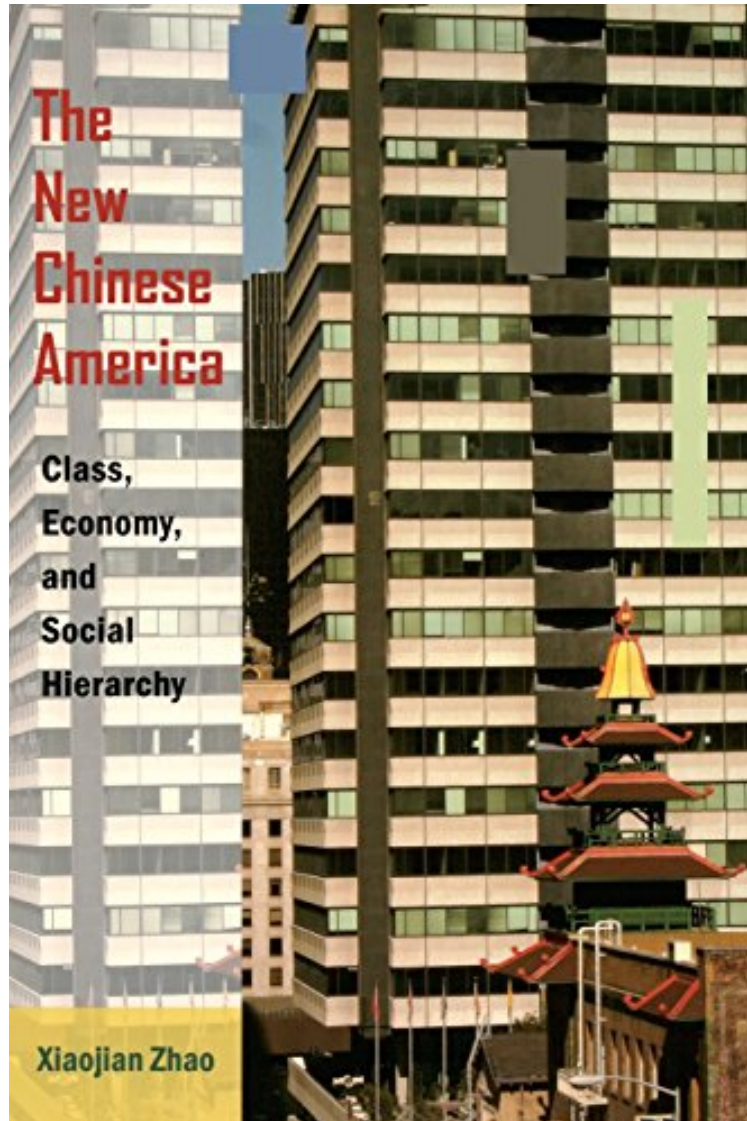


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The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy

Xiaojian Zhao

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#964249 in Books Rutgers University Press 2010-01-19 2010-01-19 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.90 x .60 x 5.90l, .68 #File Name: 0813546923220 pages | File size: 40.Mb

Xiaojian Zhao : The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Chinese Americans: One "Size" Does Not Fit AllBy John JungProfessor Xiaojian Zhao's book is one of the most important analyses of the state of Chinese America I have read in the past several years. Well-documented with demographic data, she convincingly demonstrates the dramatic

transformation of this population after the 1965 immigration law reforms that greatly increased the flow of Chinese from many different areas than Guangdong, the province in southern China from which the vast majority of Chinese immigrants came before 1943 (the year the Chinese Exclusion Act was symbolically ended). She further noted that by the 1940s, the majority of Chinese Americans were no longer immigrants, but were U.S. born. However, the 1965 shift in immigration policy has created a Chinese America that in the 2000 census showed over 70 percent of Chinese in America were born outside of the U.S. Such a huge transformation has major consequences for Chinese in America, both in how they deal among themselves and how non-Chinese America regards Chinese in America. Contrary to her book title, *THE NEW CHINESE AMERICA*, Zhao's findings clearly make the case that there are MULTIPLE "New Chinese Americas." In addition to the varied geographical origins of these newer Chinese, and the associated differences in language, politics, and customs, there are important social class differences even within subgroups. In many situations, more powerful Chinese Americans, and not non-Chinese Americans, are the worst enemies of the poorer Chinese Americans, especially the undocumented ones who are widely exploited by their compatriots. (A rough estimate is that a half million of the roughly 3 million Chinese in America are undocumented, for a variety of reasons too complex to summarize here) Unfortunately, because so many Chinese Americans have achieved so well since the 1950s, there is a tendency for society to conclude that Chinese are the "model minority," overcoming societal injustices through hard work and education on their own initiative, but Zhou's findings regarding the size and plight of 'invisible' underclass among Chinese immigrants show a quite different picture of the composition and condition of Chinese America. Zhou's book also sends a message to Chinese Americans to recognize, and reject, the oppressive conditions that Chinese with social power impose on less educated and lower income Chinese in America. Will members of the more powerful Chinese Americas choose to include or continue to ignore and exclude members of the disadvantaged Chinese Americas?

The 1965 Immigration Act altered the lives and outlook of Chinese Americans in fundamental ways. *The New Chinese America* explores the historical, economic, and social foundations of the Chinese American community, in order to reveal the emergence of a new social hierarchy after 1965. In this detailed and comprehensive study of contemporary Chinese America, Xiaojian Zhao uses class analysis to illuminate the difficulties of everyday survival for poor and undocumented immigrants and analyzes the process through which social mobility occurs. Through ethnic ties, Chinese Americans have built an economy of their own in which entrepreneurs can maintain a competitive edge given their access to low-cost labor; workers who are shut out of the mainstream job market can find work and make a living; and consumers can enjoy high quality services at a great bargain. While the growth of the ethnic economy enhances ethnic bonds by increasing mutual dependencies among different groups of Chinese Americans, it also determines the limits of possibility for various individuals depending on their socioeconomic and immigration status.

"Zhao's book provides the most detailed and relatively comprehensive look that we have of the ways in which Chinese America works and aspires." - Roger Daniels, Charles Phelps Taft Professor Emeritus of History, University of Cincinnati
"From the Inside Flap" *The New Chinese America* explores the historical, economic, and social foundations of the Chinese American community, revealing the emergence of a new social hierarchy after the 1965 Immigration Act. Xiaojian Zhao uses class analysis to illuminate the difficulties of everyday survival for poor and undocumented immigrants and analyzes the process through which social mobility occurs. While the growth of the ethnic economy enhances ethnic bonds by increasing mutual dependencies among different groups of Chinese Americans, it also determines the limits of possibility for various individuals depending on their socioeconomic and immigration status. About the Author XIAOJIAN ZHAO is an associate professor in the department of Asian American studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is the author of *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940-1965* (Rutgers University Press), winner of the History Book Award from the Association of Asian American Studies.