaccine. Measures were taken by the Chinese community to prevent anyone from cooperating; tong gangsters[87] threatened anyone considering the inoculation, and posters were posted throughout Chinatown warning merchants to remain closed or risk losing their life.[88] Thus, a battle between the Chinese and public health officials ensued. The Chinese became increasingly defensive the more officials attempted to assert their authority. A large crowd surrounded Consul Ho's residence on May 21 and demanded that he take a more active role in preventing inoculations.[89] They were forced to disband after the police were summoned. Officials believed the Chinese deliberately tried to trick them and undermine their authority. Assistant Surgeon General White said the following regarding the Chinese:

> "you are dealing with a very peculiar people who, if you apply our laws and regulations to them, will thwart you. If you apply the same laws and regulations to the Chinaman that you do to the Anglo-Saxon, you will simply be thwarted at

[86] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 134.
[87] The term *tong* refers to a kind of secret society found among Chinese immigrants in the United States, and other countries as well, during the nineteenth century. In the beginning, the *tongs*, provided support and protection against other ethnic groups that were hostile to the Chinese. Towards the latter part of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century, the *tongs* were associated with threatening and often criminal behavior.
[88] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 249.
[89] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 249-50.

> every turn. You can not do it. I went out there with the impression that you could. I became fully convinced that you can not do it. They have no faith in the white man. They believe the white man is trying to deceive them all the time, and they try to deceive the white man, and in the battle of wits we have our full equal when we meet the Chinaman."[90]

Public health officials anticipated the Chinese would do something more permanent to prevent the measures they were attempting to implement. Their worries were proven to be true on May 24, 1900 when the Chinese Six Companies applied for a restraining order. It was brought against Kinyoun and the city board and claimed that the Federal Government had exceeded authority in prohibiting free passage of Chinese within State, and claimed that the law of 1890 applied only to interstate traffic and did not have force in the current situation.[91] The complaint was filed on behalf of Wong Wai, a Chinese merchant in San Francisco, by the law firm of Reddy, Campbell, and Metson. The case of Wong Wai came to represent Chinatown collectively because of the "impracticality of joining all twenty five thousand Chinese as complainants."[92] On May 28 Judge William Morrow, a Republican, handed down his decision regarding the Wong Wai case. He categorized the travel restrictions placed on the Chinese as discriminatory. He argued that the measures were "boldly directed against the Asiatic or Mongolian race and demonstrated no scrutiny of individual habits, exposure to disease, or residence that would likely result in infection."[93] He lifted the travel restrictions and argued that the idea of a racial susceptibility to plague was not feasible.

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[90] U.S. Treasury Department—Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, *Public Health Reports: Plague Conference*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), 17-18.
[91] Joseph Kinyoun, telegram to Walter Wyman, May 24, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-),* Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 26.
[92] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 250.
[93] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 139.

Health officials did not take defeat well and were quick to calculate their next move. On May 29, 1900 the local board of health again decided to quarantine Chinatown on the grounds that this was the only way to keep the disease contained.[94] There were plans to move at least 7,000 Chinese, in order to thoroughly cleanse Chinatown, to either Angel Island or China Cove and have them remain in detention camps.[95] In addition, all Chinese were to be subjected to inspection when traveling by train, but Kinyoun was specific in his request to "avoid race discrimination."[96] The perception of Chinatown was quite negative; it was seen as something that needed to be removed from San Francisco:

> In no city in the civilized world is there a slum more foul or more menacing than that which threatens us with the Asiatic plague. Chinatown occupies the very heart of San Francisco…So long as it stands so long will there be a menace of the appearance in San Francisco of every form of disease, plague and pestilence which Asiatic filth and vice generate. The only way to get rid of that menace is to eradicate Chinatown from the city…Clear the foul spot from San Francisco and give the debris to flames.[97]

Two things are worth mentioning from the above passage. First, there was reference to the plague being an "Asiatic" disease and the need to contain it in Chinatown. This was after Judge Morrow's ruling that there was not any basis for saying the Chinese were more susceptible to the disease; words that apparently fell on deaf ears. Second was the suggestion that Chinatown be destroyed by fire just as Honolulu's Chinatown had been destroyed in 1899. This was despite the fact that the plague had not been eradicated from Honolulu following the deadly fire.

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[94] Joseph Kinyoun, telegram to Walter Wyman, May 29, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-)*, Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 31.
[95] Joseph Kinyoun, telegram to Walter Wyman, June 4, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-)*, Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 31.
[96] Joseph Kinyoun, telegram to Walter Wyman, June 6, 1900 in "Plague in San Francisco (1900), *Public Health Reports (1974-)*, Vol. 121, Historical Collection 1878-2005 (2006), 31.
[97] *Morning Call*, May 31, 1900, p. 6, columns 1-2 in Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 262.

The Chinese countered the new stipulation with yet another complaint to the federal court system on June 5. This time Jew Ho, a grocer, represented all of Chinatown and accused the local board of health of sabotaging his livelihood by not allowing him to do business outside of Chinatown. Furthermore, the quarantine deprived the Chinese residents of the equal protection of the laws and privileges under United States' laws and treaties.[98]

On June 15 Judge Morrow announced his decision in the case. He did not agree with the nature of the quarantine because it encompassed an entire area instead of just the infected households. He contended that a quarantine of this nature actually put the healthy residents more at risk for infection. Judge Morrow did not overlook the fact that white residences were excluded from the quarantine; the lines were drawn strategically to leave out white businesses and homes.[99] Following Judge Morrow's decision the quarantine was officially lifted from Chinatown but the plague would continue until February 29, 1904. The total number of cases during the first epidemic in San Francisco was 121, with 113 deaths; most of which were Chinese. Anti-Chinese sentiment was not as blatant after the last case was recorded in 1904 because there was not a reason to target the Chinese. The Geary Act, passed in 1892, had prohibited Chinese immigration for an additional ten years and the plague was no longer a threat. After the plague subsided in February 29, 1904, another case was not reported until 1907 after an earthquake devastated San Francisco in 1906.

Following the earthquake on April 18, 1906 in San Francisco, there was another plague epidemic. There were many differences between the two epidemics. First, it lasted

[98] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 268.
[99] McClain, *In Search of Equality,* 274-75.

only a year and a half during the years 1907-08, compared to the five year battle from 1900-04 for the first epidemic. Second, of the 160 cases there were 78 deaths of which most of them were Caucasian. Third, the primary focus for eradicating the disease was the trapping and extermination of rats, not quarantine and forced inoculations. This had everything to do with the rat/flea connection finally being made by Rupert Blue, who was appointed by Wyman to oversee rat extermination and urban sanitation measures during both epidemics.[100] Despite the differences between the two epidemics, some things did not change.

Chinatown and the Chinese continued to be linked to the disease; officials blamed the earthquake for spreading infected rats and their fleas from Chinatown to the rest of the city. It was still widely believed that the disease was Asiatic in origin and that infected Asians were responsible for diffusing the plague.[101] In fact, Asians continued to be seen as the "direct source of the bubonic plague—the most terrible and swift of fatal scourges known to modern science. It is a human disease, and the rodent family against which the war is now being carried on, is really the victim of human agencies."[102] Although, the Chinese were not being targeted in the same blatant manner they were in the first epidemic, the underlying anti-Chinese sentiment was still prevalent. Wyman had referred to the plague as being Oriental in nature in 1900[103] and coincidentally Dr.

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[100] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 268. See also Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides,* 153-55 and Craddock, *City of Plagues*, 147-157.
[101] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 153
[102] *Collier's Weekly*, October 1908 in in Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 153.
[103] U.S. Treasury Department, Walter Wyman, *Bubonic Plague,* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 12.

Winslow Anderson, editor of the *Pacific Medical Journal,* described it the same way in 1907.[104]

The bubonic plague arrived on continental American soil in 1900 in San Francisco. After quickly infiltrating itself into the domestic rat population, the plague began to spread to humans due to the close proximity between the rat's habitat and people's homes. Chinatown was associated more strongly with the disease because of the over-crowded, filthy living conditions that existed there. The fact that the majority of the cases were found in Chinatown, particularly during the first epidemic, also contributed to the notion that Chinatown was a haven for the plague. It was perceived as being an Asiatic disease because the majority of the victims, especially during the first epidemic, were Chinese. Due to pre-existing negative perceptions of the Chinese and Chinatown, the Chinese were subjected to coercive sanitary measures, such as mandatory inoculations, and discriminatory practices, such as routine inspections and travel restrictions upon entering or leaving Chinatown.

The Chinese refused to accept the discriminatory practices and procedures that the public health officials put into effect. Instead, they consulted the Chinese Six Companies to act as their voice and utilized the federal court system to counteract unfair sanitary measures. The cases of *Wong Wai* and *Jew Ho* helped establish a precedent that neutralized some of the damage caused by Anti-Chinese legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Scott Act, and the Geary Act. Although the victories in the *Wong Wai* and *Jew Ho* cases were beneficial, the Chinese were still the victims of discrimination and continued to be despite the advancement of the germ theory and the discovery of the rat/flea connection. Towards the latter part of the 19th century Anti-

[104] Shah, *Contagious Divides,* 155.

Chinese sentiment was somewhat less conspicuous which directly correlated to the passage of legislation that targeted the Chinese; however, it never went completely away. The arrival of the plague only enhanced Anti-Chinese sentiment that already existed in America.

Conclusion

The Chinese began immigrating in large numbers to the United States in 1848 following the discovery of gold in California. Economic and political instability, in the form of the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864, and the first Opium War, 1839-1842, provided reasons for the Chinese to leave their homeland and come to America in search of a better life for themselves and their families. At the same time, the United States was recruiting immigrant workers to help with the construction of the transcontinental railroad, and many Chinese responded to this request. As a result, mainstream American society was initially receptive to the Chinese entering the country, mainly because the Chinese were being employed to fill menial jobs for cheap wages. This atmosphere was short lived. Many unskilled white and African American workers soon came to believe that the Chinese were stealing their jobs, and increasingly perceived them as a threat. The Chinese also filled voids in the job sector by working jobs seen by others as degrading or undesirable such as the laundering business. Therefore, anti-Chinese attitudes became increasingly prevalent during the middle of the 19th century and Chinese immigrants were often the targets of legislation seeking to limit their rights as tax payers.

Probably the most significant piece of legislation was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited Chinese immigration to the United States for ten years. However, anti-Chinese legislation was not uncommon prior to this. As early as 1852 the Foreign Miners' License Tax required all foreigners to pay a monthly fee for the privilege of working in American mines. The fact that the majority of the miners were Chinese suggested *they* were the primary targets. Later legislation, such as the Scott Act in 1888, prohibited all Chinese workers from immigrating to the United States. Also, the Geary

act, passed in 1892, picked up where the Chinese Exclusion Act had left off, prohibiting Chinese immigration for an additional ten years.

In the face of all these obstacles, however, it is important to note that the Chinese did not accept the role of passive victim. They believed they had rights in America because they paid taxes and were entitled to the same privileges extended to citizens. They did not hesitate to utilize the federal court system if they felt they were being treated unfairly. The Chinese Six Companies acted as the go-between for the Chinese community and mainstream society, and represented the Chinese in government affairs. It is also important to note that the issues existing between Chinese Americans and mainstream society were not shared by all; there were those who were sympathetic to the Chinese such as the business owners who employed them. White business owners also became a vehicle of expression for the Chinese along with the Chinese Six Companies. Eventually, however, public discontent became so vocal that the federal government believed it had no alternative but to give in to demands, which explains the halting of Chinese immigration in 1882. Everything was relatively quiet towards the end of the 19th century, especially after the Geary Act was passed, but there was not much reason for mainstream society to complain. They had already achieved what they wanted, short of shipping all of the Chinese back to China; Chinese immigration was prohibited from China to the United States.

The arrival of the bubonic plague in San Francisco in 1900 brought all of the pre-existing anti-Chinese attitudes back to the forefront. The disease was thought to be Asiatic in nature, largely due to the fact that it was first found in the Chinese section of the city known as Chinatown. The fact that the disease was first found in Chinatown had

little to do with the community being Chinese and everything to do with the overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions that prevailed in this area.

The plague claimed its first victim in San Francisco on March 6, 1900 but it was not diagnosed for several days. Although government and health officials did not have the confirmation that it was indeed the bubonic plague, they wasted no time placing a quarantine on Chinatown in its entirety. This blanket policy was rather unique because usually, only homes and businesses where infection was present were quarantined. The possibility of the plague being present evoked such fear in San Francisco, that government and health officials reacted quickly in an effort to contain it. The idea of containing the disease in this case meant restricting the Chinese from traveling to other parts of the city, unless they could provide proof that they had received the experimental Haffkine's vaccine. Coincidentally, white residents and business owners were not required to receive the vaccine, nor were they subjected to the quarantine. The lines were drawn so as to exclude white residents and business owners and they were free to travel anywhere they wanted. The Chinese were singled out because of the negative perceptions surrounding Chinatown and its inhabitants; attitudes that had been prevalent from the middle of the 19th century. Chinatown was seen as a "laboratory of infection" while the Chinese themselves were often seen as "inferior". It was this atmosphere that was present when the bubonic plague arrived in San Francisco in 1900.

The reaction to the plague's existence in San Francisco was not really surprising if one takes the relationship between Chinese Americans and mainstream society into consideration. The Chinese were blamed for bringing the disease to America, despite the fact that they had been living in the United States for decades before the plague's arrival.

The plague was not responsible for the negative perception of the Chinese; these attitudes associated with them were already prevalent prior to 1900. The arrival of the plague in San Francisco merely acted as a catalyst for discriminatory behavior towards the Chinese. The disease provided a reason for mainstream society to target them. In conclusion, the Chinese were subjected to discrimination during the bubonic plague epidemic in San Francisco, 1900-08, because they had been the subjects of discrimination prior to the disease's arrival.

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