



Charting a New Course for Chinese Diaspora Archaeology in North America

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The archaeology of the Chinese diaspora in North America has reached a critical moment in its development. On one hand, archaeologists investigating Chinese diaspora communities have produced an incredibly rich body of data relating to the material lives of Chinese people who migrated to the United States and Canada in the nineteenth century. Although much of this work has focused on urban Chinatowns (e.g., Allen et al. 2002; Great Basin Foundation 1987; Praetzelis and Praetzelis 1982, 1997; Voss 2008), an ever-increasing number of projects examine Chinese lives in diverse contexts including rural towns (Rose Chapter 7 this volume; Warner et al. 2014), mining camps (LaLande 1982; Longenecker and Stapp 1993), railroad-related sites (Kennedy et al. 2019; Voss 2015a), lumber camps (Sunseri 2015a, 2015b, Chapter 11 this volume), and fishing and shrimping sites (Bentz and Braje, Chapter 12 this volume; Schulz 1996; Williams 2011). On the other hand, the stories told by archaeologists of the Chinese diaspora have generally failed to speak to archaeological theory more broadly. As we discuss below, this derives from two primary causes: (1) the continued use of theoretical and methodological approaches that foreground binary notions of continuity and change, and (2) a tendency to tell the stories of Chinese diaspora communities from a North American perspective that ignores the many transnational facets of Chinese migrant lives. If Chinese diaspora archaeology is to avoid theoretical stagnation and contribute to larger academic and popular debates about topics in-

cluding immigration, diaspora, and globalization, then its practitioners must chart a new direction.

Our goal with this volume is to provide a venue for exploring new ways of doing Chinese diaspora archaeology. Each contributor was asked to examine a new avenue of research or push back against an older trope in the field. The approaches and contexts of study presented by the contributors are diverse, and they provide suggestions for new research directions, subtle shifts in existing approaches to the field, explorations of understudied contexts in which Chinese migrants lived and worked, and interventions into how to approach Chinese diaspora archaeology as a field of study. Although the chapters in this volume make critical contributions to moving the field forward, this is just the beginning of a larger conversation. Archaeologists must continue to integrate and refine the ideas presented here, expand into new and understudied contexts such as the North American East Coast, and find ways to engage in broader archaeological and anthropological debates.

This introduction provides readers with important background information, especially on nineteenth-century Chinese migration and the history and status of Chinese diaspora archaeology, and a brief outline of the chapters that follow.

A Brief History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Migration

The history of nineteenth-century Chinese migration is critical to Chinese diaspora archaeology; however, with limited exceptions (e.g., González-Tennant 2011; Ross 2013a, Chapter 2 this volume; Voss 2015b; Voss et al. 2018), archaeologists have rarely placed migration and the transnational connections it creates at the center of their research. Instead, archaeologists have typically told the story of Chinese migration from a North American perspective centered on the perceived lived experiences of Chinese migrants in the United States and Canada. This research has made considerable contributions to understanding daily life in Chinese diaspora communities, but by focusing on North America as a narrative backdrop it has ignored or misunderstood the connections between communities overseas and home villages in China, and the transnational lives created through the flow of people, things, money, and correspondence between these populations (cf., Hsu 2000a; Ross 2013a). Although explicitly transnational projects are beginning to change this trend (for example, see Voss et al. 2018; Ng, Chapter 10 this volume), archaeologists of the Chinese diaspora must also strive to better situate their research within the broader context of Chinese migration.

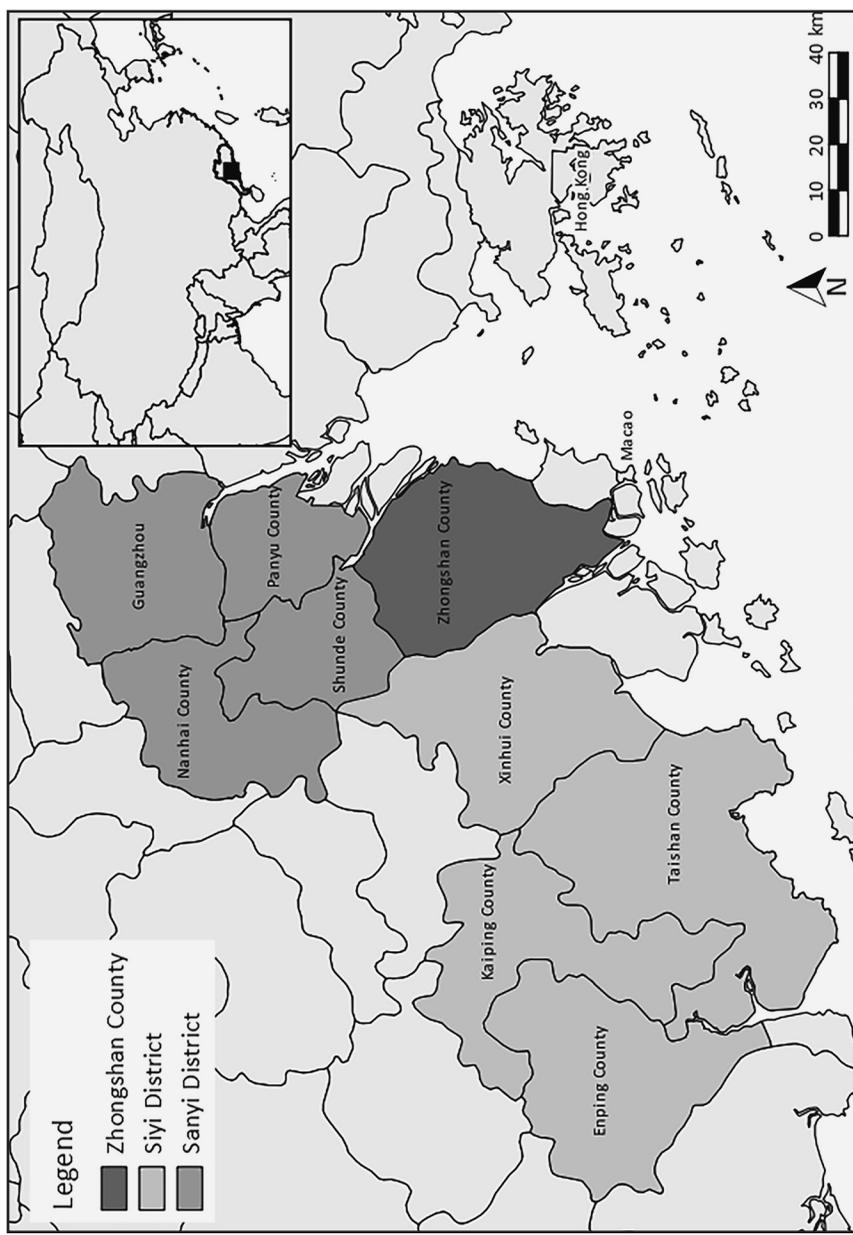
Chinese Migration and the Home Village

Although southern China has a long history of out-migration dating to as early as the seventh century, rates increased dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century (Liu 2002:30; Voss and Allen 2008:6). During this period, over 2.5 million people left China, and of these roughly 400,000 arrived in North America (McKeown 2004; Takaki 1998:32). Most Chinese migrants who traveled to North America originated from rural farming villages in the Pearl River Delta, a subtropical region in China's Guangdong Province marked by swaths of agricultural lands, coastal fishing settlements, and port cities such as the treaty port of Guangzhou (Hsu 2000a; Lai 2004). Eighty percent of these migrants hailed from the Siyi District southwest of Guangzhou, comprised of Taishan, Kaiping, Enping, and Xinhui Counties, while the remainder primarily came from the Sanyi District (encompassing Nanhai, Panyu, and Shunde Counties) or from Zhongshan County (Figure 1.1). Although the majority of people leaving southern China for North America in the nineteenth century came from Taishan County, it is important to note the diverse origins of the Chinese migrants whose material traces are present in the archaeological record.

Daily life in the Pearl River Delta during the nineteenth century revolved around family and clan relationships that played out in villages populated by multiple generations of the same clan. Villages served as loci for building these relationships among the living as well as for honoring clan and family ancestors with ancestral halls, temples, and home shrines (Wolf 1980; Faure 1986; Faure and Siu 1995). Although migration temporarily ruptured the physical connection of individual migrants with the home village, trips home, long-distance communication, remittance payments, and spiritual connections to past and present village residents all maintained important linkages between migrant populations and the home village (Benton and Liu 2018; Chan 2005; Hsu 2000a; Pan 1999). Clan villages were connected through support and trade networks and through the creation of clan markets, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure (Tan 2013a, 2013b). These robust networks became increasingly important during a tumultuous period that resulted in mass out-migration from the Pearl River Delta.

Out-migration from the Pearl River Delta was driven by multiple factors, including governmental collapse, war, famine, economic depression, and the effects of European colonial projects. In particular, the British Opium Wars

Figure 1.1. Map of Guangzhou and surrounding counties. (Adapted from Voss et al. 2018:Figure 2)



(1839–1842 and 1856–1860), Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864), and Punti-Hakka Clan Wars (1855–1867) all contributed to massive internal population displacement and reduced the Qing dynasty's (1644–1911) ability to maintain control over China—especially the southern reaches that included Guangdong and the Pearl River Delta. Additional localized pressures in Guangdong included increasing taxation, warfare, violence, banditry, and other hardships resulting from governmental crackdowns and disorganization (Lawton 1987:159). These problems were compounded by two important factors: a tripling in China's population between the early 1700s and the mid-1800s and a resulting lack of the arable land needed to feed a growing population in Guangdong and, in particular, Taishan County (Hsu 2000a:21; Spence 1977).

These factors helped make migration a valuable strategy for increasing the financial resources, stability, and well-being of families struggling to survive. Families and clans supported the out-migration of some members, primarily young men who in turn provided valuable income in the form of remittance payments. This flow of people and money supported families and funded many public works projects including the construction of roads, schools, libraries, hospitals, and other infrastructure (Dehua 1999:28–29; Hsu 2000a:40–54; Tan 2013a, 2013b). Migration also led to dramatic demographic shifts in the home village due to the removal of young men through migration and the creation of split households consisting of migrant husbands (“gold mountain guests”) and wives (“gold mountain wives”) who remained in the home village. These shifts resulted in massive changes in daily life in home villages, including the introduction of new architectural styles and material culture from overseas (Ng, this volume; Tan 2013a, 2013b; Voss et al. 2018). These unique processes have led to the classification of migrant home villages as *qiaoxiang* (“home village”), a term acknowledging their importance to migration, their impact on southern Chinese lifeways, and their unique character derived from extensive diasporic relationships and influence from abroad (UNESCO 2014).

Chinese Migrant Life in North America

Whereas North American archaeologists typically focus on Chinese migration to western North America, nineteenth-century out-migration from Guangdong reached many other locations throughout the Pacific world and beyond, including Australia, Hawai'i, the Philippines, South America, the Caribbean, and the American South. This created extended family and clan connections that crisscrossed the Pacific Ocean and that were facilitated by the region's connections