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FOREWORD

*"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would
smell as sweet."*

William Shakespeare

Large-scale Chinese immigration to the United States began during the mid-nineteenth century and has continued, with ups and downs, to the present. For almost a century, up to World War II, arrivals consisted mostly of merchants and laborers from Guangdong's Pearl River Delta. After the war, following the change in government on the China mainland in 1949, about 5,000 students who had come originally from all parts of China to study also decided to make America their home. They were soon joined by refugees formerly associated with the collapsed Chinese Nationalist regime. Immediately afterwards began a continuous stream of students from Taiwan and Hong Kong, most of whom eventually stayed in America. To these were added thousands of ethnic Chinese from troubled parts of the world such as Cuba, Latin America, Burma, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Singapore. Beginning in the 1980s, relaxation of emigration controls in China allowed many more from mainland China to land on American shores. At the same time, continued political uncertainties propelled other thousands in Hong Kong and Taiwan to seek what they perceived as havens abroad. These successive waves of new arrivals have led to tremendous growth in the Chinese population in America, both in numbers and in diversity.

When the Chinese arrived in America, they brought their language along as cultural baggage as well as mores and customs that had evolved in one of the world's great civilizations. Once they stepped ashore, however, the Chinese encountered American culture, itself part of another great tradition, Western civilization. It soon became obvious that although there are similarities there are also many differences between the two. Chinese immigrants were a minority settling amidst a majority host society with a different culture. Thus even though their culture and traditions were deeply rooted, the pressure exerted by the

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dominant host society led to numerous modifications and changes in Chinese culture in America, eventually transforming it into a Chinese American culture, influenced by both Chinese and western traditions.

Some Chinese cultural elements transplanted to the New World survived with little or no change from their practice in the land of origin. Many traits, however, underwent some transformations to adapt to conditions in the host society. Due to various motivations the Chinese in America also adopted elements from the host culture, often in modified form, or evolved new practices to accommodate to needs imposed by the new environment.

Even as basic an area as given names and family names became subject to these influences. Applications of all the above principles are evident in the way Chinese personal naming has changed under the influence of western culture in America. The changes constitute an absorbing study of how different cultures affect one another. Up to now, however, few scholars have devoted their attention to the phenomenon of Chinese American naming. Emma Woo Louie, author of the present work, is one of the few researchers of the subject and has pursued her research over a number of years, searching out, compiling and analyzing Chinese American names all over the United States. The fruit of her determined research is this fascinating story of the metamorphosis of Chinese names into Chinese American names in the American environment. Not only is it a useful reference tool for Chinese Americans researching their genealogy and family trees; it should also be highly informative to scholars studying the effects of cultural interaction and interchange.

*Him Mark Lai, Historian
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Him Mark Lai is the acknowledged "dean" of Chinese American studies, noted for his scholarship and for sharing his vast knowledge and research on the Chinese American historical experience. In addition to writing numerous articles and books, Mr. Lai, an engineer by vocation, has taught at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Berkeley, and serves as a consultant in his field both here in the United States and in Asia. The cultural program In Search of Roots, which he cofounded in 1991, is popular among young Chinese Americans wishing to research family history and to visit their ancestral villages.