

1. Qin, Yucheng. "The Cultural Clash: Chinese Native-Place Sentiment and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882." *The Journal of Race & Policy*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2012, pp. 18-36. *ProQuest*, <https://ezproxy.bu.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fcultural-clash-chinese-native-place-sentiment%2Fdocview%2F1460173947%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9676>.

My essay answers an important question: why did the United States enact the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882? Different from other exclusion scholars, I explain the influence of Chinese native-place rootedness on this watershed in the history of American immigration legislation. In the 19th century Chinese immigrants brought their native-place sentiment to the United States—the construction that a person's native place identity, and even that of his descendants, did not necessarily change along with their place(s) of residence. Chinese merchants, the spearhead of Chinese emigration, established many native-place associations—called *huiguan* in California. The native-place sentiment and *huiguan* circumscribed almost every feature of Chinese community in the United States. More importantly, Chinese native-place sentiment and *huiguan* fed all the political, economic and social charges that were leveled against the Chinese, eventually convincing most Americans of a dangerous differentness with the result that the exclusion of the Chinese ultimately was able to succeed. In short, the essay develops a cultural clash concept, which argues that psychological/behavioral conflicts help in understanding one of the first meetings of west and east to provide a clear picture of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the Congressional debate over Chinese exclusion in 1882, Orville Platt, a U.S. Senator from Connecticut, remarked, "This is race legislation.... Harsh in provisions, severe...in its penalties, the bill reads more like an enactment of the seventeenth century than like a wise, humane, and beneficial statute of the present age and time." Then he reversed his rhetoric suddenly, saying "Don't misunderstand me," and urged to limit Chinese to one thousand immigrants per year.¹ His position differed little from the exclusionists. Indeed, the formal prohibition of Chinese immigration in 1882 is diametrically opposed to all American traditions and principles.² The act changed the nation's image as a refuge of the poor, oppressed and needy in the world and marked a major turning point in American history. Why did the United States pass the Chinese Exclusion Act?

Due largely to its conspicuous position in American history, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 has been a topic of intensive academic inquiry. Scholars have developed three theories: the California thesis, the national-racist-consensus thesis, and the national politician thesis. The traditional California perspective, forged by Mary Coolidge in her monograph *Chinese Immigration* (1909), argues that the state of California and the prejudice of its workers were the chief agents of, and responsible for, the Chinese exclusion. This traditionalist theory was later refined and elaborated, especially by Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer in 1939. After reaffirming organized labor was always the real agitator of the anti-Chinese movement, he highlights that anti-Chinese sentiment was not restricted among workers but shared by all classes in California. Alexander Saxton continued the efforts to refine the California perspective by drawing more attention to racist sentiment—a picture of racist Californian workers who found a common and indispensable enemy to unite labor for generations. In 1969, the second thesis, the national-racist-consensus perspective of Stuart Creighton Miller, developed a different

- a) This article explains what caused the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.
- b) Many of the critiques towards the Chinese Exclusion Act were originated from American impressions of the Chinese.

c) The author Qin talks about the reason why the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act from the cultural perspective and sees things from Chinese native sentiments. By doing so, he points out that cultural difference and conflicts between Chinese and Americans could be a factor leading to the pass of this law.