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Introduction

Paths of Resistance and Accommodation for Asian Americans

San Diego calls itself "America's Finest City." It is certainly admired for its ideal weather, miles of beautiful beaches, and manufactured tourist attractions, such as Sea World, the San Diego Zoo, Legoland, and Hotel Del Coronado. It is also known for its proximity to Mexico, as well as for its large military complexes, most notably its navy docks. However, it is not widely identified with having a large community of Asian Americans (more than 200,000), especially one that is engaging in social change.[1] Perhaps few people notice San Diego's Asian American communities because there is no recognizable "Chinatown" or compact Asian ethnic enclave that draws tourists searching for inexpensive trinkets, photo opportunities, or exotic meals. Rather than being concentrated in well-defined and highly visible areas, Asian Americans in San Diego are dispersed in residential pockets, where they blend into multiracial neighborhoods; their commercial clusters, which are located throughout the region, cater mainly to locals. In many ways, Asian residents, like other San Diegans, lead ordinary daily lives that go unnoticed. Nevertheless, they also engage in a wide array of political, cultural, social, and economic activities that are specific to their shared identity as Asian Americans.

In cities across the country, Asian Americans are often viewed as passive, quaint populations that are immune to anti-immigrant policies, civil rights backlash, labor exploitation,

glass-ceiling discrimination, hate crimes, and police mistreatment. This view regards Asian Americans as well integrated and accepted on equal terms into mainstream America, evidence that “multiculturalism” has been achieved. In fact, their histories and their lives today show a deep engagement with matters of racial justice. Asian Americans have challenged unjust immigration policies, antimiscegenation laws, prevention from U.S. citizenship, marginalization from educational institutions, exploitation in the workplace, exclusion from labor unions, and enforced residential segregation; when necessary, they have used their fists to defend themselves (Chan 1991; Takaki 1989a). Despite efforts to exclude them from America’s borders and to marginalize them from every facet of U.S. life, Asian Americans have survived and persisted, and at times, even thrived.

Asian Americans in San Diego who work for social change are constrained by a shortage of resources, lack of access to elite positions of power, and profound differences within their group. The majority are foreign-born, with a substantial percentage being non-English or limited-English speaking; they have differing immigration histories and trace their ancestry to numerous countries; they are an economically stratified group with varying educations, occupations, and incomes; and they are spatially dispersed throughout urban and suburban areas. What interests could members of this group possibly share? What injustices affect them all? Do they have the ability to form coherent resurgent ideologies, leadership, and organizations? Despite the obstacles, Asian American coalitions have grown in San Diego, with increasing numbers of activists and organizations working to defend and advance their economic, social, cultural, and political interests. In this book, I look to these activists and their organizations to gain a more nuanced understanding of how people and groups negotiate and resist oppression on an everyday basis and to broaden our understanding of how racialized people of color engage in political action, as well as how they build and sustain a community.

This book is a critical analysis of how both the larger sociopolitical changes and the demographic transformations of the Asian American population affect its mobilization and activism and how these, in turn, affect the formation of Asian American organizations, communities, and identities. Marxist scholars, using the functionalist approach, theorized that industrial development and the processes of political and economic modernization are antithetical to ethnic persistence. However, my work supports scholars who have proposed that larger-scale cultural identities

have survived, and that, in some cases, ethnic mobilization has been revitalized in modern societies (Nagel 1996; Smith 1981). In the contemporary period, social structures provide both opportunities and constraints for collective action for racialized groups. Asian American demographic shifts simultaneously hinder and enhance the availability of resources and the viability of collective struggle. Rather than seeing mobilization as a smooth, linear process for Asian Americans, I use the *interactive mobilization model* to show that it is a dialectical relationship between social order and human action marked by interplays of resistance and accommodation. This is an analysis of coalition building as much as of internal conflict within the Asian American community and with the greater San Diego community. It is about how Asian Americans have challenged San Diego to live up to its slogan, "America's Finest City." Although it is a story about San Diego, it could as easily describe other sites across the country where Asians reside.

The San Diego Case

My work builds and expands on the overviews of contemporary Asian American activism by Espiritu (1992) and Wei (1993), who focus on national Asian American activities and grassroots organizing in major cities such as San Francisco, New York, or Los Angeles and on selective moments. I focus on perhaps the less dramatic but no less important mobilization efforts that take place from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s in one setting. San Diego represents the type of mobilization that occurred, and continues to occur, in sites where Asians are perhaps fewer in number and do not hold confrontational street protests but are no less vigilant in their efforts to provide for the needs of their communities. What I captured in San Diego reflects myriad Asian American communities throughout the country where people struggle to organize diverse groups, find sufficient resources, create leaders, and define strategies. These daily occurrences may not capture media attention, but collectively and over time, they create social improvements for Asian Americans.

By contextualizing how and why mobilization emerges and evolves in one community over three decades, my study provides an understanding of long-term models of everyday forms of activism. In contrast to earlier studies, it explains the impact of recent demographic transformations on organizational resources and efforts. San Diego provided an ideal site because of the diversity of its Asian American population

and the existence of both longstanding and newly formed Asian American organizations. I focus on various social, economic, political, and cultural pan-Asian organizing in San Diego to examine the contradictions and complexities of identity and community formations. In comparison to discussions of mobilization that focus on specific groups of Asian Americans, such as the Chinese and Japanese (Fong 1994; Saito 1998), I focus on organizational processes among a diverse population that includes Filipinos, Koreans, Southeast Asians, and, to some extent, South Asians. My study has broader implications for analyzing the complexity of mobilization at the national level, since nationwide organizations are based on regional and local organizational processes.

Bordered by the Pacific Ocean and Mexico, San Diego is the second-largest city in California and the sixth largest in the nation. In the 1990s, when I began my research, Asians were estimated to compose 8 percent of the San Diego County and 12 percent of the San Diego city population (U.S. Bureau of Census 1990c), and the growth of the latter correlates closely with the increasing percentage of Asians in the state as a whole. The Immigration Act of 1965 brought large-scale immigration from Asia, and the arrival of refugee populations in the post-1975 period added a new generation to a once dwindling Asian American population. San Diego reflects changes in California, where people of color are becoming the numerical majority, making it a prime site to also examine relations among Asian Americans and other racial groups.

Methodology

My research methodology involves both historical and ethnographic approaches. I collected historical data from the local libraries, historical foundations, the downtown redevelopment agency, local organizational archives, governmental institutions, and private individuals to piece together the history of Asian American organizations and mobilization in San Diego. For nearly two years, from 1992 to 1994, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork as both an observer and a participant. My project included attending, and sometimes participating in, primarily Asian American activities, including planning meetings, political events, ethnic festivals, community forums, redevelopment project discussions, business meetings, and informal gatherings. As part of my fieldwork, I was a board member of the San Diego chapter of the Asian Business Association (ABA) and served as its newsletter editor. My involvement in this organization gave me wider entrée into the Asian

American community, because many of the individuals involved in ABA were also involved in various other single-ethnic and pan-Asian organizations and activities. I told all those I regularly interacted with that I was there to study Asian American organizations (Võ 2000). The kind of data I was able to gather differed according to the origin and development of the organization or the processes of organizational activities.

In addition to my fieldwork, I completed thirty formal interviews with Asian American activists and informal interviews with Asians and non-Asians involved with Asian American activities.[2] What I have captured is a glimpse of a lifetime endeavor for many, while for others it consumes only a phase of their life. The individuals I had close contact with and those I chose to interview to some extent reflect the great diversity of the Asian American population in terms of ethnicity, immigration history, class background, political viewpoint, and organizational strategy. However, these organizational leaders do not represent a cross section of the Asian population in San Diego; they are a select group who play key roles in assessing the needs of the community, defining the agenda for the community, and representing the Asian American community to the larger society. There are multiple levels of power, and being a recognized Asian American community leader does not mean one is powerful in the larger society. Such differential distinctions of power are important if we are to understand why Asian American activists continue to mobilize for social justice and racial equality.

Ethnographic fieldwork is an interactive and subjective process. Although I was considered an insider because of my ethnic ancestry as a Vietnamese American, there were also noticeable differences—including ethnic, cultural, political, generational, class, educational, sexual, gender, and linguistic—between my Asian American informants and myself that shaped the process of my research project (Võ 2000). As I immersed myself in the community, I was constantly negotiating these differences while also figuring out how others positioned themselves. I have tried to present the voices and actions of those I studied with respect and sensitivity, even when I did not agree with their ideologies or strategies. However, I am quite aware that the data collected and the analysis of the data are colored by my biases and agendas as a scholar and activist. Given the complex nature of fieldwork, this study is a selective and partial collection of facts, observations, interviews, and interpretations—essentially snapshots of an evolving, dynamic community, with highlights of some of its members.

Racialization, Mobilization, and Resistance

Although we understand that race is not biologically fixed or determined but socially and politically constructed, racialized groups realize, through their individual and institutional interactions, that it has real implications for their everyday lives (Omi and Winant 1986). Asian immigrants recognized early on that regardless of their ethnic differences, they were lumped together by the larger society under the terms "Asiatic," "Mongolian," and "Oriental" (Espiritu 1992; Heizer and Almquist 1971). They also recognized that this imposed racial categorization determined their subordinate position in the racial hierarchy and was used as a basis for their economic, social, and political exclusion (Almaguer 1994). Beginning in the 1960s, they rejected the commonly used term "Oriental" because of its negative connotation, renaming themselves "Asian Americans," a term coined by Yuji Ichioka, and this discursive strategy became a symbol of resistance and opposition (Espiritu 1992). Rather than using the term "panethnic" to describe this process, I prefer "pan-Asian," since it emphasizes this process as one of "racialization," signifying it as dynamic and interactive.

In addition to the perceptions of the larger society, state bureaucracies, unwilling to deal with the intricacies of subgroup difference, initiate new aggregate racial categories that can inadvertently activate group mobilization (Nagel and Olzak 1982). These classification systems, once institutionalized, become the basis for the distribution of resources by presenting groups with a particular logic for collective action (Cornell 1988; Davis 1991; Kasinitz 1992; Nagel 1996; Padilla 1985; Woldemikael 1989). In this instrumental model of group formation, the institutional structures provide the incentive to mobilize for competitive entitlement programs designated for disadvantaged minority groups, such as the equitable distribution of economic resources, fair political representation, and access to social services (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Yancey, Ericksen, and Juliani 1976). All my respondents recognized this process; for example, a Japanese American woman elaborates on the need to organize collectively: "So, I think it makes sense, if they're lumping us together, we might as well become more cohesive as a group and at least support each other. Hopefully that will help us in the long run."

Racialized groups do not merely accept the labels imposed upon them by dominant group members or institutions; they have some power to reshape these categories (Gutiérrez 1995). Public and private

institutions have used the racial classification "Asian American" partly because of their own political agendas and partly to accommodate the demands of this group, but the usage has not been uniform, which furthers the ambiguity over the Asian American category. Asians themselves continually reconstruct the boundaries of "Asian America," not necessarily in alignment with the category conceived by the government. Thus, racialized group formation is constructed by external ascription and internal self-definition—it is emergent, malleable, and variable, not an ascribed constant, and is shaped by material interests, as well as by concrete organizational and conceptual possibilities and constraints.

A social movement has been defined as "a type of behavior in which a large number of participants consciously attempt to change existing institutions and establish a new order of life" (Blumberg 1991: 191). Resource-mobilization models emphasize variables for collective action and focus on how groups, through collective protest, manipulate resources and institutions (Zald and McCarthy 1979). Social movements range from spontaneous informal protests to more formal collective actions that include the development of organizations (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Mobilization includes a wide range of tactics, from mass-based protest to lobbying politicians, and the strategies a group adopts depend partly on the resources available to it. Groups may vary in the type of resources they possess, such as numbers, money, organizations, human capital, networks, and leaders. Not all resources are equally important all the time; their value can fluctuate according to circumstances (Jenkins 1983). Furthermore, having organizational resources does not lead to social change unless one can mobilize them (McAdam 1982). These social movement theories apply especially to protest movements (Gamson 1975; Morris 1984), revolutions (Tilly 1978), and state- and nation-building (Young 1976). However, resistance and mobilization have varying operative forms, for, as Comaroff so eloquently puts it, "if we confine our historical scrutiny to the zero-sum heroics of revolution successfully achieved, we discount the vast proportion of human social action which is played out, perforce, on a more humble scale. We also evade, by teleological reasoning, the real questions that remain as to what *are* the transformative motors of history" (1985: 261).

Social structures set the parameters of collective action for oppositional groups (Enloe 1981; Piven and Cloward 1979). As Marx states in an often quoted but appropriate comment: "Men make their own history,

but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (1987: 15). Anti-hegemonic projects are not isolated from the hegemony in which they exist, and groups resist within the constraints placed upon them by the hegemonic structure. Asian Americans employ both conformist and oppositional political strategies, so they practice a *politics of resistance* and a *politics of accommodation* simultaneously (Ortiz and Marin 1989). They use their organizations to challenge the dominant power structure, but their goal is to be incorporated into this structure, namely U.S. society, thereby sustaining the existing social order; I explore this paradox later in my book.

During the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting a period of social upheaval in this country, the political strategies of community activists and racial groups were more confrontational. As sociopolitical circumstances changed, groups began to lean toward tactics that emphasized working with institutions to resolve group concerns. At the time of the Yellow Power movement, Asian American activists were involved in confrontational, radical political struggles against colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism, particularly the Third World Liberation movement (Ho 2000; Louie and Omatsu 2001; Nakanishi 1985–1986). They protested the Vietnam War, created their own media publications, demanded Asian American studies courses on university campuses, and formed community-based organizations (Omatsu 1994; Wei 1993). However, we cannot regard the 1960s and 1970s model of activism as the only one for Asian Americans. In the post–civil rights era, the protest politics of direct confrontation has been replaced or augmented by the politics of incorporation (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984). The earlier era brought new opportunities and resources for communities of color and produced a level of Asian American activism not possible earlier. A new generation of U.S.-born and foreign-born activists have appropriated the term "Asian American," reshaping and reconceptualizing it as a means of incorporation into mainstream society. Although newer activists may not fully grasp the historical context of the term or its connection to those radical power movements, they assert their need to construct their own movement frames in a very different historical moment.

Rapid demographic growth strengthened Asian American clout, because larger numbers give the group more leverage; yet coordinating the ever-increasing population has made mobilization more challenging because of its ethnic, generational, gender, sexual, political, lin-

guistic, and class differences. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, U.S.-born Chinese and Japanese Americans dominated the Asian American movement, but by the 1980s, other ethnic groups rivaled them in dominance. Asian socioeconomic resources changed dramatically by the early 1990s with the influx of new immigrants from Asia who were well educated and skilled, and the economic mobility of the native-born population, which made more human and material capital available to Asian American organizations. While class differences make it difficult for Asian Americans to organize (Espiritu and Ong 1994), I argue that class is only one factor that can lead to fragmentation, and in many instances, it is not the most significant barrier. It is assumed that the U.S.-born population plays an active role in Asian American mobilization, while the crucial role of first-generation immigrants has been neglected (but see Saito and Horton 1994). By the late 1980s in San Diego, first-generation Asian immigrants and migrants had revitalized existing Asian American organizations and were playing a primary role in creating new ones. These examples present some of the factors that divide Asian Americans, but as I argue throughout my book, these same factors are beneficial for community organizing.

Organizations, Communities, and Identities

Mobilization manifests itself most clearly in formal organizations and is one representation of a group's efforts to counter its marginal position in the institutional life of the larger society. More importantly, the continuing existence of race-based organizations whose goal is to create social change indicates that groups feel that racial inequities and injustices persist in our society. They bring to the fore the disjuncture between U.S. ideals of democracy and its practices of racism, personal and institutional, that impact Asian Americans. In the mid-1800s, Alexis de Tocqueville (1969) recognized the crucial role that civic associations play in the democratizing process in U.S. society. In the modern period, these formally structured organizations help bring about legal, legislative, and social reforms for oppressed groups and assist in the strategic coordination of human and material resources (Piven and Cloward 1979; Morris 1984). Organizational development has become the foundation on which racialized groups sustain collective action.

Participating in organizations is not a novel concept for Asian Americans. Since their arrival in the United States, they have formed social, cultural, religious, economic, and political organizations, and this process

continues today. The ebb and flow of Asian American organizations I studied depended on the activists, issues, resources, and political climate. Through my research, I was able to contextualize the web of relationships between individuals and organizations, making it possible for me to analyze the varying organizational patterns that developed. Whether created as a defensive response to external actions or as a proactive strategy, whether built within institutionalized frameworks or outside them, whether short-lived or enduring, these organizations provided a forum for interaction among Asian American individuals and groups in a formalized setting, making possible constructions of community and identity.

What constitutes a "community" has been a persistent question among social science researchers. Sociologists have focused on the negative impact of industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization on the breakdown of interpersonal contact and communal solidarity, which result in the decline or dissipation of community (Suttles 1972).[3] Modernity is characterized by fragmentation and isolation, yet a sense of community can be derived from participation in associations (Bellah et al. 1985). The persistence of ethnic community is often discussed in a social and spatial sense, as "an aggregate of people who occupy a common and bounded territory within which they establish and participate in common institutions" (Gans 1962: 104). However, individuals can have a wide array of interpersonal networks in neighborhoods, in kinship systems, and in occupational structures within a spatially defined territory; proximity is not an absolute precondition, since close networks can exist in unbounded areas (Tilly 1973; Wellman 1979). Thus, an ethnic boundary is not a geographic or a territorial one; rather it is a social boundary that unites individuals, reflected in the institutions and organizations of the community (Barth 1969). It is no longer assumed that the dissolution of ethnic concentrations and increased occupational mobility will lead to a decline in ethnic connections.

While these theories do not explicitly address Asian Americans, they implicitly allow for the reconceptualization of Asian American communities as spatially unbounded networks. Recent scholarship on Asian Americans has investigated the territorial as well as the discursive spaces where social, cultural, and political manifestations of Asian American identities and communities are constructed (Bonus 2000; Võ and Bonus 2002). In San Diego, Asian Americans occupy separate locales, with only a few concentrated neighborhoods, but despite limited daily interaction on either the individual or group level, they are connected

through organizational networks. It is also through organizational components that Asian Americans forge a social sense of community, albeit an evolving one, that participants, and outsiders too, recognize. When members of the mainstream society want to dispense information to the Asian American community or elicit its views, they direct their requests to organizational leaders and members, thereby reinforcing the existence of such a community. Similar to Anderson's (1983) concept of nations, the constructivist approach conceives of a racialized group as an "imagined community" that is capable of reinventing itself. While community studies tend to privilege homogeneity, I focus on the ways in which a community, to survive, must constantly acknowledge its heterogeneity. Although I often employ the term "community," I am cognizant of its internal multiplicity and interchangeably use the plural term "communities" to denote the array of voices.

The boundaries of community and citizenship can be quite porous for Americans of Asian ancestry in an age of globalization, especially with a large immigrant population that is connected to homelands in Asia, in addition to other locations (Hu-DeHart 1999; Ong 1999). They may have transnational links, for example, with relatives who remain in the homeland or as a consequence of entrepreneurial ties or political affinities. Outsiders also remind them that they "belong" over there because of their racial features. At times, Asian Americans distance and disengage themselves from these transnational links and portray themselves as loyal "Americans" who should be treated accordingly. In other cases, using their biculturalism, they position themselves as transnational subjects, essentially the "bridge" between America and Asia and, ironically, attempt to use this affiliation to enhance their status in America. This positioning depends on their lived experiences, material capital, political socialization, and desired goals; most important, it can vary depending on circumstances. I examine how these transnational connections, real or imagined, impact the formation of the local Asian American community, as well as how members maneuver their global connections and disconnections to Asia.

Although the focus of my research is Asian Americans, I examine their relationship and analyze their efforts at collective organizing with other racial communities. Being categorized with other "minority" groups, such as African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, has forced them to recognize their shared experiences of discrimination and to consider how they might benefit from coalitions with other racialized communities. Yet, other racial groups are wary of the influx of post-1965

Asian immigrants and refugees, whom they perceive as either competitors for employment, housing, and governmental assistance (Thornton and Taylor 1988) or as members of an "advantaged" population. I show, throughout my book, the incentives and rewards that encourage racial groups to build coalitions, as well as the conditions that make for racial competition and strife between these racial communities.

I have a separate chapter on identity formation, but the social construction of an Asian American identity is central to *each* chapter. I treat identity work as an amorphous, interactive entity that is based less on a common culture than on shared personal, political, and economic experiences and goals. Impersonal structures intersect with personal experiences to encourage a racialized oppositional consciousness and collective action (Kelley 1994; Morris 1984; Takahashi 1997). For racialized populations, a shared perception of grievances and structural inequalities can lead to group affirmation and group assertion in a concerted struggle for racial equity. As George Lipsitz so succinctly puts it: "People exploited as a group logically seek group solutions to their common problems" (1988: 230). The construction of an Asian American identity and a politicized group consciousness is often a response to internal pressures and external structures. Rather than assume that highly race-conscious individuals joined these organizations, I found that organizations played a fundamental role in shaping the community, as well as politicizing its members. Mobilization is more than just an instrumental strategy; organizations can create social networks for mutual support and camaraderie that help produce and sustain an Asian American consciousness.

Overview of the Book

Organized by general chronological periods extending over three decades, from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, this book analyzes the ways in which the community, as a collective, intervened on issues that mattered to its members and their efforts to find their own voice. The emergence of particular forms of organizations in San Diego is not exclusive to a specific decade; rather there are continuous shifts and overlaps in the mobilization processes of Asian Americans. My intent is to explain the issues that encouraged Asian Americans to organize and the factors that are conducive or unfavorable to mobilizing effectively. Throughout, I focus on how demographic transformations as well as larger political

and economic changes shape mobilization efforts. As networks enlarged and resources emerged, the community expanded the possibilities for organizing, adding new complexity to their voices and agendas. Chapter Two presents a historical overview of the pattern of Asian immigration and settlement in San Diego County since the mid-1800s.

In Chapter Three, I analyze the formation of the Union of Pan Asian Communities, a nonprofit social service organization developed in the early 1970s in response to the state's policy on allocating funding. The organization was pivotal in gaining funds and creating programs for impoverished Asian immigrants and refugees, a group literally ignored by mainstream governmental agencies. Chapter Four examines how Asian Americans mobilized to counter anti-Asian racial stereotypes on a local television show and later a radio show. In the fifth chapter, I focus on the formation of an Asian American business organization that has worked on protecting its members' economic interests and on providing new economic opportunities, domestically and internationally. Chapter Six discusses how a group that lacks political clout, strong political leadership, and a clear political agenda manages to strategically mobilize a fragmented community to become involved in the mainstream electoral process.

Chapter Seven documents how and why a spatially dispersed Asian American population attempts to bring together its resources to have a meaningful voice in the redevelopment process of the Asian American historic district in downtown San Diego. In Chapter Eight, I analyze the formation of multilayered, multifaceted, and evolving Asian American identities from the perspective of the activists. They bring to their organizational efforts varying concepts of identity, which are often reshaped while working in the community organizations. The concluding chapter notes what factors continue to shape the character of Asian American identities, organizations, and communities. This is a study as much about collaboration and consensus as about contradictions and controversies, as much about continuities as about disjuncture.

I wanted to find out precisely how, in the post–civil rights era when Asian Americans were given some avenues of entrance into the U.S. mainstream, these individuals and groups altered their strategies and negotiated their differences. The argument I make is that no single tension exists in mobilization or coalition work, and more important, the conflict is not always over racial or ethnic differences, as many people assume. My intent was to understand how various tensions manifest

themselves in the mobilization process for Asian Americans—differences in gender, sexuality, class, personality, language, generation, or immigration status, in addition to different ideologies, strategies, or resources that impact the development of various kinds of organizations. I show how these tensions have transformed over time for the community and examine how they change with the circumstances and the issues (economic, political, social, or cultural) in one community. I also pay attention to how Asian Americans construct their relationship with Asia and how they connect with other racialized communities of color.

Conclusion

My study examines the dialectical processes of Asian American mobilization, which is shaped by interactions between Asian Americans and by contestations between Asian Americans and the larger society. Even as they continue to question the racialization of their diverse communities, Asian Americans recognize the efficacy of strategically employing the racial model. Asians in the United States have what can be considered conventional goals and agendas—they want to participate in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of this country. The paths they have chosen are at times rather conventional, at other times pragmatic yet unconventional. Ironically, even with a more diverse Asian American population geographically dispersed throughout the San Diego area, Asian American organizations there have gained momentum.

Asian Immigration and Settlement in San Diego

My fieldwork and interviews heightened my awareness of the heterogeneity of the Asian American population. I met individuals whose family members came to the United States as laborers, missionaries, railroad workers, war brides, refugees, military personnel, and professionals, as documented and undocumented immigrants. I interacted with new immigrants who came as children, as college students, and as adults who were twice or even thrice immigrants. They were employed in a diversity of occupations; their proficiency in English varied, as well as their ability to speak additional languages; and they had varying political philosophies. They had grown up in ethnic enclaves, white suburbs, and multiracial neighborhoods and on U.S. military bases. Some were multiethnic or multiracial Asian Americans. There were transnational migrants who made frequent business or social trips to Asia, while others had never left California. The variety even among those born abroad was evident at one of the monthly community meetings, when I discovered that none of the eight individuals dining at my table, myself included, had taken a direct route from Asia to the United States, nor did we fit into the general immigration patterns for our particular ethnic group.

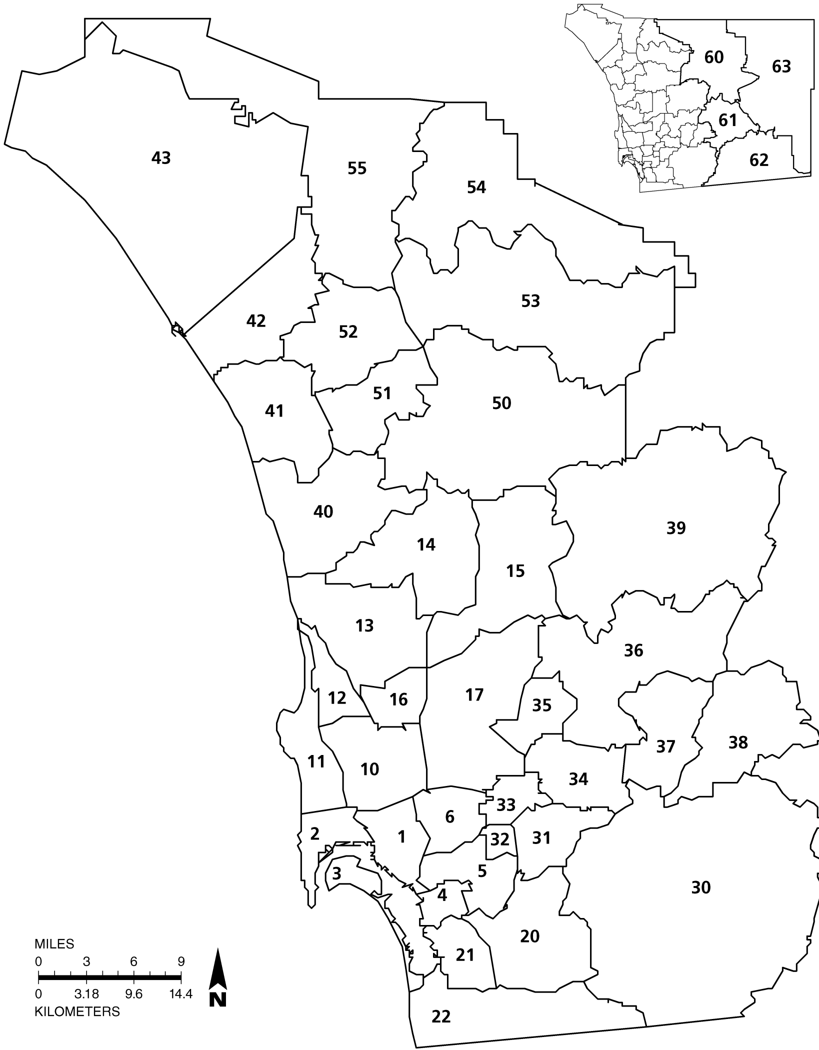
Among the many factors that affect the ebb and flow of immigration of Asians to this country and San Diego are global economic systems, immigration regulations, U.S. foreign relations, sociopolitical events in Asia, and domestic labor

policies. Factors in their countries of origin that push them to emigrate include war, natural disaster, conscription, and economic or political instability. The United States offers pull factors, such as educational and economic opportunities or reunion with loved ones (Barringer, Gardner, and Levin 1993). While some leave their homeland and come directly to the United States, others follow the indirect or stepwise migration route by settling in an intermediary country before arriving here (Barkan 1992), so they have been “twice displaced” or even “thrice displaced.” In comparison to earlier generations, current immigrants from Asia are more ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse. Tracing the Asian settlement pattern in San Diego shows how this pattern is similar to their settlement in other cities, and also depicts the uniqueness of the San Diego case.

San Diego County, situated in the southwest corner of California, is about the size of the state of Connecticut and stretches sixty-five miles north to south and eighty-six miles west to east. It is 125 miles south of Los Angeles, 500 miles south of San Francisco. In the 1990s when I began my fieldwork, San Diego County’s 4,261 square miles had a population of 2.5 million and included eighteen incorporated cities and several unincorporated communities (see Figure 1).[1] The county is bounded on the north by Orange and Riverside Counties, on the east by the agricultural communities of Imperial County, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the south by Tijuana, part of Baja California, Mexico. In 1848, after the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo forced Mexico to cede northern portions of its territory, including the San Diego area, to the United States. The city of San Diego is 324 square miles, with a total population of 1,110,549 in 1990. San Diego proper was incorporated in 1850 just after California became the thirty-first state; it surpassed San Francisco as the second-largest city in California in the mid-1970s.

Early Settlement, 1850s to World War II

Between the mid-1800s and World War II, the Asian population in San Diego was primarily Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino. The first major influx of Chinese to the West Coast came during the Gold Rush period starting in 1848, while others were recruited as unskilled contract laborers to work on the construction of the transnational railroad (Daniels 1988). In California, Chinese male laborers numbered 20,000 in 1852; 56,000 in 1860, when one of every ten individuals in the state was Chinese; and 75,000 by 1880. To discourage the Chinese from settling per-



SUBREGIONAL AREAS

Central
1 Central San Diego
2 Peninsula
3 Coronado
4 National City
5 Southeastern San Diego
6 Mid City

North City
10 Kearny Mesa
11 Coastal
12 University
13 Del Mar–Mira Mesa
14 North San Diego
15 Poway
16 Miramar
17 Elliot–Navajo

South Suburban
20 Sweetwater
21 Chula Vista
22 South Bay

East Suburban
30 Jamul
31 Spring Valley
32 Lemon Grove
33 La Mesa
34 El Cajon
35 Santee
36 Lakeside
37 Harbison–Crest
38 Alpine
39 Ramona

North County West
40 San Dieguito
41 Carlsbad
42 Oceanside
43 Pendleton

North County East
50 Escondido
51 San Marcos
52 Vista
53 Valley Center
54 Pauma
55 Fallbrook

East County
60 Palomar–Julian
61 Laguna–Pine Valley
62 Mountain Empire
63 Anza-Borrego Springs

FIGURE 1. San Diego Subregional Areas
Source: SANDAG, The San Diego Association of Governments, March 1991.

manently, immigration laws barred most Chinese women and children from entering the country; the few women who arrived were the wives of merchants or were forced into prostitution. Anti-Chinese agitation, led by nativists who felt Asians were economic competitors, contributed to acts of violence directed at the Chinese, along with racially biased legislative measures to limit their social, economic, and political activities (Chan 1991; Takaki 1989a). Alarmed by the number of Chinese immigrants, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which barred their further entry. It was difficult for the resident Chinese to challenge this exclusion, since the 1790 Naturalization Act, which conferred citizenship and its accompanying rights only to "free white persons," prevented them from becoming citizens. Although the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to African Americans in 1868, Asians were classified as "aliens ineligible for citizenship" until the 1940s.

With the completion of the transcontinental railroad and forced out of the Sierra-Nevada mines by white miners, many Chinese found other occupations, primarily as agricultural laborers, although some entered manufacturing and domestic service and others started small businesses such as restaurants, laundries, and retail stores (Light 1972); a number settled in San Diego. In 1880, of the 8,618 inhabitants of San Diego, 229, or 2.6 percent, were Chinese (Liu 1977). To escape the anti-Chinese persecution more prevalent in northern areas such as San Francisco, they came to San Diego and by 1890 numbered 909. They established a fishing colony along the edge of the bay, where Horton's Wharf provided jobs off-loading the ships that arrived in San Diego Bay. Others worked at truck gardening in Chula Vista, Mission Valley, Santa Margarita (now Camp Pendleton), and Sweetwater Valley (Chu 1982). With the prevention of further immigration, the Chinese population dwindled, and by 1900 only 414 Chinese remained in San Diego.

The Chinese were segregated in an area known as Chinatown or the Chinese Quarter, part of the Stingeree District, a red-light district well known for brothels, dance halls, and saloons that catered to Caucasians. In Chinatown, the Chinese had residences, restaurants, grocery stores, herbal stores, laundries, opium dens, and gambling halls. There also developed an elite group of Chinese merchants, who were often labor contractors and moneylenders. For example, Ah Quin, a local labor contractor, came from Canton, China, to San Francisco in 1868 and worked as a house servant and cook in cities along the West Coast before settling in San Diego in 1878; there he raised twelve children with his wife, Sue (M. Lee 2002). After the railroad was built and labor

contracting was no longer profitable, Ah Quin concentrated on his produce store and property-management business and became the unofficial mayor of Chinatown (Novarro 1986). The residential clusters and their shared occupational patterns reinforced a sense of community for those who lived in the Chinatown area, referred to as "bachelor societies" given the predominance of males.

Shortly after immigration from China was suspended, the Japanese were recruited to replace the Chinese as cheap laborers. Like the Chinese, the Japanese, who first arrived in San Diego between 1885 and 1887, worked as railroad laborers, farmers, fishermen, and merchants (Estes 1978). By 1908, there were 55,000 Japanese on the mainland and 150,000 in the Hawaiian Islands (Shinagawa and Jang 1998). With the assistance of a more powerful home government than the Chinese, the Japanese brought wives with them or used the "picture bride" practice, a form of arranged marriage, so they were able to establish families (Ichioka 1988). Under pressure from the U.S. government, the Japanese government agreed to prevent further immigration of Japanese in the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–1908.

Like the Chinese, many Japanese came south to escape the anti-Japanese activity in northern California, although they were not entirely free of it in San Diego. Japanese farmers or seasonal laborers grew vegetables or worked in the packing sheds in areas such as Bonita, Chula Vista, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Mission Valley, Oceanside, Otay Mesa, Pacific Beach, Palm City, San Marcos, Spring Valley, and Vista (Estes 1978). Since Caucasian brokers refused to sell the produce grown by the Japanese, they established their own cooperative, the Vegetable Growers' Market, at 400 Sixth Street. In 1887, Azumagasaki Kikumatsu opened Go Ban to import Japanese goods, the city's first Japanese-owned and -operated business, which was followed by other retail businesses (Estes 1978). Japanese women worked in farming, small businesses, or local canneries. The Japanese were clustered in downtown areas next to Chinatown, where they opened up pool halls, restaurants, barbershops, and boardinghouses. While some lived in the segregated downtown areas, many Japanese farmers and laborers lived in more undeveloped parts of San Diego, but the downtown area remained the center of religious, cultural, and social events.

By the time the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed, limiting immigration of southern and eastern Europeans to the United States and also excluding "aliens ineligible for citizenship," meaning Asians, immigration from China and Japan had slowed to a trickle. A new cheap labor

pool was introduced to the country and to San Diego—Filipinos. In 1898 after the Spanish-American War, the Philippines became a U.S. protectorate, and Filipinos were classified as U.S. nationals. While barred from citizenship, they were allowed to travel freely to the United States, and California agriculturists, as well as Hawaiian plantation owners, recruited workers from the Philippines, mainly from Ilocos, Visayan, and Manila, and also tried to use them to quell labor agitation. In the 1920s, Filipinos in the United States as students or *pensionados* were joined by farm laborers, commonly called *manongs*, many of whom hoped to attain education and wealth (Castillo 1976). In 1930, there were 108,260 Filipinos in the country, with 30,470 in California, and this predominantly male population experienced the same harsh exclusions directed at other Asians (Bonus 2000).

It is estimated that 48 Filipinos lived in the city of San Diego in 1920, 394 in 1930, and 800 in 1940; however, these census figures may only be approximate, given the migratory nature of the population at the time (Melendy 1977). During the Depression, restrictionists, attempting to curb what they perceived to be an influx of competitive "foreign" laborers, pushed for the passage of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act, which would make the Philippines an independent commonwealth in ten years. Once the act passed, Filipinos were reclassified as immigrant aliens like other Asians, which subsequently limited their entrance to the United States to 50 persons per year (Shinagawa and Jang 1998). The scant historical records in San Diego indicate that Filipinos had their own businesses, frequented Chinese and Japanese businesses, and congregated in the sections of town "reserved" for Asians. Economic conditions and the prevailing racial segregation, formal and informal, forced this early generation of Asian immigrants together in confined geographic and social spaces.

The Turning Point: World War II, Citizenship, and Suburbanization, 1940s–1950s

After World War II, there were dramatic changes in the Asian population in San Diego. In 1943, to reward China for being an ally, Congress repealed the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and allotted a quota of 105 immigrants of Chinese ancestry per year (Reimers 1985). The Naturalization Act of 1790 was amended to include the Chinese, who could become naturalized citizens. Asian Indians, along with Filipinos, were given the right of naturalization in the Luce-Cellar bill of 1946. The