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Excavating Chinese America in the Delta:

Race and the historical archaeology of the Isleton Chinese American community

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Archaeology

by

Kelly Nicole Fong

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Excavating Chinese America in the Delta:

Race and the historical archaeology of the Isleton Chinese American community

by

Kelly Nicole Fong

Doctor of Philosophy in Archaeology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Jeanne Arnold, Chair

This dissertation is a historical archaeological study of the Chinese American community in Isleton, California during the first half of the 20th century. I utilize excavated material culture from the Bing Kong Tong site, documentary research, and oral histories to investigate everyday life in this community. In my analysis, I employ an interdisciplinary perspective that draws from Asian American Studies and historical archaeology to interpret materials in light of Asian American Studies history and racial theory to achieve two goals. First, I use racial theory to argue that historical archaeological analyses of Chinese American sites that rely on assimilation-based models are problematic because of how Asian Americans have been racialized as foreigners. By relying on assimilation in interpretation, I argue that this reifies existing stereotypes and is too simplistic for understanding these communities. Second, I offer this

interdisciplinary perspective as a way to move beyond assimilation-based analyses by centering race, racism, and racialization in our studies to understand everyday life under conditions of structural racism. I use this interdisciplinary approach to investigate everyday life for the Chinese American community Isleton. I contend that structural racism impacted everyday life for this community and affected the material culture people used on an everyday basis. Consequently, I argue that artifacts should be interpreted in terms of agency and decisions made under conditions of structural racism rather than assimilation. By adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, we can learn much more about the Chinese American community and an emerging Chinese American subjectivity than we could with any one perspective alone. Artifacts from archaeological fieldwork illuminate how the Chinese American community found ways to survive, resist, and thrive during exclusion.

The dissertation of Kelly Nicole Fong is approved.

Laurie Wilkie

Lane Hirabayashi

Tom Wake

Kathryn McDonnell

Jeanne Arnold, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

For my ancestors

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I also had the opportunity to present my research several times to get feedback, identify more oral history candidates, and polish my work. The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California invited me to give a talk in at their monthly meeting in April 2012. This opportunity provided a chance to share my work with community members with a mutual passion in history. Laurie Wilkie and Kim Christensen-Schwarz also invited me to guest lecture in their American Material Culture class at UC Berkeley where I had the chance to share my research with students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: The Delta is in the Heart

In 1946, Filipino American author and labor activist Carlos Bulosan (1988) first published a novel about the experience of Filipino American farmworkers entitled *America is in the Heart*. Inspired by his own experience and the experiences of other *manongs* (older Filipino men, usually immigrants), Bulosan writes about the everyday lives of these migrant farmworkers who traveled up and down the West Coast and worked for a meager wage just to survive. Despite these hardships, Bulosan emphasizes the spirit of survival and hope for making a better life in the United States. For these men, America was in their hearts.

For many multi-generation Asian Americans, the Sacramento Delta is in the heart. From the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, many Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans spent time in the Sacramento Delta as laborers, merchants, labor contractors, cannery workers, and farmers—my own family included. In 1925, my maternal grandmother, Alice OwFook, was born in Isleton, California to a paper son and a paper daughter who immigrated to the United States from Heungshan (also known as Zhongshan) district in China. My grandmother and her family eventually moved to a pear ranch on Sutter Island outside of Courtland, where they lived until moving to Oakland in the mid-1940s. For these two decades, life in the Delta shaped their everyday lives from attending a segregated Oriental School to working on the farm for a white landowner. As I learned through the course of my research, even though Delta Chinese Americans no longer live in the area, their ties to the Delta remain strong through memories and kinship networks. This is particularly evident as the Delta-born Chinese Americans, now in their 70s, 80s, and 90s, reflected upon their childhood, attended periodic reunions to see old friends, and, if they were lucky, imparted their

memories and knowledge to their family historian who recognized the importance. I was one of those family historians, and this is where this project began.

After learning about historical archaeological studies of Chinese American sites as an undergraduate, I knew my interest in Asian American history would overlap with my research. By this time, I was already exploring history in Asian American Studies, particularly conducting informal oral history interviews with members of my family. To go with these stories, in my Asian American Studies history courses, I learned about many important events that both sides of my family were a part of: immigrating to the United States in the 1850s after hearing tales of *Gum Saan* or Gold Mountain, the name for California in Cantonese; subverting the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Law by immigrating as paper sons and daughters; being detained on Angel Island and subjected to intense interrogation; laboring as migrant farmers, merchants, garment workers, and domestic service workers; and even participating in the first Chinese American garment workers strike in San Francisco in 1938. What I had not heard enough about in these studies, however, were the rural communities formed during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, including the Sacramento Delta. If Asian Americans were historically so important to the Delta, where were the books, articles, and historiographies of Isleton, Locke, Walnut Grove, and Courtland?

The dissertation provided the perfect opportunity to explore my Delta roots while using an interdisciplinary perspective to study the Isleton Chinese American community. As a student of both historical archaeology and Asian American Studies, I realized that the two fields complemented one another and offered new and exciting ways to think about Chinese American historical archaeology. By historical archaeology, I am referring to archaeological work of the more recent past. Historical archaeological research in and of itself utilizes multiple lines of

evidence to construct narratives of the past, including archaeological artifacts, oral history interviews, and archival research. Utilizing multiple evidentiary lines provides richer interpretations that can highlight complexities and contradictions of the past.

Asian American Studies and historical archaeology do not have a long history of collaborative scholarship, but there is much to be gained from such work in the archaeological study of Chinese Americans. Scholars who only employ one approach are not tapping the full richness of this story. For instance, with the exception of Sue Fawn Chung (2005) and Imogene Lim (2002), Ethnic Studies scholars do not use archaeological material culture in their studies of the past. Instead, scholars studying history primarily rely on the archival record and oral histories for information. Furthermore, many Ethnic Studies scholars see archaeology and anthropology as historic tools of colonial powers used to “Other” (as a verb) people of color (Baker 2010). Moving past this perception and engaging in collaborative work would allow Asian American Studies scholars to conduct historic research from a new and exciting perspective.

Historical archaeologists studying racialized communities have developed ways to do so archaeologically, but their methods and theories for studying communities of color are less sophisticated than theories in Ethnic Studies. This is particularly true for studies of Chinese American sites that have relied on assimilation in artifact analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, these studies have not fully utilized the historical research from Asian American Studies scholars, who have spent decades constructing narratives of the racialized past. Given the advantages that each field stands to gain from collaboration, this dissertation explores what an interdisciplinary approach to Chinese American historical archaeology might look like.

In this dissertation, I draw upon Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies method, theory, and history in my historical archaeological study of the Bing Kong Tong in Isleton Chinatown. I use material culture, oral histories, and historic research to examine everyday life in Isleton under conditions of structural racism from 1915 to the 1950s. To contextualize these data, I draw from historical research on Chinese Americans using perspectives from Asian American Studies as well as racial theory from Ethnic Studies. In particular, I use Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) racial formation theory and Claire Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory to argue that Asian Americans have been racialized as foreigners and that this foreigner racialization has impacted the everyday lives of individuals and communities, including those in Isleton. From this perspective, I interpret the archaeological materials from the Bing Kong Tong site as the constrained outcome of choices, both individual and institutional, under conditions of structural racism. Artifacts become material evidence of these actions that individuals made in order to navigate, subvert, and adapt to these conditions. I also aim to open an analytical and theoretical conversation to understand Chinese American subjectivity by using multiple disciplines and multiple lines of evidence in a way that seriously considers race, racism, and racialization in everyday life.

The Sacramento Delta

Situated between the San Francisco Bay Area and the city of Sacramento, the Sacramento Delta is a rich farming area bounded by the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers (Figure 1). Although only a few Asian Americans live in the Delta today, it was home to many Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans from the last half of the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. Chinatowns and Japantowns quickly

formed in Delta towns such as Isleton, Courtland, Locke, and Walnut Grove and became community nuclei for the Asian American farm and cannery laborers, merchants, and foreman who lived in the area (Chan 1986; Kagiwada 1982).

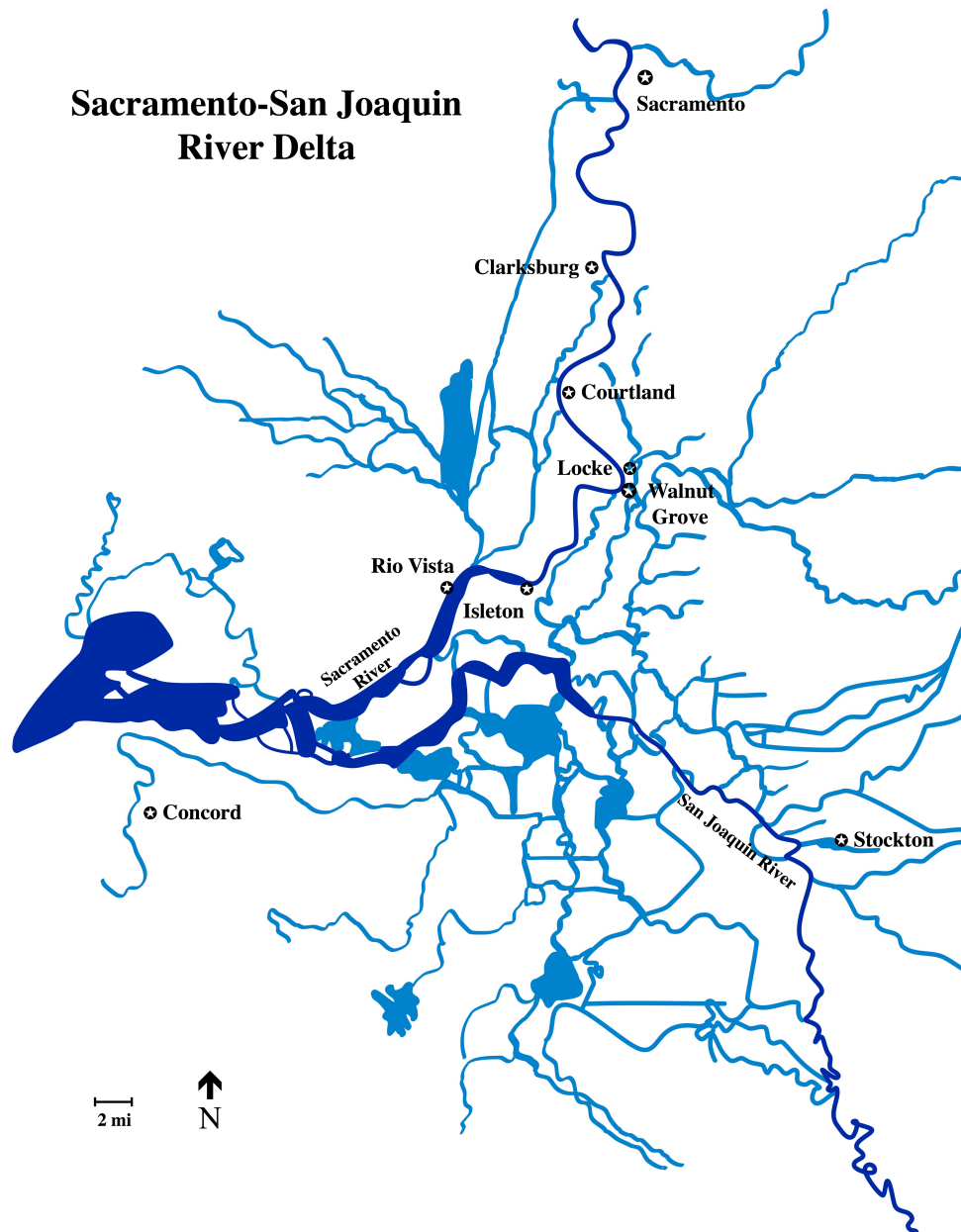


Figure 1. Map of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and some Delta towns. The Sacramento River and San Joaquin River are marked in dark blue to distinguish them from their tributaries. Adapted from Lund et al. (2007: 3).

One of the post-1926 fire buildings housed the Isleton branch of the Bing Kong Tong, located at 29 Main Street. The Bing Kong Tong was a Chinese American community organization whose headquarters were in San Francisco, California. While people originally created tongs in Guangdong as antigovernment associations, mainstream American culture historically has sensationalized tongs as secret societies involved in organized crime, gambling, prostitution rings, and wars with rival tongs (Kwong 2001; Takaki 1998). Tongs, however, served the local community as a social organization (also known as a benevolent society), offering a number of services as well as a physical location where community recreational activities occurred (Anderson 1991; Dillon 1962; Lai 2004; Lin 1998). These services include resolving local disputes and providing mutual support network funding, as well as helping organize Chinese language schools for American-born children. The Bing Kong Tong in Isleton provided the Isleton Chinese American population with these services and was particularly important as a community gathering place for the Isleton Chinese American population (Crawford 2003). The Tong building in Isleton was the site that simultaneously served as a community location, recreational activity hub, Chinese language school for the local children, and domicile for the schoolmaster and family (Crawford 2003). Tongs served important roles in Chinese American life, most of which had nothing to do with crime and violence.

Methods

Archaeological excavation at the Bing Kong Tong site included sampling and block excavation from two adjacent lots: 27 Main Street and 29 Main Street. The historic Tong building still stands on 29 Main Street. The Tong building is currently owned by Isleton Brannan-Andrus Historical Society (IBAHS), which has been raising money to restore the

structure. The adjacent lot at 27 Main Street was a shop until 1926, when the structure burned down. After the fire, this lot remained vacant and became the playground for local Chinese American children. Jean Yokotobi owns this empty lot and is building a memorial garden for Bessie Chinn, who was a member of the Toy family and very important to the Chinese American community in Isleton. The land lots are approximately 30 meters long from the edge of the sidewalk to the beginning of the levee bordering the Sacramento River.

The excavation area included the space behind the standing Tong building and the empty lot at 27 Main Street. With a team of volunteers in the summers between 2009 and 2011, I excavated 34 shovel test pits (STPs) measuring 50-x-50 cm and 11 units of various sizes ranging from 1-x-1 m to 50 cm-x-2 m. This excavation uncovered three features including two burned trash pits and one sheet midden; all three produced a large number of archaeological artifacts. I recovered over 47,000 artifacts from the Tong site including ceramic tablewares and food storage vessels, glass from beverage and medicinal bottles, nail fragments, buttons, and Chinese and American coins.

In addition to archaeological excavation, I conducted five oral history interviews with six individuals, three men and three women. I used family, friend, and kinship networks to identify individuals who lived in the Sacramento Delta and were willing to share their stories with me. I also attended an Isleton Chinese American reunion event in June 2012 to speak with people about my research, show them what I uncovered, and learn more about their experiences in Isleton. Interviews generally ranged from one to two hours long, which I digitally recorded on a Zoom H4n digital audio recorder as .wav files in 24 bit/96 kHz fidelity.

Questions varied depending on the interviewee but included inquiries about the interviewee's family background, childhood memories, memories of Isleton specifically,

memories about multiethnic and multiracial interaction, and life history after leaving the Delta. I also asked specific questions related to excavated material culture. This included showing the interviewee a range of artifacts for identification and asking questions about foodways and what he/she remembered eating. These stories provided detailed information about local everyday life as well as more general information about the Chinese American community in the Sacramento Delta and its relationship with the communities in San Francisco, Sacramento, and China. These interviews particularly emphasized the importance of kinship networks on the local, regional, and transnational level. Consequently, oral history narratives offer a new line of information that provides a narrative of the past while simultaneously helping situate Isleton within larger scales of analysis.

Finally, I also collected information from various archival records. This included Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps, US Census records, and historic newspapers. Some archival sources proved to be more helpful than others. The US Census, for example, did not keep detailed information on Isleton until 1930 because until then, the population was too small. Similarly, the manuscript Census records before 1930 do not distinguish people who lived in the town of Isleton from people who lived in Georgiana Township, which was the enumeration district Isleton was part of. Consequently, some Census information only includes the county or township level. In addition, structural racism also helped and hindered archival documentation of Chinese Americans in Isleton. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, for example, felt Chinatowns were fire hazards and explicitly labeled areas where Chinese Americans lived in their maps. While mappers generated this information under racialized circumstances, it is helpful in archival research on historic Asian American communities. On the other hand, structural racism through the Alien Land Laws prevented Chinese immigrants from owning

property, which eliminates a whole category of records. Furthermore, many people conducted rental transactions informally to circumvent the lease limits that the Alien Land Laws also established.

Chinese Romanization and Terminology

I utilize two Chinese Romanization systems to transliterate Chinese terms in addition to Chinese characters in this dissertation. When transcribed, I write Chinese characters in the complex, traditional form that is closer to classical Chinese rather than the simplified form that people in China use today. Literate Chinese Americans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries would have used traditional Chinese characters in their writing since simplified Chinese is a more modern invention. In addition to writing the Chinese characters in the dissertation, I have also provided translated meanings. Transliterations are italicized, except for place names and commonly used words.

For transliterating Chinese words, I generally use both Cantonese and Mandarin transliterations. This is important because written Chinese has the same meaning regardless of dialect, but spoken Chinese greatly differs between these dialects. The Isleton Chinese American population largely originated from the Canton area of southern China, specifically from three districts in Guangdong Province: Sam Yup, Sze Yup, and Heungshan (Chan 1986). While each district also had its own dialect, most people would have understood standard Cantonese to communicate to each other but would not have spoken Mandarin. I believe it is essential to have transliterations in Cantonese, even though Mandarin is the national language of China, because Cantonese transliterations allow us to use the same names for places, items, or people that the Chinese American community in Isleton used. Using standard Cantonese that is

closest to Sam Yup dialect, I use the Yale system to romanize the majority of translated Cantonese words. Heungshan and Sze Yup dialects would have been different for some of these words, but I do not include them in this dissertation. I do not use the Yale romanization system for commonly used and recognized transliteration for words such as place names or names of vegetables.

In addition to romanized Cantonese, I also used the *pinyin* system to transliterate in Mandarin for several reasons. First, Mandarin is the national language of China and it is the most commonly taught dialect of Chinese in the United States. Most Chinese language classes also use *pinyin* for teaching Mandarin phonetics and tones. Mandarin *pinyin* therefore provides recognizable transliterations for a broader audience. Second, the majority of archaeologists studying Chinese Diaspora sites use Mandarin *pinyin* transliterations if they translate Chinese in their work. Using *pinyin* makes it easier to do comparative work with existing studies.

Terms and definitions

Asian American and Chinese American

I intentionally use the term “Asian American” for two reasons: to align my work with the body of literature in Asian American Studies; and to keep firmly in mind the historical experience of immigrants and their American-born children under particular conditions of race, racialization, and structural racism in the United States. Asian American activists created the term Asian American during the Asian American Movement in the 1960s, intending for it to serve as a pan-ethnic term for people of Asian descent in the United States and to forge a common identity and sense of struggle (Espiritu 1993). Shared elements of the Asian American experience include being denied the right to become naturalized citizens; being unable to own

property; being forced to live in segregated areas; and being unable to marry European Americans because of anti-miscegenation laws. The effect of these laws lumped Asian Americans of different ethnicities together to racialize them as perpetual outsiders (Ancheta 2006; Kim 1999). Creating this term was a political action that empowered the community and gave birth to Asian American Studies as an academic discipline. By racialization, I am referring to the social construction of race that is the product of power relations. Asian Americans specifically have been racialized as perpetual foreigners that can never become American. I go into further detail on foreigner racialization in Chapter 2.

Asian American Studies programs and departments began in the late 1960s as part of the Asian American Movement. Since then, scholars in Asian American Studies intentionally use this term to describe the shared experiences of people of Asian descent in the United States. While racial theory from Ethnic Studies scholars may also be applicable to the study of Chinese Diaspora sites worldwide, I focus on the specific sociohistorical racialized experience in the United States.

It should also be noted that when Asian American activists coined the term Asian American, the Asian American community primarily consisted of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and, to a lesser extent, Korean Americans and South Asian Americans. The composition of the Asian American community has changed since the 1965 Immigration Law went into effect, opening the United States to immigration from Asia through family reunification and employment preferences (Hing 2003). The influx of refugees from Southeast Asia since the mid-1970s has also complicated the notion of who is Asian American. Despite the much wider range in experiences in the Asian American community, the term is still

applicable since these newer Asian immigrants and their children are still subjected to foreigner racialization (Ancheta 2006; Kim 1999).

I use the term “Chinese American” for some of the same reasons I use Asian American. This term signifies a shared identity because of common experiences, despite different dialect groups, as a racialized population specifically in the United States. Additionally, I use this term to distinguish the experiences of ethnic Chinese in the United States from Chinese Diaspora communities elsewhere. In this way, the term Chinese American includes both American-born Chinese and immigrants and distinguishes their experiences from Chinese Canadians, Chinese Australians, and Chinese Peruvians.

Overseas Chinese, Chinese Diaspora, and Chinese American historical archaeology

When referring to my archaeological field of study, I use the terms Chinese American historical archaeology or Chinese Diaspora historical archaeology instead of Overseas Chinese archaeology. Historical archaeologists studying Chinese sites refer to this field as Overseas Chinese archaeology. This phrase is a translation of the Chinese term 華僑, or *huáqiáo* in Mandarin *pinyin* and *wakiu* in Cantonese.

There are several reasons for my decision to not use the term overseas Chinese archaeology. First, the semiotic connotations of the English translation of *huáqiáo* are that these populations were Chinese people that were always “overseas,” that is, always foreign and likely sojourners (Louie 1998). This is particularly problematic in light of foreigner racialization that views Chinese Americans as perpetual foreigners and outsiders to the American body. Consequently, the term Overseas Chinese reifies this sense of foreignness. Secondly, the term *huáqiáo* was a political term that the Qing Dynasty created at the end of the nineteenth century.

Here, the Qing government was referring to the southern Chinese population who migrated throughout Southeast Asia (Wang 1985, 2003). Consequently, the term *huáqiáo* likely did not even refer to the communities in North America, South American, and Australia. The use of this term has also changed over time, indicating that this term did not have a fixed meaning. Recent governments generally use the term *huáqiáo* to refer to Chinese nationals living in foreign countries and refer to people of Chinese descent who are not Chinese nationals as *wàijí huárén* (外籍華人 or *ngoijik fayan* in Cantonese), or literally Chinese person living outside (Louie 1998; Wang 1985). In fact, to avoid the political and legal connotations of *huáqiáo*, the term overseas Chinese (or the Chinese overseas) has been retranslated into Chinese as *hǎiwài huárén* (海外華人 or *hoingoi wayan* in Cantonese) (Wang 1985). Consequently, there is some confusion as to who is considered *huáqiáo*: does this term refer to people who are immigrants but still retain their Chinese nationality or does this refer to all people of Chinese descent regardless of nationality? If this term only refers to people with Chinese nationality, then this nomenclature is only applicable for immigrant sites. If *huáqiáo* includes everyone of Chinese descent, then it once again reemphasizes the notion of foreignness.

To describe the work on ethnic Chinese sites worldwide, I use the term Chinese Diaspora archaeology. Here, I follow the example of the work of Asian Studies historian Wang Gungwu (1985, 2003), as discussed in an archaeological context by Edward González-Tennant (2011), to think of Chinese migration in terms of diaspora. I also use the term Chinese Diaspora to follow the example of historical archaeologists studying the African Diaspora to highlight the complexities within a heterogeneous population that shares roots in a geographic area with different experiences depending on the location communities settled in. The term diaspora also

emphasizes the transnational and relationships networks between communities worldwide (McKeown 1999).

Chapter overview

Chapter 2 is a literature review that explores the theoretical background of my dissertation to explain my own approach to archaeological studies of Asian Americans. This chapter heavily relies on racial theory from Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies literature. First, I outline the model of ethnic succession that Chicago School of Sociology scholars created and discuss the continued impact that Chicago School scholars have on the social sciences, including archaeology. I then problematize the Chicago School model in light of use theory from Ethnic Studies, particularly Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) racial formation theory, Claire Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory, and the notion of the "perpetual foreigner" or "stranger" discussed by Angelo Ancheta (2006) and Ronald Takaki (1998). I use these concepts to consider how assimilation-based models of analyses in Chinese Diaspora historical archaeology are problematic and how an interdisciplinary approach to archaeological analyses that employs racial theory may offer new ways of thinking about the racialized past.

Chapter 3 provides the sociohistorical context for my study on the Isleton Chinese American community. This chapter begins with an overview of the pre-1965 Chinese American experience. I discuss factors contributing to Chinese immigration abroad, particularly the role of imperialism, then shift to the Chinese American experience in the United States. Here, I particularly focus on the impact of racialization and structural racism on the everyday lives of Chinese American communities. I then turn to the Sacramento Delta and Isleton. I first discuss the role of Chinese American labor in the development of the Delta before introducing Isleton

and the Bing Kong Tong. I explore everyday life activities at the Tong site and in the Chinese American community more broadly to provide context for archaeological analysis.

Chapter 4 focuses on the archaeology at the Bing Kong Tong site. I outline my archaeological fieldwork and then discuss site formation processes to consider what types of materials we might expect to see archaeologically on the Tong site. In the subsequent artifact analysis, I review material types and discuss the broad patterns of artifact distribution before going into greater detail about significant diagnostic artifacts. I focus on the three excavated features and use archaeological materials in conjunction with historic research to date each deposit. This chapter provides the data for interdisciplinary interpretation in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 presents interpretations of my multiple evidentiary lines from an interdisciplinary perspective. I explore how oral history, archival research, and archaeological materials reveal interesting stories about everyday life under conditions of structural racism. In particular, I explore how we can detect networks operating on multiple scales: the local, the regional, and the transnational. I interpret artifacts as the material evidence of individual decisions people made to adapt, subvert, and negotiate structural racism. Here, I consider how we can see Chinese and non-Chinese artifacts not as material correlates of assimilation or non-assimilation, but rather remains of agency.

I also interpret these artifacts as representing the movement of people, goods, ideas, and money within social networks locally in Isleton and the Sacramento Delta; within the San Francisco Bay Area region; and transnationally between Isleton and southern China. This includes relationships between Chinese Diaspora communities as well as interracial and interethnic relationships locally in Isleton. To explore these networks, I focus on what these different evidentiary lines can tell us about foodways, education and literacy, and health and

body. Finally, I explore how an interdisciplinary approach allows us to consider the development of a Chinese American subjectivity, or how members of the Chinese American community conceived of their place and identity in a racist world and its power relations. I draw upon the work of Lisa Lowe (1996) and W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) to consider the complexities of Chinese American identity and the possibility of a Chinese American double consciousness that recognized foreigner racialization. I argue that an interdisciplinary exploration of subjectivity can shed new light on Chinese American historical archaeological interpretations and take studies in new directions.

Chapter 6 reviews the benefits of a new, interdisciplinary historical archaeology that conjoins racial theory and archaeological analyses. I argue that analyses of Chinese American sites must consider the role of foreigner racialization and structural racism in the everyday lives of communities. From this perspective, we can achieve a much more nuanced understanding of the racialized past in a way that considers the complexities of the Chinese American community as well as the interconnectedness of communities throughout the Chinese Diaspora. Additionally, we can explore the role of agency and the development of Chinese American subjectivities to think about how individuals made certain decisions to adapt, subvert, survive, and thrive under conditions of structural racism.

Chapter 2: Racial theory and the historical archaeology of Chinese Americans

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for my interdisciplinary analysis of the Chinese American community in Isleton. I situate my project within current literature in Ethnic Studies as well as Chinese Diaspora historical archaeological studies to argue for why an interdisciplinary framework is crucial for a nuanced understanding of this racialized community. I begin with a discussion on two major social science theories of race that understand race as a non-biological, social construct. First, I examine the model of ethnic succession theorized by Robert E. Park of the Chicago School of Sociology. I specifically focus on how Chicago School scholars studied why Asian Americans did not assimilate into mainstream Euroamerican society and how this perceived non-assimilation has shaped how social scientists have understood the Asian American experience.

Next, I discuss racial theory from Ethnic Studies scholarship, which provides a critical lens to evaluate past historical archaeological work as well as a way to proceed with future research, including this dissertation. Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) theory of racial formation and racialization informs my approach to Chinese American historical archaeology by arguing that race is socially constructed, changes with time, and is inherently tied to politics and power. I build upon ideas of racial formation with racial theory geared toward understanding differential racialization, including Claire J. Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory, and the notion that Asian Americans are "perpetual foreigners" or "strangers" as discussed by Angelo Ancheta (2006) and Ronald Takaki (2008). These theories are crucial to my understanding of how Asian Americans have a unique racial positioning such that a black-white model of race is inadequate for understanding the Asian American experience. These theories shape my critique

of the existing body of work on Chinese American historical archaeology as well as my own approach to the field. I argue that historical archaeology should use these racial theories to move beyond the influence of assimilation.

I end this chapter with an overview discussion of Chinese American historical archaeology in light of racial theory from Ethnic Studies scholars. I link assimilation-based models of analysis to the enduring influence of the model of ethnic succession and perceptions about Asian American foreignness. From an Ethnic Studies-based racial theory perspective, I argue that the assumptions made in an assimilation-based model can be problematic and unintentionally support stereotypes about historic Chinese American populations. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the possibilities of interdisciplinary work between Ethnic Studies and historical archaeology to study Chinese Americans, which is the topic I explore in the rest of this dissertation.

Framework for Analyzing the Social Construction of Race

Since the 1920s and 1930s, when the Chicago School of Sociology began studying race, scholars have theorized the social construction of race in ways that challenge older biological definitions. Many social scientists have acknowledged the importance of race as an academic topic, focusing on how it is socially produced as well as how researchers can unintentionally reproduce racial ideologies (Omi and Winant 1994). Scholars who created the Chicago School model of race, according to Omi and Winant (1994: 10), were “the first *modern* analysts of the subject, and their thinking shaped the dominant theoretical and methodological assumptions about race relations” (emphasis in the original) through the twentieth century. Furthermore, the Chicago School model still influences contemporary social scientists, shaping common-sense,

theoretical, and ideological understandings of race that affect how we talk about, write about, theorize, and politically address race today (Yu 2001). Scholars studying the historical archaeologies of Chinese Americans utilize an assimilation-based model that is not unlike the Chicago School model of ethnic succession (Blanford 1987; Staski 1996). I argue that the Chicago School model has influenced our assumptions regarding Asian American assimilation into mainstream Euroamerican culture and has shaped how historical archaeologists study Chinese American material culture.

The Chicago School model of ethnic succession is based on the interaction cycle in the work of Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess (1921). Trying to understand race relations in the United States, Park studied what happens when immigrant groups interact with the dominant ethnic group. He focused on interactions among African Americans and European Americans as well as those among Polish immigrants and European groups that had previously settled in the United States. From these studies, Park created the model of ethnic succession, in which he describes interactions between groups as a sequence of stages: competition, conflict, accommodation, and finally assimilation (Park 1921; Yu 2001). He argues that this process is cyclical such that as one immigrant group achieves assimilation, the process begins again with a new immigrant group. Park contends this is a universal process, regardless of ethnic or racial group. Some groups such as Asian Americans, however, did not achieve the goal of assimilation, so Park and his students sought to understand why (Yu 2001).

Park began studying Asian Americans after a group of scholars established the Survey of Race Relations in 1924 to examine non-European residents on the Pacific coast. Before this survey, Park had little experience studying Asian Americans and their role in defining race relations in this region. Consequently, this survey was important to Park's study on race and his

perceptions of Asian Americans. As both an immigrant and non-white race group, Asian Americans were, according to Park, the “ideal link between the Polish peasant and the Negro Problem” for understanding race relations and the adjustment experiences of different racial and ethnic immigrant groups (Yu 2001: 39). After observing Asian Americans on the West Coast in the 1920s, Park realized that they encountered a barrier to assimilation. The model of ethnic succession links assimilation to regular social contact with the existing population; multiple interactions eventually develop into shared memories and experiences. Prejudice, however, prevented this from happening for Asian Americans on the West Coast where Asian Americans were segregated from white Americans. This dearth of communication between European Americans and Asian Americans since the late 1800s led to isolation without social contact. Consequently, since prejudice could only be overcome by interaction that yielded shared experiences and empathy, Asian Americans could not assimilate properly (Yu 2001).

Non-assimilation and isolation were prevalent themes in later sociological studies on Asian Americans, including the work of Paul Siu (1987). Siu was one of Park’s graduate students who sought to understand why Asian Americans were not assimilating. His research during the 1930s drew on his personal social network of Chinese laundrymen in Chicago Chinatown, where he observed and conducted interviews. In his dissertation, Siu concludes that these laundrymen were not assimilating because of a sojourner mentality. A sojourner is someone who “clings to the cultural heritage of his own ethnic group in spite of many years of residence abroad” (Siu 1987: 4). This mentality in the laundrymen was not evidence of an inherent tendency to cling to cultural heritage, but rather the result of explicit racial exclusion. Siu argues that prejudice and hostile discrimination in conjunction with self-defensive ethnocentrism and self-isolation prevented these Chinese laundrymen from forming social

relations outside the Chinese American community. Consequently, these laundrymen reached a different outcome in the race relations cycle: isolation instead of assimilation (McKeown 2002; Siu 1987; Yu 2001). Other scholars have adopted this notion of the sojourner to explain why the race relations cycle failed for Asian Americans, and this image has become part of how mainstream American society views Asian Americans (Yu 2001).

Despite good intentions, Chicago School sociologists made assumptions that rendered the model of ethnic succession problematic for understanding Asian Americans. Chicago School scholars believed in the immigrant analogy, or the idea that the experiences of one immigrant group were similar to those of all immigrant groups (Omi and Winant 1994). Consequently, these scholars believed the model of ethnic succession outlined a universal experience for all immigrants, despite the fact that they developed this model off of the experiences of European immigrants in United States Northeast and Midwest urban areas. This assumption is particularly problematic. As sociologist Bob Blauner (1972) and Omi and Winant (1994) argue, Chicago School sociologists assumed that there were no differences across ethnic and racial immigrant groups. Consequently, these scholars ignored historical differences that affected particular ethnic or racial groups such as slavery, colonization, and exclusion, which undeniably impacted the experiences of immigrant groups and their relationship with the dominant Euroamerican group.

While the Chicago School model failed to explain the race problem in the United States, it remained influential for other scholars studying race. Sociologist Milton Gordon (1964), for example, attempted to salvage parts of the model by further developing the concept of assimilation. He outlines seven stages of assimilation ranging from cultural assimilation (or its weaker form, cultural acculturation) to civic assimilation. Gordon argues that different ethnic

groups achieve different levels of assimilation depending on their sociohistorical circumstances. Groups that are spatially and socially isolated or face “unusually marked discrimination” achieve lower levels of assimilation than those who are integrated into the “core society” (Gordon 1964: 77-78). By considering multiple types of assimilation, Gordon explains why certain racial or ethnic groups did not fully assimilate into mainstream American society like most European ethnic groups. Gordon’s work and the Chicago School model continue to influence assimilation studies throughout the twentieth century (Alba and Nee 2003; Omi and Winant 1994).

Chicago School sociologists also assumed that racism was the result of individual prejudices and attitudes that could be changed with proper education. This assumption neglected “the institutional and ideological nature of race in America, and the systemic presence of racial dynamics” and instead focused on “racial dynamics as the irresponsible products of individual pathologies” (Omi and Winant 1994: 10). By viewing racism as problem on the individual level, Park and his students did not acknowledge the role of structural racism in shaping race relations in the United States. Other scholars today, particularly those in Ethnic Studies departments, have theorized specifically about the role of structural racism. They understand racism not as individual prejudice that can be educated away, but rather as social relationships involving power created through public policy and the law. Consequently, these scholars understand racism as both institutionalized into social structure and constantly reconstructed through everyday discourse (Omi and Winant 1994).

Ethnic Studies racial theory

Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s (1994) racial formation theory challenges the Chicago School model. Instead of a biological definition of race, Omi and Winant argue for a social

construction definition that understands race as something that forms over time in relation to power and is capable of change. Also known as processes of racialization, racial formation is “...the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi and Winant 1994: 55). These racial categories, which include ascribed, embodied, and essentialized social difference, are not biological categories. Instead, they are the product of “historically situated [racial] *projects*” (emphasis in the original) that link representations and meanings of race to everyday practices and macro-level social organization (Omi and Winant 1994: 56). Omi and Winant argue that racial formation is both structural and discursive and is socially constructed through representation with concrete ramifications for racialized populations. Race is not a matter of individual identity or cultural affiliation, but rather is deeply political, embedded in social structure, and central to social representation.

Omi and Winant’s emphasis on social construction highlights the role of power and politics in racial category formation. Because these categories can change depending on time and place, racial formation theorists contend that there can be multiple meanings of race at any given moment. During the late nineteenth century, for example, Anglo-Saxon Americans perceived the Irish as non-white and not part of the white American population on the East Coast. At the same time, the Irish on the West Coast could claim whiteness because they positioned themselves closer to Anglo-Saxon Americans compared to Asian immigrants who were the racial Other on the West Coast (Ignatiev 2009; Roediger 1991, 2005; Sandmeyer 1991). Furthermore, the West Coast Irish had the power and political clout to transform these racial categories into lived reality. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Irish labor in California formed the Workingman’s Party that supported politicians who ran on an anti-Chinese platform. Once in office, these politicians helped pass laws aimed at discriminating against

Chinese Americans. These laws helped codify racial perceptions about Chinese Americans into social structure such that racial categories ultimately became institutionalized as structural racism (Omi and Winant 1994).

Scholars have expanded Omi and Winant's framework to apply racial formation theory to other disciplines such as geography (see Lai 2012, Pulido 2000) and to specific racialized groups like Asian Americans. Political scientist Claire Kim's (1999: 107) racial triangulation theory is particularly important because it explores why Asian Americans do not fit in a black-white binary of race relations. Kim (1999: 107) contends that opinion-makers, or "White elected officials, journalists, scholars, community leaders, [and] business elites," racialized nineteenth and twentieth century Asian Americans not only in relation to whites and blacks but also in terms of their perceived foreignness. Consequently, Kim's racial triangulation theory argues that the social construction of race occurs along a multi-dimensional plane in which racial groups are racialized in relation to each other rather than a two-dimensional black-white hierarchy. While racial triangulation includes racialization in relation to whiteness and blackness, this model acknowledges that this process simultaneously occurs along other social axes depending on the racial group in question. Asian Americans specifically cannot be adequately understood within a black-white binary because their racial position is much more complex than this polarity allows. Kim (1999: 107) argues that opinion-makers relationally positioned Asian Americans with respect to both blacks and whites along two dimensions: racial and/or cultural superiority/inferiority, which she calls relative valorization, and perceived foreignness, which she calls civic ostracism. Asian Americans are positioned as culturally inferior to whites but superior to blacks, while simultaneously perceived as foreign outsiders regardless of citizenship status and therefore not part of the U.S. nation that includes blacks. Kim's racial positioning

argument allows us to see how race is relational and can involve parameters such as citizenship, nationality, class, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, racial triangulation provides a model for thinking about race in a multiracial context rather than a black-white binary of race relations.

Other scholars in Asian American Studies have examined the idea of perceived foreignness and how this type of racialization impacted the Asian American experience. Ronald Takaki (1998: 18), for example, argues that mainstream America historically has seen Asian Americans as “strangers from a different shore” who could not transform into “Americans” like European immigrants because of their different traditions and distinct “racial uniform” that distinguishes them from white Americans (Takaki 2008: 12-13). Consequently, mainstream American society continues to perceive Asian immigrants and their American-born descendants as foreign outsiders. Takaki argues that this perception has shaped the Asian American experience through legislation restricting or banning immigration and citizenship, ordinances designed to harass and restrict, and outright hostility and violence from Euroamericans.

Angelo Ancheta (2006: 64) also theorizes the role of perceived foreignness with the term “foreigner racialization,” or the process by which popular discourse has equated Asian Americans with immigrant status, regardless of actual citizenship status. He believes that this process operates on multiple levels including psychological cognition, discourse, and institutional structure (Ancheta 2006: 63). Furthermore, he argues that race-neutral terms become racialized through these same processes and terms such as “immigrant” and “foreigner” become equated with the image of non-white bodies. This equivalence becomes part of the social and political discourse, permeating commonsense knowledge within American society. Ancheta argues that foreigner racialization has major ramifications for racialized populations that are presumed to be subordinated outsiders and not actually American.

For Asian Americans, the foreigner racialization process that made them “strangers from a different shore” is best illustrated by the long history of immigration and naturalization laws that impacted the Asian American experience (Ancheta 2006; Takaki 2008: 18). Beginning with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the United States government proceeded to pass legislation banning immigration from all Asian countries. In 1934, this quest for Asian exclusion led the United States to grant independence to the Philippines, which had been an American colony since 1898 after Spain lost the Spanish-American War. As colonial subjects, Filipinos gained American national status and became the only Asian group permitted to travel freely between the United States and Asia. Philippines independence took away this special status and the right to travel at a time when white labor was becoming increasingly unhappy about large numbers of Filipino farmworkers. Given that independence occurred when the United States was asserting its imperial influence across the globe, it is clear that the desire to separate the white American from its brown, black, and yellow imperial subjects was part of how Asian Americans were Othered as foreigners (Ancheta 2006; Takaki 2008).

Naturalization laws maintained this perceived foreigner status by making Asian immigrants ineligible to become naturalized citizens. While the 1870 modification of the 1790 Naturalization Act allowed people of African descent to naturalize, it was unclear whether Asian immigrants were included as well. In a series of important decisions including *In re Ah Yup* (1879), *Ozawa v. United States* (1922), and *United States v. Thind* (1923), the Supreme Court ruled Asian immigrants were a non-white race ineligible for naturalization (Ancheta 2006; Chan 1986; Takaki 2008). Asian immigrants became legally known as “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” a race-neutral phrase legislators used to uphold discriminatory laws. Thus, they regulated everyday life without employing overtly racist language. Beginning in the 1910s,

Alien Land Laws, for example, banned “aliens ineligible to citizenship” from owning property in a number of states and set limits on the number of years they could hold a lease (Chan 1986).

While state legislatures eventually overturned these laws, including California in 1948, the Alien Land Law in Wyoming was legal until 2001. Furthermore, Florida still has an Alien Land Law in its state Constitution and efforts as recent as 2008 to remove it have ultimately failed.

The clearest example of foreigner racialization for Asian Americans is the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The United States government classified Japanese immigrants and their American-born children and grandchildren as enemy aliens, and as many as 120,000 men, women, and children were removed from their homes and placed in internment camps in the United States interior. Despite the fact that two-thirds of these individuals were American citizens, the actions of the United States government clearly demonstrate that Japanese and Japanese Americans, regardless of citizenship status, were perceived as foreigners no different than the Japanese enemy (Ancheta 2006; Chan 1991; Takaki 2008).

From these examples, it is clear that a black-white binary of race relations alone is not enough to understand the Asian American experience. Foreigner racialization had life-altering impacts on the Asian American community. Furthermore, since this type of racialization is specific to particular racial groups, it becomes evident that we cannot view all racialized groups as the same or understand them with the same racial theory models. Omi and Winant’s (1994) racial formation model and Kim’s (1999) racial triangulation model offer complex theories of race that allow us to understand the nuances of the Asian American experience and see them as a racialized population within a particular time and space. Likewise, Takaki (2008) and Ancheta (2006) push us to recognize how the foreign, “stranger from a different shore” had structural

impacts on legislation that affected everyday life in Asian American communities. Consequently, as I expand upon in the next section, I believe archaeologists studying Chinese Americans must consider the unique racialized position of Asian Americans in their analyses to comprehensively understand the Chinese American experience.

Race in the historical archaeology of Chinese Americans

So what does this mean for the historical archaeology of the Chinese Diaspora? Historical archaeologists have given increasing levels of attention to sites in the Chinese Diaspora since the 1970s. The majority of these studies have focused on sites in North America, Australia, and New Zealand. In the United States, many excavations have been salvage archaeology projects because many older urban areas deemed blighted and targeted for redevelopment were historic Chinatowns. Early studies built the foundation of the field through identifying Chinese-manufactured material culture and establishing artifact typologies (see for example Great Basin Foundation 1987; Greenwood 1976; Hattori et al. 1979; Lister and Lister 1989; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1982; Ritchie 1986). Archaeologists began exploring ways to interpret the material culture. These interpretations often relied broadly on conceptualizations of ethnicity in historical archaeology in conjunction with ideas about immigrant groups assimilating or not assimilating into mainstream Euroamerican society. As scholars have noted more recently, however, reliance on ethnicity and assimilation is problematic, particularly in light of the literature on race and racialization (Fong 2005; Mullins 2008; Orser 2007; Rains 2003; Voss 2005; Voss and Allen 2008). For Asian Americans, these studies fail to consider how these tropes about assimilation and foreignness perpetuate stereotypes rather than challenging or enriching what we think we know about the past.

To understand how archaeologists have interpreted Chinese American sites, it is crucial to understand how historical archaeology has looked at race and ethnicity. Distinctions between “race” from “ethnicity” in the field has been nebulous at best, and they are often used interchangeably (Orser 1999). Broadly speaking, historical archaeologists saw ethnicity as an identity that communities formed and exerted themselves opposed to race, which was an ascribed identity by other groups. Studying ethnicity therefore allowed archaeologists to consider some degree of agency, which became popular to archaeologists looking for an alternative to structuralist interpretations of the past. Early studies on ethnicity focused on the formation, maintenance, and interaction of ethnic groups, giving particular attention to material correlates of ethnicity, or “ethnic markers,” which were specific artifacts associated with particular ethnic communities (McGuire 1982; Orser 1999). These ethnic markers gave archaeologists a material way to examine ethnicity in the past. This made studying ethnicity more attractive than race because as an ascribed social construct, race was a more abstract concept and did not have clear material correlates.

Ethnic markers, however, led some archaeologists relying on processual, scientific methods to oversimplify interpretations of ethnic and racial communities. Instead of exploring agency and identity, ethnic markers became seen as a body of distinctive material culture belonging to a given ethnic group such that the archaeological presence of these artifacts could be linked to the historic presence of these associated communities (McGuire 1982). Furthermore, some historical archaeologists argued that ethnic markers reflected the “mental template” of a given population and could therefore provide insight into something otherwise unknown. Logically, this meant that the percentage of “ethnic” materials in an assemblage would reflect how “ethnic” the group was. This argument had profound impacts on the study of racial and

ethnic minorities in the United States. This research gained momentum in the historical archaeologies of the African Diaspora, where archaeologists sought glimpses of African culture that continued to survive in plantation contexts (Orser 1999). Historical archaeologists also extended this practice to Chinese Americans, whose archaeological presence became equated with stereotypically Chinese material culture that was distinct from Euroamerican material culture: particular ceramic tablewares, opium pipes, and faunal assemblages with particular species represented in distinctive butchering practices.

While archaeologists today recognize that this practice led archaeologists to rely on stereotypical artifact associations to identify certain groups of people (Orser 1999), elements of this practice remain in the field. As Charles Orser (1999: 662) notes, historical archaeologists have shifted from seeing artifacts as static indicators of ethnicity to symbols whose meanings can change. Instead, these scholars focused on assimilation and ethnic boundary maintenance and investigated questions similar to questions Chicago School asked: Why do some ethnic groups assimilate into Euroamerican society while ethnic differences persist in other ethnic groups (Orser 1999; McGuire 1982)? While Orser (1999: 662) and Randall McGuire (1982) argue that scholars saw assimilation studies as a way to move beyond ethnic markers, the fact remains that studying assimilation still relies on these same ethnic markers to determine whether or not an ethnic group assimilated into mainstream Euroamerican society. This has been particularly true within the field of Chinese American historical archaeology. Consequently, given the nineteenth century stereotype of non-assimilating Chinese; the influence of the Chicago School; and widespread interest in ethnicity, ethnic markers, and assimilation in historical archaeology, it is not surprising that Chinese American historical archaeologists relied on assimilation in their analyses.

The influence of assimilation in Chinese American historical archaeology is most evident in two ways: language describing Chinese American assemblages, and analysis methods relying on determining assimilation or non-assimilation by calculating the ratio of Chinese to non-Chinese artifacts. While it is likely archaeologists do not intentionally draw upon stereotypes about assimilation or non-assimilation for Chinese Americans, other archaeologists directly draw upon an assimilation framework by employing methods that specifically seek to investigate degree of assimilation. Both examples demonstrate the deep influence of assimilation studies in Chinese American historical archaeology, regardless of intentionality.

Language that archaeologists use to describe Chinese ethnic markers often invokes notions of foreignness, and therefore non-assimilation. This includes describing items as “exotic”—that is, distinctly different from Euroamerican materials and therefore foreign. These connotations indicate ethnic Chinese identity maintenance through clothing, ceramics, or foodways. The influence of assimilation in language is most evident in discussions of foodways, which has a long history of “Othering” the Chinese through stereotyped consumption of otherwise socially unacceptable food items by Western standards. Historically, Westerners have scrutinized Chinese and Chinese American foodways as exotic (Lee 1999; Miller 1969; Tchen 1999). This is historically documented as early as Marco Polo’s exploration of China in 1275 where he describes the “exotic and unattractive aspects of Chinese eating habits” (Roberts 2002: 28). The rat/cat/dog-eating Chinese trope epitomized the ambivalent feelings of Western culture toward Chinese foodways that permeated popular culture, as seen in publications such as the *New York Times*, *Harper’s Weekly*, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, and *The Wasp*, commercial advertisements, and even textbooks for children (Lee 1999; Tchen 1999). Assumptions about foreign Chinese foodways were therefore widespread and historically

entrenched within Western common sense understandings about the Chinese and, by extension, Chinese American populations.

Assumptions about distinct Chinese foodways are important to how archaeologists have approached studying foodways. Nineteenth century perceptions of the distinctness of Chinese traditions developed evaluations on a Euroamerican standard. Because Chinese foodways were so different, they became something that clearly distinguished Chinese Americans from Euroamericans. Furthermore, because social scientists have argued that foodways are slow to change and tied to group identity (Brown and Mussel 1984; Chang 1977; Mintz 1996), these distinct foodways have fed into assumptions about Chinese Americans not assimilating. Historical archaeologists have relied on this logic: if foodways are less likely to change, then foodways changes in Chinese American assemblages should be a good indicator of assimilation. Traditional foodways maintenance, on the other hand, should be an indication of intentional Chinese identity maintenance and therefore non-assimilation. Combined with the argument that Asian Americans failed to complete the model of ethnic succession, it is easy to conclude that foodways are the best way to gain insight into historic Chinese American identity.

The “normal” standard upon which archaeologists have attempted to measure change in foodways, however, has drawn upon stereotypical perceptions about Chinese foodways, represented by the consumption of particular food items prepared in particular ways. Edward Staski (1996: 181), for example, notes that the Chinese diet is “known to have been highly distinctive from common American foodways.” Likewise, the foodways chapter in the Woodland Opera House report states, “Chinese tastes in food, and those of the Cantonese in particular, had always been highly eclectic” (Prazniak 1984:131). Other archaeologists describe Chinese foodways as “exotic” when discussing a variety of Chinese foodways elements from

food containers to the “appearance and flavor” of bittermelon (Honeysett 1982; Longenecker and Stapp 1993).

Archaeologists also have employed a Euroamerican perspective for identifying Chinese foodways through faunal remains, where a pork-heavy traditional Chinese diet contrasts greatly from a beef-dominated Euroamerican diet. This analytical perspective becomes problematic when Anglo-Saxon-centered judgment or embodied experience becomes the basis for interpretation, yielding stereotype-laden interpretations that ultimately stigmatize Chinese foodways: the Chinese were consuming species and animal parts considered unfit for consumption by Western standards such as rats, cats and dogs, chicken feet, fish heads, and pig feet (Gust 1982; Langenwalter and Langenwalter 1987; Prazniak 1984). These interpretations draw from a Yellow Peril-derived trope which views the Chinese as possessing “a tradition which out of necessity stressed economy and full utilization of resources” such that “[n]ot only were a vast variety of plants and animals considered edible, but every digestible part of a food item was consumed” (Prazniak 1984:131). Consequently, faunal assemblages with these species and parts become a Chinese ethnic marker, made distinct from the Anglo-Saxon American faunal assemblage as the “Other.” From these examples, it is clear that the language archaeologists have employed rely on a Euroamerican foodways standard that evaluates Chinese American foodways in light of an assimilation model.

The influence of stereotypes about the distinctiveness Chinese foodways is also evident how archaeologists structure their analyses and interpretations. Edward Staski (1996) demonstrates the influence of Chicago School scholars’ preoccupation with assimilation as well as a fascination in archaeology with ethnicity with his work on the Chinese American Community in El Paso, Texas. Staski outlines Milton Gordon’s (1964) definitions of ethnicity

and acculturation as well as Gordon's seven types of assimilation as his model to understand and interpret the El Paso Chinese American community. In setting up an argument for his study, Staski (1996: 170) argues,

it is recognized that those archaeologists studying the overseas Chinese should not be unfairly criticized for focusing on acculturation. It is well established that the Chinese assimilated relatively little during their first 80 years in the United States, and changes in behavioral identifiers usually are the first steps towards further assimilation.

Staski uses this logic to frame his analysis, which focuses on different material types (i.e., bottles, ceramics, faunal remains) and determines whether or not they show a pattern of assimilation or non-assimilation. He identifies artifacts as either Chinese or non-Chinese by use or manufacture and calculates statistics to conclude if an artifact type implies assimilation based on the percent of Chinese to non-Chinese artifacts. According to this argument, fewer Chinese artifacts imply non-assimilation and higher number of non-Chinese artifacts implies assimilation or at least some degree of acculturation. By relying on definitions of assimilation and acculturation outlined by Gordon, the influence of the Chicago School and analyses of Chinese American sites becomes evident.

The influences of the Chicago School and ethnicity studies are clear in Staski's work. The theory framing the analysis employs a Chicago School-based model for understanding assimilation, acculturation, and ethnicity. The analysis then seeks to determine whether or not Chinese Americans in El Paso assimilated into mainstream Euroamerican culture through the material record. Artifact analysis relies on ethnic markers, that is, anything identifiably Chinese. By focusing on ethnicity and assimilation, this analysis assumes that ethnic identity can be accurately inferred from certain types of archaeological remains. Furthermore, this conclusion

assumes that the Chinese American population in El Paso had the ability and intention to either assimilate or not assimilate through the items they used and consumed. While Staski considers some contextual information impacting the access the El Paso Chinese American community had to Chinese goods, I believe that other factors need to be considered, particularly the role of structural racism. The El Paso materials were deposited during the era of exclusion where structural racism would have affected the everyday lives of the El Paso Chinese American community. Consequently, I find it is too simplistic to assume that the material assemblage is a clear reflection of whether or not the Chinese American population intended to assimilate.

The Chicago School model of assimilation is also integral to John Blanford's (1987) analysis of glass bottles at the Wong Ho Leun site in Riverside, California. Based on the assumption that the Chinese and Euroamerican population in Riverside had the same access to the same range of goods, Blanford argues that archaeologists can establish a Chinese ethnicity pattern based on bottle usages. Blanford models his processual archaeology-influenced patterns off of Stanley South's (1978) refuse behavior patterns. Like Staski, Blanford relies on ethnic markers to identify "Chinese" from "Euroamerican" artifacts. Blanford sorts the bottles that Chinese Americans used by content types such as food, beverage, and medicine. He examines the relative proportion of each category in the Riverside assemblage and in other Chinese American assemblages in the Western United States for comparison. Based on this analysis, Blanford concludes that the Chinese ethnic bottle pattern had very few food bottles compared to beverage bottles. He argues that this pattern corresponds with what archaeologists know about traditional foodways since Chinese food goods were transported in ceramic vessels and not glass vessels like many Euroamerican food items. Consequently, the absence of glass food vessels implies that the Chinese continued consuming Chinese goods from ceramic vessels. Blanford

argues that this pattern illustrates a given Chinese American population was not moving towards an assimilated Euroamerican lifestyle.

While Blanford notes that most of the examined assemblages support this pattern, there are several “deviant” sites such as Lovelock, Nevada, and Sacramento and the Woodland Opera House in California. To explain why these sites do not fit the ethnic Chinese bottle pattern, Blanford taps further into the Chicago School assimilation model and argues that there were actually two ethnic strategies that the Chinese American population employed—the “sojourner” pattern and the “Chinese-American” pattern. The sojourner pattern, or the ethnic Chinese pattern as discussed above, demonstrates intentional non-assimilation because Chinese immigrants were not planning on staying in the United States. On the other hand, the “Chinese-American” pattern had a higher percentage of food bottles and looked more like a Euroamerican bottle pattern. Blanford (1987: 220) describes this pattern as “Chinese-American” because he argues this group intended to settle permanently in the United States and consequently had incentive to assimilate. While he also acknowledges that the remote location could have contributed to the increased use of Euroamerican food bottles, Blanford’s analysis and interpretation are structured around assimilation. Even Blanford’s “deviant” bottle pattern is explained in terms of non-assimilation. Blanford’s bottle pattern analysis, terminology, and logic demonstrate the prevalent influence of the Chicago School model on archaeology such that assimilation is integral to what type of research questions scholars have asked, how they have structured their analyses, and what conclusions they have drawn.

The deep influence of assimilation leaves us with an important question: How do we move beyond thinking about assimilation and non-assimilation when we analyze Chinese American archaeological assemblages? One step in this direction is a more comprehensive

consideration of the sociohistoric conditions in which the Chinese American community lived. Adrian Praetzellis and Mary Praetzellis (1997, 1998) provide an example of what this might look like in their study of Sacramento, California, which explores how the relationship between a white merchant and the Chinese American community impacted an assemblage. They argue that the high percentage of Euroamerican artifacts compared to Chinese-manufactured artifacts should not be interpreted in terms of assimilation or acculturation, but rather in light of ethnographic research that illustrates how white merchants often served as middlemen between the Chinese American and broader Euroamerican communities. They contend that the Chinese American community adapted to life in Sacramento such that when there were disruptions in the Chinese American supply networks in the 1850s, merchants and community associations utilized Euroamerican merchant connections to wholesalers for goods. While the Sacramento Chinese American community used this “assimilated” Euroamerican assemblage, Praetzellis and Praetzellis argue that there is still evidence of traditional Chinese practices. Transfer-print tablewares, for example, have engraved Chinese characters marking ownership. Similarly, the faunal assemblage displays Euroamerican meat cuts with evidence of defleshing knife scores, which is a Chinese meat preparation practice. This study illustrates that archaeologists cannot understand Chinese American assemblages in terms of an assimilation or non-assimilation paradigm because there may be more to the story than can be gleaned via a list of artifact types. Archaeologists must think more comprehensively about sociohistorical context and consider how these artifacts may instead tell us about meaning and social practice in the studied community.

Barbara Voss and Rebecca Allen (2008) also recognize the prevalence and problems of assimilation within “Overseas Chinese” studies and suggest possible new directions for the field. Here, they acknowledge the importance of doing multi-scalar, multi-sited, interdisciplinary work

that requires a degree of self-reflexivity, particularly related to orientalism-derived assumptions. Specifically related to scale, Voss (2008) advocates looking at the “mesoscale” which would allow us to study populations at a community level rather than a household or world systems level. She contends that there is usually little evidence of deposits associated with individual households, which is based on middle-class Euroamerican family unit and its practices. Furthermore, Voss (2008: 37) argues that in the Chinese American community, most “residential arrangements were shaped by institutional discrimination, racial violence, labor practices, economic relations, and culturally specific strategies that Chinese immigrants used to promote their survival and well being.” Consequently, she advocates the mesoscale level as the logical unit of study. This raises interesting possibilities for considering Chinese Diasporic communities in their geographically spatial context. While Voss and Allen (2008) and Voss (2008) propose new directions for the field to explore, neither article explicitly calls for increased attention to the role of race, racism, and racialization in the field. Race and racism is implied in the critique on orientalism and using the household unit of analysis, but neither article outlines how archaeologists should approach these issues other than through self-reflexive work. Thus, while these two articles provide interesting ideas to pursue, they fall short providing a more comprehensive way for archaeologists to think about the role of race, racism, and racialization in archaeological analyses.

Some historical archaeologists studying the African Diaspora have discussed race and racialization, which has opened a discussion about race in the study of racialized communities. These scholars have explored possibilities for studying race in more complex ways, including 1) exploring critical race theory as a way to think about race in archaeology (Epperson 2004); 2) investigating the adaptation, creolization, and/or rearticulation of artifact meanings in households

and communities (Dawdy 2000; Franklin 2001a, 2001b; Mullins 1999); and 3) thinking about race as one aspect of intersecting identities that may also include gender, class, and sexual orientation (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Mullins 1999; Singleton 2001; Wilkie 2003). These studies have been key to illustrating how historical archaeology can study race archaeologically as well as why it is an important topic of study. Many of these studies utilize an interdisciplinary perspective that draws upon the work of Ethnic Studies scholars, sociologists, and other social scientists who have developed a rich body of theory and literature on race. Furthermore, a number of these scholars are scholars of color who recognize the importance of studying their own ancestral communities. Consequently, African Diaspora historical archaeologists provide a model to follow in developing more explicit models for understanding race and racialization in Chinese Diasporic communities.

In historical archaeology more broadly, Charles Orser's (2007) work has pushed archaeologists to think about race outside of an ethnicity paradigm and within a racialization framework. He acknowledges that historical archaeologists have embraced studying ethnicity but have been much more reluctant to study race (Orser 1999). In his article "The Challenge of Race to American Historical Archaeology," Orser (1999: 663) writes, "Race is highly mutable, often situationally defined designation, and archaeologists do not know precisely how to study it using material culture." Instead, he argues historical archaeologists have fallen back on their ethnic markers when discussing race, resulting in problematic studies that use "race" and "ethnicity" as interchangeable terms. Orser proposes thinking about race in relation to capitalism and power rather than the search for ethnic markers and highlights Paul Mullins' (1999) study of bric-a-brac in African American households as an example for how historical archaeologists might think about race beyond ethnicity. Orser argues Mullins' work demonstrates how artifact

meanings shift in African American households such that historical archaeologists must consider this recontextualization and see these knickknacks not as ethnic markers, but rather as complicated symbols of social relations and power.

Orser (2007: 34-5) also argues that historical archaeology can contribute to studying racial construction through material culture, but that this work must be done with careful reflexivity that understands both the benefits and unintentional consequences of this work. Here, he draws upon the work of sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva to argue that historical archaeologists should think about how race is socially constructed through time. In studying racialization, Orser challenges archaeologists to think not just about communities of color, but also white ethnic groups such as the Irish who also have been historically marginalized. He focuses on two case studies, the Irish at the Five Points neighborhood in New York City and the Chinese from a laundry site in Stockton, California, to push studies of racialization beyond African Diaspora studies and to demonstrate how racialization processes work along different phenotypes, cultures, religions, and birthplaces. He argues that materials found on these sites, regardless of “ethnic marker” status, must be understood within their historical context that seriously considers racialization because racialization had a real impact on the experiences of individuals and communities in the United States.

While Orser’s call to study racialization within historical archaeology makes important contributions to the field, I believe there is room in his argument for more in depth explanation, particularly concerning a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between racialization, time, geography, and particular racialized groups. I agree with Orser’s argument for including ethnic European groups in historical archaeological studies of racialization, but I feel it is unfair to do so without a comprehensive understanding of how racialization operated within a particular

time period and within a particular space for specific racialized groups. Orser's juxtaposition of the Irish in New York and the Chinese in California, for example, may demonstrate how different marginalized groups are both subject to racialization processes, but what Orser does not explain is how these groups are racialized differently in different time periods and locations. Racialization processes on the East Coast where the Irish were perceived as "less" than white were very different than those on the West Coast, where Asians were the racialized "Other." Consequently, West Coast Irish Americans could rally against Asian Americans with other European ethnic groups to claim whiteness by comparison. West Coast Irish laborers, for example, were very vocal in their mobilization against Chinese labor and became a formidable power in California politics through the Workingman's Party. By positioning themselves as part of white labor whose existence was threatened by Asian labor, Irish Americans on the West Coast allied themselves with Anglo-Saxon American laborers and obtained a level of whiteness on the racial hierarchy. Consequently, I believe it is impossible to understand how Asian Americans or Irish Americans were racialized on the West Coast without seeing how they were racialized relationally. Therefore, as Claire Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory argues, it is crucial to understand differential racialization within specific sociohistorical contexts because racialization processes happen relationally and within geographic and temporal contexts.

While African Diaspora studies have engaged in more in depth work with racial theory and Orser's work pushes us to consider the role of racialization within a Chinese American context, this has not been the norm for much of the existing work on Chinese American historical archaeology. Consequently, this leaves the field with room to explore how racial theory can help historical archaeologists think not just about the local sociohistorical context of our sites, but also the broader structural conditions that shaped the way Chinese American

communities lived their everyday lives under an era of exclusion. I believe Chinese American historical archaeology can move further away from the assimilation paradigm by engaging in interdisciplinary work with Ethnic Studies through a critical social constructionist understanding of race. Racial theory from Ethnic Studies scholars challenges and problematizes the legacy of Chicago School assimilation theories, particularly in light of how Asian Americans have been racialized as perpetual foreigners. I believe these critiques will change the way archaeologists structure and analyze studies on Chinese American archaeological assemblages and push archaeologists to consider the role of race, racism, and racialization in the past. Furthermore, this approach will force archaeologists to self-reflexively consider the role of their own assumptions about assimilation as well as critically evaluate our own epistemologies.

Conclusion

For Chinese American historical archaeology, thinking about racialization can help archaeologists understand the political and changing nature of race. It forces archaeologists to reconsider the assimilation-based model for understanding Chinese American archaeological assemblages, both in terms of the historical legacy of the Chicago School model of ethnic succession and what assumptions about Asian American foreignness and non-assimilation have meant for the Asian American experience. Furthermore, it is crucial that scholars studying Chinese American historical archaeology understand that Asian Americans have been racialized differently than other racial groups. This is where I believe Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies racial theory can help move the field in a new direction. Chinese American historical archaeology can learn from the work on the African Diaspora, but the field must create its own way to understand the Asian American experience if we want to accurately interpret Chinese

American and Asian American sites. Much like an assimilation-based model is not enough to understand the complexities of Chinese American racialization and its impacts on everyday life, we also cannot apply the same model of race to all racial minorities because of differential racialization. Interdisciplinary work with Ethnic Studies can push historical archaeology to be more self-reflexive. By doing so, historical archaeologists will have to reconsider their assumptions about Chinese American communities and their role as interpreters of the past in the present. Perhaps most importantly, interdisciplinary work will force scholars to consider how these interpretations may have implications for contemporary and future ideas about these communities. In the following chapters, I advocate for an archaeological study of a diasporic Chinese community that considers specific sociohistorical contexts of racialization and its impacts on everyday life. With an interdisciplinary approach studying multiple lines of evidence, I demonstrate how historical archaeology can go beyond interpretations that focus on assimilation versus non-assimilation to look at subjectivities, social practice, agency, and meaning.

Chapter 3: Sociohistorical context of the Isleton Chinese American community

This chapter provides the sociohistorical background for my research on the Chinese American community in Isleton, California. In order to explain the broader context for the Isleton community, I begin with a brief overview of the Chinese American experience. This includes understanding the role of imperialism in stimulating immigration from China in the middle of the nineteenth century as well as the Chinese American experience upon arrival in the United States. This broad narrative reinforces theory from Chapter 2 with concrete examples of how Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans were the racialized Other on the West Coast. I discuss how the notion of foreignness and xenophobia expressed in the anti-Chinese movement contributed to larger forms of structural racism that became codified in law. I then shift to look at the role of Chinese Americans in agriculture, particularly their role in reclamation projects and establishing agriculture in the Sacramento Delta. The last part of this chapter focuses specifically on Isleton, providing brief historical context for the Isleton Chinese American community, as well as details about activities at the Bing Kong Tong site.

Chinese Immigration to the United States

In the late 1840s, Chinese immigrants began arriving in California. While it is true that stories of the riches of *Gum Saan*, or “Gold Mountain,” that reached the shores of southern China inspired many men to try their luck in the United States, there is more to this narrative: the story of the Chinese in the United States is a story of Western imperialism in Asia. Some men left freely, while labor recruiters convinced others to travel as laborers to build the Transcontinental Railroad or work on plantations. Some people, however, had no choice. Labor recruiters also

kidnapped young men and women to work overseas. Others had no choice due to imperial powers pushing their way into China and impoverishing Guangdong Province. Consequently, the story of the Chinese in the United States story is a story of adaptation and survival under imperialism.

The majority of these immigrants were Cantonese-speaking men, both single and married, who came from the Sam Yup, Sze Yup, and Heungshan districts in Guangdong Province and, to lesser extent, from neighboring Fujian Province (Figure 2). These districts are all part of the Pearl River Delta. While the majority of immigrants came from southern China, it is important to note that the district differences were significant in terms of geography, language, and how individuals identified themselves. Geographically, Sze Yup and Sam Yup were environmentally dissimilar, despite both being agricultural areas in the Pearl River Delta region. While both areas were densely populated, land quality was different in the two districts. While Sam Yup had mostly reclaimed delta farmland that supported growing crops as well as fishing, many families were impoverished because they had very little land to farm. These families had a hard time surviving off of agriculture and needed supplemental income from handicrafts and common labor. The poverty in Sze Yup, however, was far greater than in Sam Yup. Families in Sze Yup faced the same overcrowding issues, compounded by inferior land quality. The landscape was hilly, rocky, and suffered from high salinity levels or drought. Ultimately, farmers could only cultivate about ten percent of the land. Consequently, while Sam Yup and Sze Yup immigrants were poor, they came from different levels of poverty that were exacerbated by imperialism, social unrest, and famine (Chan 1986; Chinn 1969).

Pearl River Delta, Guangdong Province

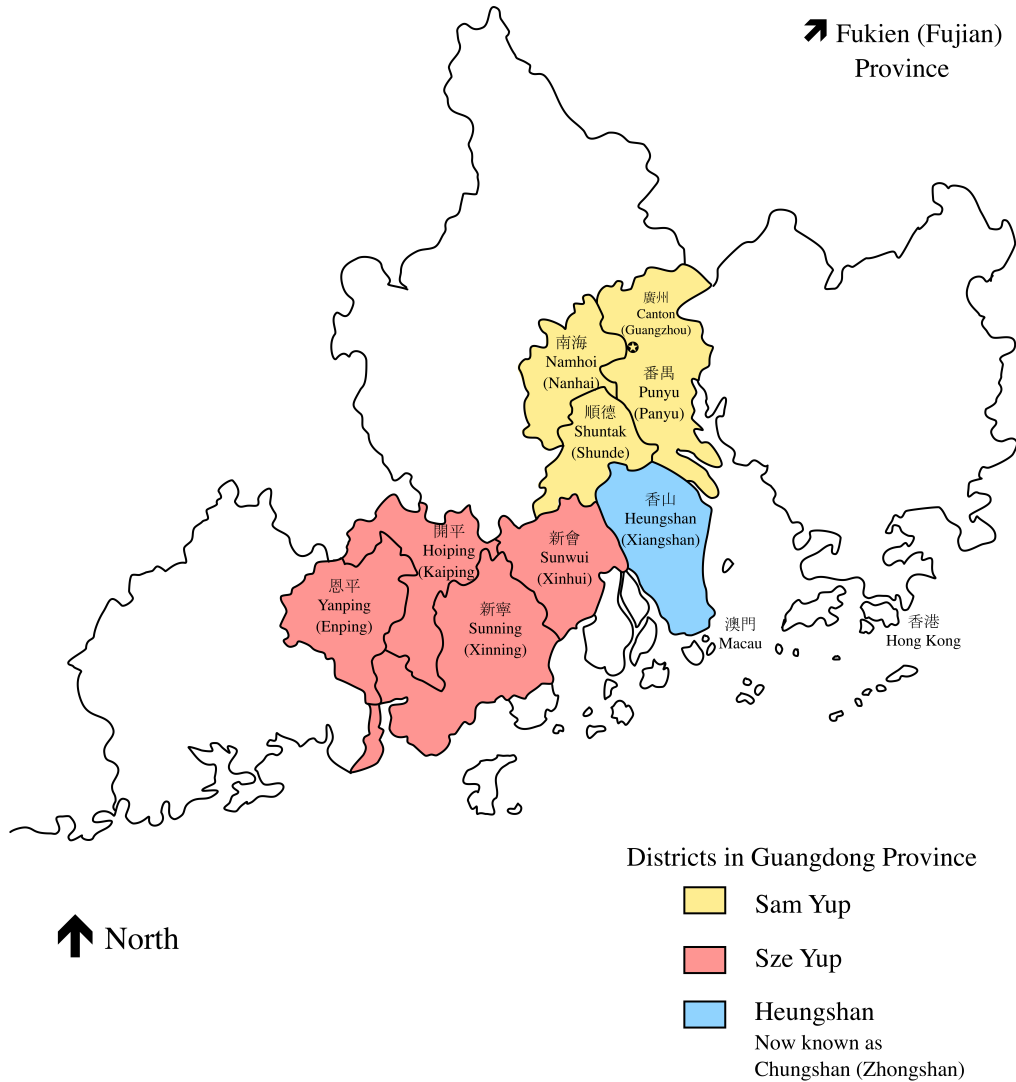


Figure 2. Map of home districts of most pre-1965 Chinese immigrants, Guangdong Province, China. Map adapted from Choy (2007: 18).

In terms of language, there are significant linguistic differences between Sam Yup and Sze Yup as well as Heungshan due to when populations migrated to southern China and where they were from (Lai 2004: 4-13). Most immigrants likely could speak a form of standard Cantonese, which is also found in Sam Yup and Hong Kong. Inhabitants from Sze Yup and the Heungshan area, however, also would have spoken their local dialect, both of which are

drastically different than standard Cantonese. The native dialect of the Longdu area of Heungshan, for example, is unintelligible to someone who only speaks standard Cantonese. Consequently, these geographic and linguistic differences provided a means by which people from southern China formed their own identities. Furthermore, district/linguistic identity was important to how the immigrant community viewed and organized itself in the United States. Chinese immigrants largely operated within social networks made up of individuals from their own district/linguistic group, evident in the establishment of surname and district benevolent societies. Thus, while many Chinese immigrants came from Guangdong Province, these district and linguistic differences illustrate the diversity of the immigrant population (Chinn 1969; Chu 1970; Lai 2004).

These people immigrated to the United States because of a number of factors pushing and pulling them abroad, many of which are tied to Western nations increasing their attempts to assert imperialist influence over China. Western imperialism exacerbated a population suffering from civil unrest, a weakened government, famine, and high levels of poverty, leaving people with no choice but to leave home. Thus, to understand the story of Chinese immigration to the United States, it is crucial to understand how imperialism shaped the sociohistorical conditions in which immigrants lived.

While migration to North America was part of a long history of maritime contacts and emigration between southern China and Southeast Asia since the seventh century, China during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) instituted a closed-door policy for international relations. This policy forbade individuals from leaving China on pain of death upon return and severely limited contact with foreign countries. Despite this ban on immigration, people from Fujian and Guangdong continued to emigrate to Southeast Asia and, by the middle of the nineteenth century,

Hawaii and the Americas (Chan 1991). This continued migration from southern China meant there were more Cantonese-speaking immigrants abroad compared to Mandarin-speaking people during this period.

By restricting foreign relations, a closed-door policy severely limited Western trade and contact in China. This policy directly impacted Chinese immigration abroad due to increased imperial pressures for more control over trade. High demand for silk, tea, and spices left a trade imbalance that favored China and meant that the Chinese government had the power to dictate trade conditions for these highly coveted goods. Exported tea and silk were far more valuable than imported British woolens and other goods, and China demanded payment in silver bullion. Trade was limited to specific ports, and, after a decree from the Emperor in 1757, Canton became the only port available for Western trade. While Canton historically had been the center of maritime activity and international commerce in China since the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), this exclusivity transformed Canton into a bustling area that provided a boom in trade-related jobs. Additionally, people living in and around Canton became exposed to Western ideas, religion, products, and news from Europe and North America (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Lai 1994).

These conditions changed as European traders introduced opium to China and the Opium Wars broke out in the late 1830s. Many Chinese became addicted to opium, much to the alarm of the Chinese government, and the trade imbalance quickly shifted in favor of foreign trade. The Chinese government took action in the late 1830s when Chinese official Lin Zexu confiscated and destroyed thousands of British opium chests in Canton in a symbolic and political act not unlike that of the Boston Tea Party (Chan 1991). The British government

claimed this destruction violated free trade and used the incident to start the first Opium War, which lasted from 1839 to 1842 (Chan 1991; Takaki 1998).

The resulting Treaty of Nanjing shattered China's closed-door policy, opening China to the imperialist incursions of foreign powers and ultimately transforming life for people living in southern China. Key treaty stipulations included the forced opening of five ports outside Canton for unrestricted commerce; granting extraterritoriality to Europeans on Chinese soil; paying an indemnity of 21 million silver dollars to the British government; limiting the amount of customs China could charge; and ceding control of Hong Kong to Great Britain. The Treaty of Nanjing directly impacted people living in southern China. Opening additional ports caused Canton to lose its trade monopoly and many people lost jobs at the docks or in industries that could no longer compete with the influx of imported factory goods from Western nations. The Chinese government also exacerbated this economic crisis by raising taxes for funds to pay the silver indemnity to Britain (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Takaki 1998). Consequently, imperialist efforts to control trade with China intensified the existing poverty in Guangdong Province. This situation made many people increasingly desperate to find a way to survive, including illegal immigration abroad.

In addition to this economic hardship, China was in the midst of internal social unrest. The Qing Dynasty was falling apart and becoming increasingly weaker against imperialist agendas. Floods, droughts, and famine fueled discontentment with the Qing Dynasty, resulting in number of rebellions and peasant uprisings. The largest conflict was the Taiping Rebellion, which began in 1850 and lasted until 1864. Led by a millenarian leader who was inspired by Christianity, the Taiping Rebellion quickly gained momentum and attempted to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. While the rebellion ultimately failed, the attempt destroyed farms, homes, and

families in south and central China, and caused an estimated 10 million deaths. Additional local conflict exacerbated unrest in southern China, including Red Turban Rebellion (1854-1864) and local warfare over land disputes in Sze Yup and Zhongshan beginning in 1856 between Cantonese-speaking people and Hakka-speaking people originally from northern China. All of these factors combined lead to an out-migration of people from southern China to flee unrest and find means of survival (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Takaki 1998). Between 1840 and 1900, an estimated two and a half million people fled China for Hawaii, the continental United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, South America, and Africa (Takaki 1998: 32).

These conditions pushing people out of China worked in conjunction with the attractive success stories reaching Canton of people striking it rich in the California gold fields (Chan 1991). With international ships at the port of Canton, it was not difficult for people to find transportation to California. Finding transport abroad became increasingly easy by 1859 when the provincial government allowed foreigners to recruit Chinese laborers, effectively ending the Qing Dynasty ban on immigration. People immigrated under different conditions, depending on what they could afford. Those who could not afford passage abroad either became contract laborers or used the credit-ticket system. Contract laborers were essentially indentured servants who traded their labor for a certain number of years for the price of a ticket abroad. Recruiters quickly discovered, however, that enforcing the labor contract was difficult. They shifted to the credit ticket system where a merchant broker would give an immigrant funds for passage abroad, and the immigrant was expected to repay this debt out of future earnings. Merchant brokers worked for companies that also had employees in the United States who helped immigrants find employment and were responsible for collecting the debt (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969). With these two systems, many immigrants could to afford to immigrate.

After the initial wave of immigration, many other family members, friends, and kinsmen also came to the United States, leading to the mass emigration and/or circular migration of men from many villages in southern China. This effectively created an international diasporic network between southern Chinese villages and points across the Pacific Ocean (McKeown 1999; Rouse 1991). The accumulation of structural factors, word of mouth, and even an established history of emigration to Southeast Asia form the social context within which the Chinese departed Southern China and arrived in California in the late 1840s and early 1850s (Chan 1991; Sandmeyer 1991; Takaki 1998). These networks became increasingly important as the United States began closing the doors to immigration for the Chinese, particularly after the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. I will go into further detail later in this chapter.

Very few women came to the United States due to cultural prohibitions against emigration and, more significantly, because of strict United States immigration legislation that severely discouraged women from emigrating. Many of the Chinese women who came to California were either kidnapped or sold and then forced to work as prostitutes. Consequently, Americans feared an invasion of Chinese women and saw them as a threat to morality, particularly as more Euroamerican families migrated and the West became less wild and more domesticated. Furthermore, by the 1870s, the anti-Chinese movement that called for the Chinese to leave had rapidly gained momentum. Anti-Chinese movement leaders saw the arrival of women as an opportunity for Chinese immigrants to begin starting families and settling permanently, which was, in their eyes, unacceptable. To regulate the immigration of Chinese women, the United States Congress passed the Page Law in 1875 that forbade the immigration of Chinese women for the purpose of prostitution. While not all women were prostitutes, immigration officials could deny entry visas based on the suspicion that any given Chinese

woman was potentially a prostitute. Women feared rejection and the humiliation of being branded a prostitute, and strict screening procedures intimidated women from even attempting to immigrate (Lau 2006: 17). With very few women immigrating, Chinese American gender ratios became very imbalanced. The skewed gender ratio resulted in the presumption that the Chinese immigrant community was a “bachelor society” (Chan 1991: 54; Lau 2006: 20-1; Takaki 1998: 50). Furthermore, the gender imbalance delayed the birth of an American-born Chinese population. Consequently, the large number of immigrant men, small number of women, and small number of American-born children characterized the early Chinese American community (Lau 2006).

Traces of imperialism are intertwined with factors causing Chinese from Guangdong Province to begin immigrating to the United States, both pushing and attracting individuals to leave their homes and families for an uncertain future. Imperialism implicitly and explicitly caused war, famine, and social unrest to unfold in Southern China, exacerbating the existing overcrowding and poverty in the area. The demands of imperialist powers weakened the failing Qing Dynasty and ultimately transformed Guangdong Province and set the stage for Chinese immigration abroad.

The Rise of the Anti-Chinese Movement and Exclusion

After arriving in the United States, Chinese Americans found jobs mining, railroad building, farming, manufacturing, fishing, and operating restaurants, shops, and laundries. Many of these jobs involved hard labor building key infrastructure on the West Coast that employers could not find other labor sources to fill. Consequently, Chinese American labor helped transform the West by constructing railroads, both local lines and the Transcontinental Railroad;

levees and canals to reclaim and irrigate new farmland; and dams for reservoirs. They also found niches in the developing economy, particularly in the service industry where they worked as cooks, houseboys, gardeners, laundrymen, and vegetable peddlers. Many of these service-oriented jobs were occupations that white labor saw as domestic and feminine and refused to take those jobs. This stigma against feminized jobs was particularly exaggerated while the West Coast population was predominantly male during the mid-nineteenth century. Chinese American workers, however, took this opportunity to find employment. Chinese American laborers found jobs in the manufacturing industry where they made items such as cigars, shoes, and garments. Unlike finding jobs in the service industry, however, involvement in manufacturing put Chinese American labor in direct competition with white labor, which caused conflict (Almaguer 1994; Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Saxton 1975; Takaki 1998).

Increasing visibility of Chinese American labor in the workforce caused anxiety for white labor that ultimately led to the rise of the anti-Chinese movement. The willingness of Chinese American laborers to work long hours at lower wages drew ire from unionized white labor, particularly the Workingman's Party. Economic downturns in the late 1860s exacerbated the antagonistic sentiment, particularly as more white workers migrated to California in hopes of escaping the recession and flooding the West Coast labor market (Chan 1991; Saxton 1975; Takaki 1998). White labor felt that Chinese American labor stole jobs and they became increasingly resentful during these economic downswings. On March 30, 1876, the *Marin Journal* voiced these sentiments by arguing that the Chinese Americans were slaves and "no fit competitor for an American freeman" because "he herds in scores, in small dens, where a white man and wife could hardly breathe, and has none of the wants of a civilized white man" (Sandmeyer 1991: 25). These fears became embodied in the image of the Yellow Peril, or the

fear of the invading hoard of Chinese American laborers who were a threat to white labor and to the racial composition of the American West. Anti-Chinese sentiment erupted in the late 1860s, peaking again in the mid 1870s and early 1880s as the economy cycled up and down (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Sandmeyer 1991; Saxton 1975; Takaki 1998).

The anti-Chinese movement continued to gain strength during the second half of the nineteenth century, fueling outright violence and increasing social, legal, and economic discrimination against Chinese Americans. An increasing number of anti-Chinese mobs organized to make sure the Chinese were “driven out” of cities and towns across the United States including Seattle, Nevada City, Auburn, San Jose, Truckee, Marysville, Riverside, Santa Cruz, and Stockton (Pfaelzer 2008). Some anti-Chinese mobs threatened violence if Chinese Americans did not leave by a certain time while others skipped threats and forcibly removed Chinese Americans by violence, usually burning Chinatown homes and businesses in the process. Violence was particularly brutal in Rock Springs, Wyoming on September 2, 1885 when British and Swedish miners killed 28 Chinese American miners, wounded an additional 15 miners, and burned the homes of 79 men to the ground (Pfaelzer 2008).

Anti-Chinese movement violence worked in conjunction with federal, state, and local laws and ordinances designed to harass, restrict, and discourage Chinese Americans from coming to the United States to work in certain industries at the state and local levels. Many of these laws were race neutral, but targeted Chinese Americans in practice. As early as 1850, for example, the California legislature passed the Foreign Miner’s Tax aimed at Chinese American miners to discourage them from working in the goldfields. While this tax technically applied to all foreign miners, tax collectors more heavily enforced the law on Chinese American miners to discourage and harass these miners. At a local level, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors attempted to

curb the success of Chinese American laundries by passing 14 ordinances between 1873 and 1884. These ordinances included a high tax for laundries that did not use horse-drawn delivery wagons as well as a ban on carrying parcels on poles, which was the normal Chinese American delivery practice (Chan 1991: 46; Chinn 1969: 24). In the name of fire safety, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors also made it mandatory that laundries be housed in brick or stone buildings rather than more inexpensive wood buildings (Sandmeyer 1991: 76). While these laundry ordinances did not name Chinese Americans specifically, they targeted Chinese American laundries in practice because Chinese American laundrymen usually did not have enough capital to own a horse-drawn cart to deliver laundry or to own a more expensive brick or stone building. The ordinances were designed to intimidate and harass Chinese Americans out of the laundry business.

The anti-Chinese movement also influenced federal legislation, particularly surrounding issues of immigration. As I mentioned above, the United States Congress began restricting Chinese immigration as early as 1875 with the Page Law that prohibited prostitutes from entering the United States and effectively curtailing the immigration of women. Congress extended this ban to all Chinese laborers in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, set to last ten years. The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first time in United States history that a law specifically named and banned an ethnic group from entering the United States. While merchants, students, teachers, travelers, and diplomats were exempt from exclusion, it severely curtailed Chinese immigration. Chinese immigrants used these loopholes to continue immigrating while Congress strengthened the barriers to keep out Chinese immigrants. In 1888, the Scott Act revoked the right of Chinese immigrants to travel outside of the United States. Immigrants previously could travel to China and return to the United States with the proper paperwork. The Scott Act took

away this right and simultaneously stranded approximately 20,000 Chinese immigrants who were overseas at the time, including those who were already en route to California. Congress renewed exclusion for ten years in 1892 with the Geary Act that also required all Chinese Americans to register with the government. Immigration officials could deport anyone they found without this registration certificate. Congress once more renewed exclusion for ten years in 1902 and, in 1904, decided to make exclusion last indefinitely (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Lai 1994; Lau 2006; Lee 2003).

In the face of discriminatory local, state, and federal legislation as well as hostility and violence, the Chinese American population found ways to resist, both through overt and subvert means. Open forms of resistance did not just mean Chinese Americans began to bear arms to defend their homes, businesses, and lives. By the mid-1850s, they formed organizations usually based on district or surname groups that provided resources for the community that they could not get otherwise. These associations helped the Chinese American community navigate the hostile environment, whether this was helping new immigrants find employment and housing, ensuring individuals traveling back to China had the proper paperwork filed for reentry, or hiring lawyers to challenge discriminatory laws in court. Larger organizations such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA, also known as the Chinese Six Companies) became informal governing bodies for the Chinese American community, particularly in populated Chinatowns such as San Francisco. The CCBA also provided the San Francisco Chinese American community with services such as medical and hospitalization assistance since Chinese Americans were not allowed in the San Francisco county hospital. By creating their own institutions, the Chinese American population found ways to resist discriminatory practices and survive (Lai 2004).

With the support of these associations, many Chinese Americans challenged discriminatory legislation in the courts. According to historian Sucheng Chan (1991: 90), during the exclusion era between 1882 and 1943, the *Federal Reporter* published more than 1,100 court cases involving Chinese American plaintiffs or defendants in the court system. From these 1,110 cases, 170 were Supreme Court cases. Some of the Supreme Court cases forced the justices to rule on issues of naturalization that directly impacted subsequent Asian immigrant groups. In 1878, for example, the Supreme Court ruled in *In re Ah Yup* that the Chinese immigrants were ineligible for naturalized citizenship because the Chinese were categorized as “Mongoloid” and therefore were nonwhite. With the exception of people from African descent, the 1790 and 1870 naturalization laws denied American citizenship to nonwhite peoples. Consequently, as “Mongoloid” and nonwhite, Chinese immigrants were ineligible for naturalization (Ancheta 2001; Chan 1991). Likewise, in 1898, the Supreme Court faced the question of whether or not nonwhite people qualified for birthright citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*. Wong was born in San Francisco but immigration officials detained him after returning from a trip from China, saying he was not an American citizen. The Supreme Court ruled in Wong’s favor, upholding the birthright citizenship clause in the Fourteenth Amendment. The Chinese American community was victorious and immigrants now knew that while they could be denied the right to naturalize, their children could not be stripped of citizenship granted to them by birth (Ancheta 2001; Chan 1991).

One of the most common forms of subversive resistance was finding loopholes to circumvent the Chinese Exclusion Law. The most popular method was becoming “paper sons” and “paper daughters” by purchasing citizenship papers and adopting this identity. According to historian Estelle Lau (2006: 5), an estimated 25 percent of Chinese Americans living in the

United States before 1950 came as paper children. This method became possible after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed the San Francisco Federal Building, which housed many important documents including birth and citizenship records. Without these records, the federal government could not prove or disprove that someone was an American citizen. Many Chinese immigrants took advantage of this situation and claimed American citizenship. These new citizens could then travel freely between the United States and China and claim they sired children while overseas, whether or not these children really existed. According to United States law, children of American citizens were also citizens regardless of where they were born. Thus, these children, whether real or fictitious, were also American citizens. People sold these citizenship papers in China to people who assumed the identity of that paper son or daughter to enter the United States as an American citizen. While these papers were expensive to purchase, families would collectively gather enough money to afford sending someone overseas (Chan 1991; Chinn 1969; Lai 1994; Lau 2006; Lee 2003; Takaki 1998).

Once immigration officials noticed the rise in immigration from China despite outright exclusion, however, there were consequences. After the United States government realized how more Chinese immigrants were entering the country, officials built an immigration station on Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay. Operating between 1910 and 1940, all immigrants entering through the Port of San Francisco had to go through the immigration station. Angel Island quickly became a detention center for Chinese immigrants who stayed in barracks anywhere from a few days to several months until immigration officials decided to admit or deport them. Immigration officials subjected immigrants to invasive medical examinations and then intense interrogations to try to find a way to deny entry to the United States. These interrogations have become notorious in Chinese American history because of the complex

process and detailed questions officials asked in hopes of catching paper sons and daughters. Officials interviewed immigrants and then cross-examined witnesses in separate interviews to check for discrepancies among the answers. If the answers between parties did not match up, officials assumed the immigrant was lying and could deport him or her back to China (Lee 2003: 81-87). Questions were often very detailed, such as asking about the direction a house faced or how many rooms were on the ground floor of the house. Some immigrants were also required to create maps of their villages, marking exact locations of residences including family names, ancestral halls, wells, and cultivated land. Officials compared these maps to those that witnesses were required to create to search for discrepancies (Lee 2003: 210-211). The interrogation process was so difficult that an immigration official admitted his own children probably would not have passed the detailed examination he was administering to Chinese immigrants (Lee 2003: 213).

The paper sons and daughters experience left scars on the Chinese American community beyond the barrack walls on Angel Island. Chinese Americans knew they were perceived as foreigners with suspect citizenship status, leaving them with a constant fear of immigration officials and deportation. Chinese Americans who were in the United States legally also had reason to be wary because they knew their appearance made them targets of suspicion. Furthermore, these paper children had to live with this assumed identity for the long term, forcing them to live by a different name with fictitious family history to maintain this deception. Paper identities became intertwined with true identities such that the fictitious family and stories became reality as paper kin networks developed across space and time. Consequently, paper identities ultimately shaped the way paper sons and daughters perceived themselves and their interaction with the broader community (Lau 2006: 7). While some of these paper children

changed their paper name to their real surname in the 1950s under the confession program, many multigenerational Chinese Americans still use their paper surname today.

While Chinese exclusion technically lasted until 1943 when Congress formally repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act, immigration did not freely resume until the 1965 Immigration Law abolished national origins quotas (Chan 1991; Lai 1994). The quota system established by the 1943 law only allowed 105 Chinese immigrants to enter the United States each year, effectively continuing exclusion era immigration levels. Furthermore, this quota included everyone of Chinese ethnicity, regardless of what country an immigrant was traveling from. Consequently, Chinese immigration continued to be severely limited until the 1965 Immigration Law opened the doors for Chinese immigration, finally allowing for families to be reunited after decades of separation (Lau 2006). By this time, however, exclusion had already left its mark on the Chinese American community. The Chinese American population declined an average of 15 percent every decade during exclusion such that a population of 105,456 in 1880 had become 61,639 by 1920 (Lau 2006: 22). Exclusion also stunted the growth of the American-born Chinese population that only began growing again with the influx of new immigrants after 1965. Consequently, 1965 marks a changing point in the Chinese American community where post-1965 immigrants had a drastically different immigration experience than immigrants who came before 1965.

It should be noted that the assumed foreignness is key the Chinese American experience, impacting how mainstream Euroamerican society perceived and treated Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans. Perceived foreignness contributed to xenophobic fears of the invading Yellow Peril as well as exclusion from the American body both in terms of immigration and citizenship. As discussed in Chapter 2, these fears, codified in law, became part of the everyday

reality for the Chinese American population that set the stage for understanding the Chinese American experience at the local level of the Sacramento Delta.

Chinese Labor and Agriculture

Chinese American labor was important to the development of California agriculture, such that by the end of the 1860s, Chinese farm hands dominated the agricultural labor market (Chiu 1967; McWilliams 1976; Street 2004). Laborers transformed uncultivated earth into a landscape filled with crops and continued to work the land as tenant farmers, sharecroppers, seasonal laborers, and, very occasionally, landowning farmers. Chinese American workers began farming in the 1850s when they realized that miners of all races needed a steady supply of fresh food. These truck gardeners grew crops on small parcels and took the fresh produce in wagons or on foot where their clientele lived to sell, whether they were miners in the Sierra Nevada foothills or laborers living in urban areas such as San Francisco, Sacramento, or Marysville (Chan 1986: 81-88). Their ability to bring fresh produce to people directly provided an invaluable service in a time before refrigeration. These truck farmers also found farming to be more profitable with steady income than taking a chance in the gold mines. Consequently, small farms began appearing on the outskirts of more populated areas where peddlers would later sell the produce (Chan 1986).

Not all areas in California, however, were already suited for agriculture; places such as the Sacramento Delta, located northeast of the San Francisco Bay Area, had the potential for being a highly productive farming area, but required reclamation projects to convert the land from a swampy peat bog into farmable parcels. This meant building levees along the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River and their tributaries, building ditches to drain the bog,

and clearing the tule peat before breaking the soil for agriculture. This project, however, required a formidable labor force to work in malaria-infested swamp. Reclamation project managers quickly realized that they needed a new cheap labor force after white labor refused these jobs and indigenous labor sources dwindled. Consequently, they turned to the Chinese to fulfill these labor needs and Chinese American labor became indispensable (Chan 1986; Street 2004).

Reclamation projects began in the 1850s after Congress passed the Federal Swamp and Overflow Act, but did not take off until the 1860s and peaked in the mid-1870s. The peak of reclamation projects in the 1870s correlates with the influx of Chinese laborers in the labor market after the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869. These laborers flooded cities and towns in California looking for jobs, and labor bosses promptly recruited them for reclamation work in the Sacramento Delta (Chan 1986; Chinn 1969; Street 2004). Before this influx of released railroad labor became available, however, legislators attempted to solve this labor shortage crisis. The California legislature went as far as to introduce a bill in 1852 to import Chinese reclamation workers. Governor John Bigler did not support this bill and it failed to pass the state senate, but it is clear that white landowners saw Chinese workers as the ideal source of cheap labor by the mid-nineteenth century (Street 2004: 238-9).

Landowners and reclamation corporations heading projects relied on Chinese American labor bosses to mobilize Chinese American laborers when they needed men. Labor bosses were usually able to speak some English as well as several Chinese dialects. They often worked within district association connections to quickly recruit laborers seeking work. These labor bosses saved white employers a lot of work by organizing the work crews, providing transportation, supplying room and board, setting the working conditions, and paying the

laborers. Consequently, white employers never had to interact with the laborers themselves or worry about recruitment. This recruitment system allowed landowners to complete large-scale reclamation projects with minimal work, including projects that employed as many as 3,000 to 4,000 men (Chiu 1967: 72). While some of these labor bosses cheated workers out of their wages, the relationship was generally beneficial for laborers as well. Stuck in a hostile environment and unable to speak English, labor bosses supplied workers with employment, food, and housing (Chan 1986; Chu 1970; Street 2004).

Chinese American laborers began reclamation with building levees in 1850. They first cleared the area of shrubs and trees and then drained the area by building dams, drainage ditches, and floodgates. Once the area drained, laborers began cutting peat into blocks to construct a levee, usually building on top of an existing natural levee. Laborers could not use heavy machinery or horses because they sank into the peat. Instead, laborers worked by hand in waist-deep bog, using shovels and wheelbarrows to move peat and clay from the swamp to build levees (Chan 1986; Street 2004). Finished levees were usually ten to fifteen feet wide at the base and three to five feet high (Chu 1970: 25). Levee construction was dangerous work and many Chinese American laborers lost their lives after suffering from malaria and overwork, being crushed by wheelbarrows full of peat, and getting swept away by the river and drowning (Chan 1986; Street 2004). While floods washed away some of these original levees, many of them form the foundations of the current levees in the Delta (Chu 1970).

The need for land reclamation in the Sacramento Delta not only shaped the physical landscape but it also influenced land ownership and use dynamics in the region that encouraged rich individuals to own large tracts of land. After the United States annexed the west from Mexico and California became a state, all land that was not part of Spanish-Mexican land grants

became part of the public domain. Between 1841 and 1862, the federal government granted millions of acres of public domain land to the state of California, about a quarter of which was flooded swamp in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The state made this land available for purchase by the mid-1850s for a low price and encouraged property owners to pay for reclamation costs by offering subsidies (Chan 1986). This practice greatly benefitted individuals with enough capital to purchase land and pay for reclamation costs. Reclaimed lands that originally cost \$1 to \$3 per acre increased in value to between \$20 and \$100 per acre (Chinn 1969: 56). In addition to increased property values, after 1872, landowners could be credited for their reclamation cost if they spent no more than \$2 per acre on reclamation (Chan 1986: 165). In conjunction with the government abolishing acreage purchase limitations in 1868, individuals could potentially purchase very large tracts of land at almost no cost and ultimately make a very large profit. While some landowners did subdivide some of these tracts, they only did to a certain point to ensure they still had control over a reclamation district. Most landowners, however, found it more profitable to lease their land. Consequently, most of the land in the Sacramento Delta fell into the hands of rich white landowners or land development corporations supported by land speculators and bank investors. By 1940, the top five percent of the largest landowners in the Delta held 33 percent of the total area acreage (Kawahara 1982). Many of these landowners were not even farmers living on the land but rather investors speculating on increased land values after reclamation, making their fortune from the blood, sweat, and tears of Chinese American laborers (Chan 1986; Kawahara 1982; Street 2004).

After completing the levees, Chinese American laborers began preparing the soil for farming. They first had to remove the remaining tule reeds. The fastest and cheapest method was fire, though this was also dangerous because the peat often ignited with the tule and these

fires easily grew out of control (Street 2004). Some fires even continued burning until the seasonal rains in the winter extinguished them. Next, Chinese American laborers plowed the soil, which they had to do by hand because the peat was too soft to use horses and ordinary plows could not remove tule roots. Chinese American laborers eventually developed the “tule buster” tool that they used to break the peat (Street 2004: 263). This process took at least three passes across the field before it was ready for sowing.

Landowners continued employing Chinese American laborers after the land was ready for agriculture. Chinese American workers tended crops, pruned orchards, harvested produce, and packed or canned the fruits and vegetables for the market. Harvest time particularly required large numbers of laborers and landowners relied on Chinese American labor bosses to recruit enough help seasonally. These seasonal labor demands ultimately led to the development of a mobile labor force that travelled up and down the West Coast to follow peak crop harvest times. The demand for produce along with better transportation technology augmented this demand. Consequently, landowners developed a large-scale farming system in California that aimed to meet produce demands across the country and required a large seasonal labor force. While these landowners have shifted to different ethnic or racial groups to meet their labor demands, this system still exists today (Street 2004).

The large landholdings model also helped define the racial dynamics in the area such that racial hierarchy became integrated into socioeconomic stratification in the Sacramento Delta. Ethnic and racial minorities were largely laborers working on farms or in canneries, including Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, Russians, Italians, and Portuguese from the Azores (Azuma 1994; Chu 1970; Iwata 1992; Maeda 2000). These groups also lived in the less desirable areas, usually closer to the levees in newly reclaimed areas. English, German, and

American farmers who were not landowners, on the other hand, rented better farmland and lived on higher ground (Chu 1970). Furthermore, ethnic or racial groups were given different tasks and, in the case of seasonal laborers, often lived in segregated camps (Chan 1986; Chu 1970; Street 2004). Landowners believed, for example, that different ethnic groups were better suited for particular tasks and therefore each group had a different crop they grew best. Consequently, crops were, to a certain extent, grown by different ethnic groups: Chinese American labor worked fruit ranches, onions, and potatoes; Portuguese farmers grew truck vegetables; Italian workers raised beans and barley; and Japanese farmers specialized in potatoes, onions, celery, asparagus, and sugar beets (Chu 1970: 26). From these examples, it becomes evident that ethnic and racial groups became stuck with particular types of farming in an exploitative system that discouraged large property owners from subdividing their land tracts in favor of maximizing profits through leases with tenant farmers.

Asian American farmers quickly became successful in California, much to the dismay of white farmers (Almaguer 1994; McWilliams 1964). Chinese American farmers had successfully cultivated land across California, growing a variety of crops including mustard, sugar beets, and strawberries in the greater Monterey region; grapes in the Napa Valley; potatoes and hops in the San Joaquin Valley; and asparagus and pears in the Sacramento Delta (Chan 1986; Street 2004). To hinder the success of Chinese American and Japanese American farmers, state legislatures began passing Alien Land Laws, including California in 1913. Historian Nayan Shah (2011) describes this system as a racial cartel that effectively protected the right to own property for white landowners. Alien Land Laws prohibited “aliens ineligible to citizenship” from owning property and limited the number of years these “aliens ineligible to citizenship” could lease property. While the law uses the race-neutral term “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” in practice

this law was again aimed at Asian immigrants who could not become naturalized citizens. The Alien Land Law in California also limited the amount of time “aliens ineligible to citizenship” could lease land, which made it more difficult for Asian American farmers to cultivate land for crops that required more time than the lease limit allowed. While immigrant farmers found and exploited loopholes in the law, such as forming companies to hold land deeds or purchasing land under the name of their American-born children, Alien Land Laws effectively forced Chinese immigrants to remain part of the farm labor force rather than independent farm owners and operators.

Chinese Americans and Isleton, California

Small towns began forming in the Sacramento Delta as the landscape transformed from swampland to cultivated land and the area became a place people called home. The high demand for Asian American labor resulted in their permanent presence in these towns where they began establishing Chinatowns and Japantowns in Isleton, Walnut Grove, Locke, and Courtland. Chinatowns and Japantowns became nuclei for the Asian American population in surrounding areas. Workers could buy Chinese or Japanese goods, visit temples, and send their children to language schools. Seasonal laborers stayed in boardinghouses and frequented the restaurants, soda shops, gambling houses, laundries, and barbershops.

In 1874, Josiah Poole founded the town of Isleton on Andrus Island in Georgiana Township. Poole purchased 800 acres of land on Andrus Island in the 1870s and intended for Isleton to be one of the agricultural centers in the Delta. He strategically planned Isleton along the Sacramento River for easy access to shipping by boat, particularly after constructing a wharf in 1875 that allowed steamboats to stop in Isleton when traveling between San Francisco,

Sacramento, and Marysville (Pezzaglia 2013; Tointon 1979). By 1876, Poole established the California Sugar Manufacturing Company, which grew sugar beets on 70 acres of land. Poole's farming venture was only successful for one season; a flood destroyed the second crop of sugar beets and the company could not produce sugar (*Lodi News-Sentinel*, 18 June 1973). After this failed attempt at farming, Poole sold his land to his son-in-law, Phillip Hogate Gardiner. In 1874, Gardiner had established the first business in Isleton, a general store. He quickly became a key figure in town, especially after helping install a post office in Isleton in 1879 where he served as postmaster for 17 years. Gardiner also helped establish schools in town and was affiliated with a number of large transportation companies including the Southern Pacific Railroad (*Lodi News-Sentinel*, 18 June 1973). The Gardiner family has been in Isleton for five generations and they continue to be a prominent family in Isleton.

Chinese American laborers already in the area quickly settled in town after its establishment. The original Chinatown in Isleton was on the southwest outskirts of town along Jackson Slough Road. In the 1880s, this Chinatown flourished with the influx of laborers coming to the Delta for employment. Shops and restaurants opened to cater to these farmworkers, and Isleton quickly became a thriving rural Chinatown. In December 1915, however, this Chinatown burned to the ground and Chinatown residents were not allowed to rebuild their homes and businesses at this same location. John Gardiner, Phillip Gardiner's son, offered to rent land on the east side of town to rebuild Chinatown away from Jackson Slough Road and city hall. The Chinese rebuilt Chinatown on Main Street between 1st Street and 2nd Street, which have since become F Street and E Street respectively. Japanese Americans that previously lived in Chinatown, however, intentionally separated themselves from Chinatown. They felt their 1915 fire losses were because they had lived interspersed with the Chinese

American community and Chinatowns were notorious for burning down. Consequently, the Japanese American community established a Japantown on Main Street the other side of 2nd Street. Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and, by the 1920s, Filipino Americans lived together in this two block area. Much like the Chinatown along Jackson Slough Road, the rebuilt community thrived with a variety of businesses catering to the Asian laborers traveling through town for work (Crawford 2003; *Lodi News-Sentinel*, 18 June 1973; Tom et al. 2013).

The new Chinatown and Japantown, however, also burned on May 31, 1926. Starting near the segregated school at the west end of Chinatown, the fire traveled east and ravaged the Chinese American and Japanese American businesses along Main Street. According to *The Sacramento Bee* (1 June 1926: 9), the fire destroyed 110 Chinese American and Japanese American homes and businesses in this “Oriental colony,” left 1,500 “Orientals” homeless, and caused an estimated \$500,000 to \$750,000 in damage. Most of the buildings were wooden and built close to one another, making it easy for the fire to spread. Consequently, firefighters concentrated on saving the Isleton Cannery at the end of Main Street rather than the Chinese American and Japanese American homes and businesses. While *The Sacramento Bee* reports this fire started because of an explosion from a stove, no one really knows what happened (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview, 3 September 2011).

The Chinese American and Japanese American communities rebuilt their homes and businesses at the same location after the 1926 fire. Many people used brick instead of wood and ensured structures had more space between one another. By 1928, the area was once again a thriving community. The 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map shows some vacant lots in the Chinese American section of town that had structures in the 1925 survey map, but also shows

many rebuilt businesses including grocery stores, gambling halls, barber shops, restaurants, an herbal shop, pool halls, laundries, hotels, and even a Japanese movie hall (Tom et al. 2013).

It is important to note that property ownership for Asian Americans in Isleton was complex. Legally, Asian American immigrants could not own property in California according to the Alien Land Laws after 1913. Since many Chinese Americans in the Delta were American-born or paper sons and daughters, they were considered United States citizens so the Alien Land Laws did not apply. Many white landowners in the Sacramento Delta, however, refused to sell their property either because they did not want to subdivide their land or because they did not want to sell to Asian Americans. Consequently, a dual form of property ownership developed in many of the Delta towns: Asian Americans often owned the structures they built but not the land beneath it, which they had to rent. While the Gardiner family did sell land to some Asian American families, this was not always the case in Isleton or in other Delta towns (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Alfred Owyong, personal communication, 13 October 2012).

The community along Main Street was incredibly diverse, despite being labeled as a Chinatown and a Japantown (Table 1 and 2). According to the 1930 US Census manuscript forms, the east part of Isleton was also home to Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and Portuguese Americans from the Azores as well as Russian Americans and Italian Americans who lived in cannery housing at the end of Main Street. These groups could not live in the segregated part of Isleton known locally as “White Town” where whites of British and German decent lived (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Consequently, Chinatown and Japantown were really only Chinatown and Japantown in name; in

practice, they were multiethnic and multiracial communities. I will go into more detail in Chapter 5.

Table 1. Population by Race and Nativity, 1890-1950

Sacramento County	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
White	35364	40917	61040	82016	121545	156793	258899
African American	513	511	631	873	1485	2146	7499
Other				8140		11384	10742
Chinese	4371	3254	2143	1954	2792	2471	3860
Japanese	51	1209	3874	5800	8114	6764	5298

Georgiana Township	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
White					5807	4826	
African American					2	39	
Other					5980	2856	

Isleton	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
White					1424	1108	1174
African American					0	11	28
Other					666	748	395

Note: The US Census did not record data for Georgiana Township and Isleton between 1890 and 1920 because the population was not large enough. Asian ethnic groups for Georgiana Township and Isleton are included in the “Other” category.

Table 2. Isleton Population by Race, 1920-1940

Isleton	1920	1930	1940
White	1043	1419	1146
Chinese	190	325	299
Japanese	536	196	213
South Asian	60	24	
Filipino	9	67	168
Korean		1	
Mexican		56	
Canadian		1	
Black			11
Other	2	1	1
Total	1840	2090	1838

Note: Race statistics come from what Census takers noted on the manuscript Census forms.

Japanese Americans were a large part of the labor force in Isleton. Immigrating to the Sacramento Delta in large numbers by the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese Americans made up 31.7% of the agricultural labor force in the Delta in 1910 (Shiraki 2010). Japanese Americans in Isleton ran a number of businesses along Main Street including boarding houses, fish markets, a tofu store, restaurants, pool halls, grocery stores, and an *ofuro*, or a Japanese bathhouse (Shirakai 2010). Additionally, there was a Japanese Buddhist Temple and a Japanese language school on F Street. The Buddhist Temple, language school, and *ofuro* indicate that the Japanese American population was stable and large enough to support these community institutions. This thriving community, however, disappeared with the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans in 1942.

While there were a number of Filipino Americans in Isleton before World War II, their numbers increased after Japanese Americans were interned and the demand for labor increased. Most Filipino Americans worked as laborers in the fields, although some worked as labor contractors and storekeepers (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview, 3 September 2011). This was particularly true during World War II when many Filipino Americans moved into the stores and residences left vacant by Japanese Americans. This even included the Buddhist Temple, which became a Filipino dance hall in the 1940s before eventually becoming a non-denominational African American church. A number of Filipino Americans came from Hawaii as part of a secondary migratory wave of Asian Americans. Labor recruiters had convinced many of these individuals to work on the Hawaiian plantations, but after some time, many laborers decided to try their luck in California instead (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview, 3 September 2011).

The Isleton Chinese American population was largely a mix of immigrants from Sze Yup and Heungshan and their children. Many Sze Yup families owned the businesses in Isleton, which Heungshan families eventually took over by the 1920s (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Heungshan families initially came to the Delta for work as farm laborers and cannery workers, particularly by the 1910s and 1920s. Some Heungshan workers settled in the area after becoming permanent workers on the neighboring farms or canneries. The large Heungshan population in the Sacramento Delta is significant because they were a minority dialect group in the broader Chinese American population that was dominated by people from Sze Yup and Sam Yup (Chinn 1969). Consequently, the large concentration of Heungshan Chinese Americans in the Delta illustrates the heterogeneity in the Chinese American community and emphasizes the uniqueness of the Sacramento Delta.

Despite these internal dialect differences within the Chinese American community, all Asian American children attended a segregated Oriental elementary school in Isleton. Located at the east end of Chinatown and adjacent to the school white children attended, the Oriental school in Isleton opened in 1909 and remained in operation until World War II when the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans made it economically unwise to run a separate school. Isleton was not the only Delta town with a segregated school; Asian American children in Courtland, Florin, and Walnut Grove were also subjected to segregation (Azuma 1994; Nakano Glenn 2011). Oriental schools elsewhere in California existed in areas with large concentrations of Asian Americans, such as San Francisco. The presence of segregated Oriental schools in the Sacramento Delta emphasizes how significant the Asian American population was in the region by the turn of the twentieth century, yet how they were also seen as a racial Other that needed to be kept at a distance.

In addition to the businesses along Main Street, canneries became important landmarks in Isleton both in terms of their physical presence as well as their labor demands that brought more people to town. Isleton was home to a number of canneries including a Heinz Pickle factory, the Bayside Cannery, the Libby McNeil Cannery, the California Co-operative Cannery, and the National Cannery located at the east end of Main Street. Many of these canneries specialized in canning pears and white asparagus, particularly during Isleton's asparagus boom in the 1900s and 1910s when Isleton was known as the asparagus capital of the world (Crawford 2003). National Cannery was particularly unique because it was Chinese American owned and operated, and employed workers of all ethnicities (Crawford 2003; Tom et al. 2013). Canneries usually supplied housing for their workers in small structures adjacent to the factory. Like farm labor, cannery work was highly seasonal with huge demands for labor during the harvest season. During this time, canneries were often open 24 hours a day. By the 1920s, canneries began to decline in Isleton, particularly by the 1930s and the beginning of the Great Depression. Sun Garden was last operating cannery in Isleton, which closed in 1966 (Tointon 1979).

The Bing Kong Tong, located at 29 Main Street, is one of the post-1926 fire structures in Isleton. The Toy family, a prominent merchant family in Isleton, helped the Bing Kong Tong purchase the building for an Isleton chapter (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). The Bing Kong Tong assigned three families to be trustees of the property, including the Toy family, who helped embellish the building. The Bing Kong Tong building was an important multi-use site for the Chinese American community. The building had two floors. The top floor had an altar room for religious ceremonies, a small kitchen, a bathroom, and a large meeting room that faced Main Street. The meeting room is where the Tong held meetings as well as where people would socialize and game. A large room on the bottom floor was home to the

Chinese language school. The Chinese language schoolmaster lived in the area behind the Chinese language schoolroom. It is clear that the Tong building in Isleton was a multifunctional site that simultaneously served as a community meeting location, recreational activity hub, Chinese language school for the local American-born children, and domicile for the schoolmaster (Crawford 2003; Leung 1994). Consequently, people of a variety of ages and genders likely frequented this site, potentially providing an interesting glimpse into a cross-section of the community.

The Bing Kong Tong was a Chinese American community organization founded in the early twentieth century, whose headquarters were and still remain in San Francisco Chinatown. In addition to the Isleton chapter, the Bing Kong Tong had another Delta branch in Walnut Grove. Mainstream American culture has historically sensationalized Tongs as secret societies involved in organized crime, gambling, prostitution rings, and wars with rival tongs. Tongs, however, were originally antigovernment associations that arose in Guangdong at the end of the Qing Dynasty (Kwong 2001; Takaki 1998). In the United States, tongs were social organizations serving the local community. In addition to offering a physical location for community recreational activities, tongs offered a number of community services such as resolving local disputes and providing mutual support network funding. This helped the Chinese American community regulate its own problems and provided financial support for members in times of need (Anderson 1991; Dillon 1962; Lai 2004; Lin 1998).

As the home of the Isleton Chinese language school, the Tong building was a focal point for the Chinese American children. Most families sent their children to Chinese language school because immigrant parents wanted to ensure that their children could speak Cantonese and had the opportunity to learn about Chinese history and culture. Chinese American children attended

Chinese school weekday evenings from 5 PM to 8 PM as well as Saturday mornings from 8 AM to 12 PM (Tom n.d., http://chong.zxq.net/ancestry/prt1/Isleton_Legacy.htm, accessed 19 February 2013). Instruction was in Cantonese, although as a child attending language school, Roger Chinn (oral history interview, 2 September 2012) remembers having to sing an anthem in Mandarin that he did not understand.

The Chinese language schoolmaster lived on the bottom floor at the back of the Tong building. According to personal accounts, language schooling was inconsistent because the school did not always have teachers. One teacher, Peter Yee, was a single man who eventually returned to China (Tom n.d., http://chong.zxq.net/ancestry/prt1/Isleton_Legacy.htm, accessed 19 February 2013). Another teacher was a minister who came with his wife and young daughter (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). The domicile in the Tong building adds a domestic use to the site that included a garden along the levee when the second schoolmaster lived there with his family.

The lot adjacent to the Tong at 27 Main Street was also important to the Chinese American youth in town. The 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map indicates that there was a shop on this lot when the surveyor drew the map. This structure, however, burned in the 1926 fire and was never replaced. Instead, this lot remained empty and became the Chinese playground for the local children attending the Chinese language school to play during recess. According to oral history interviews, the playground had a lot of open space to play but also included a basketball court, a swing, a set of chain rings, and a seesaw. Interviewees remember playing games such as kick the can, jacks, and marbles with their friends (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012).

This thriving Chinatown, however, drastically changed by the advent of World War II and ultimately diminished by the end of the 1940s. The golden age of asparagus in Isleton was long gone and most of the canneries had already closed, which meant fewer people came to Isleton for work. The forced internment of all Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II changed Main Street as many Filipino Americans moved in and took over Japanese American businesses, homes, and Buddhist Temple. Even after the war ended, Japanese Americans never returned to Isleton. Additionally, by the 1940s, many American-born Chinese children had grown into young adults who left the Delta for school or work because they did not want to go into agriculture. This was particularly true for men who served in the war and took advantage of the G.I. Bill to go to college and become professionals. Many people settled in San Francisco, Sacramento, and Stockton, taking their parents with them. The American-born generation felt they had no farming future in the Delta with the system of white large landowners that capped the progress of racialized communities at tenant farming rather than independent landowning farmer. Between this exodus of young adults and the demise of Delta cannery work, very few Chinese American families still lived in Isleton by the 1950s. By 1970, only 54 Chinese Americans remained in Isleton (Tointon 1979: 14).

Conclusion

Chinese Americans were an important to the development of the American West, providing the cheap labor source that constructed key infrastructure that ultimately transformed the landscape. This is particularly true in the Sacramento Delta, where reclamation projects powered by Chinese American labor helped a swampy tule bog become one of the richest agricultural areas in California. Despite these significant contributions, we must understand the

Chinese American experience as one shaped by foreigner racialization and xenophobia that had structural impacts on legislation as well as local impacts on the everyday lives of Chinese Americans. With racial theory from Chapter 2 and history from Chapter 3 providing the sociohistorical context in which I approach my analysis, I turn to material culture analysis and interpretation from the Bing Kong Tong site in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Excavating the Isleton Chinese American community

The Tong site is rich with archaeological material culture that can tell us about everyday life in Isleton in unique ways. Situated within the sociohistorical context outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter outlines my archaeological excavation and artifact analysis. I begin with a description of my fieldwork and labwork before discussing site formation processes to think about who would have contributed to the archaeological record at the Tong site to contextualize the excavated deposits. I then provide an overview of the types of recovered materials with a more in depth discussion of the three features I excavated: two burned trash deposits and one sheet midden. I focus on diagnostic artifacts that provide clues about the features and the site. I also discuss broader trends I observed from materials across the site, such as which proveniences have concentrations of particular artifact types. This chapter sets the foundation for Chapter 5, in which I interpret these materials from an interdisciplinary perspective along with oral history interviews and archival research.

Archaeological fieldwork

Along with several volunteers, I excavated at the Tong site for five weeks in 2009, 2010, and 2011. Excavations focused on the area behind the standing Tong building at 29 Main Street as well as the adjacent empty lot at 27 Main Street. As I previously mentioned, 27 Main Street is currently an open lot but had a structure before the 1926 fire that housed a shop. After the 1926 fire, 27 Main Street was home to the Chinese playground. 29 Main Street was a shop before the 1926 fire and became home to the Bing Kong Tong by 1930. Excavation included a combination of sampling and block excavation. For sampling, I used 50-x-50 cm shovel test pits

(STPs). Block excavation consisted of units in areas with features or non-randomly selected significant deposits. Most units were 1-x-1 m in size, although several were linked into trenches. I excavated 34 STPs and 11 units (Figure 3). I began with systematic sampling, excavating STPs at 3-m intervals across the site in areas we had access to. I opened additional units where STPs uncovered high concentrations of artifacts. I block excavated the area near the base of the levee behind the Tong building where we recovered higher concentrations of artifacts as well as evidence of fire. This allowed me to see the relationship between deposits in this area. This excavation recovered 3 features: Feature 1 is a trash pit on 27 Main Street; Feature 2 is a trash pit behind the Tong building; and Feature 3 is a sheet midden at the base of the levee on 29 Main Street. In the field, all excavators placed artifacts in brown paper bags labeled with provenience information. When possible, excavators mapped significant finds. All dirt was dry-screened using 0.5 cm mesh to catch smaller artifacts. All screen residues were collected.

I excavated by natural stratigraphic levels collected all materials related to a single episode, such as the 1926 fire, in a single level. I used changes in soil color and/or texture to determine stratigraphy changes. The soil at the Tong site ranges from very fine, loose silt at the surface to compact clay underneath the archaeological deposit layers. The soil generally fell into the brown colored soils according to the Munsell color chart, roughly 10YR 4/3. Overall, stratigraphic layers with evidence of fire varied in color depending on the amount of ash in the soil such as 10YR 3/2, very dark greyish brown, or 10YR 3/3, very dark brown. I will go into more detail on soil color and texture as I discuss specific proveniences.

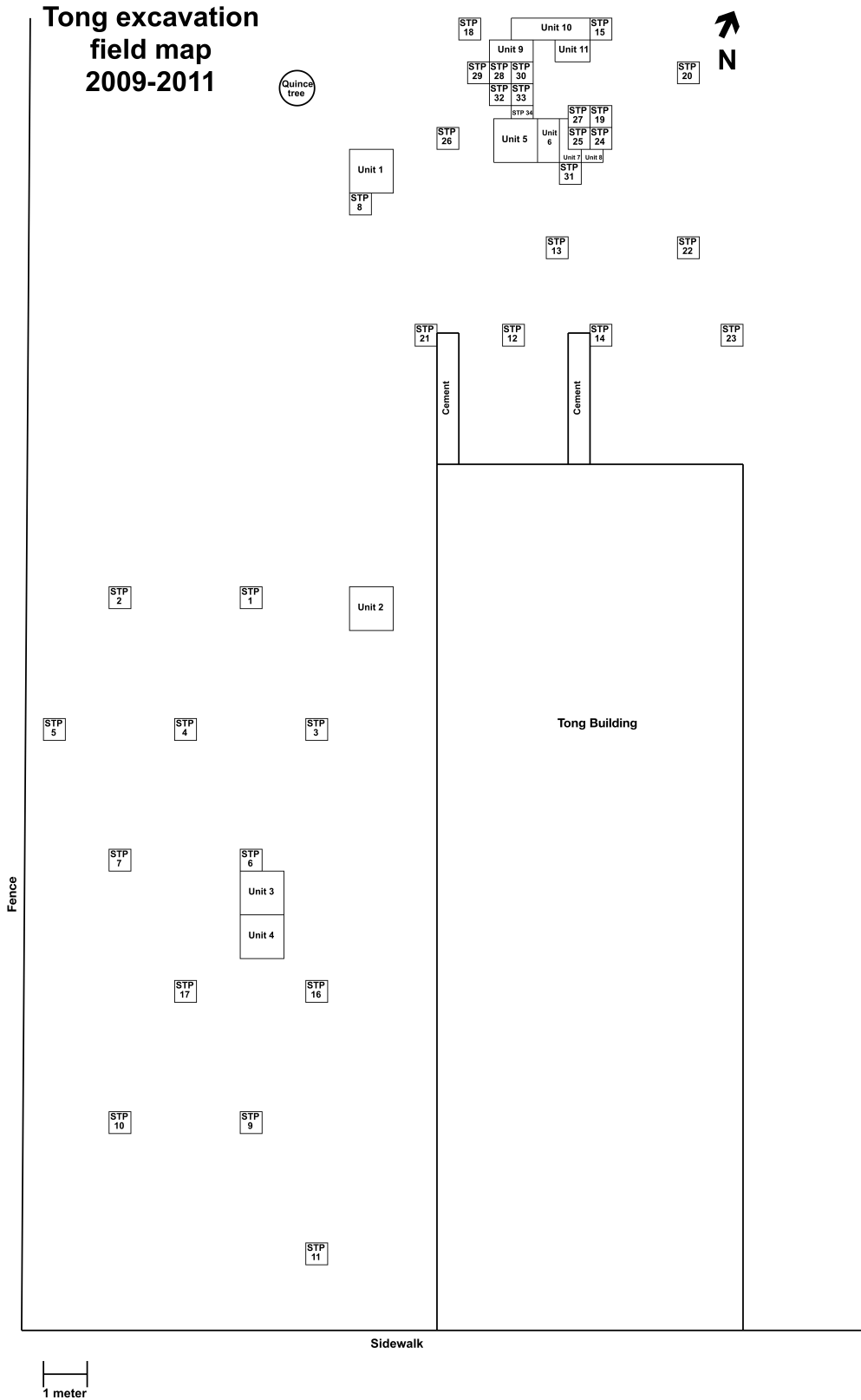


Figure 3. Tong site excavation map from fieldwork between 2009 and 2011.

The site does not appear to have high levels of disturbance. The lot at 27 Main Street has been graded to level the dirt on the main part of the lot. Excavated features, however, were roughly 15-20 cm below the surface so grading likely did not disturb these deposits. The area along the levee suffers from seasonal erosion, but not enough to create a visible mixture of chronological deposits. Disturbance from rodent bioturbation was minimal. It is also important to note that Isleton suffered from a major flood in 1972, but I did not see evidence of this in the archaeological record.

After excavation, I washed and sorted all of the artifacts in the historical archaeology lab at the University of California, Berkeley with some help from a few undergraduate volunteers. I conducted my artifact sorting, labeling, cataloging, and analysis both in Berkeley and in Los Angeles. Some UC Berkeley undergraduates enrolled in Dr. Laurie Wilkie's historical archaeology laboratory class in 2010 and 2013 worked with the faunal remains and glass for their final projects. Dr. Tom Wake and staff at the zooarchaeology lab at the University of California, Los Angeles analyzed a sample of the faunal remains from Feature 1, Feature 2 and Feature 3.

Site formation processes

Before discussing the excavation findings, it is important to consider the activities that likely took place on the Tong site and the people that created these deposits. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Tong site was a multiuse site that attracted a diverse cross-section of the Isleton Chinese American community between 1915 and the early 1950s. We can divide use of the Tong site into two major periods: 1915-1926 and after 1926. The Isleton Chinese American community moved to Main Street after fire destroyed the Chinatown along Jackson Slough Road

in 1915. Landowners refused to allow the Chinese to rebuild on the same site, so the Chinese American community had to find a new location. According to Roger Chinn, his maternal grandfather, Toy Tue, was an established resident in Isleton and had become close to one the major landholding families in town, the Gardiner family. As mentioned in Chapter 3, John Gardiner took over the Poole family landholdings after Josiah Poole left Isleton. The Gardiner family gained more land and power in Isleton after Gardiner married into the DeBack family, another large landholding family in Isleton. Toy Tue asked Gardiner to allow the Chinese American community to build Chinatown in the asparagus fields along the Sacramento River levee (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Gardiner granted this request and the Chinese American community built Chinatown along Main Street (Crawford 2003; *Lodi News-Sentinel*, 18 June 1973; Tom et al. 2013).

Very little is known about the Chinese American community between 1915 and 1926. Some personal accounts do not place Chinatown on Main Street until after the 1926 fire (Roger Chinn, personal communication, 14 August 2012; Tom n.d. http://chong.zxq.net/ancestry/prt1/Isleton_Legacy.htm accessed 24 February 2013). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1919 and 1924, however, indicate that Chinatown existed along Main Street before the 1926 fire (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1919, 1924). These maps illustrate that there were structures on 27 Main and 29 Main Street, both labeled “S” for shop by the map surveyor. It was common that people lived on top of or behind their businesses, so these structures were likely both businesses and personal homes. Consequently, any archaeological deposit associated with the pre-1926 fire period should include both household and business types items. Unfortunately, we do not know what type of stores they were and cannot determine what business-related materials to expect in the assemblage.

We should expect a pre-1926 fire deposit to include the following: household goods such as ceramic tablewares and food storage vessels, bottle glass, and metal from canned food; evidence of some unknown business; and a large number of architectural materials that did not burn with the structure, particularly metal, ceramic, and glass. Architectural materials should include items such as electrical utility porcelains, metal architectural brackets, and an abundance of nails. There should also be evidence of fire in the form of charcoal, burnt or ashy soil, and artifacts affected by fire including melted glass and burned ceramics. Because the fire burned all of Main Street quickly, we should also expect to recover more valued personal items that sustained fire damage and could not be salvaged including buttons, jewelry, coins, or toys. All materials associated with the pre-1926 Chinatown should be in or below the 1926 fire stratigraphic layer.

After the 1926 fire, the Chinese American community rebuilt their homes and businesses along Main Street. People quickly built a structure at 29 Main Street, but 27 Main Street remained vacant. The Bing Kong Tong took over the building at 29 Main Street around 1930 with the help of the Toy family (Roger Chinn oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Sharon Fong personal communication, 26 June 2013). The post-1926 fire site occupation is the period we know the most about because it was longer and still exists within living memory. As a community institution, the Tong attracted many different people to the site for a variety of reasons: merchants who ran stores in town and financially supported the Isleton Bing Kong Tong branch; immigrant migrant laborers who came to Isleton to eat, gamble, and socialize; American-born children who attended the Chinese language school or played on the playground; the schoolmaster and his family who lived at the back of the Tong building; and families and single men who came to pray at the Tong altar and celebrate the New Year with a feast.

With a wide range of activities from individuals of varying socioeconomic classes, gender, age, and generation, we expect to see a complex archaeological deposit representing activities from the Tong, the Chinese language school, and the schoolmaster's house. From the Tong, we know that a number of activities occurred on site including solving disputes, gambling, paying respects to the religious altar, maintaining the Tong bookkeeping, and cooking and consuming communal feasts. The largest archaeological signature likely comes from the kitchen. Oral history interviewees remember people rolling out large round tables during holidays such as the Lunar New Year to celebrate with a large feast in the upstairs meeting hall room (Roger Chinn, oral history interview 2 September 2012). Preparation and consumption of large meals would have left an archaeological signature through faunal remains as well as a significant number of large serving bowls. We would also expect a large number of individual serving-sized bowls, probably rice bowl sized. While it is possible that individuals brought their own bowls and chopsticks to these meals, it is most likely the Tong owned a communal set of serving bowls and individual serving-sized bowls to service these events. Furthermore, given the important position of the Bing Kong Tong, it is likely the Tong owned tablewares with the same pattern to emphasize group belonging through shared pattern usage as well as the economic ability to buy a large set of matching tablewares.

In addition to artifacts related to foodways, Tong activities also would have contributed to the archaeological record. Roger Chinn recalls that gamblers sometimes came to the Tong and there was some gambling taking place on site (oral history interview, 2 September 2012). The majority of gambling, however, took place in the gambling halls in town, including one gambling hall two doors away from the Tong. Games played on site include dominos, mahjong, fan-tan, and keno. We may see some of the smaller pieces involved with these games, such as

plastic, four-hole white buttons that people used as substitutes for coins in fan-tan, gambling tokens, even possibly tiles from dominos or mahjong. In addition to gambling, we may see evidence of Tong operational activities. It is likely people moved the Tong documents and records to San Francisco when the Tong left the building in the 1950s, but we may see evidence of implements to create those records with pencils, pens, or ink brushes and ink bottles. Finally, we know there was a religious altar on the top floor of the Tong building. People would have visited the altar to pray and make small offerings of food or incense. The IBAHS has curated the altar, so the only archaeological evidence of religious activities would likely be food-related and therefore similar to foodways activities at the Tong.

Chinese American children also had many activities on the Tong site between attending Chinese language school and playing on the playground. The Isleton Chinese language school occupied the first floor of the Tong building. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Chinese children in town attended the Chinese language school six days a week where they received instruction on how to read, write, and speak standard Cantonese in addition to instruction on Chinese history and culture. We may expect to see archaeological evidence of these school activities through parts of pencils (graphite, wood, or metal end), brush handles, equipment for grinding ink, ink bottles, and parts of books or readers if preservation conditions are good.

Activities on the playground varied by age and gender. Children would play during recess from Chinese language school but also whenever they wished during their time off. The space was specifically designated for the Chinese American children in town, maintained by the Bing Kong Tong. Consequently, 27 Main Street was a notable gathering place for the Chinese American children in town. The playground was a bare piece of ground that had a number of playground structures including a swing set, chinning rings, a seesaw, and a basketball court

(Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). In addition to playing on the playground structures, children also brought their own games and toys to play with such as marbles and jacks. The playground was most active from the 1930s until the early 1950s, after which very few Chinese American families remained in town. By this time, the Chinese language school was no longer operational and the playground structures eventually fell apart. Archaeologically, we can expect to see evidence of activities of Chinese American children through small finds that were accidentally lost or broken during play such as jacks or marbles. It is also possible to find evidence of the playground structures on the site, either parts of the structures themselves or an imprint on the stratigraphy of their presence.

The post-1926 fire Tong site was also home to the Chinese language schoolmaster and his family. The schoolmaster lived on the first floor in an area behind the main Tong structure. According to oral history accounts, the Tong employed a number of schoolmasters over the years the school operated (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2013; Tom n.d. http://chong.zxq.net/ancestry/prt1/Isleton_Legacy.htm accessed 24 February 2013). Roger Chinn remembers at least two different schoolmasters while he attended Chinese language school as a child in the late 1930s and 1940s. One of these schoolmasters was a bachelor from China who did not stay very long because the work was hard and the pay very low. It took the Bing Kong Tong a while to find another schoolmaster, a Protestant or Methodist minister who moved to Isleton with his wife and baby daughter. Roger felt this schoolmaster with his family became a stabilizing factor in the community. The schoolmaster and his wife maintained a garden behind their dwelling along the levee, where they grew Chinese vegetables such as *gai choy*, *bok choy*, and *gai lan*.

The schoolmaster's household adds potentially domestic materials to the post 1926-fire archaeological materials on the Tong site. We would expect to see some of the same foodways evidence as from the Tong such as stoneware food storage vessels, porcelain tablewares and spoons, glass beverage bottles, and faunal remains from meals. Additionally, we may see evidence of gardening activities along the levee. People may have used their kitchen waste as fertilizer for their gardens, possibly burying items such as bones and eggshells in their garden for nutrients (Roger Chinn, oral history, 2 September 2013). We should also expect to see evidence of health and body care through items such as toothbrushes, combs, and containers that held medicines, lotions, creams, or powders.

Finally, we should expect to see evidence of the structure the schoolmaster lived in. We know that someone tore down the structure the schoolmaster lived in sometime in the late 1970s. While wood and metal that constructed the structure are no longer on the site, we should still expect to see evidence of the structure through debris that the demolitionists did not clear away. This could include nails, smaller pieces of wood, window glass, electrical utility porcelains, roofing material, wallpaper, and flooring material. These materials should not be burned unless someone intentionally gathered them with other trash to burn. Furthermore, it is likely these materials are scattered in the open area behind the Tong building.

It is also important to recognize the fire of 1926 as an event contributing to the archaeological record. The fire serves as chronological marker in the stratigraphy that allows us to distinguish between a 1915-1926 period and a post-1926 period. Chronologically, the 1920-30 period was an important decade in the Asian American Isleton community, with the booming canneries, increasing numbers of Chinese American and Japanese American laborers coming to the Sacramento Delta for work, and growth of the American-born population. The 1926 fire

therefore provides a chronological marker for us to think about change over time in Isleton that corresponded with larger changes within the Isleton community.

Overview of recovered artifacts from the Tong site

I recovered 47,879 artifacts from the Tong site representing a cross-section of everyday activities in the Isleton Chinese American community (Table 3). The most numerous artifact types include metal (nail fragments, flat pieces of cans, unidentified ferrous metal), glass (bottle glass, window glass, melted glass), and ceramics (tablewares, storage vessels, electrical hardware). These artifacts came from proveniences across the site with high concentrations in excavated features, which I detail in the next section.

Ceramics are the largest diagnostic artifact group in the Tong assemblage. I calculated ceramic data through sherd counts as well as minimum number of vessel (MNV) counts, which give a conservative estimate of the number of vessels represented on the site. MNVs are helpful because they provide an alternative way to think about represented vessels that is not skewed by how different ceramic types and forms may break in different ways. To calculate MNVs, I sorted diagnostic sherds by vessel pattern and form, making sure to separate vessels with the same decorative pattern by rim or base diameter size. I then used vessel rims and bases to calculate the percentage of the vessel represented by each rim or base based on the vessel diameter. When there were multiple sherds with the same decorative and ware type and the same rim or base diameter, I added the rim/diameter percentage measurements from all of these similar sherds. Vessels with 1-100% represented in rims or bases have a calculated MNV of one, 101-200% have an MNV of two, and so forth. While it is likely that the number of vessels actually represented in the Tong assemblage was greater than the calculated MNV data, MNV

provides a baseline in which we can think about ceramic data through vessels rather than sherd counts.

Table 3. Artifact Totals by Material

Material	Quantity
Bath tub enamel	133
Bead	13
Botanical	422
Button	90
Ceramic	2,018
Coal Slag	91
Coin	17
Conglomerate	133
Foil	701
Glass	10,648
Graphite	120
Linoleum	83
Metal	24,530
Paint/shell	207
Plastic	2,120
Roofing tar	5,174
Seashell	92
Slate	171
Small finds	41
Styrofoam	180
Unidentified	895
TOTAL	47,879

Ceramics

The Tong assemblage contains a total of 2,130 ceramic sherds (Table 4). The calculated MNV for the assemblage is 162. The majority of the Tong ceramics are porcelain tablewares and stoneware food storage vessels of Chinese manufacture based upon patterns, vessel form, and manufacturer's marks. Porcelain tablewares refer to white-bodied, high-fired, vitreous

vessels used during meals, such as serving bowls, rice bowls, spoons, and cups. There are 868 porcelain sherds from tablewares, accounting for 40.8% of total ceramic assemblage. The MNV of porcelain and earthenware tablewares is 112. Stoneware food storage vessels refer to high-fired, vitreous vessels merchants used to export food items such as pickled vegetables, wine, and soy sauce. There are 613 sherds of stoneware food storage vessels, which make up 28.7% of the total ceramic assemblage. The MNV for stoneware storage vessels is 23.

Table 4. Ceramic Sherd Count by Type

Type	Quantity
Porcelain tablewares	868
Refined earthenware tablewares	37
Brown glazed stoneware storage vessels	613
Earthenware tile	50
Terra cotta flower pot	8
Porcelain toys	3
Architectural earthenware pipe	144
Miscellaneous ironstone	15
Utility porcelain	95
Other	297
TOTAL	2,130

Porcelain tablewares

Porcelain from the Tong site is a mixture of tablewares, such as plates, spoons, and bowls of various sizes, and electrical hardware, including fuses, insulators, knobs, and cleats.

Porcelains are a type of white-bodied ceramic made out of kaolin clay. Porcelains are fired at high temperatures, usually between 1,200 and 1,400 °C, which results in vessels that are vitreous, hard, and waterproof. While the high firing temperatures give porcelains their characteristic translucent appearance, the temperature also limits the types of decorations these vessels can

have. Porcelain vessels are often monochromatic. Multicolored porcelain vessels either have underglaze decoration in cobalt blue glaze, or overglaze enamel or decal decorations (Kerr 1986).

Recovered porcelain vessel forms from the Tong site represents the range of vessel forms that people used on an everyday basis for meals. The person cooking typically placed cooked meals in large bowls or dishes while people ate their servings on top of rice out of individual serving-sized rice bowls and chopsticks. This table arrangement worked for meals within the immediate family as well as meals for a large number of laborers in a boardinghouse or on a farm (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 8 August 2012). Vessel types from the Tong reflect this same table arrangement, where I recovered soup spoons, bowls ranging from tea bowls to larger serving bowls, shallow dishes of various sizes, and a teapot spout. Many of the sherds, however, are too small to specifically identify the vessel shape beyond some type of hollowware, that is, a vessel with hollow middle that allows it to hold something.

The range of patterns on in the Tong assemblage from Chinese-manufactured tablewares largely fall into the four categories historical archaeologist have described in the existing literature on historic Chinese Diaspora sites (Table 5). While nomenclature for these patterns has not been entirely uniform, these four patterns are mostly known as “Double Happiness,” “Bamboo,” “Celadon,” and “Four Seasons” (Greenwood 1996; Mueller 1987; Wegars 2013a, 1999). For the ease of comparative work with other archaeologists, I use this same terminology in my discussion. The Tong assemblage contains one sherd of a Bamboo bowl as well as many vessels with Celadon and Four Seasons patterns. I recovered no Double Happiness vessels, although this may be because this pattern is usually associated with sites dating to the 1840s and 1850s (Greenwood 1996; Sando and Felton 1993).

Bamboo is known by many names in the archaeological literature, including “Three Circles and Dragonfly,” “Three Friends,” “Blue Flower Ware,” and “Swatow Ware” (Greenwood 1996; Mueller 1987; Wegars 2013a). This pattern consists of underglaze, handpainted blue decorations of circles and items that other archaeologists have interpreted to be bamboo leaves and dragonflies (Greenwood 1996; Sando and Felton 1993; Wegars 2013a, 1999). This type of decoration has only been recovered on rice bowls. Archaeologists have categorized these bowls as porcelaneous stoneware because of their grey bodies, coarse texture, and lack of translucency (Greenwood 1996). Only one sherd of Bamboo came from the Tong site belonging to a rice bowl.

Table 5. Porcelain Tablewares by Decorative Type

Type	Quantity
Longevity pattern	35
Celadon pattern	152
Four Seasons pattern	318
Bamboo pattern	1
Undecorated	265
Blue on white	56
Other	41
TOTAL	868

Celadon or “Winter Green” refers to porcelain bowls with a solid, pale green glaze on the vessel exterior (Greenwood 1996; Wegars 2013a, 1999). These vessels usually come in the form of bowls ranging from small tea bowls to rice bowls. They often have a cobalt blue, hand-painted basemark drawn at the bottom, usually in the shape of a square chop. Archaeologists have interpreted these marks as reign marks, although archaeologists have deciphered very few of these marks. The inside of these bowls is white. I recovered Celadon vessels throughout the

Tong site, with higher concentrations in features. The highest concentration of Celadon vessels came from Feature 1, a post-1926 fire trash pit, followed by Feature 3, the sheet midden at the base of the levee. The majority of Celadon vessel forms are rice bowls with a 14 cm rim and 5 cm base. The calculated minimum number of vessels (MNV) for green-glazed rice bowls is 5, which is also the largest MNV of the ceramic assemblage. These rice bowls have blue basemarks in the shape of a square Chinese chop mark. This mark is not found on any other vessel types in the Tong assemblage. None of these bowls have a country of origin mark at the bottom. There is also evidence of a smaller green glazed hollowware vessel in the assemblage that was likely a tea bowl.

The last common decorative pattern is Four Seasons, also known as “Four Flowers” (Greenwood 1996; Wegars 2013a, 1999). This pattern consists of polychrome overglaze enamel, hand-painted floral decoration. The flowers depicted on the vessels are supposed to represent the four seasons in Chinese culture: the peony for spring, chrysanthemum for fall, and prunus for winter (Greenwood 1996; Mueller 1987). These vessels also often have a peach in the center to signify longevity. Vessel forms include rice bowls, larger serving bowls, soup spoons, small condiment dishes, small tea bowls, and plates or shallow dishes (Greenwood 1996).

One other important pattern represented in the Tong assemblage is an orange “longevity” pattern that appears on tea bowls—that is, a teacup without a handle. The longevity tea bowl has two decorative types. Both tea bowls have a distinctive orange pattern near the rim of the vessel that alternates between an endless knot and three diamonds aligned vertically in a row. The rest of the body decoration, however, differs. One type of tea bowl is decorated with the stylized Chinese character for longevity(壽) pronounced *sau* in Cantonese or *shòu* in *pinyin*, also in an orange glaze. The other type of tea bowl has a different stylized form of the longevity character

found in a circle. A ring of stylized bats surrounds this character. In Chinese culture, bats are seen as lucky because the word for bat (蝠 or *fuk* in Cantonese or *fú* in *pinyin*) has the same phonetic sound and tone as the word for good fortune (福, also *fuk* in Cantonese or *fú* in *pinyin*).

I recovered a total of 35 sherds of this decorative pattern that represents an MNV of three vessels. Other than the tea bowl, no other vessel form appears with the longevity pattern in the Tong assemblage. The longevity tea bowl sherds largely came from the two areas of the site where a large number of artifacts were recovered: the sheet midden near the base of the levee (Feature 3), and the burned trash deposit in the middle of the 27 Main Street (Feature 1). Since both areas appear to be trash deposits, it appears that these longevity tea bowls were intentionally thrown away with other refuse. These longevity tea bowls do not have a country of origin mark at the bottom of the vessel, indicating they entered the United States before the United States Congress passed the McKinley Tariff in 1890. I will go into more detail on the importance of country of origin marks below.

In addition to Chinese-manufactured ceramics, vessel pattern, form, and manufacturer's marks also allowed me to identify a small number of Japanese-manufactured porcelain bowls as well as several British and American porcelain and earthenware tablewares. There are at least four different Japanese-manufactured porcelain vessels, which I identified based on the patterns on the vessels. The Japanese ceramic industry produced cobalt blue decoration on white-bodied porcelains using a stenciling method, which gave these vessels a distinct appearance. Stenciling was a popular method for decorating porcelains in Japan, particularly between the early 1870s and the 1920s (Ross 2012). In a process known as *katagami*, ceramicists applied a positive paper stencil on the vessel that allowed pigment to pass through to create the decoration. The dashes,

lines, and dots used to create decorative patterns are the result of how the paper stencil was held together, ultimately creating a distinctive appearance for this type of ware (Ross 2012: 7).

Earthenware tablewares

There are 37 earthenware sherds from tablewares, accounting for 1.7% of the total ceramic assemblage. Most of these vessels only have a few sherds of different decorative types, which implies that each of these sherds may represent a single vessel of that type and decoration on the site. Earthenware vessels differ from porcelains and stonewares because they are fired at lower temperatures, making earthenware vessels less strong and more porous than the other two. Consequently, it is possible to scratch earthenware bodies but not stoneware and porcelain bodies. The earthenware tablewares are mostly refined earthenwares such as whitewares, which have higher quality clay than unrefined earthenwares such as terra cotta. Whitewares are white body ceramics that American and European kilns produced in attempts to make a white-bodied ceramic like Chinese porcelain without the same technology. Chinese kilns, however, did not make whiteware ceramics because the porcelains they produced had superior strength and white bodies, making it unnecessary to create refined earthenware.

It is important to note that the Chinese and Japanese tableware porcelains do not have a basemark indicating a country of origin, which is important for several reasons. First, the lack of a country of origin basemark could indicate that these vessels were made and imported before Congress passed the McKinley Tariff in 1890, which required all imported items to be marked with their country of origin. These vessels would have been in the United States several decades before the heyday of asparagus in Sacramento Delta during the first few decades of the 20th century. Since Isleton was established in the 1870s, these ceramics could have belonged to

laborers who travelled to the Delta to build the levees and planted the initial batch of crops in the area. These laborers may have settled more permanently in the Delta, bringing their pre-1890 ceramics to Isleton with them. Alternatively, it is also possible that these ceramics were hand-me down items that belonged either to the Tong or to the Chinese language schoolmaster. This may account for the variety of ceramic decorations represented in the assemblage because the ceramics were miscellaneous donated items rather than part of a set. It is also possible these ceramics date to after 1890 but ended up in the United States either as smuggled items that avoided obeying the McKinley Tariff, or because they were personal possessions of immigrants that travelled in their possession rather than as imported items. As personal items sold to customers in China, these ceramics would not have been intended as imported items and it is unlikely they would have been labeled as manufactured in China.

Stoneware storage vessels

In addition to porcelain, the assemblage has many Chinese-manufactured sherds from stoneware vessels with brown and green glaze. There are 613 sherds of stoneware storage vessels. The brown-glazed stoneware sherds in the Tong assemblage are mostly undiagnostic body sherds. Consequently, I largely rely on rims, bases, and lids in my analysis to gain insight into the vessel forms represented at the Tong site.

The main function of stoneware food storage vessels was housing goods for transport between where the food items were packaged and the households that consumed them. Archaeologists have recovered brown-glazed stoneware vessels on sites throughout the Chinese Diaspora, indicating that Chinese food goods reached areas where Chinese Diasporic communities formed around the globe. Brown-glazed stoneware vessels contained a number of

different food items including soy sauce, wine, preserved vegetables, dried black beans, bean curd, pickled duck eggs, and dried seafood such as oysters, shrimp, and abalone (Brott 1987: 233; Felton et al. 1984:47). These vessels came in a variety of vessel forms and sizes depending on the item the vessels held. The stoneware vessels follow two color schemes. Most vessels have a brown glaze that can range from a tan color to a deep brown-black hue. The glaze also varies in terms of finish. Some vessels have a matte brown finish while others are very shiny almost to the point of appearing slightly iridescent. A small number of these vessels have some white glaze on the exterior body. The other color on stoneware vessels is the bright blue-green hue on the shoulders and bodies of small hexagonal jars known as “ginger jars” in the Chinese Diaspora archaeological literature. The base of this kind of vessel is usually unglazed and the interior of the vessel varies between a dark brown to a light brown glaze.

There are several diagnostic shapes for brown-glazed stoneware storage vessels found on Chinese Diaspora sites, several of which I recovered and identified at the Tong site. One of these vessels is a wide-mouth, thin-neck hollow vessel that is known as a wine jar or liquor vessel in the existing literature because the vessels once held Chinese wine or alcohol (Brott 1987; Wegars 2013a, 1999). These vessels have a tear-shaped, globular body with a flaring neck and mouth for pouring liquids. There are five diagnostic sherds of this vessel type: four rim sherds and one body sherd that connects to one of the rims. The rim and neck of this vessel shape are recognizable because of the curve of the narrow neck that flares in width at the rim, which has a 6 cm diameter. The MNV for this vessel type is 2, since one of the recovered vessel mouths is complete. All of the recovered wine jar sherds came from the area near the base of the levee behind the Tong building in Feature 3.

Several other types of mouth rims are in the Tong assemblage. One diagnostic rim is a folded lip rim measuring 4 cm in diameter that belonged to a vessel with a narrow mouth. It is likely this rim represents vessel known as a spouted jar or soya jar (Brott 1987; Wegars 2013a, 1999). These medium-sized vessels have a globular body with a small neck and a narrow mouth. They also have a short spout on one side to pour their liquid contents such as soy sauce or vinegar. I recovered one spout, which is plugged with grey clay. There are also folded lip rims measuring 6 cm, 8 cm, and 12 cm in diameter, indicating they came from medium-sized vessels. While it is unclear what kind of vessels they were, it is likely they were part of shouldered jars. These vessels have a medium-sized mouth with a broad sloped shoulder that leads to a larger hollow body. These shouldered jars come in a variety of sizes and likely held preserved food items such as preserved vegetables or dried seafood.

From brown-glazed stoneware base sherds, we can gain insight into the width of different vessels. Base diameters include 8 cm, 12 cm, and 16 cm, which likely belonged to medium-sized hollowware vessels, possibly the shouldered jars with the folded lip rims. The bases are unglazed on the bottom and generally have glaze on the body to a few centimeters above the base. The inside of the bases are glazed, although some have thinner coats of glaze. It is interesting to note that some bases have a swirl-shaped pattern on the interior bottom that is raised.

The Tong assemblage also has a small, thin-bodied, brown-glazed stoneware vessel type. These vessels are known as straight-sided jars and come in a variety of sizes. The sherds from Tong site measure at a 6 cm base diameter and a 5 cm rim diameter. There is a thin flange on the rim that allows a concave lid to sit on top to seal vessel. This vessel is much smaller and much

more delicate than the other brown-glazed stoneware vessels. I also recovered lids that go with these vessels.

There is one other type of stoneware lid type in the Tong assemblage. This lid is unglazed and would have gone on top of stoneware vessels. The lid is circular in shape with a bit of a curving slope downward at the edge of the circle. This slope gives the lid a concave shape. There are two different sizes for this type of lid in the Tong assemblage: a 6 cm rim diameter and an 8 cm rim diameter. The color of the unglazed body varies on sherds from a light tan-grey color to a darker brown-grey hue. This color variation could represent a large number of different vessels or post-depositional processes, particularly those sherds recovered in areas with evidence of fire.

Utility ceramics

The Tong assemblage also has a number of utility ceramics, particularly architectural components. This includes 50 pieces of earthenware tile, 92 pieces of utility porcelain, mostly electrical porcelain, and 144 pieces of coarse-bodied earthenware architectural pipe. While most of these components are not identifiable, there are some sherds of electrical porcelain that are large enough to identify and this information provides some insight into the electrical system of the structures at the Tong site. The most commonly recovered identifiable item is electric porcelain cleats. We recovered 28 pieces of porcelain cleats of various sizes including complete cleats and broken sherds. These vessels are approximately 8.5 cm long rectangular bars that have curved ends. There are two holes on each side of the bar. There is also evidence of porcelain knobs and tubes used in the knob and tubing wiring system, which would have been the common method for electrical wiring for the pre-1926 fire era. Consequently, it is likely the

structures at 27 and 29 Main Street before the 1926 fire likely used knob and tubing wiring for their electricity. In the Tong assemblage, there are a number of sherds from 3 cm diameter knob insulators of various thicknesses. I also recovered several porcelain tube insulators, one porcelain fuse, and at least two socket insulators.

Glass

The Tong assemblage contains total of 10,648 glass artifacts (Table 6). The majority of these artifacts are vessel glass, which came in a variety of colors including green, olive, aqua, brown, cobalt blue, white, and clear. There are 8,208 pieces of vessel glass, which make 77.1% of the glass assemblage. Most of these sherds are not large enough to identify what the item was. There are, however, a number of medicinal vials and nearly intact or intact bottles that provide us with some information about what types of liquids people were consuming on the Tong site. Bottles with embossing on them are particularly useful in trying to date deposits or find more information about the types of liquids people were consuming. I will go into greater detail on the significant glass artifacts later in this chapter.

Table 6. Glass by Type

Type	Quantity
Vessel	8,208
Flat (window)	1,718
Melted	661
Miscellaneous/unidentified	52
Go tokens	9
TOTAL	10,648

There are also 1,718 pieces of flat window glass in the assemblage, which make up 16.1% of the glass assemblage. These sherds likely came from the buildings on site before the 1926 fire, the area where the schoolmaster lived that has been torn down, or from the standing Tong itself, which is missing a number of windows. The remaining artifacts in the glass assemblage are 661 pieces of melted glass and 9 Go gaming pieces. The melted glass largely came from the features where there was direct evidence of fire. While glass has different melting points depending on its composition, glass generally melts around 1,500 °C. Go pieces, also known as stones, are black or white half sphere-shaped pieces of glass used in the Chinese game Go. In Go, two players take turns placing either white or black stones to try to surround their opponent's color. The game, therefore, has many glass stones that could have easily been lost and become part of the archaeological assemblage.

Metal

Metal artifacts from the Tong site include a large number of nail fragments and can fragments as well as miscellaneous small finds. Since ferrous items are fragile and break easily, I calculated both counts and weights for nail fragments, flat can fragments, and unidentified ferrous metal pieces (Table 7). I recovered a total of 12,331 nail fragments from the Tong site, which make up 25.8% of the entire Tong assemblage and 50.3% of the metal assemblage. These nail fragments also make up 58.6% (>19kg) of the total weight of metal. Similarly, the Tong assemblage has 7983 pieces from metal cans, or 16.7% of the Tong assemblage and 32.5% of the metal assemblage as well as 3,500 pieces of unidentified ferrous metal, or 7.3% of the Tong assemblage or 14.3% of the metal assemblage.

Table 7. Metal by Type

Type	Quantity	Weight (grams)
Aluminum	4	
Flat (from cans)	7,983	7,538
Lead	14	170
Nails	12,331	19,055
Small finds	698	
Unidentified	3,500	5,751
TOTAL	24,530	32,514

There are 698 metal small finds that include pencil tops, buttons, coins, safety pins, bullet casings, and bottle caps. Small finds refer to artifacts that are unique and may tell us a bit more information about the community of study. Items I have classified as metal small finds are unique because they are identifiable and have the potential for telling us more about the Isleton Chinese American community. Coins in particular are helpful with dating deposits because with stamped dates, coins provide a terminus post quem, or the earliest date that we know a deposit could have been made. Consequently, we know that the deposit would have been made sometime during the year stamped on the coin or after that year. I will discuss small finds in greater detail below.

Features

Excavations uncovered three features from the Tong site: two burned trash pit deposits (Feature 1 and Feature 2) and one sheet midden (Feature 3) (Figure 4). In the field, these features became apparent with high concentrations of artifacts and soil color or texture changes. I expanded excavation from STPs to units of various sizes depending on the feature and areas I had access to. Feature 1 is located in the middle of 27 Main Street. Feature 2 and Feature 3 are at the rear of the lot behind the standing Tong building at 29 Main Street. Artifacts from these

features represent materials from the pre-1926 fire period as well as the post-1926 fire period, allowing us to look at materials used on an everyday basis over time.

Feature 1

Feature 1 is in the middle of 27 Main Street, represented by three proveniences: STP 6, Units 3 and 4. Feature 1 consists of two stratigraphic layers: a burn pit layer (Layer 2) and the layer on top of it (Layer 1). Layer 1 includes STP 6-1, Unit 3-1, and Unit 4-1. The soil in Layer 1 was silty brown (10YR 3/4). This area caught my attention while excavating STP 6 because it contained a higher concentration of artifacts than neighboring STPs. Furthermore, STP 6 uncovered darker soil in its south wall, which demanded further investigation. Opening Unit 3 immediately south of STP 6 uncovered a burn pit feature at about 15 cm beneath the surface where the soil became much darker color (10YR 3/4, dark yellowish brown). Layer 2 includes proveniences from Unit 3-2, Unit 3-3, and Unit 4-2. The darker soil of Layer 2 remained a silty texture and contained many more artifacts compared to the brown, compact, sterile clay bordering the edge of the feature. Layer 2 also contained large numbers of tiny charcoal pieces mixed in the soil. The feature sloped downwards until about 50 cm from the surface before sloping back up (Figure 5). Underneath Layer 2, the soil changes to the same brown, compact, sterile clay as the soil that borders the feature.

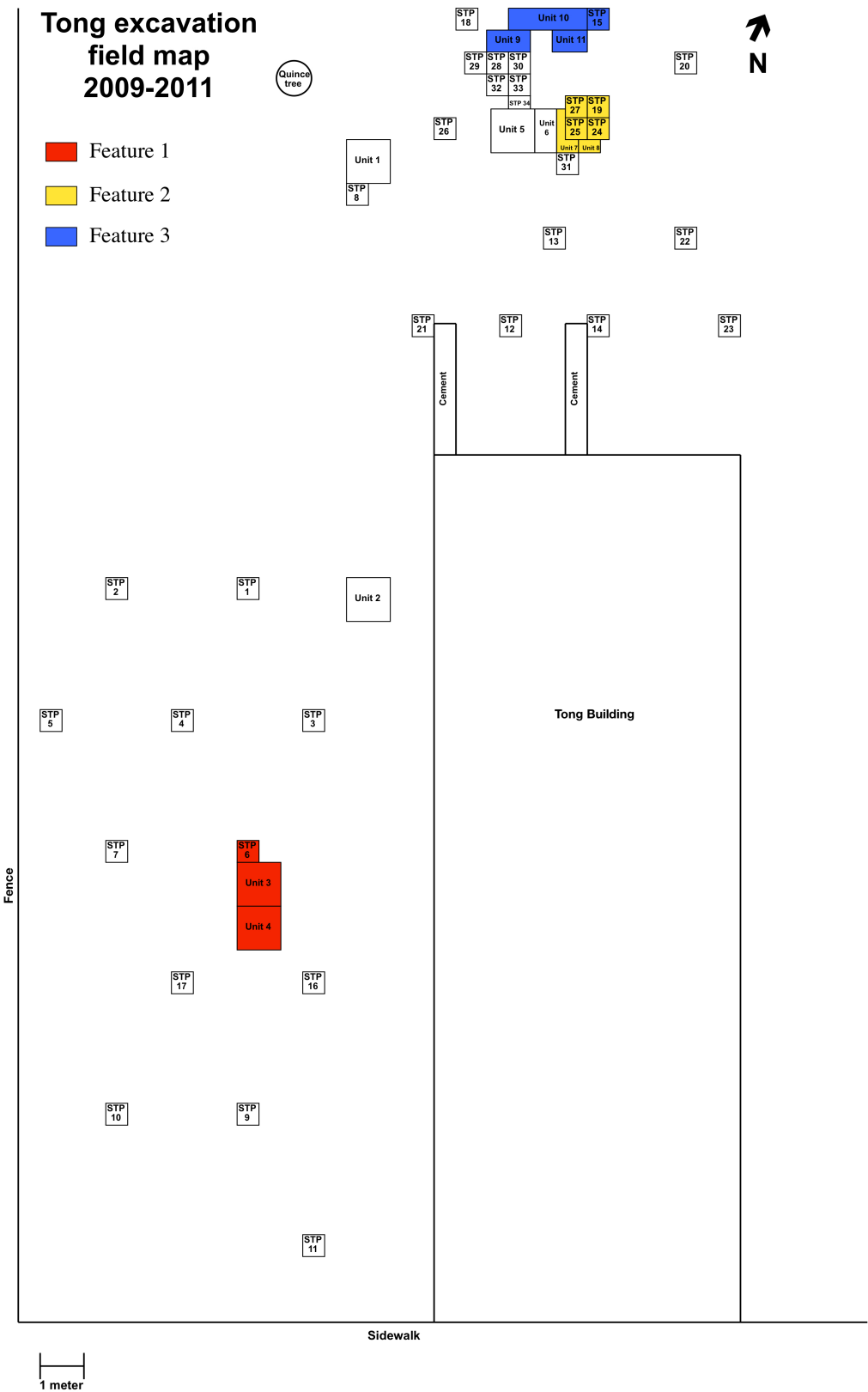


Figure 3. Tong site map with features.

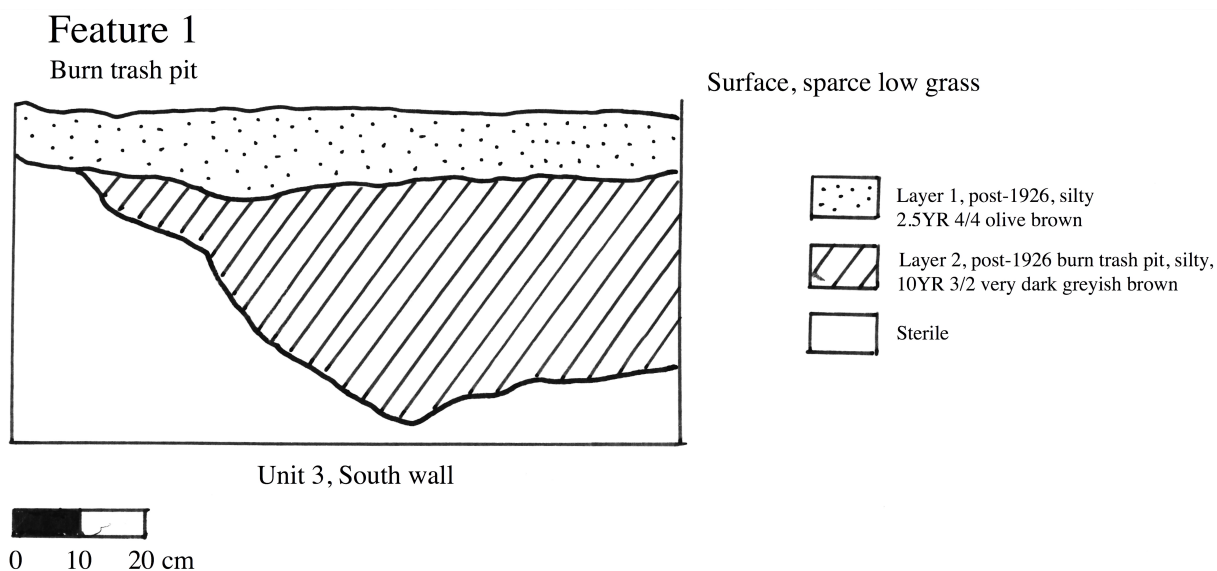


Figure 5. Feature 1 stratigraphy profile.

There are not many diagnostic artifacts to help date Feature 1, but historic research helps categorize it as a post-1926 fire deposit. According to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1919 and 1925, there was a structure on 27 Main Street, which would have been on top of Feature 1. Consequently, people would not have been able to dig the trash pit until after the structure burned in 1926. A 1969 US penny also came from the top layer of Unit 3-1 (0-9 cm), which puts a terminus post quem on the first nine centimeters of this feature.

A wide range of materials came from the both Layer 1 and Layer 2 (Table 8 and Table 9). Recovered materials from Feature 1 included tableware and storage ceramics, bottle glass, window glass, various types of metal artifacts including nails, wire, bottle caps and pieces of metal cans, buttons, pencil graphite, and faunal remains. A large amount of glass in particular came from this deposit. 2,890 pieces of glass came from Layer 2, or 27.1% of the total glass from the Tong assemblage. The majority of this glass from Layer 2 is curved vessel glass and glass that shows evidence of melting. 1,420 curved vessel glass pieces and 1,272 melted glass

pieces came from Feature 1, Layer 1. This feature also had a large number of excavated ceramics, particularly porcelain tablewares and stoneware food storage vessels. 378 ceramic sherds came from Feature 1, Layer 2, or 17.7% of the total ceramic sherds from the Tong assemblage. Many of these ceramics show evidence of being burned at a high enough temperature to cause the glaze to melt, which would have required temperatures around or above 1,300°F for porcelains and stonewares (Saadi Shapiro, personal communication, 30 June 2013). A significant amount of metal artifacts also came from this feature, particularly nails and flat pieces of metal that likely came from canned food. This includes 1,846 nail fragments, or 15.0% of the total nail fragments from the Tong site, and 488 flat pieces of metal, or 6.1% of the total flat metal pieces from the Tong site. Additionally, 21 bottle cap fragments of varying sizes came from Layer 2.

Layer 1 contained a range of artifacts similar to Layer 2, but these items did not show signs of fire. Items include a battery, plastic beads, botanicals, glass, ceramics, bottle caps, Styrofoam, nails, bullet casings, buttons, and pencil graphite. Layer 1 included 3,438 pieces of glass (1,689 vessel glass, 529 flat glass, 1,219 melted), or 32.3% of the total glass recovered from the Tong site. Other significant artifact concentrations in Feature 1, Layer 1 included 349 ceramic sherds, or 16.4% of the total ceramic assemblage, and 1,181 nail fragments, or 9.6% of the total nail fragment assemblage. The large number of items in this stratigraphic layer indicates that this feature continued to be a place people deposited their refuse even after burning the trash there.

Table 8. Feature 1, Layer 1 Artifacts

Material	Quantity
battery	1
bead	3
botanical	6
button	6
ceramic	349
coin	2
conglomerate	8
foam	13
foil	33
glass (conglomerate)	6
glass (flat)	529
glass (Go piece)	1
glass (melted)	1,219
glass (misc.)	13
glass (vessel)	1,677
graphite	34
linoleum	1
metal (bottle cap)	2
metal (flat from cans)	359
metal (lead)	5
metal (misc.)	84
metal (nails)	1,181
metal (unidentified)	196
metal (wire)	15
plastic	92
roofing tar	99
slate	5
Styrofoam	12
yarn	3
TOTAL	5,954

Table 9. Feature 1, Layer 2 Artifacts

Material	Quantity
adornment item	1
bead	7
botanical	6
button	16
ceramic	378
conglomerate	23
foam	2
foil	4
glass (flat)	194
glass (Go piece)	1
glass (melted)	1,272
glass (misc.)	3
glass (vessel)	1,420
graphite	75
metal (bottle cap)	21
metal (flat)	488
metal (lead)	5
metal (misc.)	97
metal (nails)	1,846
metal (unidentified)	80
metal (wire)	52
plastic	9
roofing tar	6
TOTAL	6,006

Other significant artifacts include two white half-dome shaped glass Go gaming pieces and an intact glass Tiger Balm jar. This feature also included the most evidence of children and school related activities from the site. Many artifacts related to writing came from this feature, particularly pencil graphite and metal bands from the top of wooden pencils. Nearly all of the pencil graphite from the Tong site came from this feature: 107 pieces of 113 pieces, or 94.7% of pencil graphite came from levels in Unit 3 and Unit 4. Similarly, 94.5% or 36 out of 38 metal bands from wooden pencil tops came from Feature 1. Additionally, a number of toys came from this feature including two of three recovered toy jacks, as well as the one plastic unicorn head,

part of a partial porcelain figurine of a horse, and part of a porcelain figurine of a person. Both of these porcelain figurines are marked “JAPAN,” which indicates the country of manufacture. I will discuss these in greater detail in Chapter 5. Additionally, part of a plastic Pez candy dispenser also came from the first layer of this feature, which puts a terminus post quem of 1948 on Layer 1 (<http://www.pez.com/history/>, accessed 4 July 2013).

Another one of these significant finds is a Chinese coin from 23 cm deep in Unit 4-1. Unlike most commonly recovered Chinese coins, this coin does not have a square hole in the middle. It is also larger than the square-hole coins with a 3 cm diameter. The coin is not in very good condition so it was difficult to identify the faded dragon on the front the coin. The back of the coin has Chinese characters. I identified coin as a Tai Ching Ti Kuo Dragon coin, which was a late Qing dynasty coin used after the government standardized copper coin designs (Cuhaj 2010: 372). The writing on the back of the coin identifies it as a 10 copper coin minted during the reign of Emperor Guangxu (光緒, also phoneticized Kuang-hsu), who reigned from 1875 to 1908. Additional characters help us date this coin with a cyclical date that relies on the Chinese zodiac and elements known as the earthly branches and heavenly stems to create compound characters that indicate a year within a 60-year cycle. The coin has the characters 丙午 (*bǐngwǔ* in *pinyin* or *bingng* in Cantonese), which refer to the 43rd year of the 60 year cycle. Combining Emperor Guangxu’s reign period with what we know about the manufacturing period of this kind of coin, the cyclical date identifies the coin as minted in 1906. Characters on the coin provide one more significant piece of information. There is a small Chinese character in the center of the back of the coin that indicates where the coin was minted. This coin has the character 閩 (*mǐn* in *pinyin* or *man* in Cantonese), which is the short name for Fujian (福建 or Fukien in Cantonese) province (Cuhaj 2013:368). Fujian province is along the northwest border Guangdong province

along the east coast of China. Since very few pre-1965 immigrants came from Fujian compared to Guangdong, this coin raises questions about how this coin traveled from Fujian to Isleton. Did it travel with one of the few immigrants from Fujian? Did it travel from Fujian to Guangdong province somewhere before crossing the Pacific Ocean with an immigrant? Given the uniqueness of this coin, it is likely someone in Isleton curated this coin, maybe as a lucky charm or important token that ultimately ended up lost. While it is impossible to know the path this coin took to get to the United States, it clearly indicates that there movement of people and currency between provinces in China or between Chinese immigrants in the United States.

Given the terminus post quem and the large number of ceramic and glass vessels I recovered from this deposit, this feature was likely a post-1926 fire trash deposit. The large number of nails could be indicative of architectural materials deposited along with what appears to be household refuse, possibly from decaying structures used to fuel the fire. Additionally, the large number of artifacts from the stratigraphic layer above the burn deposit indicates that someone must have used this area for trash over a period of time and not for a single trash-burning episode. Given the large number of tableware and storage ceramics, vessel glass, and faunal remains, it seems likely that the materials from this trash deposit either came from the Tong or the schoolmaster's house.

While it is probable the two shared a communal refuse location, I believe that it is most likely that the materials came from the Tong kitchen, probably near the end of the site occupation. Feature 1 is located in the middle of 27 Main Street, which, after the 1926 fire, ended up becoming the Chinese playground in town by the 1930s. It is unlikely that there would have been an open trash pit in the middle of an active playground. Furthermore, the schoolmaster only would have lived at the Tong site while the Chinese language school operated,

which would have coincided with active use of the playground. With the decrease in Chinese American children in town by the early 1940s, the schoolmaster would have already moved away by the time the playground fell into disrepair. The large number of items related to children and education may also indicate that this feature was part of a building clean up after the Chinese language school closed. The Bing Kong Tong left Isleton by the 1950s. The deposit, therefore, could have been trash from some of the last Tong communal feasts or from when the Tong moved out of the building.

In light of the discussion on site formation processes, the large number of matching porcelain tablewares supports this interpretation. It is likely the Tong had a matching set of tablewares as well as a large number of vessels both large and small. The majority of porcelain tablewares came from Feature 1, with a high concentration of Four Seasons pattern bowls in particular. Furthermore, there is very little cross mending, which suggests that there were a large number of ceramic vessels and the excavated sherds only represent a fraction of the vessels that were used and broken on site. Since it is unlikely the schoolmaster's household needed so many vessels, these tablewares probably belonged to the Tong.

Feature 2

Feature 2 is a trash pit located behind the Tong building at 29 Main Street near the base of the levee. It includes Units 7, 8 and STPs 19, 24, 25, and 27. Similar to Feature 1, the top layer of this feature (Layer 1) had silty brown (10YR 4/3) soil that turned to a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) about 20 cm below the surface (Layer 2). This burn pit layer stretches from about 20 cm to about 70 cm below the surface (Figure 6). Layer 1 includes the following proveniences: Unit 7-1; Unit 8-1, 8-2; STP 19-1; STP 24-1; STP 25-1; and STP 27-1. The burn

pit feature of Layer 2 includes the following proveniences: Unit 7-2, 7-3; Unit 8-3; STP 19-2, 19-3; STP 24-2, 24-3; STP 25-2; and STP 27-2. The pit sloped downwards and reached its maximum depth in STP 25. Layer 2 contained a higher concentration of artifacts compared to Layer 1 along with more charcoal and some ash. The soil texture remained silty. Below the burn pit layer, the soil turned to brown-colored, compact clay (10YR 4/3) like the sterile soil across the Tong site.

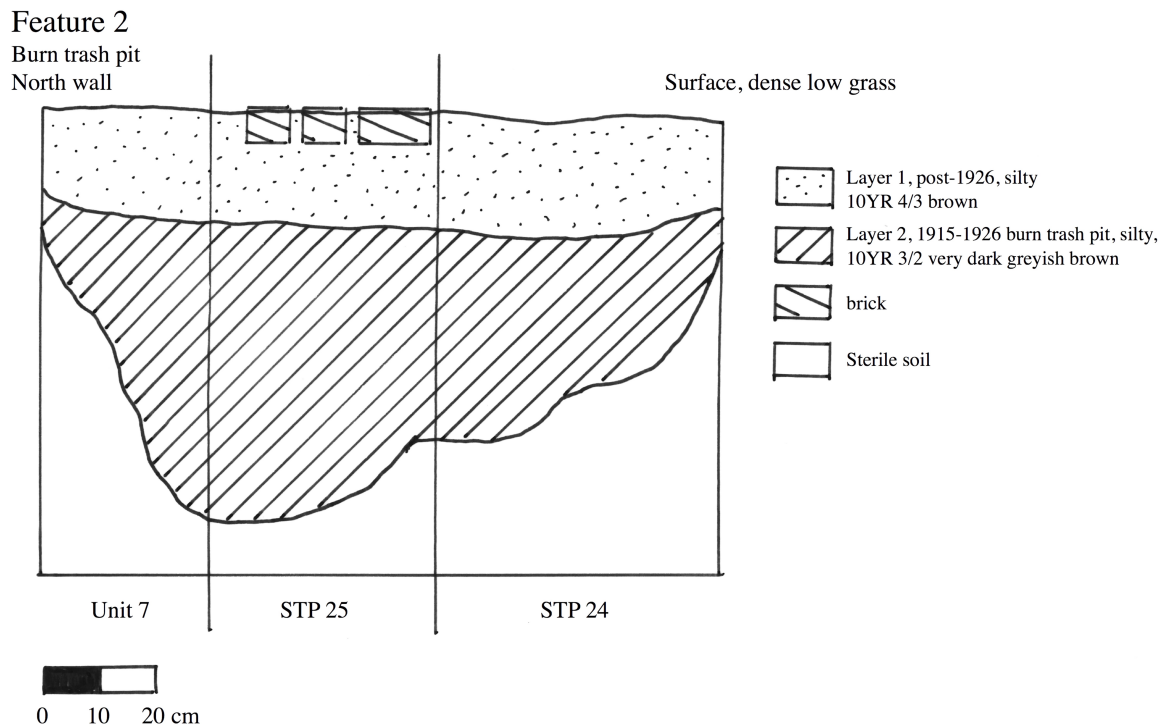


Figure 6. Feature 2 stratigraphy profile.

There are a number of artifacts that help date this feature in relation to the 1926 fire. Layer 1 contains a 1952 US penny in STP 25-1 at 14 cm below the surface. This means the terminus post quem for Layer 1 is 1952, placing it in a post-fire period. Layer 2 contains four coins dating between 1911 and 1918, placing a terminus post quem for the fire pit at 1918. Additionally, there is part of a glass medicinal bottle with “E.B. JORGENSEN, PHARMACY,

SAN FRANCISCO” embossed on it, found 24 cm below the surface in STP 25-2. In addition to shedding light upon medicinal practices and connections between Isleton and San Francisco, which I will go into greater detail in Chapter 5, this artifact allows us to help date the deposit. According to the documentary record, E.B. Jorgensen earned his registration from the California State Board of Pharmacy in 1895 and worked at Joy’s Pharmacy in San Francisco until the 1906 earthquake and fire burned the building (*Bulletin of Pharmacy* 9(8) August 1895: 377; *The Pharmaceutical Era*, May 25, 1906: 509). By 1908, Jorgensen eventually opened his own pharmacy at 644 Kearny Street between Clay and Commercial in San Francisco (*Pacific Pharmacist Volume 2* 1908: 545). This location is particularly notable because it was on the outer edge of San Francisco Chinatown. According to the 1924 Crocker-Langley San Francisco city directory (1924: 1893), Jorgensen’s pharmacy was still in operation. Consequently, this information helps us place the burn pit layer of Feature 2 in a pre-1926 fire period. It is likely, then, that Feature 2 represents both pre-1926 and post-1926 fire materials. Layer 2 was likely pre-1926 fire materials, possibly trash from the people who lived on the site before the fire. Layer 1 was likely a post-fire deposit where people continued to leave trash after the 1926 fire.

Recovered materials from Level 2 include faunal remains, bottle glass, window glass, ceramic tablewares and storage vessels, metal nails, flat pieces of metal from cans, bottle caps, medicinal vials, and buttons (Table 10). There is particularly a large concentration of metal. Out of 12,331 nail fragments from the Tong site, 3,793 or 30.8% came from Feature 2, Layer 2. A large percent of other types of metal artifacts also came from Layer 2. Out of 7,983 pieces of flat metal from cans, 1,905 or 23.9% pieces came from this burn pit layer and from a total of 3,500 pieces of unidentified metal pieces, 1,371 or 39.2% came from this burn pit. A significant amount of bottle glass and ceramics also came from Layer 2. 364 pieces of vessel glass came

from this site, including 6 pieces from medicinal vials. Furthermore, this burn pit contained far fewer pieces of melted glass with only 7 pieces compared to 1,272 in Feature 1. This indicates that the fire in Feature 2 was a lower temperature than the fire in Feature 1.

Layer 2 contained 161 ceramic sherds, including porcelain tablewares and stoneware food storage vessels. Porcelain tablewares included Celadon rice bowls and Four Seasons tablewares. As previously mentioned, significant porcelain tableware type from this feature in particular is porcelain teacup with a longevity pattern. This pattern consists of orange-red colored enamel, hand painted, over glaze decoration of the stylized character for longevity. At least three teacups came from this feature, where the MNV is calculated based on the percentage of base rims present. This is significant because sherds with this pattern only come from a few other proveniences on this site and 12 out of 35 total sherds or 34.2% come from Feature 2. It should also be noted that the only intact ceramic vessel on the Tong site came from 66 cm below the surface in STP 27-2: a tan-brown glazed, square shaped bowl. The corners of the square are inverted such that the vessel has zigzag-shaped corners on its top rim rather than the normal perpendicular intersecting lines of a square. This makes the vessel look like a shallow plus shape roughly in the form of a square. The vessel measures approximately 10.5 cm across and 4 cm high. It is unclear what the function of this vessel was. This shallow bowl may have been a side dish for condiments like pickles, or, if it did not have a food-related function, could have been as an ashtray.

Similar to Layer 1 in Feature 1, Layer 1 in Feature 2 also contained a significant number of artifacts including faunal remains, ceramics, vessel glass, window glass, nail fragments, and roofing tar (Table 11). Like Layer 2 in Feature 2, Layer 1 contained a large concentration of metal. Instead of nail fragments or unidentified iron in Layer 2, however, Layer 1 had a large

number of flat pieces of metal from cans: 1,750 pieces, or 21.9% of the total assemblage came from Feature 2, Layer 1. This means that a total of 45.8% of all flat metal pieces came from both layers of Feature 2. The high concentration of pieces from metal cans suggests that this type of refuse was regularly deposited in this area during the site occupation.

Table 10. Feature 2, Layer 2 Artifacts

Material	Quantity
bathtub enamel	2
botanical	15
button	7
ceramic	161
coal slag	36
coin	5
conglomerate	39
duct tape	1
foil	4
glass (flat)	67
glass (melted)	7
glass (vessel)	367
graphite	2
linoleum	2
metal (bottle cap)	21
metal (flat)	1,905
metal (lead)	8
metal (misc.)	286
metal (nails)	3,793
metal (unidentified)	1,371
metal (wire)	7
plastic	23
roofing tar	63
seashell	1
slate	2
string	4
Styrofoam	1
yarn	1
TOTAL	8,201

Table 11. Feature 2, Layer 1 Artifacts

Material	Quantity
botanical	5
ceramic	90
coin	1
conglomerate	2
duct tape	2
foil	22
glass (flat)	56
glass (Go piece)	1
glass (melted)	5
glass (vessel)	204
graphite	1
linoleum	10
marble	1
metal (misc.)	19
metal (flat)	1753
metal (lead)	1
metal (nails)	282
metal (unidentified)	94
plastic	56
roofing tar	291
slate	6
string	3
Styrofoam	14
TOTAL	2919

There are several significant artifacts from this feature. The feature includes two black, half-dome shaped glass Go tokens. These black tokens are the counterpart to the white half-dome shaped tokens in Feature 1. Also related to recreation, the only marble found on site came from Layer 1 in STP 19-1. Feature 2 also contained two Chinese ink bottles in Layer 2 from STP 24-3 and STP 25-2. One of the bottles is aqua colored and the other is a dark black/green color. Both ink bottles have Chinese characters embossed on their shoulders that read 香港光潤公司墨汁 or Hong Kong Guangrun (Gwongyeun in Cantonese) Ink Company (literally Hong Kong Guangrun Company, Ink). I will go into more detail on these inkbottles in Chapter 5.

Feature 3

Feature 3 is a sheet midden located at the back of 29 Main Street along the base of the levee bordering the Sacramento River. Unlike Feature 1 and Feature 2, Feature 3 consists of materials horizontally spread out across an area in a thin layer rather than a hand-dug deep pit. Stratigraphically, Feature 3 appeared to be a 10 cm-thick horizontal scatter of materials, ash, and darker soil about 40 cm below the surface (Figure 7). Layer 1 had a silty texture and was brown colored (10YR 4/3) like the top layers in the other two features and across the site. The burn layer, Layer 2, contained very dark greyish brown soil (10YR 3/2) with ash mixed in. Ash was particularly noticeable on the east side of the feature including part of Unit 10 and STP 15. The soil was silty and a bit sandier than elsewhere on the site, likely because of levee building materials. Feature 3 includes the following proveniences: Unit 9, Unit 10, Unit 11, and STP 15. These adjoining proveniences effectively opened a trench that ran parallel to the levee. The sheet midden appeared to continue through the north walls of Unit 10 and STP 15, indicating that the midden likely continued further into the levee.

A few artifacts help with dating this feature in relation to the 1926 fire, although it is not as clearly defined as the other features. I recovered four United States coins and one Chinese coin in Feature 3, Layer 1 from Unit 10, Unit 11 and STP 15. The dates on the coins range from 1910 to 1929. The 1929 coin came from 20 cm below the surface in Unit 10-1, setting a terminus post quem for this deposit after the 1926 fire. This coin was much closer to the surface, however, than the coins dating to the 1910s. A 1910 and 1918 US penny came from Unit 11-1 42 cm below the surface, right where Layer 1 and Layer 2 met. Consequently, it appears as if this feature consists of materials from both before and after the 1926 fire. Layer 2 is likely a pre-1926 fire deposit that may even represent debris from cleaning up the site after the fire. The

concentration of materials from Layer 1 indicates that this area continued to be a place to dump trash.

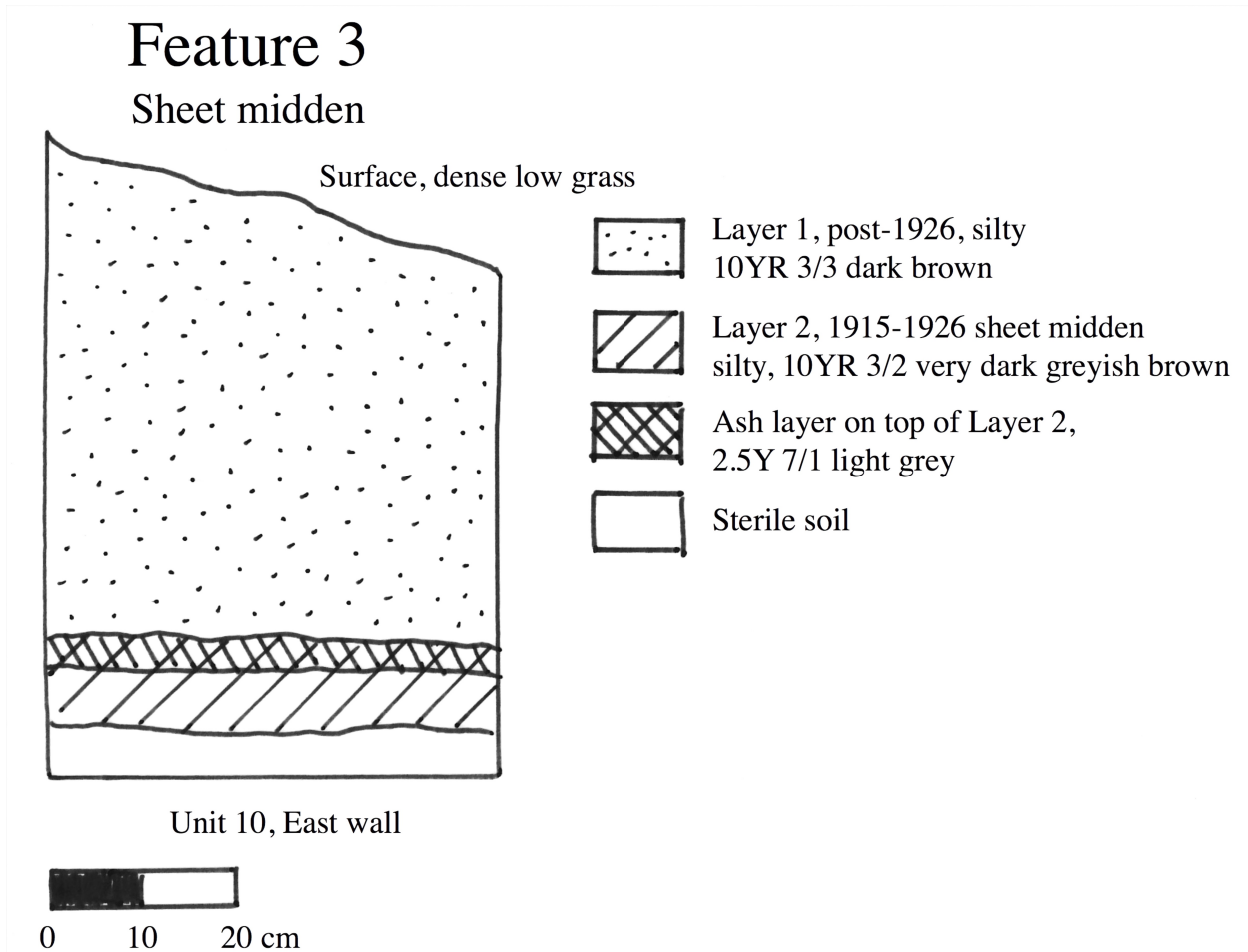


Figure 7. Feature 3 stratigraphy profile.

In addition to these coins, Feature 3 contained a range of artifacts that is similar to Feature 1 and Feature 2 (Table 12 and Table 13). Layer 2 includes the following proveniences: Unit 9-2, Unit 10-2, Unit 11-2, and STP 15-2. Layer 2 in particular contained a large amount of metal, mostly pieces of iron nails, flat pieces from cans, and unidentifiable pieces of iron. 1,511 nail fragments came from Layer 2, which is 12.3% of the nail fragments in the entire Tong

assemblage. Additionally, 564 pieces of flat metal from cans and 451 pieces of unidentified metal came from Layer 2. Layer 2 had a number of glass medicinal vial sherds that were mostly square Chinese medicinal vials. 343 pieces of curved bottle glass also came from Layer 2. Layer 2 also contained a large number of botanicals, totaling 171 pieces, or 40.5% of the total botanicals found on the site. The seeds from Layer 2 included peach seeds and unidentified small black seeds. While parts of peach seeds come from proveniences across the site, the small black seeds only appeared in this feature.

Layer 1 contained a large number of artifacts, particularly metal and glass. Layer 1 includes the following proveniences: Unit 9-1, Unit 10-1, Unit 11-1, and STP 15-1. There were 1,486 nail fragments, or 12.1% of the total assemblage; 2,811 flat can fragments, or 35.2% of the total assemblage; and 483 unidentified pieces of metal, or 13.8% of the total assemblage. This means that combined with the metal found in Layer 2, 24.3% of all nail fragments, 42.3% of all flat can fragments, and 26.7% of unidentified pieces of metal come from Feature 3. This large concentration of metal artifacts is one of the significant characteristics of Feature 3.

There are several other notable metal artifacts in Feature 3. A round, nonferrous metal lid with “Beacon, Trademark Registered” embossed on the top along with the image of a lighthouse came from Unit 10-2. The lid measures 4 cm diameter and 1 cm high. The lid appears to have screwed onto a vessel because the inside of the lid walls have grooves. It is unclear what type of vessel this lid belonged to. There was also what appeared to be the metal part of a hose head as well as a rusted, flat piece of metal in the shape of a star that could have been an adornment item.

Table 12. Feature 3, Layer 1 Artifacts

Material	Quantity
aluminum	1
bathtub enamel	4
botanical	69
button	26
ceramic	189
cloth	1
coin	5
conglomerate	23
foam	2
foil	404
glass	1
glass (flat)	134
glass (melted)	167
glass (vessel)	919
graphite	2
linoleum	1
LP	1
metal (bottle cap)	23
metal (cast iron bathtub)	2
metal (flat)	2,811
metal (lead)	10
metal (misc.)	215
metal (nails)	1,486
metal (unidentified)	483
metal (wire)	11
mica	6
paper	10
plastic	377
roofing tar	724
rubber	2
seashell	37
slate	10
Styrofoam	20
wallpaper	3
yarn	4
TOTAL	8,183

Table 13. Feature 3, Layer 2 Artifacts

Material	Quantity
bathub enamel	1
botanical	171
button	15
ceramic	172
conglomerate	16
foil	17
glass	3
glass (flat)	25
glass (Go piece)	1
glass (melted)	11
glass (vessel)	353
metal (flat)	564
metal (lead)	8
metal (misc.)	125
metal (nails)	1,511
metal (unidentified)	451
metal (wire)	14
plastic	15
roofing tar	44
seashell	11
slate	10
Styrofoam	1
TOTAL	3,539

Significant amounts of ceramics and glass also came from Layer 1. Layer 1 contained 189 pieces of ceramics. Brown-glazed stoneware food storage vessel sherds in particular composed a large percent of the ceramics in this layer and Feature 3 as a whole. 71 pieces of the 189 ceramics recovered in Layer 1 were stoneware storage vessel sherds. 202 stoneware storage vessel sherds came from Feature 3, which is 33.0% of the total stoneware food storage vessel sherds in the Tong assemblage and the highest concentration of stoneware food storage vessels on the site.

915 pieces of curved vessel glass came from Layer 1, which makes up 11.1% of vessel glass from the Tong site. This means that 1272 pieces of vessel glass came from Feature 3, or 15.5% of the entire Tong assemblage. Layer 1 also contained 134 pieces of flat window glass and 167 pieces of melted glass. It is interesting to note that more melted glass came from Layer 1 than Layer 2. This fact reemphasizes that Layer 1 included materials deposited at a different time than the sheet midden that had clear evidence of fire.

It should be noted that Feature 3 was the only location where I found intact or mostly intact glass bottles, with the exception of small medicinal vials. This includes a Karo syrup bottle from Unit 9-1, a Purity Beverage Co. bottle from Unit 11-1, a Lion Soda Works, Walnut Grove bottle from Unit 10-1, and a rectangular perfume bottle from Unit 9-1. I will go into greater detail about some of these vessels in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

These artifacts shed light on everyday life for the Isleton Chinese American community. With deposits dating to the 1915-1926 period as well as the post-1926 period, the Tong site allows us to study the Chinese American community at its peak and decline in Isleton. In conjunction with oral history narratives and historic research, these materials become an important way that we can learn about activities at the Tong site and catch a glimpse of different aspects of everyday life from what people were eating to what games they were playing. With this overview of the archaeological materials, I now turn to Chapter 5, where I explore how interpreting these materials from an interdisciplinary perspective that foregrounds the role of structural racism yields a complex understanding of the past.

Chapter 5: Material culture and everyday life under structural racism

The overview of materials from the Tong site leaves us with the question: what do these artifacts tell us about every day life in Isleton for the Chinese American community? Instead of relying on ideas about assimilation or non-assimilation to frame my interpretation, I approach this question from an interdisciplinary perspective to interpret multiple lines of evidence. I rely on the work of Asian American Studies scholars on racialization and structural racism to consider what this looks like for the everyday lives of racialized people. While racialization and structural racism appear to be abstract forces without a direct material correlate, they impact the everyday lives of individuals and communities. Structural racism influenced where people lived, what jobs they could hold, what decisions they made, and if they could legally come to the United States with their families, which, in turn, affected the material culture that people used. Consequently, the important questions become, if racialization and structural racism affect people on an everyday basis, how did this shape their material culture? How can we think about intentionality and agency in our explanations? How might multiple lines of evidence and insights from Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies help us understand Chinese American identities and lives as they negotiated the means to survive and thrive in a world rife with unequal power relations?

This chapter explores the relationship between structural racism and material culture in the Isleton Chinese American community. I use material culture from the Tong site to think about how legal, social, political, and/or economic restrictions shaped by structural racism impacted certain aspects of everyday life. I begin by considering how we can see the impacts of structural racism on material culture representing everyday aspects of life such as foodways,

health and body, and education. I then explore how material culture can also shed light on how people subverted, adapted, and negotiated conditions dictated by structural racism on an everyday basis. Here, I consider how the Isleton Chinese American community developed complex networks and relationships, both multiracial and multiethnic, on a local, regional, and transnational level that helped them survive and thrive.

Finally, this chapter explores how interdisciplinary work provides insights into Chinese American subjectivity—that is, how they conceived their place and identity in a racist world and its relations of power. Here, I draw upon the work of Lisa Lowe (1996: 67), who argued that Asian American identity is characterized by heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity, which create contradictions and complexities in the community that arise under the dominant foreigner perception of who is Asian American. Likewise, I invoke W.E.B. Du Bois' (1903) notion of double consciousness as a way to understand these complexities and contradictions in Chinese American subjectivity. A Chinese American double consciousness manifested in the desire to be included in American society while simultaneously understanding this society perceived them as foreigners held at arms length, yet desperately needing their labor. It is within the contradictions of race and capitalism under structural racism set the stage for the decisions the Chinese American community made in everyday life—and the materials they used.

The impact of structural racism on material culture

Before delving into how structural racism affected material culture, I must reemphasize how structural racism affected the everyday lives of individuals. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Chinese Americans, and Asian Americans more broadly, have been racialized as perpetual foreigners since immigrating to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. This racial

positioning ultimately led to many restrictions for Asian American communities, including their ability to immigrate, naturalize, testify in court, live in certain areas, and hold certain jobs.

Limited employment opportunities for Chinese Americans is particularly significant for thinking about material culture because jobs impacted where Chinese Americans lived, what kind of goods they had access to, and how much economic purchasing power they had. As I discussed in Chapter 3, white labor on the West Coast, particularly Irish workers, prevented Chinese Americans from entering certain industries. Consequently, Chinese Americans took the jobs no one else wanted including building railroads, dams, and levees and working in laundries, domestic service, restaurants, and agricultural fields. This is also true for the Chinese Americans who ended up in the Sacramento Delta and after employment opportunities brought Chinese Americans to the Sacramento Delta, small Chinatowns grew in Delta towns. Consequently, structural racism limiting employment opportunities to certain types of jobs therefore is linked to the development of Chinatowns in Isleton, Walnut Grove, Locke, and Courtland. Additionally, living in a rural location affected access to goods and low paying, labor jobs would have affected how much money people could spend on goods. These are factors that the Chinese American community navigated through in their everyday lives. The material record sheds light on the decisions people made under these conditions.

With an understanding of the role of structural racism on everyday life and material culture, historical archaeology using an interdisciplinary perspective and multiple lines of evidence offers the opportunity to explore individual agency and subjectivity under conditions of structural racism. Materials allow us think about choices people made and the networks and personal relationships people developed in Isleton. The archaeological materials, oral history, and historic research shed light on aspects of everyday life such as foodways, health and body,

and education and literacy through multiple intersecting scales of networks and personal decisions. This allows us more fully to understand Chinese American community as actors in our archaeological interpretation of the racialized past.

Foodways

One major aspect of everyday life affected by structural racism is foodways. Foodways refers to all activities related how people acquire, prepare, consume, and think about food. Foodways have a large material signature in the archaeological record due to the broad range of activities as well as the high preservation rate for associated items such as ceramics, glass, and faunal remains. This holds true for the Tong site with the large number of ceramic tablewares, food storage vessels, vessel glass, and animal bones. Instead of thinking about foodways in terms of maintaining traditional Chinese foodways or adopting Euroamerican foodways, I find it important to think about the connection between consumed foods and the conditions structuring those choices. Did race play a role in where people acquired their food items? Did racism limit where people could shop? How can we think about agency in individual decisions on what to consume in households? All of these factors played a role in the development of Chinese American foodways. While structural racism may not have a direct material signature, an interdisciplinary approach that centers structural racism in interpretation allows us to think about agency outside of an assimilation framework. The Tong assemblage offers an example of how structural racism may have unintentionally affected cuisine choice in terms of how we broadly interpret the assemblage and how we explain the presence of specific items.

Broadly speaking, thinking about structural racism forces us to consider foodways beyond an explanation that relies only on assimilation or adaptation. As a rural Chinatown, the

Isleton Chinese American community was separated from the urban Chinatown environment and still highly connected to both San Francisco and Sacramento by car and ferry. This meant Isleton was in a unique position where access to goods may have been filtered through what Isleton merchants stocked in their shops, but people still could get items they wanted from San Francisco or Sacramento that were not available locally. This meant that while Isleton was a rural Chinatown, it was by no means isolated. Consequently, we know that people in Isleton had choice in the items they used, but this choice was still constrained by conditions created by structural racism.

Oral histories indicate that people mostly ate Chinese food in their homes, but not exclusively, and these food items were a mixture of imported and locally available foods. People remember eating non-Chinese meals at holidays, for example, where they would have turkey or ham like Euroamerican families. People also remember taking peanut butter sandwiches to school for lunch or, on occasion, getting the chance to eat in the cafeteria at the white school (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 20 August 2012). On a daily basis, however, most people ate Chinese food at home. Oral history narratives recall many imported preserved goods in the kitchen in brown-glazed stoneware containers including pickled ginger, pickled mustard greens and soy sauce (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 20 August 2012). To go with the preserved food items, Chinese Americans bought Chinese vegetables from Sacramento or the local store in Isleton. Some families grew vegetables in small gardens to supplement their diet. Meat sources included home-raised chickens, pork from the butcher, and preserved fish purchased fish from the store or freshly caught fish from the Sacramento River. There was a bait shop two doors west from the Tong

building. Roger Chinn remembers spending a lot of time with his cousin fishing in the Sacramento River and selling his black bass catches to cooks at gambling halls at \$5 per pound or helping his father dry fish on the back porch to make *haam yu* (鹹魚), or Chinese salted fish (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012).

From oral histories and historical research, we know that people in Isleton purchased goods locally, but also from San Francisco and Sacramento. Families who were fortunate enough to own cars often made weekly trips to Sacramento to purchase goods, particularly fruits and vegetables. These stores were usually run by a kinsman of the same dialect group, which emphasizes the importance of dialect networks within the Chinese American community (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview 20 August 2012; Edwin Chew, oral history interview, 16 September 2012).

People without vehicles could travel to San Francisco on the shuttle that ran from the Sacramento Delta to San Francisco daily, known in the Chinese American community the limo, bus, or taxi service. Started in the early 1920s by Chauncey Chew, this shuttle traveled from Courtland to San Francisco daily until the 1940s, making stops in Locke, Walnut Grove, and Isleton. People would go to San Francisco to shop, visit family and friends, or watch the Chinese opera. Furthermore, both people and goods traveled on this shuttle; if people needed items from San Francisco, they left a shopping list with the driver, who purchased the items and dropped them off on the return trip (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 20 August 2012; Edwin Chew, oral history interview, 16 September 2012). This service was not limited to Chinese Americans, although no one I spoke with remembers non-Chinese Americans riding the shuttle. The shuttle service highlights

how Chinese Americans developed their own networks and services to adapt and operate under conditions of structural racism such that people and goods could reach Isleton with ease.

The material record tells a similar story about foodways. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Tong assemblage has many Chinese-manufactured tablewares as well as stoneware food storage vessels. These ceramics indicate that people at the Tong site primarily ate Chinese food in traditional tablewares and used traditional ingredients that came from China in stoneware food storage vessels. Consequently, in addition to shedding light on foodways, Chinese ceramics also demonstrate a continued trade relationship between Isleton and China. Together with oral history narratives, we can understand how imported items reached Isleton with the constant flow of goods and people between San Francisco and Isleton through the bus service.

A more detailed investigation of the material culture reveals details about Chinese American foodways that we do not know from oral history and historic research. A few items in the Tong assemblage offer clues about the companies that manufactured the items and where the items may have come from. There are several sherds of brown-glazed stoneware storage vessels with Chinese characters on them, for example. It is likely the characters represent the name of the company that manufactured the product. Unfortunately most of the sherds only contain a few characters of the name, leaving too little information to form a definitive interpretation.

One sherd from Feature 3, Layer 1 is a brown-glazed stoneware food storage vessel lid with three complete Chinese characters and two partial characters. The complete characters read: 天津瓦 (*tinjeun nga* in Cantonese or *tiānjīn wǎ* in Mandarin *pinyin*). Tianjin is the name of a large city in northern China and “wǎ” is the character for tile or ceramic. The two partial characters likely read 公司 (*gungsi* in Cantonese or *gōngsī* in Mandarin *pinyin*), which is the word for company. Consequently, the characters marked this ceramic as made by the Tianjin

Ceramic Company. The name of this company raises several possibilities. First, it is possible that this ceramic came from a company manufacturing ceramic vessels in Tianjin in northern China or the company originated in Tianjin and had a manufacturing facility near one of the port cities such as Canton or Hong Kong, or had trade connections to get vessels from Tianjin to a port city for export. The company name also could have referred to the contents of the vessel rather than the geographic location of manufacture. There is a well-known type of pickled cabbage that originated in Tianjin known as Tianjin preserved vegetables (天津冬菜 or *tinjeun dungchoi* in Cantonese or *Tiānjīn dōngcài* in Mandarin *pinyin*). Manufacturers still package and sell Tianjin preserved vegetables in brown glazed earthenware vessels today. Consequently, it is possible that the Tianjin Ceramic Company named their company after these pickles.

In addition to detecting transnational trade through foodways, the Tong assemblage allows us to glimpse regional trade within the Sacramento Delta. Level 1 of Feature 3 included a clear glass soda bottle with “Lion Soda Works, Walnut Grove” embossed on it. Lion Soda Works was in operation during the 1920s during the heyday of the Sacramento Delta. In 1923, Lion Soda Works placed an advertisement in the Courtland High School yearbook (Sacramento River Delta Historical Society Newsletter 1999: 4). While we do not know who owned and ran the company, it shows that people were consuming locally produced goods. Consequently, the bottle reemphasizes the connectedness between Delta towns as well as the choice to consume this particular product.

Based on preliminary faunal analysis from Feature 1, Feature 2, and Feature 3, the faunal assemblage indicates that the Isleton Chinese American community primarily consumed fish, bird, and pig and supplemented their diets with locally available items. These species correspond with oral history narratives. Pig (*Sus scrofa*) is a traditionally important meat source

in Chinese cuisine and oral history interviewees remember seeing pork at most meals. Interviewees, however, do not recall raising pigs. Most of the identifiable bird bones were from chickens (*Gallus gallus*), which we know from oral histories people were raising in their backyards. The identifiable bird assemblage also included some duck (*Anas* sp.) and turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). The duck may have been a locally acquired species while the turkey likely was part of a Western-style meal that some families consumed during holidays (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012).

The fish assemblage is particularly interesting because it allows us to investigate what species people were acquiring locally out of the Sacramento River and San Francisco Bay as well as what types of fish merchants imported. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, a number of freshwater fish live in the Sacramento including bass, catfish, sturgeon, striped bass, trout, and salmon (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fishingpassport/guide.asp>, accessed 18 July 2013; <http://www.sacdelta.com/fishing/#Species>, accessed 18 July 2013). The faunal assemblage contains some of these fish, including carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), bullhead (*Ictalurus* sp.), smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), and catfish from the family Ictaluridae. It is likely that people were acquiring these fish locally to supplement their income by selling their catches or to bring in extra food for consumption. We know, for example, that there was a fish peddler that lived on a boat in the Delta who travelled to Delta towns to sell his catches. Interviewees recall that sometimes the fish peddler bartered fresh fish for fresh water, which he did not have access to from his boat (Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 20 August 2012). The Tong assemblage also contains bones from minnows (Cyprinidae) and sardines (Clupeidae). According to Roger Chinn (personal communication, 19 August 2013), people used these small fish as bait for larger fish. He recalls using lures or live minnows on

hooks to catch black bass and sardines to catch striped bass. Roger remembers selling black bass to cooks at the gambling houses, who liked to cook black bass as a special dish to winners.

Regionally, fish from the San Francisco Bay or the ocean along the California coast include white seabass (*Atractoscion nobilis*), white croaker (*Genyonemus lineatus*), rockfish (*Sebastes* sp.), seaperch (*Amphistichus* sp.), flatfish belonging to the order Pleuronectiformes, and sardines belonging to the family Clupeidae. Additionally, the sardines used as bait for striped bass came from either Monterey or San Pedro (Roger Chinn, personal communication, 19 August 2013). Since these fish likely came from the Northern California region, they emphasize the connection between Isleton and San Francisco and beyond as material examples of the movement of goods between the two communities.

Finally, there are several bones representing a puffer fish (*Sphoeroides* sp.), which is not found locally in Northern California. Puffer fish could have come dried from somewhere in Asia or from a boat that traveled north from around Baja California. Since we do not know what particular species the puffer fish was, we cannot identify where it came from. Nevertheless, the presence of puffer fish reemphasizes transnational trade connections. Puffer fish, however, was not a regularly consumed item and none of my oral history interviewees could recall eating one or hearing about someone consuming one. It is possible that the fish had some medicinal purposes or that it represents a relationship with the Japanese American community because puffer fish is a delicacy in Japanese cuisine. I will go into further discussion about relationships with the Japanese American community later in this chapter.

While these foodways items indicate that the Isleton Chinese American population largely maintained a traditional diet, we must think about these choices not in terms of assimilation, but rather in terms of agency under conditions of structural racism. The presence of

Chinese-manufactured ceramic tablewares, imported stoneware food storage vessels, and a variety of species providing protein give insight into decisions made by the Chinese American community, particularly the Bing Kong Tong. As a Chinese American organization, the Tong may have intentionally selected Chinese cuisine to serve at their functions on matching Chinese manufactured tablewares to project a particular image. Since both the Tong and the Chinese language school had ties to the Republic of China, the Tong may have used cuisine to build a sense of identity and allegiance to China as well as fostering a sense of community among the Chinese Americans in the Delta.

Likewise, we should not think of non-traditional Chinese foodways items as indicators of assimilation, but rather in terms of individual choices made under the conditions of structural racism. One interesting example is a nearly complete Karo syrup bottle from about 29 cm below the surface in Unit 9-1 of Feature 3. I identified the bottle by part of the label still attached to the vessel. Karo is a corn syrup produced by the Corn Products Refining Company beginning in 1902. By 1910, the company began widely advertising their product through cookbooks. The product soon became popular in baking recipes through the twentieth century and is still available for purchase today (http://www.karosyrup.com/about_us.html accessed 5 July 2013).

The Karo syrup bottle becomes an interesting artifact to interpret in light of how structural racism played a role in transforming cuisine in Chinese American households. Karo syrup, or corn syrup more broadly, is not a traditional ingredient in Chinese food. Recipes that use Karo syrup are generally for baking Euroamerican goods such as pies. While it is possible a creative Chinese American chef in Isleton substituted Karo for sugar in a Chinese recipe, this syrup bottle is more likely indicative of Chinese Americans baking Euroamerican recipes. Many Chinese Americans learned how to cook Euroamerican cuisine because the service-oriented jobs

they were restricted to, where they worked as cooks in restaurants, hotels, railroad cars, and personal households to serve white clients. In these jobs, Chinese Americans quickly learned how to prepare non-Chinese cuisines, which may have influenced what items they cooked in their own households. Roger Chinn, for example, remembers a great baking tradition in his household when he was a child because his grandfather learned how to bake cookies, pies, muffins, and cakes while working on a railroad dining car (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Likewise, my paternal grandfather, who immigrated to the United States as a paper son, learned how to bake elaborate sponge cakes, cream puffs, and pies while working as a houseboy and cook in a private San Francisco home during the 1920s. Like Roger's grandfather, my grandfather used these acquired skills at home where he regularly baked cakes and pies for family gatherings. In this case, the adoption of non-traditional Chinese foodways was not simply a matter of assimilation or adaptation, but rather a skillset Chinese American laborers had to learn because of the jobs available to them. Consequently, instead of seeing this non-Chinese ingredient as a form of assimilation, we can see this transformation of foodways as an effect of structural racism, which ultimately exposed Chinese Americans to new cuisines and ingredients that eventually became part of Chinese American cuisine.

Education and Literacy

In addition to food items, the Tong assemblage offers insights into education and literacy as the home of the Chinese language school, local Tong headquarters, and, before the 1926 fire, Chinese businesses. People with various education levels frequented the Tong site over the site occupation including educated merchants, literate and illiterate laborers, and children in the middle of being educated in grammar school and Chinese school. Oral history indicates that

people who were illiterate relied on people who could read and write Chinese to keep in touch with their families. According to the 1920 US Census, a significant number of Chinese laborers were able to read and write a language. People who were illiterate relied on someone else to read and write their letters. Roger Chinn remembers long lines of men waiting for help from his granduncle to read letters from home and compose responses to send with money (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). This anecdote reinforces the connectedness between the Isleton Chinese American community and friends and family in southern China while also shedding light on levels of education and literacy in Isleton.

Material culture also provides some information about literacy and education in the Isleton Chinese American community. Two Chinese ink bottles came from Layer 2 in Feature 2, which dates to the pre-1926 fire era. One of the ink bottles is aqua blue color and the other is a dark black/green color. Both ink bottles have Chinese characters embossed on their shoulders that read 香港光潤公司墨汁 or Hong Kong Guangrun (*Gwongyeun* in Cantonese) Ink Company (literally Hong Kong Guangrun Company, Ink). It is unclear what “guangrun” (光潤) means; it is possible that this is someone’s name. Alternatively, the two characters together mean smooth or sleek, which would be good adjectives to describe ink.

These bottles are significant for several reasons. First, on a local level, they indicate that there were literate people in Isleton in the pre-1926 fire era and they were writing with liquid ink opposed to the traditional method of grinding ink for Chinese calligraphy. Second, the writing on these vessels shows that people in Isleton were receiving goods manufactured in Hong Kong. Hong Kong was an important port in southern China, so it is not surprising that goods were traveling from Hong Kong to California. During this time period, however, Hong Kong was already a British colony, so these ink bottles provide some insight into connections between the

colonized Chinese port and international trade throughout the Chinese Diaspora. Furthermore, like imported food items, these ink bottles reemphasize the continued connections between China and the United States. Not only were merchants importing ink from Hong Kong, but we also know that people in Isleton used ink to send letters and remittances home.

The fact that people used imported liquid ink raises interesting questions. First, people traditionally make calligraphy ink by grinding a stone and mixing it with water. Roger remembers his granduncle making ink this way when writing letters (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Using ink that was already in liquid form suggests that people preferred having ink that was ready to use rather than having to prepare it by hand. Since these bottles date to a pre-1926 fire period, it is possible the people who ran the businesses on 27 and 29 Main Street before the fire used liquid ink for their business affairs for speed and convenience. Furthermore, the fact that people used ink imported from Hong Kong rather than an American brand of ink such as Sanford Ink Company is also interesting since American brands would have been available. It is possible the consistency of the Hong Kong ink worked better for calligraphy than the Sanford ink. Alternatively, it is also possible that someone simply preferred this brand of ink and continued to use it while living in Isleton.

In addition to adults who were literate in Chinese, the Tong assemblage allows us to explore education in the American-born Chinese population with materials associated with the Chinese language school. From oral history, we know that the children in town attended Chinese language school to learn Chinese, but their Chinese education was often sporadic without regular schoolmasters (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). It should also be emphasized that Chinese language schools themselves are symbols of close ties between China and diasporic communities in the United States. Chinese language schools were meant to

educate American-born Chinese children in Chinese language, culture, and history. In the face of a blatant racist society in the United States, parents hoped to give their children the option of moving to China to help build the new Republic of China and fitting in without too much trouble. Chinese language schools also had close connections to the Republic of China, which helped fund some of the schools. To the emerging republic, Chinese language schools were symbols of modernity via education (Lai 2004). Furthermore, instilling a sense of nationalism to the Republic of China was particularly important to Chinese Americans in the Delta since many were Heungshan like Sun Yat-sen, who helped overthrow the Qing Dynasty and founded the Republic of China in 1911. To other people in Heungshan, the fact that Sun Yat-sen was also Heungshan was significant, and he commanded their loyalty, strengthening the ties between the Chinese American community in the Delta and China. In fact, there was a portrait of Sun Yat-sen and a Republic of China flag inside the Isleton school as well as the Chinese language school up the river in Locke that is still on display today (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012).

Archaeologically, while we would expect to see evidence of the Chinese language school activities through materials used in calligraphy, the material record actually contains a large number of pencil tops and pencil graphite instead of ink bottles, calligraphy brush parts, and ink stones. As mentioned above, the only ink bottles I recovered from the Tong site came from a pre-1926 fire deposit, which would have predated the Chinese language school on this site. Feature 3, a post-1926 fire deposit that I believe contains Tong and language school materials, included over 100 pieces of pencil graphite and 36 metal bands from wooden pencil tops. These materials suggest that Chinese language school students used pencils in their studies instead of brushes and ink. Oral histories recall that students learned very little calligraphy in Chinese

language school, so this could explain the lack of ink and brushes in the archaeological record (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Pencils also may have been a convenient alternative for learning how to write Chinese characters because they do not require ink, and, unlike pens, pencils are erasable. Since memorizing how to write characters takes practice, there are many benefits to being able to erase and start over. Combined with the fact that students likely used pencils in grammar school, students would have been familiar with using pencils but may not have known how to use a brush and ink. This fact suggests that the schoolmaster made the intentional choice of the pencil for his pupils. Consequently, we can see how material culture combined with oral history sheds light on literacy amongst the Isleton Chinese American community while simultaneously emphasizing transnational connections between the United States and China through trade, education, and correspondence.

Health and Body

Materials from the Tong assemblage also allow us to study how people in Isleton took care of themselves. We know from oral history interviews that Isleton had a Chinese herbal doctor who prescribed medicine for most of the ailments in town. When the ailment was beyond the skill of the Isleton healer, another healer would come from San Francisco (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Health-related material culture complicates this story with evidence both Chinese and Western medicine from San Francisco. Consequently, utilizing multiple lines of evidence provides insight into the connections between Isleton and San Francisco as well as the choices people made for their health in both traditional Chinese medicine and also Western medicine.

A number of glass vessels related to health came from the Tong site, with notable quantities from Layer 2 in Feature 2. In addition to the bottle from E.B. Jorgensen's pharmacy in San Francisco as discussed in Chapter 4, this burn pit layer also contained seven Chinese medicinal vials: three teardrop-shaped vials, three square medicinal vials, and one round medicinal vial with small Chinese characters embossed on the bottom. One additional teardrop-shaped medicinal vial came from Layer 1 in Feature 2. The teardrop-shaped vials were all empty but likely held small pills. The square medicinal vials appear to hold very little contents with only a small area inside for liquid medicine. The round medicinal vial held more medicine, but it is unclear what was inside. These Chinese medicinal vials likely came from the Chinese herbalist in town, who supplied the Isleton Chinese American community with both medicine in glass vials as well as dry herbs or powders wrapped in paper that did not leave archaeological remains.

Another Chinese health-related artifact is a hexagonal, glass Tiger Balm jar from Feature 1 at the bottom of Unit 3-1, 9 cm below the surface. Tiger Balm is a Chinese herbal medicine that an herbalist invented in the late 1870s to relieve aches and pains (<http://www.tigerbalm.com/us/pages/about>, accessed 15 June 2013). It is equivalent to Ben Gay or arnica gel in American medicine. Although the vessel lid is missing, the bottom half of the vessel is complete. There is embossing on each hexagonal jar side as well as the bottom. One of the sides and the bottom has an image of a tiger. The other sides each have a single character that reads 虎標萬金油 (*hǔpiāo wànjīnyóu* in Mandarin pinyin or *fupiu maangam yau* in Cantonese). The translation for these characters is “tiger strike Tiger Balm.”

The Tiger Balm jar is important for several reasons. First, it is unique because it is the only glass Chinese medicinal vessel that indicates what type of medicine was inside. Thus,

while the other medicinal vials give us a sense that the Isleton Chinese American community relied on Chinese medicine for their ailments, the Tiger Balm jar provides detailed insight into what ailments people had and what they used to cure them. As a medicine that heals aches and pains, it makes sense that Chinese Americans in Isleton used Tiger Balm. Laborers working in the fields or canneries would have stressed their bodies with their repetitive work, so Tiger Balm may have been a solution to soothe their aching backs and limbs. Additionally, since Tiger Balm is a product based in Singapore but sold in China, the Tiger Balm jar also highlights the trade networks between Asia and California. Like foodways items imported from China, the Chinese medicine vials provide a material indication of the continued transnational networks in the Chinese Diaspora, including small rural towns such as Isleton.

The Tong assemblage also represents Western-style health care with several diagnostic artifacts. One of these artifacts is the E.B. Jorgensen Pharmacy bottle discussed in Chapter 4, which contained some unknown medicine from San Francisco. In addition to helping us date Feature 2 to before the 1926 fire, the E.B. Jorgensen Pharmacy bottle shows use of Western medicine and reemphasizes the connection between Isleton and San Francisco. Furthermore, the proximity of the pharmacy to San Francisco Chinatown is significant. As mentioned in Chapter 4, archival research indicates that the E.B. Jorgensen Pharmacy was located on the border of San Francisco Chinatown. This location suggests that E.B. Jorgensen catered to the Chinese American community that wanted to use Western medicine. Consequently, the E.B. Jorgensen Pharmacy bottle provides the opportunity to consider agency and choice in health care within Chinese American community. As I mentioned above, we know from oral history that the Chinese herbalist in Isleton attended most ailments but summoned a healer from San Francisco when the problem was beyond his skill (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012).

Chinese Americans in Isleton, therefore, were well equipped to utilize traditional Chinese medicine if they chose to. The fact that someone had medicine sent from San Francisco instead of only relying on locally available Chinese medicine demonstrates that people in Isleton could choose their form of healthcare. The mixture of Chinese and Western medicine also indicates that people in Isleton chose what they wanted and had the ability to get medicine from China and/or San Francisco through their trade and interpersonal networks.

The Tong assemblage also includes artifacts related to Western types of preventative health care, particularly dental care. A small round bottle embossed with “Colgate & Co Perfumers, New York” on the bottom came from Layer 2 in Feature 2. The vessel was broken but could be reconstructed from the pieces in from STP 24-3. Given the shape and size of the bottle, this vessel likely held tooth powder. To go along with this tooth powder, Feature 2 also contained ten fragments from toothbrush heads and two handles. It is likely the general store in Isleton Chinatown carried these types of items, although it is also possible people were acquiring them from stores in either Sacramento or San Francisco.

The Tong assemblage contains two artifacts related to Western style body care: a white glass Pond’s cold cream jar, a rectangular glass perfume bottle, and a brass pressed powder lid embossed with “Golden Glow.” These cosmetics likely belonged to women who lived on the site. Since these items come from post-1926 fire deposits, it is most likely they belonged to the schoolmaster’s wife. This is important because it supports what we know about Chinese American women and families in Isleton from oral history and archival research. According to the US Census, very few Chinese American families lived in Isleton before 1920, but increased by the 1930 Census. This increase in the number of families corresponds with increasing numbers of paper sons and daughters immigrating to the United States in the 1910s and 1920s

(Lau 2006). Similarly, oral histories indicate that Isleton had a number of Chinese American families, evident by the significant number of Chinese American children and the need for a segregated Oriental School and a Chinese language school. The presence of families is significant because the early Chinese American population had a large gender imbalance with most immigrants being bachelors or married men who left their wives in China (Chan 1991). The fact that Isleton had families suggests the community had stability that allowed the community to grow and thrive. In fact, Roger Chinn remembers from a child's perspective that the schoolmaster and family helped make the community feel more stabilized, particularly after the Chinese language school did not have a schoolmaster for a long time (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012).

The cosmetics also raise interesting questions about notions of beauty and how Chinese American women chose to tend to their appearance. Instead of interpreting these items as a sign of assimilation, I believe they speak to the complexities of the Chinese American population. Since we know the Isleton Chinese American community had access to goods from China, using Western cosmetics would have been an intentional choice. While it is possible that these items were cheaper than cosmetics imported from China or they were a gift, it is most likely that the woman who used these items preferred these American cosmetics. We know the schoolmaster's wife lived on the Tong site and she would have occupied visible position in the community. She may have wanted to portray a particular image for herself and her family that suggested a stable middle class living and these cosmetics may have helped her achieve this image. This raises interesting questions about Chinese American subjectivity in light of foreigner racialization: what would it mean for a Chinese American woman to use American cosmetics and subscribe to American notions of beauty when she is still perceived as being a foreigner? How can this

contradiction provide us with insight into a Du Boisian double consciousness for the Chinese American community (Du Bois 1903)? These artifacts demonstrate that with interdisciplinary research, we can begin to think about how people in Isleton created an image and identity for themselves not as Chinese but Chinese American—an identity that was neither entirely American nor entirely Chinese.

Community building in a multiethnic and multiracial town

An interdisciplinary approach to historical archaeology also has the potential for exploring relationships and community building. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Barbara Voss (2008: 47) discusses this a larger scale of analysis through the “mesoscale,” which she describes as the scale between the household and transnational world system. Voss advocates using the spatial scale of zones and blocks as a way of understanding community-level archaeology as an alternative to a household scale that favors the heteronormative, white, middle-class family. I also use a community-level approach, but conceptualize community in terms of geographic and social scale—that is, the physical location of Chinatown in Isleton as well as the social relationships between the Isleton Chinese American community and people locally as well as elsewhere in the region and/or diaspora. While I have touched upon evidence of regional and transnational networks in the previous sections, I want to explore how an interdisciplinary approach can also shed light on the types of social relationships people in Isleton developed among different Chinese dialect groups and with other ethnic or racial groups in town. In this section, I use historic research, oral history, and material culture to examine how racial dynamics affecting Isleton may have shaped the kinds of local relationships the Chinese American community developed during the first half of the twentieth century.

Racial positioning and the development of multiracial relationships—the Portuguese American community

In conjunction with structural racism in Isleton, the physical layout of the town played an important role in the kind of relationships the Chinese American community formed with other ethnic or racial groups. While Isleton was a racially diverse town, structural racism ensured that it was also segregated. The Chinese American and Japanese American population lived on the outskirts of town both along Jackson Slough Road and on the east end of Main Street. Because of the Alien Land Law in 1913, many Asian American immigrants could not legally own land in California. People who were legally US citizens such as paper sons or daughters or American-born citizens were restricted where they could purchase land. Many landowners would not sell land to Asian Americans, and segregation specifically kept them from living in the west part of Isleton known as “White Town” (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Consequently, all people excluded from White Town lived in Chinatown and Japantown. According to the 1930 and 1940 US Census manuscript forms, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, African Americans, and Portuguese Americans lived in Chinatown and Japantown. Structural racism also segregated Asian American children in the Oriental School. While structural racism dictated the spaces Chinese Americans could occupy in Isleton, this forced segregation also fostered the development of relationships, some of which may not have happened otherwise.

There were a number of Portuguese Americans in and around Isleton during the first half of the twentieth century. They worked on the farms and in the canneries with the Asian American laborers. Their presence on Main Street illustrates the complexities of race and power

in the United States; Portuguese Americans occupied a liminal racial positioning as an “in-between” race that was not-quite white yet also not Asian American or African American (Shah 2011: 15). This racial positioning differed, however, by time and location (Shah 2011; Jung 2005; Roediger 2005).

Portuguese Americans in Isleton were mostly immigrants from the Azores and seen as lesser whites on the racial hierarchy that placed them on similar status to Asian Americans in town. Consequently, oral histories recall that while many Portuguese Americans lived outside of town on farms, those that lived in Isleton could not live in White Town. Instead, these families lived along Main Street in Chinatown and Japantown or, if they worked for the canneries, in the cannery company housing (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview 3 September 2011; Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). These memories correspond to data from the 1930 and 1940 US Census, which demonstrates that Portuguese Americans were living interspersed with Japanese American and Chinese American families in this part of town. Out of these circumstances, some people began to develop interracial friendships. Social historian Nayan Shah (2011) describes these social, economic, and sometimes sexual relationships as “stranger intimacies” that people forged out of necessity, economic circumstances, and local and/or regional power relations. As a labor contractor of Filipino and Portuguese descent, Nikolas Catanio recalls recruiting laborers of all different ethnicities to work on farms in the Delta (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview, 3 September 2011). Roger Chinn remembers that his family was close to the Enos family, a Portuguese family who lived in the cannery housing at the end of Main Street. As a child, Roger remembers playing together and eating together with the Enos children. Portuguese Americans would also frequent the Chinn family’s general store, especially since they ran the only sporting goods store in town (Roger Chinn, oral history

interview, 2 September 2012). The positionality of Portuguese Americans in Isleton illustrates how structural racism effectively forced certain groups of people to live and work together.

These friendships and working relationships between the Chinese American and Portuguese American communities may help explain the presence of some of the non-Chinese ceramics on the site. While it is likely personal choice was involved with bringing European and American-manufactured ceramics to the Tong site, it is also possible that they were gifts. Sharing food is a common way to build friendships, and oral history interviewees remember sharing food with other Chinese Americans as well as non-Chinese Americans at home and at school with other children (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview, 3 September 2011; Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). This would help account for the small number of fragments representing numerous different vessel and decorative types. Furthermore, since I recovered these vessels broken, we know that people were using them rather than just throwing them away. This suggests that the vessels were of some importance to the people who used them. Interpreting some of these ceramics as gifts from Portuguese American neighbors may explain why these dishes were important while reemphasizing the complexities in race relations in the Sacramento Delta during the first half of the twentieth century.

Racial positioning and the development of multiethnic relationships—the Japanese American community

In addition to the Portuguese Americans, Chinese Americans in Isleton lived in close proximity to the Japanese American community. As discussed in Chapter 3, historical research and oral history indicate that the Japanese American community created a Japantown in Isleton on Main Street just east of Chinatown in the 1910s. Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans

lived together in Chinatown along Jackson Slough Road before 1915, but after moving to Main Street, 2nd Street created a physical boundary separating the two communities. Oral histories highlight differing accounts of the levels of interaction between Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans. Some people say the Chinese American and Japanese American communities had little interaction and largely kept to themselves, evident by the 2nd Street boundary between Japantown and Chinatown. The only exception to this generalization was that all Asian American children attended the segregated Oriental school (personal communication, Charlene Andersson, 25 October 2008). This may have been particularly true for Chinese and Japanese immigrants as Japan became a rising world power on the world stage and invaded China. Chinese and Japanese immigrants paying attention to events in their old countries extended the sentiments from home to Isleton, resulting in two neighboring but independently functioning Asian American communities.

Other oral history accounts, however, indicate that this separation between the two communities was not always the case. Roger Chinn recalled that one of his mother's best friends was a Japanese American woman. He also remembers many Japanese ceramics in his childhood home, particularly vases, because his mother enjoyed these items. He also recalls his mother's love for Japanese food and that his parents' general store even sold some Japanese food items (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). This memory emphasizes two points. First, interaction levels between the Japanese American and Chinese American communities may have varied by generation. While immigrants were more likely to pay attention to current events in their native countries, Chinese American children born in the United States would have had a different perspective for understanding their Japanese American neighbors. Roger's mother's family had lived in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. Her exposure to Japanese

culture and the Japanese American community is consequently different than that of immigrants and their American-born children. Second, and most importantly, this anecdote demonstrates that interaction in multiethnic and multiracial communities is incredibly complex.

Children attending the segregated Oriental school also remember befriending kids from other ethnic groups. When I asked about memories of Japanese American classmates, oral history interviewees all had stories to share about certain students they were friends with or experiences they remember sharing. This includes swapping food during lunchtime or hanging out during recess (Nikolas Catanio, oral history interview, 3 September 2011; Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 20 August 2012). They befriended their Japanese American classmates, even if their parents did not look fondly upon the friendship (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview, 20 August 2012). Children also belonged to Chinese American or Japanese American sports teams that played baseball or football matches against each other (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). Interviewees also had strong memories of when the United States government forcibly removed Japanese Americans from town and placed them in internment camps. This is particularly telling considering that this event was memorable to a child less than ten years old. None of my interviewees remembered seeing their Japanese American friends in Isleton again.

With this sociohistorical context from oral histories and historic research in mind, Japanese-manufactured wares from the Tong site raise interesting questions about who was buying and using the items. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the Tong assemblage includes at least four blue-on-white decorated porcelain bowls that I identified as Japanese based on the distinct appearance of Japanese stencilwares and transferwares. Additionally, there are the two porcelain

figurines from Layer 2, Feature 1 that have “JAPAN” embossed on them. One figurine is the legs and body of a four-legged creature, most likely a horse, and the other is a human body from the neck down. Both figurines are broken. The fact these figurines were labeled “JAPAN” indicates that they were manufactured in Japan and imported after 1890 when the McKinley Tariff required all foreign items to be marked with their country of manufacture.

Japanese-manufactured material culture in the Tong assemblage raises the question of how these items reached the Tong site. Other archaeologists studying Chinese American sites have argued that Japanese-manufactured porcelains on Chinese American sites do not indicate the presence of a Japanese American community because Chinese American merchants have been known to import and sell Japanese ceramics (Greenwood 1996: 79). This explanation is how archaeologists explain the presence of Japanese-manufactured porcelains in areas without known Japanese American populations. Since Isleton had a flourishing Japanese American community until internment, this same explanation may not be true for Isleton.

The Tong site also has a later occupation date than these other sites with Japanese-manufactured ceramics that date to the late nineteenth century. Consequently, we must also consider the changes in international politics during the early twentieth century. As I briefly mentioned above, by the turn of the nineteenth century, Japan had become a rising power on the world stage, competing with Europe and the United States for imperial influence in Asia. By the 1930s, Japan had begun invading China, causing a surge of nationalism amongst the Chinese in the Diaspora and increasing dislike for the Japanese. Many Chinese Americans participated in fundraising to support efforts in China to defeat the Japanese army (Edwin Chew, oral history interview 16 September 2012). With a large number of Chinese immigrants in the Isleton Chinese American community who would have paid attention to current events in China, it is

difficult to believe that Chinese merchants and consumers would have willingly purchased and used Japanese-manufactured items. We know the Japanese-manufactured tablewares and the two porcelain figurines came from post-1926 fire stratigraphic deposits or stratigraphic layers. Consequently, people would have been using these items at a time when relationships between the two communities potentially could have been tense.

Since oral history suggests that friendships developed between the Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans in Isleton, it is likely the Japanese-manufactured ceramics ended up on the Tong site as gifts. Like the other non-Chinese tablewares, the Japanese tablewares must have been important to whoever owned them since they were used and broken. It is also possible that someone purchased and used these items because they liked the aesthetic of Japanese ceramics, like Roger Chinn's mother. At the same time, her exposure to Japanese culture was through her Japanese American friend, which again suggests interaction between the Japanese American and Chinese American communities.

Interaction via friendship also is the most likely explanation for the porcelain figurines with Japan embossed on them. Since oral history interviewees recall friendships forming with Japanese American schoolmates while attending the Oriental School, it is likely children swapped or shared toys. If these toys belonged to their friends, it seems unlikely that the country of manufacture would have mattered to the Chinese American children. The Chinese playground at 27 Main Street would have been a logical place for the Chinese American children to play with these toys, even if their Japanese American friends did not join them there. Like the non-Chinese ceramics, these broken figurines had to have been handled and played with before breaking and being discarded. Consequently, while it is possible that someone purchased the Japanese-manufactured figurines for Chinese American children, it is most likely that the

figurines were material remnants of interaction between the Chinese American and Japanese American children in town.

These examples illustrate how historical archaeology using an interdisciplinary approach has the potential for understanding social relationships in Isleton. Oral history narratives, historic research, and an understanding of racialization and structural racism provide key sociohistorical context to help understand and interpret excavated material culture in a complex, multiracial world. With an understanding that structural racism effectively placed certain racial and ethnic groups in the same socioeconomic environment, we can begin to explore how Chinese Americans formed friendships or “intimacies” with their Japanese American and Portuguese American neighbors (Shah 2011). From this perspective, instead of being interpreted as signs of assimilation, non-Chinese artifacts become material symbols of the complexities involved in interpreting artifacts in a multiracial environment.

Building a Chinese America: subjectivities and complexities in the Chinese American community

In addition to thinking about multiracial and multiethnic community building in Isleton, it is also important to consider the development of community within the Isleton Chinese American population. Despite the fact power holders racialized Chinese Americans as a homogenous group, Chinese immigrants largely self-identified by their district or dialect groups, including Sam Yup, Sze Yup, Heungshan, and Longdu. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, immigrants utilized these district networks to find jobs, marriages, and other opportunities as a way to adapt to a racist environment. Relationships between dialect groups did not always form naturally. Perceptions from China about neighboring dialect groups accompanied immigrants to California: Sam Yup families felt better off than Sze Yup families because their relative wealth

in China was higher; Sze Yup families knew their situation was better than the Heungshan and Longdu groups who were the last groups to settle in southern China and consequently left with the poorest land (Chan 1991). Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 3, dialects were, to a certain extent, unintelligible to other dialect groups. While most people understood a standard form of Cantonese that is closest to Sam Yup, the Sze Yup, Heungshan, and Longdu dialects were very different and could form a language barrier.

These differences, however, became less important as the American-born generation grew. Structural racism helped create this shift by producing conditions in which children from different Chinese dialect groups interacted. Chinese Americans in Isleton grew up among many dialect groups and all went to the same segregated Oriental School. Since the majority of the American-born children in Isleton were from Heungshan, children from Sze Yup-speaking families often ended up speaking better Heungshan dialect than Sze Yup because they picked it up from their Heungshan friends (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012). This interaction continued as adults when American-born Chinese began to marry and start families of their own. Immigration exclusion severely limited the number of families and children in the United States, leaving fewer people of the same dialect group for second generation Chinese Americans to marry. From oral histories, we know it was common for people to marry across dialect groups, sometimes to the dismay of their parents (Roger Chinn, oral history interview, 2 September 2012; Molly Leung, oral history interview, 14 August 2012; Mary Moy and Margaret Chew, oral history interview 20 August 2012). Consequently, most third and fourth generation Chinese Americans can claim to belong to multiple dialect groups.

I believe the increase of inter-dialect group families corresponds with the formation of a truly Chinese American subjectivity that focused on a shared identity as Chinese American

rather than from a particular dialect group. This is important because it speaks to the transformation of Chinese America from an immigrant population to an American-born population under conditions of structural racism that, in many ways, forced Chinese Americans to cooperate across dialect groups to survive. As a community institution for all Chinese Americans regardless of dialect or generation, the Bing Kong Tong in Isleton is a key example of this inter-dialect interaction: Sze Yup merchants such as Roger Chinn's family helped found the Isleton Bing Kong Tong branch, yet the Tong served a primarily Heungshan population. Dialect differences became less important because of similar circumstances in Isleton including being segregated in the same part of town, traveling in the same social circles, and belonging to similar socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, the 1920s through the 1940s was particularly important to the development of Chinese America because many paper sons and daughters had children. This is not to say that dialect identities no longer were important; many American-born Chinese are still very aware of their own dialect group as well as the dialect group of their friends, neighbors, and in-laws. Instead, the experiences of the American-born generation accentuated a sense of being Chinese American that situationally drew on village and/or dialect identifications.

From this discussion, it becomes evident that the Chinese American population was by no means homogeneous: analyses of Chinese American sites, therefore, should be cognizant of these dialect differences, socioeconomic differences, and changes over time with each new generation. We must remember, however, that these changes in Chinese America developed as a response to conditions set by structural racism. Consequently, any studies of Chinese Americans must view the development of Chinese American subjectivities and communities as a complex reaction and adaptation to an environment structured by racism and foreigner racialization. From

this perspective, we can view Chinese Americans as actors with the ability to make choices in their everyday lives under particular structures of power and its contradictions (Lowe 1996).

By approaching archaeological analyses and interpretations from a perspective that centers Chinese American subjectivities, racialization, structural racism, and power, we can begin to understand the meanings of material culture to a racialized community. Much like how meanings of race, racialization, and power are specific to a given time and location, the meanings of materials shifted over time with changing Chinese American subjectivities, and this is a complexity we must investigate. Exploring these intricacies is something I have tried to do in this chapter with my interdisciplinary perspective utilizing multiple lines of evidence. Instead of thinking about whether or not a given assemblage tells us about levels of assimilation, we have the potential for exploring agency and meaning to the people who used the items in a world structured by racism. How did Chinese Americans perceive themselves in a world rife with unequal power relations? How did particular choices help them survive? How did people form interdialect, interethnic, and interracial relationships to survive in segregated Isleton? What would it have meant to adopt Euroamerican baking practices as tradition in a Chinese American household? What does it say about Chinese American subjectivities when women were using Euroamerican beauty cosmetics? What is the material culture of Chinese America?

Since materials alone cannot tell us about Chinese American subjectivities, interdisciplinary work that relies on multiple lines of evidence is key to reach this level of understanding. With interdisciplinary work, historical archaeology has the potential for moving beyond models based on assimilation to understand the contradictions and intricacies of everyday life in the Isleton Chinese American community under conditions of structural racism.

Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes information in the previous chapters to explore new directions for analyzing and interpreting material culture from the Isleton Chinese American community. By using an interdisciplinary perspective that draws upon Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies scholarship to understand and interpret data from oral history interviews, the archival record, and material culture, I believe this approach allows historical archaeologists to achieve more nuanced understandings of what life was like for Chinese Americans in Isleton. I center racialization and structural racism in my analysis to consider how power affected everyday life in the Chinese American community as well as how Chinese Americans made intentional choices and actions within these structural conditions that allowed them to adapt, survive, and thrive. Within these adaptations, negotiations, and even subversions, I explore how we can see the effect of racialization and structural racism on material culture from the Tong site. Since this was a multifunctional community location, the material assemblage allows us to explore different aspects of everyday life including foodways, education, and health and body care in a multi-scalar way. Consequently, I interpret the Isleton Chinese Americans as a complex, heterogeneous community that was well connected with diasporic communities locally, regionally, and transnationally. I argue that this approach allows us to explore Chinese American subjectivities and consider Chinese American identity formation as well as how Chinese Americans viewed themselves in light of race and power in a society that wanted to exploit their labor but not keep them. Thus, in conjunction with information from oral histories and archival research, I argue that historical archaeology can delve into what it was like and what it meant to be Chinese American in the Sacramento Delta during the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter 6: Future directions for interdisciplinary Chinese American historical archaeologies

Through the investigation of the historic Chinese American community in Isleton, this dissertation explores the possibilities of interdisciplinary work, drawing on both historical archaeology and Asian American Studies as a way to think about the past in terms of race, racism, and racialization. I contend that material culture should be interpreted as the material signature of agency constrained by conditions of structural racism. From this perspective, we can see that assimilation-based interpretations of material culture cannot account for the diverse effects of structural racism on everyday decisions. Consequently, I argue that an interdisciplinary approach provides an alternative to assimilation-based models by considering the complexities of the heterogeneous Chinese American community and understanding the unique racial positioning of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners in the American West.

I interpret everyday activities in light of structural racism to consider its impacts on everyday life and how the Chinese American community responded to these conditions. This approach allows me to examine a broad range of factors that may have affected the choices people made. How might an exposure to Euroamerican foodways through domestic service jobs have led to the incorporation of Euroamerican traditions into Chinese American foodways? How might relationships with other racialized communities segregated in Chinatown and Japantown have impacted the type of material culture we recover archaeologically? These complexities show that we need something more than an assimilation-based perspective to understand the nuances of the lived racialized experience.

This dissertation also considers how collaborative work can help scholars delve deeper into everyday life by thinking about agency and the development of a Chinese American subjectivity. Studying agency and subjectivity utilizes data from multiple evidentiary lines to consider how people viewed themselves in a world rife with race and power as well as the kinds of decisions they made in light of this world. What did it mean to use American cosmetics, medicines, and non-Chinese tablewares? What image did the Bing Kong Tong leadership want to portray with matching porcelain tablewares? Thinking about the formation of a Chinese American subjectivity opens the future of the field in new and exciting directions.

Benefits of interdisciplinary work

In addition to studying the Isleton Chinese American community, this dissertation explores what historical archaeology and Asian American Studies have to gain from interdisciplinary work. A strong theoretical understanding of race, racism, and racialization from Ethnic Studies makes historical archaeology better equipped for interpreting material culture from racialized populations. While archaeologists studying the African Diaspora have pushed historical archaeologists to develop theories and methods for studying race, examining Asian Americans provides historical archaeologists an opportunity to think about race beyond a black-white context. To do so, however, historical archaeology must develop ways to think about differential racialization. This is where I believe Ethnic Studies can help.

I demonstrate how interdisciplinary work can provide historical archaeology with a more nuanced way of understanding race from a social constructionist perspective that illuminates how racial groups have been differentially racialized in different times and locations. For Asian Americans, Claire Kim's (1999) racial triangulation theory provides a way for us to consider

how opinion-makers have racialized Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners who are not American. With differential racial positioning of racial groups, racial triangulation theory demonstrates that a single model of race cannot be applied to all racialized groups. Interdisciplinary work with Ethnic Studies therefore provides a way for archaeologists to think about race in much more complex ways. Historical archaeologists can use Ethnic Studies racial theory to articulate a theory of racism and racialization in the archaeological record and question their assumptions about what constitutes racism.

A strong understanding of the unique racial positioning of Asian Americans is important for being able to study these communities archaeologically. Structural racism and foreigner racialization shaped many aspects of everyday life including where people could live, who they could marry, what jobs they could have, whether they could become naturalized citizens, and whether or not they could live with their families. These factors would have, in turn, affected the choices people made as well as the items people used on an everyday basis. In the case of Isleton, high demands for low wage, labor-intensive jobs pulled Asian Americans to the Sacramento Delta. This impacted factors such as what kind of access to goods people had in a rural location and how much money they had to spend on items. Consequently, I believe understanding the pervasiveness of structural racism on everyday activities and choices is crucial for being able to interpret assemblages from Chinese American sites, particularly for developing ways to analyze materials beyond an assimilation-based model.

The benefits of interdisciplinary work are particularly evident in how archaeologists interpret the presence of non-Chinese artifacts on Chinese American sites. As I discussed in Chapter 5, the Karo syrup bottle is an example of how interdisciplinary research offers new interpretive possibilities. Without broader sociohistorical context from Asian American Studies,

an assimilation-based model of analysis would interpret this non-Chinese ingredient as a sign of assimilation into mainstream Euroamerican foodways; Karo syrup could have been symbolic of a shift away from traditional Chinese foodways in favor of Euroamerican foodways. From an interdisciplinary perspective, however, we recognize that many Chinese American laborers became cooks for Euroamericans because it was one of the few employment opportunities available for Chinese Americans. Chinese American chefs had to learn how to prepare dishes for their Euroamerican clients in private homes, hotels, restaurants, and railroad dining cars. They then brought these skills home and developed baking traditions in Chinese American households. The Karo syrup bottle illustrates that the use of a non-Chinese ingredient cannot be equated with assimilation. Instead, we should see it as symbolic of the forced exposure of Euroamerican foodways on the Chinese American community because of structural racism and an ingredient that became incorporated into Chinese American foodways. Consequently, the Karo syrup bottle emphasizes why assimilation-based models are not enough for understanding the presence of non-Chinese artifacts on Chinese American sites and how structural racism impacted everyday life in the Chinese American community.

Similarly, we can think about the presence of Japanese, European, and American-manufactured ceramics as material indicators of multiethnic and multiracial relationships that developed in Isleton Chinatown and Japantown. The racial dynamics in the Delta led to segregated areas in Delta towns, including separate schools and neighborhoods for everyone excluded from white areas. In Isleton, interracial and interethnic relationships formed out of this forced segregation for Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and Portuguese Americans. Non-Chinese materials at the Tong site can therefore be the material correlates of what Nayan Shah (2011) describes as forced “stranger intimacies” that developed

out of necessity for survival racialized rural areas. This perspective shifts the research question from whether or not the Chinese American community assimilated to what kinds of relationships formed and interactions occurred among the racialized communities in Isleton.

Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies scholars stand to benefit from collaborative work with historical archaeologists, particularly in exploring new ways to conduct social histories, or histories of non-famous, everyday people. Since the documentary record often favors famous and powerful individuals, material culture offers a way to study people who may not have a strong presence in the documentary record. Furthermore, archaeological findings may tell different stories than oral histories or the archival record, or tell these stories from different perspectives that make historic narratives richer. Artifacts also do not rely on memory or the ability to record information like oral histories and the documentary record. The Tong assemblage, for instance, provides detailed information about what people were eating, what they were eating with, and how they were taking care of themselves. Faunal remains let us learn about what types of meat people were eating or what kinds of local fish they caught from the Sacramento River to supplement their diet. Since people often do not remember or record these small details of everyday life, material culture allows scholars to glimpse the past from a perspective that enhances traditional lines of evidence in historic research. Consequently, archaeology provides a rich body of information for Asian American Studies scholars to learn about historic communities in a new and very personal way.

Historical archaeology also offers Asian American Studies scholars a way to reconnect with community organizations and historical societies. During the Third World Movements in the late 1960s, Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies programs formed out of the need to make scholarship relevant to communities of color as well as a commitment to working with and

for these communities. This commitment includes close relationships with community organizations and historical societies. In recent years, however, increasing institutionalization of Ethnic Studies units has shifted the field away from this community work and towards the academy in favor of institution building and publication for a number of strategic reasons. Archaeological fieldwork, however, places scholars squarely in a visible community position. Pre-excavation research often collaborates with local historical societies and descendant communities who are knowledgeable about the area and its history. The IBAHS, for example, was incredibly helpful in my own research on Isleton and the Bing Kong Tong. Furthermore, excavation has a very visible physical presence in the community. People will notice an archaeological excavation in the newspaper, walk by the site during fieldwork, or attend public archaeology days. This engagement and visibility in the community is something Asian American Studies should also be doing, possibly through collaborative historical archaeology projects that could include the collection of oral histories and enhanced learning opportunities for students in classes tied to these projects. Thus, writing social histories with material culture pushes Ethnic Studies scholars to think about histories from a different perspective and reorient the discipline towards its community roots. Collaborative historical archaeologies therefore have great potential for studying the racialized past in new and meaningful ways that benefit both historical archaeology and Asian American Studies.

Future directions

This dissertation demonstrates that interdisciplinary work for the archaeological study of Chinese Americans is full of possibility for future directions. In addition to building a relationship between historical archaeologists and Asian American Studies scholars and utilizing

more racial theory in archaeological analyses, I believe there are several areas historical archaeology should explore. As I discussed in this dissertation, Chinatowns were often multiethnic and/or multiracial communities, inhabited with other racialized groups who could not live outside segregated parts of towns or cities. This was true for Isleton, where Chinese American, Japanese American, Filipino American, and Portuguese American men, women, and children had to occupy the same geographic and socioeconomic spaces. Consequently, we ought to think about Chinatowns not as the archaeological study of Chinese Americans, but rather as the multiethnic and multiracial archaeologies of racialized communities. This approach allows us to study the complexities of racialized communities, including diversity within the heterogeneous Chinese American community and the intricacies of a multiracial world.

Pushing historical archaeology to examine other Asian American ethnic groups that lived in Chinatowns raises additional questions: Where are the archaeologies of Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, and South Asian Americans who lived these same spaces and held these same jobs? Where are the historical archaeologies of Japanese Americans outside of a forced incarceration context? What does an Asian American historical archaeology look like? Through collaborative work with Asian American Studies, I believe historical archaeology can explore both the experiences of specific Asian American ethnic groups and the collective experiences of Asian Americans as the archaeology of shared foreigner racialization. Studying these communities will help us understand the social histories of the men and women who played a critical role in the economic development of California and help historical archaeologists expand their studies of racialized communities.

Finally, historical archaeology should explore how it can become more involved with historic preservation efforts in the Asian Pacific Islander American community. This could

include working with the Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation (APIAHiP) network or getting involved in local campaigns. Some historical archaeologists have already become involved with preservation efforts, such as Anna Naruta's (2006) work on Uptown Chinatown in Oakland. One could also argue that ongoing projects at Japanese American internment camps such as Manzanar, Amache, and Kooskia are also working to preserve the memory of Japanese American incarceration during World War II. I see my work on the Bing Kong Tong as part of the efforts of IBAHS to restore the Tong building and preserve the history of Isleton Chinatown. With development threatening an increasing number of Asian American historical sites, archaeologists studying Asian American communities should use their expertise to assist community preservation efforts. This involvement could aid contemporary struggles to save endangered sites such as China House in Rancho Cucamonga or Riverside Chinatown while also engaging with the community.

Conclusion

The Chinese American community played a seminal role in the economic development of the Sacramento Delta and, more broadly, the West Coast. Their feats of strength and perseverance helped transform the region into the rich agricultural area it is today, and the important contributions of the Asian American community remain imprinted on the landscape in the towns, levees, and fields. The heyday of the Isleton Chinese American community, however, is long past and the bustling Chinatown at the east end of Main Street during the 1920s and 1930s no longer exists. According to the 2010 US Census, only 12 people identifying as Chinese still live in Isleton. Although these Chinese American men and women no longer live in the area, Delta roots run deep. People who lived in the Delta hold their memories and Delta connections

close to their heart, and proudly declare their links to Isleton, Courtland, Locke, or Walnut Grove. For us to recognize the significance of these memories and the contributions of the Asian American community, we must draw upon the full potential of interdisciplinary work to understand the complexities of the everyday lives of these everyday people under conditions of structural racism. When we reach this point of understanding, we, too, will be able to understand how the Delta was in the heart.

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