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Forgotten Chinese Railroad Workers Remembered: Closing Commentary by an Historian
记住被遗忘的中国铁路工人：一个历史学家的总结陈词

ABSTRACT

In the concluding essay for this volume, Sue Fawn Chung (Zhang Sufang) briefly traces the development of historical and archaeological research in Chinese American studies that shows the new direction of multidisciplinary approach and multiethnic considerations. She has highlighted the contributions of the authors in this journal issue.

在本特辑的总结陈词中，张素芳教授简要地回顾了美国华人研究领域中历史学与考古学研究的发展。这些发展显示了跨学科方法与跨种族考量的新方向。她同时强调了本辑作者们的贡献。

In May 1969 the Golden Spike centenary was held to commemorate the completion of the first transcontinental railroad line. Although no Chinese American representatives were invited, the organizers of the train tour stopped and placed a plaque noting the 10 mi. (plus 58 ft., not noted) of track laid in one day (from 5 A.M. to 7 P.M.) on 28 April 1869, an unmatched feat. The teamwork of 1,400 Chinese workers and 8 Irish workers put into place 4,462,000 lb. of ties, rails, spikes, bolts, and other materials, allowing Charles Crocker of the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) to win the bet with E. P. Durant of the Union Pacific, on which crew could lay the most track in a day. Later the U.S. National Park Service allowed the Chinese Historical Society of America to place a bronze plaque about the Chinese railroad workers at Promontory, Utah, but the opening exhibit devoted little space to the Chinese. As a result, the Chinese were called "the forgotten railroad builders."

Little attention was paid to these men until the 1960s civil rights movement. The centrality of race relations in the West led to deeper studies about different racial groups, but many were based upon the assumptions that the white race was superior to all other races and that class conflicts and racism were inevitable. In the 1950s, historians turned their attention to the role of immigrants in North American history with the writings of Oscar Handlin, John Higham, and others. In the 1970s and 1980s, the "new social history" and "new western history" movements led to a focus on race, class, gender, science, ideologies, migration, diaspora, economics, art, and environment. Beginning in the 1980s, archaeologists followed this trend and paid more attention to Chinese immigrants. They began to interpret the material culture found at Chinese sites and gradually became more sophisticated at providing context. They understood that the Chinese were not homogeneous and unchanging as earlier scholars had assumed. Questions based on the theories of the 1920s Chicago school of sociology, such as why they did not assimilate, yielded to an acknowledgment of at least adaptation/acculturation to American society and a less-biased interpretation of their findings. In recent decades, Barbara Voss and others have advocated looking with an interdisciplinary (history, sociology, art, law, economics, and other disciplines) perspective at interethnic interaction, multiple scales of analysis, transnationalism, transculturalism, preservation of culture and adaptation to American culture, discoveries globally, and an understanding of the Chinese perspective. This journal issue exemplifies these trends in examining Chinese railroad workers in the field of archaeology.

Paul G. Chace and William S. Evans, Jr. pioneered the field with their 1969 study of a Chinese camp in the High Sierras. Later, R. Scott Baxter and Rebecca Allen investigated Summit Camp and gave the archaeological finds historical context and established the significance of this labor site. John Molenda dispelled the stereotype of the docile Chinese railroad workers as they participated in a

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strike reminiscent of the 1854 Chinese railroad workers' strike in Marysville, California, and raised an important concept: the differences between a Westerner's view of a "gentleman" and the Chinese view of a gentleman (*junzi*) that emphasized righteousness, benevolence, filial piety, education, and compromise. An old Chinese saying denotes the main qualities of a "gentleman": skill in calligraphy, poetry, and painting; in playing the qin (*gŭqín*), a seven-stringed instrument dating to the 5th century B.C.; and in the game of Go (*wéiqí*). How different this is from the American ideal of a gentleman!

At the end of the line, Michael Polk compared the Chinese workers' camp to white camps. The 1870 census manuscript listed 440 Chinese still working in the area around Promontory, while others traveled back to Nevada towns along or near the CPRR line and to California, as well as eastward. Lynn Furnis and Mary L. Maniery used a method of investigating horizontal deposits across the Virginia & Truckee Railroad (V&TRR) Chinese work camp at Lakeview, Nevada (on the western margin of Little Ranch), which was occupied from 1861 to 1905, instead of employing more traditional vertical excavation methods. This resulted in finding architectural, domestic, food, industrial, personal, transportation, and other types of surface artifacts. Putting the finds in context, they conclude that Lakeview Camp was occupied in the 1870s by a series of Chinese workers in two major crews, and project what everyday life for them was like.

Charlotte Sunseri's ethnography covers what happened to some of the former CPRR workers. When the CPRR reached Reno, Nevada, in early 1868, only 5,000 workers were retained, while several hundred went to work in building the V&TRR, Carson & Colorado Railroad, and Bodie & Benton Railroad, as well as other lines. At the same time, men went into logging for the Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company and other newly established lumber companies. Tim Urbaniak and Kelly Dixon also study the period after the CPRR, analyzing rock inscriptions. Chinese railroad workers were hired by mines and other industries after the rails were built, and they left their mark on the landscape near Roundup, Montana. Later, with the growing restriction on Chinese immigration, railroads hired maintenance crews from other ethnic groups, including Japanese, English, and Norwegian immigrants.

Daily life is explored in several works. Marjorie Akin, James Bard, and Gary Weisz provide cultural context to a frequently found artifact on almost all 19th-century Chinese sites: Asian coins. Based on the work of J. Ryan Kennedy, it becomes obvious that the Chinese consumed lots of pork, fish if available, and local animals. Different foods were evident at different sites. One wonders if one additional factor to the environmental availability of foodstuffs was the eating habits of the immigrants based on those of their home villages, so that Zhongshan immigrants, having lived near the South China Sea, were more partial to seafood. Medical care was of great concern to these immigrants, who were familiar with practices over 2,000 years old. Sarah Heffner examined health-care practices that included the incorporation of more readily available Western medicines and traditional herbal remedies. Chinese workers were practical people who used whatever medicine was available. Many contract laborers insisted upon the presence of a Chinese practitioner hired by the regional or family association, so in 1870 in Elko and Winnemucca, two railroad towns, for example, there was at least one physician. Finally, Ryan Harrod and John Crandall examined the bones of men buried in the Chinese cemetery of Carlin, a railroad town that began in 1869 and was the home of many Chinese railroad workers and their supporters, including Chinese farmers providing produce for the cooks who served food to the passengers and crewmen 24 hours a day. All of the 13 male skeletal remains revealed poor health and hard work, and showed signs of stress and strain on their bones. They truly led hard lives.

This important issue brings together information about these railroad builders so that they are not forgotten. Although these Chinese left no written records, archaeologists have uncovered artifacts that have shown aspects of daily life, racism and discrimination, health, culture, perspectives, and accomplishments. By bringing together scholars from several disciplines interested in the subject of Chinese railroad

workers, greater knowledge and understanding has been gained, and new research questions have been posed. These studies have opened the door to a greater understanding of material culture and the lives and experiences of late-19th-century Chinese railroad workers.

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