

Socioeconomic Impacts of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

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INTRODUCTION

Until 1853, Chinese immigration into the US was minimal, falling below 10 documented immigrants each year.¹ However, Chinese immigration faced a dramatic change after 1853. The Taiping Rebellion, which had started in 1851, caused political unrest and economic instability throughout China. This caused many Chinese people to look outside of China and many found the US as a suitable alternative. In addition to the employment opportunities, the California Gold Rush also was seen as an attractive opportunity for Chinese people seeking a better life.

The first wave of Chinese immigration was seen as highly beneficial for the US by the public. Immigrants were willing to do physically demanding work, such as construction, farming, mining, and railroad construction. Such work was both challenging and dangerous, and thus were mostly avoided by white Americans. Despite the challenging work, immigrants were willing to work for low wages, making Chinese immigrants a crucial part of the US workforce and seen by the public.

Throughout the Taiping Rebellion in the People's Republic of China, a time of political instability, a significant consequence occurred in the United States. This upheaval, in particular, resulted in an increase in career options that white Americans sought to avoid. "Patterns of Chinese Settlement in the United States," an academic essay by Hsiang-shui Chen, describes the flood of Chinese immigrants and their subsequent employment throughout this turbulent period. The Taiping Rebellion, which lasted between 1850 and 1864, was a historic civil war that threw

China into chaos. This disturbance resulted in a large outflow of Chinese citizens seeking sanctuary and opportunities overseas, with the United States being among their chosen destinations.

Concurrently, America was going through its own socioeconomic changes, such as the Gold Rush and the growth of railroad networks. These changes demanded a large work force to support businesses like as mining, railroad building, and agriculture. However, these labor-intensive vocations were generally avoided by white Americans, who were unwilling to participate in such strenuous work. Chinese immigrants, on the other hand, were more eager to take on these demanding responsibilities, driven by a desire for economic prospects and frequently hampered by limited alternatives and discriminating treatment. As a result, they formed an important workforce in industries critical to the growth and advancement of the United States throughout that time period. The statement emphasizes the interrelationship between China's political instability, the resulting flood of Chinese immigrants to the USA, and their proclivity to fill jobs that white Americans shun. This historical backdrop gives light on the reasons and possibilities that led to Chinese colonization, as well as their substantial contributions to the American labor environment amid the Taiping Rebellion period.

Chinese immigrants willingly embraced physically demanding occupations such as construction, farming, and mining for meager wages due to their perceived potential as opportunities. D. Joe Long's work, "The Impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act on the U.S. Economy," elucidates the factors influencing their choices during that era. Discriminatory policies, like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, restricted their access to various professions, creating a limited labor market. Consequently, these labor-intensive industries, typically shunned by white Americans, became the sole viable options for Chinese immigrants to secure their

livelihoods and generate income. Despite the challenges and meager compensation, they exhibited a resolute work ethic and an unwavering determination to establish themselves and provide for their families in their new homeland.

PUBLIC REACTIONS TO CHINESE IMMIGRATION

According to the data, specifically the chart entitled "Number of documented migrants from Asia to the United States between 1820 and 1957, by region" by the US Census Bureau and US Department of Commerce, Chinese immigration increased steadily from the mid to late 1800s, with a particular emphasis on the 1860s and 1870s.

The figures show a significant increase in the number of verified Chinese migrants attempting to relocate to the United States over this time period. The main causes behind this inflow may be traced to a convergence of economic possibilities resulting from the Gold Rush, railroad building, and labor demand in industries such as agriculture and mining. Furthermore, social variables such as political turmoil, economic hardship, and unemployment.

The extracted data focuses on the scenario in California, which was the principal settlement place for Chinese immigrants over the time period under question. It demonstrates that the state had a financial downturn, which resulted in an increase in unemployment. Crop failures also caused a movement in population from countryside to urban regions, resulting in congested cities. The economic crisis harmed job opportunities, making it difficult for both immigrants and local citizens to obtain steady employment. Migration from fields to cities worsened the problem, generating overcrowding and straining urban supplies. These factors impacted the patterns of settlement and living circumstances of Chinese immigrants in California at the time.

The comment exemplifies a tendency detailed in Hsiang-shui Chen's book "Patterns of Chinese Settlement in the United States," in which white Americans blamed Chinese immigrants for the current low salaries because of their willingness to take minimal pay. As a result of this attribution, there has been a boom in nativist attitude, defined by a preference for native-born persons and the growth of anti-immigrant views. During the time period under consideration, Chinese immigrants, who faced restricted employment options and were frequently targeted for discriminatory practices, shown a willingness to labor for lower pay. The acceptance of lower pay by this work force fostered a notion amongst white Americans that Chinese immigrants being directly responsible for wage suppression in numerous areas. As a result, white Americans developed an increasing sense of economic competitiveness and unease, fostering nativist sentiment that originated in the desire to protect their financial security.

This nativist feeling expressed itself through discriminatory legislation and social activities focused at limiting Chinese immigration and the economic opportunities accessible to Chinese immigrants in the US. This attribution resulted in an increase in nativist feeling, with favoring for native-born people and the formation of anti-immigrant views. The subsequent acts and laws aimed at limiting Chinese immigration mirrored the economic competitiveness and worries felt by white Americans at the time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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