HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CHINESE CONSOLIDATED BENEVOLENT
ASSOCIATION/HUI GUAN SYSTEM

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The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/huiguan
(CCBA/huiguan) system was founded in the United States more
than 135 years ago. Over the years stories in the American press
have often thrust it into the limelight. Yet due to language and
cultural barriers, it has long been misunderstood by the public,
and only recently have a few scholars even begun to analyze its
history and role objectively.

Using information from English and Chinese language
sources, this essay attempts to provide a clearer understanding of
the historical development of this system and its affiliated organi-
izations, thereby stripping them of the mysterious aura that has
surrounded them in the past. It does not deal with the secret
societies (tongs) or trade and workers’ guilds, since these groups
are subjects worthy of separate treatment.

The CCBA/huiguan system evolved in response to the need of
the Chinese to organize for social, economic, and political rea-
sons. The earliest formal organization, the huiguan, united clans
or groups of people from the same region, district or districts.
Led by the merchant class, the huiguan exercised both economic
power and social control over its members. The huiguan became
the key components of the CCBA. The latter represents a high-
er level of organization which was prompted by a growing sense
of community that crossed clan or regional lines and the need to
respond to anti-Chinese agitation. In the reverse direction con-
flicts within the huiguan system, between clans, or between re-
gional groups gave rise to two types of associations: clan and regional (shantang). Based on a more limited and closely related membership, these associations had functions parallel to those of the huiguan. Often they constituted a power bloc within the huiguan and had the right to be represented within the huiguan’s leadership circle.

THE HUIGUAN, FOUNDATION OF THE SYSTEM

Some of the earliest organizations established among Chinese in America are those in which membership is determined by a common geographical origin in China. This criterion may be applied to part of a district, one or more districts, or one or more provinces. The nearest equivalent to this type of organization in Western society would be the German Landsmannschaft (in Germany an association of students from the same country or province). A person’s eligibility for membership in these organizations is determined at birth and is thus defined as nonvoluntary.1

The most important of these regional associations among nineteenth-century Chinese abroad was the huiguan (“meeting hall”), commonly known as a district association. The overseas Chinese huiguan has centuries-old antecedents in China. Similar organizations already existed in the imperial capital of Peking as early as the fifteenth century.2 By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, they also began to spring up in major Chinese cities, established by sojourning merchants or craftsmen from the same locality in China. The aim was to protect group economic interests and to perform certain charitable and social functions for fellow Landsleute away from home. Finding themselves in a similar situation when they settled abroad, immigrants also applied the concept of the huiguan in overseas Chinese communities.3

Following the discovery of gold in 1848, the Chinese population in California increased rapidly. San Francisco, the principal port of entry, became their economic, political, and cultural center. By 1849 Chinese merchants in the city apparently had formed a gongsi, or company, to maintain internal order and to facilitate dealings with the larger community.4 In that year they met to select an advisor, and in 1850 they organized Chinese participation in some civic events. However, the name of this gongsi still has not been found in historical documents.
As Chinese immigration increased during the early 1850s, rivalries spurred the birth of organizations representing different constituencies. Given the strong clan and village loyalties of the Guangdong peasants, who comprised the bulk of the immigrants, people from the same village tended to seek each other's company for mutual aid and comfort. However, as immigrants from any one particular village were usually limited in number, the basis for organization expanded to include a larger constituency to gain the necessary resources to function effectively. Since speakers of the same dialect generally live in contiguous areas in China, dialect grouping became a logical common criterion for organizing. In the United States the overwhelming majority of the immigrants were from the Pearl River delta and Siyi (Sze Yup). They established several huiguan, or companies, each enrolling as members immigrants from districts speaking closely related Cantonese subdialects. A small minority speaking Hakka, a dialect different from Cantonese, also established its separate organization.

The creation of these societies in California took place without the participation of the gentry and scholar-officials, the traditional elite in Chinese society, since opportunities for upward mobility in China were attractive enough to keep this group from emigrating outside the bounds of the empire. As a result the merchants, who were more affluent and generally more literate than their compatriots overseas, assumed the leadership role abroad.

The first two huiguan were established by 1851. Merchants from Nanhai, Panay, and Shunde, three districts surrounding the city of Guangzhou (Canton), led in the formation of Sanyi Huiguan (Sam Yup Association), or Canton Company. The other was Siyi Huiguan (Sze Yup Association), comprised of people from Xinhui, Xinning (now Taishan), Kaiping, and Enping, four districts in the Tan (Tam) River valley, located just west of the Pearl River Delta.

In 1852 Yuan Sheng (Norman Assing), Cai Libi, and Liu Zuman from Xiangshan became the leading spirits in the founding of Yanghe Huiguan (Young Wo Association). This association also included immigrants from adjacent Dongguan, Zengcheng, and Xin'an (now Bao'an). In 1853 Xin'an immigrants, a majority of whom spoke the Hakka dialect in contrast to the Cantonese majority in Young Wo Company, withdrew to form Xin'an Huiguan (Sun On Company). The name of this last organization subsequently changed several times. Today it is known as Renhe Huiguan (Yan Wo Association). Its membership remains overwhelmingly Hakka.

In this manner Chinese in California had become organized into four regional dialect groupings by 1853. Changes in huiguan ranks, however, did not stop at this point. As the membership continued to increase in each huiguan, ambitious leaders took advantage of clan and village loyalties to form rival power blocs. As these groups contended for status and power, they caused internal stresses and strains that sometimes flared up into intramural strife. At times this resulted in dissidents splitting from the parent organization. Conditions in Sze Yup Company, with the largest membership, fostered the development of such situations. Thus, it was the most susceptible to secession attempts.

In 1853 a dispute within the Sze Yup Company led Xinning people, with the largest number of Sze Yup immigrants, to secede and form Ningyang Huiguan (Ning Yung Association). The split was accentuated by a bloody fight between adherents of each faction in front of a San Francisco Chinatown theater. At the time influential huiguan leader Yee Ahtye (also known as George Ateh) persuaded members of the Yu (Yee) clan of Xinning not to join the exodus. However, this last group left with Kaiping and Enping clans when a dispute arose over the presidency of Sze Yup Association in 1862. This coalition also established a new association, Hehe Huiguan (Hop Wo Association). Xinhu merchants, representing the only one of the four founding groups remaining in Sze Yup Association, subsequently led its reorganization as Kung Chow Association.

Feelings between the rival groups remained antagonistic after these secessions. Frequent news items recounted fights between adherents of Hop Wo Company and members of both Sze Yup and Ning Yung Companies. The new Hop Wo Company also challenged the custody of a piece of Yee Ahtye's land, on which he had given permission to Sze Yup Association to build a head quarters building and temple. Yee Ahtye, who was from Xinhui, sided with Sze Yup Association and in 1866 legally leased the land to the new Kung Chow Association. However, Yee and his friends had to organize Cuisheng Tang (Suey Sing Tong), a secret society, to ensure that his decision be respected.
the Sze Yup Association, including what is today known as Kong Chow Temple, later gave rise to the widely held misconception that it was the first huiguan.14

Instability did not end with the demise of the Sze Yup Association. Friction soon developed within Hop Wo Company over the Yee clan’s dominating attitude. On Sept. 21, 1878, the San Francisco Bulletin noted that a split had occurred in the Hop Wo Company. “For some time there has been much dissatisfaction among the Chinese belonging to the Hop Wo Company regarding the management of the funds. About a year ago there was an opposition to the selection of officers for the year, and a crowd of disgusted Chinamen favored the new president, as he was going to the Company’s house, with showers of soft cheese, liver, chow-chow, etc. . . . The discontented were forced to submit, but recently they have determined to form a new company and today it begins operations.” This newly formed Zhaoqing Huiguan (Sue Hing Association) included members of several Kaiping and Enping clans.

The fragmentation continued. By 1879 the original Hop Wo Association had become four groups: Yu Fengcai Tang (Yee Fung Toy Tong), Tan Yiyi Tang (Tom Yee Yee Tong), En-kai Huiguan (Yen Hoy Association), and Sue Hing Association.16 Through the mediation of Chinese Consul General Huang Zun-xian, the four reconciled and reunited as Hop Wo Association around 1883. But the antagonisms penetrated too deeply and this union proved to be fragile. Sue Hing Company soon seceded again.16 In 1898 the Tan (Tom) and Guan (Quan) clans left with several Kaiping and Enping clans still in Hop Wo Company to reestablish Yen Hoy Company.17 In 1901 another thirteen Enping clans led by the Tang (Tong) clan also seceded, this time to join Sue Hing Company.18 But the two huiguan soon found their respective constituencies too small to be effective and initiated merger talks that were successfully completed by 1909.19 Subsequently Sue Hing Association accepted membership from Sanshui, Sihui, Qingyuan, Gaoyao, and Gaoming people belonging to Liuyi Tongshan Tang (Look Yup Tong Sen Tong). Eventually it also took under its wing people from Yangjiang and Yangchun and became the second largest huiguan in membership and the one with people from the greatest number of districts; however, the majority are still immigrants from Kaiping. As for Hop Wo Company, members of the Yee clan from Taishan remained domi-
nant, although some Kaiping clans, notably the Xie (Dere), Hu (Woo), and a large part of the Deng (Ong), as well as the Zheng (Jung) clan from Enping, are also represented.

The non-Sze Yup huiguan had less turbulent histories, possibly because their smaller memberships precluded the growth of large rival blocs that could foster and sustain open conflicts and instability in the organizations. Even so, in 1901 five of the six districts belonging to Look Yup Tong Sen Tong left Sam Yup Association due to a dispute over the presidency.20 They joined Sue Hing Association while the sixth, Hua Xian, remained affiliated with Sam Yup Association. After World War II, when Hua Xian people had grown in population and affluence, they sought a greater leadership role in the association but were rebuffed. Soon afterward they seceded and established Hua Xian Huiguan (Fah Yuen Association) in 1955.21 (See Figure 1.)

**Social control**

The huiguan was the organization by which the merchant class in the Chinese community maintained social control. It influenced the lives of the nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants as soon as they arrived in San Francisco. “Each huiguan has one to two directors (dongshi) and one interpreter (longshi). . . . When Chinese arrive each huiguan sends people to the wharf to meet and take them to the association quarters where they are registered.”22 The association building served the purpose of a caravan-sary, where the new immigrant was furnished a room to spread his mat and provided with water and facilities for cooking. Persons returning from inland towns en route to China, or who had finished a job and were seeking new work, could also find temporary lodgings there.

The huiguan arbitrated disputes among its members and offered rewards for the apprehension and conviction of murderers of its members. It also assessed the membership to raise funds for its operating expenses and for projects of common concern. However, one of its most important functions was to prevent the absconding of defaulting debtors. Thus, a Chinese intending to depart for China, no matter where he had lived in the United States, reported to his huiguan when he arrived in San Francisco. If the huiguan was satisfied that he had paid all debts and fulfilled all other financial obligations, he would be issued an exit
permit after paying an assessment that went toward the *huiguan's* operating expenses. According to one observer, "When the immigrant is about to return to China, [the *huiguan*] collects several dollars up to $10 or $20 from him. . . . The *huiguan* also made agreements with the steamship companies so that if *huiguan* had not received this assessment from the immigrant, and the *huiguan* had not issued an exit permit, then the steamship company will not sell him a ticket. Because of this, [in the past] no one returning to China sought to evade contributing this amount. The custom had been carried out for years and has become an accepted practice."  

The practice of using the power of the *huiguan* in San Francisco to ensure payment of debts may have been developed during the early years of Chinese immigration to guarantee that those who arrived by the credit-ticket system would settle their accounts before departure. Since during the nineteenth century practically all Chinese departed for China through San Francisco, this put the *huiguan* in the city in a particularly strategic position to enforce this requirement. To ensure compliance, each *huiguan* sent an inspector to the docks to collect exit permits from departing Chinese as they boarded ship. An exception was Chinese Christians, who refused to pay the tax on the grounds that it would be used to support idolatry in the *huiguan* temples. After prolonged negotiations the *huiguan* finally allowed Chinese missions and churches to issue exit permits and to assess members of their congregations separately.

Each *huiguan* maintained a cemetery, provided medicine and burial expenses for the poor, and donated passage money to China for the infirm and indigent elderly. But they provided so few other services for their membership that Consul General Huang Zunxian wrote in disappointment: "According to my investigation each *huiguan* has comparatively large incomes. Yet they have not provided for the welfare of the membership with this money collected from them. None of the *huiguan* can escape criticism on this point. Although their reputation may not be as bad as stated by the white people, yet there are areas in which they can justly be attacked." 

Huang Zunxian decried this lack of social services that would have "fulfilled the people's hope" and noted that it was rooted in internal organizational weaknesses. "The *huiguan* operate with few established rules. The money they collect is not accountable to anyone. If the directors and interpreters are men of integrity, then the organization's functions are carried out reasonably well. If not, then powerful individuals and large clans can entrench themselves; unscrupulous persons can purchase property, profit from it and line their pockets."  

The *huiguan* played the role of patriarchal leaders in the nineteenth century California Chinese community. During the early 1850s they did not hesitate to use force on those who defied their leadership. For example, one Ah Ti "inflicted severe corporal punishment upon using of his more humble countrymen . . . cutting off their ears, flogging them or keeping them chained." These harsh disciplinary measures ceased only after they were exposed in 1853 by the San Francisco County Grand Jury. The apparent power the *huiguan* exercised over the Chinese laborers also gave credence to another charge that they imported Chinese to perform servile coolie labor. This charge was first raised during the early 1850s, when it was fueled by the notoriety of the Chinese coolie trade. This impression persisted in the larger society and was used effectively by anti-Chinese agitators pushing for a ban on Chinese immigration. White missionaries and Chinese Christians, both of whom were familiar with the operations of the *huiguan* system and had no particular love for them, consistently denied the veracity of these accusations. However, it is evident that although the *huiguan* themselves may not have been directly responsible for the importation of Chinese labor, they played a major role in ensuring the smooth operation of the credit-ticket system.

Reforms

After a Chineselegation was established in Washington, D.C., and a consul general stationed in San Francisco, the Qing government tried to bring these powerful autonomous organizations under control and pressured the *huiguan* into correcting some of the more obvious abuses. In the early 1880s the *huiguan* began recruiting titled scholars from China to serve as presidents. In 1887 the Qing envoy to the United States issued orders that credentials of the president-elect be validated by the provincial governor-general in China having jurisdiction over his district of origin. After that he would be issued a diplomatic passport for
himself and one personal staff member (suixuan) to come as members of the consular staff.  

The intent for importing a titled scholar to be president was to ensure that the person be above local petty politics. But obviously the arrangement also made the huiguan in effect an extension of the Chinese diplomatic service and a channel between the Chinese government and the Chinese in America. This method for filling the huiguan presidency was used until 1925 when the United States Department of State objected to giving huiguan presidents diplomatic status since this was not in accordance with accepted international protocol. In 1926 the Chinese government gave in and issued tourist passports to the presidents-elect only; accompanying staff members were no longer allowed. Because of this immigration restriction, the huiguan gradually began to fill the office of president with local candidates, the earliest being Chen Jingshan of Young Wo Association in 1926.  

Qing officials also pushed other reforms that were successful to some degree, and Consul General Huang was encouraged to say that “in recent years [huiguan have issued] financial statements of income and disbursements for public examination. Except for the salaries of the directors, no abuses have arisen due to misappropriations and embezzlements. When I arrived I ordered the directors to arbitrate disputes. Since the directors had regard for the huiguan's reputation, each has done his best in performing his duties and has thereby gained credibility among the membership. Thus the atmosphere has changed somewhat.”  

One problem Qing officials were unable to scotch completely, however, was the regional and clan antagonism that characterized nineteenth-century Guangdong society and was carried over into Chinese American society. Such intergroup animosity was one of the factors justifying the existence of the huiguan—namely, to protect members from external threats. The pitting of organized groups against each other, on the other hand, also tended to exacerbate these existing antagonisms. Disputes between individuals always had the potential of evolving into group conflicts as each huiguan felt obligated to support its member(s). Such was the case during the early 1850s when several disagreements escalated into violent battles, with each group backed by its huiguan with manpower and arms. One example was the “Weaverville War” of 1854, which started over a gambling quarrel and ended up with the Young Wo Company adherents fighting the combined forces of the Sam Yup, Sze Yup, and Ning Yung Companies.  

Another fight occurred at Chinese Camp in 1856, pitting members of Sam Yup Company against Yan Wo Company in a quarrel over a mining claim.  

The number and scope of such conflicts decreased in succeeding decades, although the antagonisms remained. After a consulate was established in San Francisco, pressure brought to bear by the office helped to resolve many disputes before they escalated into violent confrontations. The consular office also may have been instrumental in the 1880s in helping to establish a system of rotating the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of San Francisco (CCBA-SF) presidency among the various huiguan, as well as a system of rotating the presidency and other offices in each huiguan among the various affiliated shantang or clans. (See “Organizational Structure.”) Even though this mechanical apportioning of the offices did not eliminate the domination by powerful individuals or groups, the institutionalized rotation of power eased tensions among contending factions.  

However, even the prestige of the imperial government could only maintain an uneasy truce in Chinatown. It could not eradicate existing conflicts of interests, which tended to be aggravated even further by mistrust and prejudices between different dialect groups. Thus, one last big conflict occurred in the 1890s when huiguan of Sze Yup people backed a boycott by their constituents against Sam Yup businesses to protest the latter’s monopolistic domination of certain types of Chinatown businesses, especially in the import-export area. In spite of mediation efforts by several successive consul generals, the confrontation lasted several years before a truce was reached. It was only after the growth of nationalistic feelings among Chinese during the twentieth century that such interclan and regional animosities slowly subsided.  

THE CHINESE CONSOLIDATED BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION,  
THE UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION  

The increasing anti-Chinese agitation in California during the 1870s ultimately led the United States Congress to pass a series of Chinese Exclusion Acts beginning in 1882. With the implementation of these laws, the influx of Chinese was abruptly throttled, and the foundation of power for the huiguan began
to erode. During this period maintenance of social control became secondary to the larger problem of ensuring the survival of the Chinese community in a hostile environment. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, in which *huiguan* were the key components, emerged as the acknowledged leader of the Chinese community. The ascendancy of this organization marked the growth of a sense of identity among the Chinese of America as a Chinese community rather than as an assortment of Sam Yup, Sze Yup, and other groups.

Actually, the *huiguan* had long had a history of working together when dealing with certain matters of common concern. As early as 1853 the Chinese in San Francisco had formed a committee elected from among the Chinese merchants of San Francisco to act with the presidents of the *huiguan* in all public affairs involving the Chinese community. In succeeding years observers referred to “four great houses,” “five companies” and so on, in accordance with the number of *huiguan* existing at any particular time. A *gongsuo* (“public hall”) consisting of *huiguan* officers and committeemen was established around 1862. This, however, appeared to be a loosely organized federation of the *huiguan*, which by consensus made decisions on matters affecting the general interest of the Chinese on the Pacific Coast. It dealt with such matters as settling disputes between the people of different companies, consulting on the best means to contest or seek relief from anti-Chinese laws, devising means to bar the import of Chinese prostitutes, and entertaining public figures. Since at the time there were six “companies” (that is, Ning Yung, Hop Wo, Kong Chow, Young Wo, Sam Yup, and Yan Wo), this organization was known collectively as the six Chinese companies. Later it was referred to as the Chinese Six Companies and was recognized by white society as the representative of the entire Chinese community in America.

During the height of the anti-Chinese movement, Chinese Consul General Huang Zunxian pushed the formation of a single organization with better defined powers, the CCBA-SF, to provide more effective leadership in the fight against anti-Chinese actions. Absorbing the earlier *gongsuo*, this new organization came into being on November 19, 1882. Zheng Zaoru, the Chinese envoy in Washington, gave the new organization its Chinese name, Jinshan Zhonghua Huiguan. It was later incorporated under the laws of the state of California in 1901.

**Organizational structure**

Membership in the Chinese Six Companies was not always fixed at six. When Sue Hing Association joined the organization, the total became seven. Later, when Yen Hoy Company was also accepted into CCBA-SF, the six companies were in reality eight for a few years. However, the larger society continued to call the organization Chinese Six Companies throughout these many permutations.

The office of the presidency of the Chinese Six Companies was established in 1880. This provision was carried over to CCBA-SF when it came into being in 1882, with the officeholder being one of the *huiguan* presidents who were all titled scholars from China. The first CCBA-SF president was Chen Wenquan (Chun Munchuen) of Kong Chow Association. The *huiguan* presidents of CCBA-SF collectively made up its *shendong*, or gentry-directors. Up to the end of the Qing dynasty, it was also customary for the CCBA-SF to submit to the consul general a list of candidates from which he would choose and appoint its other board members. These other board members were called *shandong*, or merchant-directors, a term that reflected their class origin.

At first there was no limitation on the length of the president’s term; however, this soon gave rise to abuses and disputes. Therefore, in 1890 the organization set a limit of six months to each term, which was to be rotated among six *huiguan*, except Yan Wo, the smallest in membership. In 1900 the length of each term was further decreased to three months. In addition, the Chinese consul general was given the right to confirm the president’s appointment. During this period no fixed number of directors was assigned to represent each organization, a situation that tended to work in favor of associations such as Sam Yup, Young Wo, and Kong Chow, which had small memberships but a high percentage of merchants. For example, in 1907 the consul general appointed forty-one directors, out of which Ning Yung had eleven, while Sam Yup, Young Wo, and Kong Chow, whose combined member-
ships numbered less than that of Ning Yung, each had six directors, or a total of eighteen.\textsuperscript{45}

This situation did not sit well with leaders in Ning Yung Association, the organization with the largest membership, who felt that their association should have a greater voice. But when CCBA-SF drafted a revision to its bylaws in 1925, out of a total of eighty directors, Ning Yung was still assigned only twenty-two, while Sam Yup, Young Wo, and Kong Chow each had twelve, or a total of thirty-six.

In 1928 Ning Yung Association had just begun a national boycott of the newspaper \textit{Young China} over published articles alleged to be insulting to the association and its role in CCBA-SF. Using this as a pretext, Ning Yung Association withdrew from further participation in CCBA-SF meetings and demanded to be given rights commensurate with the size of its membership. In the meantime it withheld the exit permit assessments that normally would have been passed on to CCBA-SF as part of its contribution toward CCBA-SF’s operating expenses. As this amount constituted about half the budget, it had a serious financial impact on the remaining huiguan, which had to make up the deficit. Thus pressured, the CCBA-SF board finally agreed to most of the demands and passed revised bylaws in 1930.

The new bylaws set the board at fifty-five members, with the number redistributed to each huiguan in proportion to the number of registered members in 1926. Accordingly, Ning Yung Association, having 48.5 percent out of 26,676 registrants, was entitled to twenty-seven directors, one less than the board total. The number of directors for Sam Yup, Young Wo, and Kong Chow Associations was pared drastically to a total of thirteen. The revised bylaws also set the president’s term at two months, with the Ning Yung president filling the office every other term, while each of the other huiguan presidents rotated to fill the remaining terms.\textsuperscript{46}

These changes marked a significant shift in the distribution of power in CCBA-SF. Now population became the sole determinant for apportioning the number of directors instead of the previously used criterion, which was weighed in favor of huiguan having a higher proportion of merchants among their members. Ning Yung Association became the dominant voice on the CCBA board. Since there was little chance that the remaining huiguan could work together as a bloc against Ning Yung, a decision on any question by Ning Yung Association would determine its fate in CCBA-SF. Since this change, there has been no revision of the bylaws, nor has CCBA-SF admitted any new huiguan members.

\section*{Leadership Role and Limitations}

When CCBA-SF was established in 1882, one of the main objectives was to provide more effective leadership in the Chinese community’s fight against anti-Chinese legislation. Putting its trust in the American judicial system, CCBA-SF was often successful in nullifying or modifying hostile measures. Since control of CCBA-SF and the affiliated huiguan was in the hands of the merchant class, its function as an organization working for the interest and welfare of the Chinese community must be viewed within this framework. For example, since it would work against the association’s interest to take the side of the working class against the merchants, it tended to deal only with those issues upon which all strata in society had a common interest.

Under this guiding principle CCBA-SF provided support for a Donghua (Tung Wah) Dispensary in 1900\textsuperscript{47} and was one of the fifteen founding organizations of a Chinese hospital in 1920.\textsuperscript{48} In 1905 it established the Daqing Academy, the predecessor to the present Chinese Central High School, to teach Chinese language and culture to Chinese children.\textsuperscript{49} Many of its actions, however, were aimed toward protection of the interests of the business community. For example, before the advent of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, CCBA-SF witnessed changes of ownership and property sales. To protect Chinatown against nocturnal prowlers, CCBA-SF used to hire night watchmen to make the rounds.\textsuperscript{50} CCBA-SF also acted as a clearinghouse for fund-raising efforts, and before World War II CCBA-SF approval of a fund-raising project could open many Chinese doors for donations.

During the early twentieth century Chinese all over the country looked to CCBA-SF for leadership in areas of common concern, such as fighting laws and discriminatory actions against Chinese. These expectations extended even to Chinese in American colonies and countries in Latin America which did not have Chinese diplomatic representation. When atrocities were committed against Chinese during revolutions in Mexico in 1913 and again in 1916, Chinese in that country requested and received assistance from CCBA-SF. CCBA-SF also lent a helping hand to Chinese in
Guatemala (1920), the Philippines (1921), El Salvador (1925), Ecuador (1926), Mexico (1930-32), and the Dominican Republic (1932) when these countries promulgated anti-Chinese measures. The organization retained a lawyer on an annual basis to facilitate the handling of these and other legal matters.

However, CCBA-SF leadership in the community had many limitations. This was obvious even during its early years. The following comments by Chinese envoy Liang Cheng in 1907 perhaps express this most succinctly: "When the [Zhonghua] Hui-guan was established it was entirely patterned after the traditional xiangyu system. Thus its aims and objectives as well as its powers were lacking in definition, or were described only sketchily. These simple principles are still being followed, but in reality they are irreconcilable with the structures required for autonomous rule. The organization is also obviously incongruous with the concept of a chamber of commerce, since it not only cannot unify the merchants, do research on commercial affairs and compete with outsiders for supremacy in the market place, but in the community it cannot even discharge its obligations to its fellow countrymen in passing judgement on right and wrong and helping the sick and suffering."

A few years earlier Liang Qichao of the Reform Party also observed the following: "I looked at the hui-guan's bylaws and found that by and large they were patterned after organizations in the West—very civilized and very detailed. But when I observe the implementation, then there was not a single instance where the actions were not contrary to the [bylaw] provisions. For example, the CCBA [is to the Chinese community] as the municipal government is to the entire city. But each time a meeting is convened, less than one in ten of the so-called hui-guan presidents and directors attend. Enforcement [of the bylaws] is lax, yet no one raises any questions. Sometimes because of minor differences of opinion, the various hui-guan will refuse to contribute their share of the CCBA's operating expenses and CCBA can do nothing about it."

Similar problems continued to plague the organization in later years. For example, Ning Yung Association boycotted proceedings of CCBA-SF during the late 1920s, as described previously. And according to a 1970 report, thirty out of the fifty-five directors, or 55 percent, attended eight or fewer of the sixteen meetings called in 1969. Such shortcomings led some critics to refer to CCBA-SF board members derisively as "rice buckets," that is, those consuming much rice but accomplishing little.

THE CLAN ASSOCIATIONS AND SHANTANG, BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS

The hui-guan and CCBA-SF are but the top layers of a well-defined hierarchical organizational structure that evolved in San Francisco over many decades during the nineteenth century. (See Figure 2.) A number of associations organized either on the basis of surname or regional groupings also eventually evolved under the umbrella of the hui-guan. Due to the close identification of clan lineage groups with locality in the Sze Yup area, the Sze Yup group of hui-guan—Ning Yung, Sue Hing, Hop Wo, and Kong Chow Associations—organize on the basis of a common surname, with clan associations, or the modern equivalent zongqinshui ("kindred club"), as the basic units. The remaining three hui-guan—Young Yo, Sam Yup, and Yan Wo,—with memberships originating from areas where the population was more heterogeneous, organize by region, with shantang ("benevolence hall") as the basic units. Sometimes the more ambiguous terms such as gongxiao ("public hall") and tongxianghui ("fellow villagers club") are also used. Membership in one of these units qualifies a person for membership in the associated hui-guan. Similar to the hui-guan, both shantang and clan associations also provide mutual aid and charitable services to their membership.

CLAN ASSOCIATIONS

A clan association, more familiarly known as a family association, is an extension of the concept of the ancestral hall in a single lineage village. Due to the immigrants' needs to socialize, as well as the necessity for mutual aid, they naturally tended to consort with others of the same genealogical background from the same village. Such informal groupings, known as fang (fong), have existed since the early days of Chinese settlement in California. However, in any one locality, immigrants from the same village were usually comparatively few. Following the same logic that motivated expansion of the district associations to encompass membership beyond the local village, clan or family associations among the Chinese abroad went beyond the limits of the clan-
village to enroll members on the basis of common surnames. The sole criterion is descent from an alleged common ancestor, with no limitation on the locality of origin. In the United States membership in such associations in the past has been mostly from Sze Yup because of the predominance of immigrants from that region.

The history of clan associations is obscured since they were not in the public eye as much as the huiguan. Several clan associations apparently had their beginnings in the 1870s. Apparently their rise was spurred by the increasing necessity for collective defense against violence, which was rampant among Chinese in nineteenth-century America. The earlier clan organizations apparently were formed by the more numerous and affluent clans.

Over the years clan associations developed a system to send delegates to serve on the board of directors of their corresponding huiguan in rough proportion to their membership. For example, the 1970 Ning Yung Association bylaws provide for fifty-one directors on its board, twelve from the Huang (Wong) clan and nine from the Li (Lee) clan.58 The remaining clans each elect one to four board members. Within each clan, the delegates are also distributed in proportion to the population of each fang. Other offices are also rotated among different clans, with the group nominating the candidate being held responsible for the officeholder's good behavior.

The formula for rotation can be very complex. For example, the order of succession adopted by Ning Yung Association in 1945 stipulates that a Wong is entitled to become president once every four years and a Lee every six years, but each of the smallest clans receives a turn only once every twenty-four years.59 Within many clans there is a further rotation by fang. This formula was calculated in accordance with the number of exit permits issued to each clan before World War II. With the decline of regional and clan feelings among Chinese Americans during the twentieth century, some organizations have begun to relax these rules. In 1954 Kong Chow Association became the first huiguan to modify these requirements.60

To counteract domination by the large clans, numerically smaller clans also banded together to gain collective strength, using as rationale some alleged common ancestor or event in Chinese mythology or history. One well-known association of this type is Longgang Qinyi Gongsuo (Lung Kong Tin Yee Association), the so-called “Four Brothers Association,” which enrolls members
from four different clans: Liu (Lew), Guan (Quan), Zhang (Jeong), and Zhao (Chew). Although such an organization did not exist in China, the concept is alleged to have originated in Kaiping, based on a tale from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Immigrants took this concept with them when they went abroad, and as early as 1827 members of the four clans were known to be in alliance in Singapore. In the United States a Longgang Temple was in existence no later than the 1880s.

During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when tong wars erupted frequently and Chinatown was a jungle where the strong preyed on the weak and unprotected, many larger clan associations organized into two branches. One, administered by the elders, had jurisdiction over affairs affecting the entire clan, while the other acted as the clan association's defense unit against outside threats to members' interests. In many respects this latter was akin to a secret society in behavior. It is said the formation of defense units was encouraged by the Chinese consul general to counter the threat posed by these same secret societies. Similar groups, which enrolled members on the basis of geographic origin, also existed. For example, Kong Chow Association members formed the Bao'an Tang [Bow On Tong]; Panyu people organized Chaoyi Gongsoo [Chew Yee Association]; and Zhongshan immigrants founded Jun Ying Tang [Jan Ying Tong].

When the frequency of tong wars dwindled after the 1920s, the need for self-defense diminished. Many of these organizations became primarily socializing centers for the membership and a number of clan associations eventually amalgamated the two branches. Among one of the earliest was the combined clan associations formed by the Chen (Chan, Chin, or Chun), Hu (Woo), and Yuan clans during a 1925 Seattle convention, when the Zhixiao Tang combined with the defense organization Duqin Tang to form Zhixiao Duqin Gongsoo (Gee How Oak Tin Association). Among the single clan associations Peiguo Tang of the Zhu clan (Gee Poy Kuo Association) absorbed Zhujia Gongsoo in 1927.

SHANTANG

During the early years of Chinese immigration, the huiguan maintained lodgings and provided medicine for their infirm, aged, or sick. Those who were crippled or too old to work or who were destitute were given financial assistance to return to China. Bones of the dead were also disinterred and shipped for reburial in China. As such needs increased with the Chinese population, their administration was soon delegated to separate organizations known as shantang. In 1855 people from Nanhai established Fuyin Tang (Fook Yum Benevolent Society). This was followed in 1858 by Panyu's Changle Tang (Chong How Benevolent Association) and Shunde's Xing'an Tang (Hung On Benevolent Association). Several shantang under Young Wo Company were also in existence by 1856 when they shipped remains back to China for burial.

These charitable activities remained the primary function of shantang established for Sze Yup huiguan, but in the non-Sze Yup associations, the functions of the shantang have expanded. Each has come to perform functions similar to the huiguan, but for smaller geographical divisions within the area represented by the huiguan. For example, there are twelve shantang under the Young Wo Association. Zhongshan district is divided into nine areas, each represented by a separate shantang. The other three districts, having fewer immigrants, are represented by one shantang each.

Over the years a system has developed wherein directors elected from these shantang served on the board of directors in non-Sze Yup huiguan. During the early period directors were selected from among the merchants. In recent decades, however, most associations changed their bylaws to allow election of individuals. The shantang also take turns providing candidates to fill the huiguan presidency. The number of directors on the huiguan board assigned to each shantang reflects the size of its membership. Thus, according to the current bylaws of Young Wo Association, Tongshan Tang (Tung Sen Association), Zhishan Tang (Jack Sen Tong Association), and Xishan Tang (Hee Shen Association), which represent large numbers of immigrants, each sends four directors to the board, while Boshan Tang and Luoshan Tang, representing areas with fewer immigrants, are entitled to only two directors each. In one huiguan, Sam Yup Association, this principle of apportionment is extended one step
Chinese, transcending regional or clan feelings. In America a generation was also growing up for whom regional and clan loyalties were much less significant than they were to the older generation. The first half of the twentieth century saw a diminution of regional and clan antagonisms among the Chinese of America, a development that chipped away at an important raison d'être for the huiguan system.

Some associations did attempt to modify their structure and activities to be more in step with contemporary society. As mentioned previously, many clan associations combined their defense organizations with the elders-led main bodies. In San Francisco some huiguan and shantang sponsored Chinese schools to ensure that the growing American-born generation received a proper Chinese education. The organizations still play a role, although diminished, serving as socializing centers and providing mutual aid, and the huiguan through the shantung still administer cemeteries for members. In spite of these measures the influence of the associations steadily declined. The scope of operation of each huiguan contracted.

During the nineteenth century each huiguan maintained headquarters in San Francisco but established branches in other towns wherever there was a need. Thus, as early as 1855 agencies of Young Wo Association existed in Stockton and Sacramento, and at different times during the nineteenth century, Sam Yup Association had branches in eleven towns outside San Francisco. But during the exclusion period many branches closed down as Chinese left the areas. Ties with other branches also became increasingly tenuous.

But huiguan and other organizations based on the regional principle (which may also be named gongsuo, tang, or tongxianghui) continued to exist or were newly organized in communities outside San Francisco to fill the social needs of the local Chinese. These organizations usually maintained nominal fraternal ties with the corresponding huiguan in San Francisco and similar organizations in other Chinese communities. In this relationship the San Francisco huiguan was increasingly relegated to that of titular head of a loose confederation.

Depending on local conditions, regional-type organizations sometimes may cover constituencies from geographical areas in China that may not coincide exactly with that of the huiguan in San Francisco. For example, Stockton has a Zhongshan Hui-
guan (Chungshan Association) instead of a Young Wo Association; in Fresno there is a Yen Hoy Association instead of a Sue Hing Association; in New York City there is a Heshan Gongsoo (Hok San Society) and Xinhui Tongxianghui (Sun Wei Association) instead of a Kong Chow Association. In Hawaii, where Zhongshan immigrants predominated, separate regional associations serve people from different areas of Zhongshan instead of one overall association for all Zhongshan people. For example, a Sida Du Hui guan (See Dai Doo Society) was established by immigrants from a region in the east central part of Zhongshan and Long Du Congshan Tang (Lung Doo Chung Sin Tong) for a region in the west central part.

In recent decades regional associations covering areas other than the Pearl River delta and Sze Yup have also appeared, reflecting the new diversity of immigrants. These groups usually use the terms hui guan or tongxianghui interchangeably. However, the hui guan appears to be the more prestigious organization and the term often implies the existence of a headquarters building. For example, Southeast Asian Chinese with ancestors from the Han River delta in northeast Guangdong have established Chaozhou Tongxianghui (Chiu Chow Association) in many cities. In 1983 the chapter in Southern California launched a fund drive to purchase a hui guan building. In 1986 the San Francisco chapter of the association also announced that it intended to change its name from tongxianghui to hui guan and expand its scope to cover northern California.77

Immigrants from Taiwan also have established regional organizations, the most widespread of which is the Taiwan Tongxianghui (Taiwanese Association), with about sixty chapters throughout the country.78 Similarly, immigrants of Shandong ancestry formed the Qi-Lu Hui guan (Shandong Association) in San Francisco. There are also tongxianghui for immigrants from Fujian, Jiangxi, Guangxi, Hunan provinces, and so on. Born out of a modern milieu, none of these newer organizations wields the same authority over its members as the nineteenth-century hui guan. They generally serve as social centers for members and provide mutual aid.

Most clan associations and zong qin hui are headquartered in San Francisco, but many branches have appeared in cities and towns outside of San Francisco, largely due to the widespread presence of Sze Yup, especially Taishan, immigrants all over the United States. Some of these formed extensive nationwide networks; for example, in the 1970s the Wong and Lee family associations as well as Gee How Oak Tin Association each had eighteen branches outside San Francisco, while the Long Kong Tin Yee Association had fifteen. These networks have also expanded beyond the boundaries of the United States. One of the earliest to be established was Lung Kong Tin Yee Association, which established a network of branches in the Americas in 1948, with headquarters in San Francisco. In 1963 this expanded to a worldwide network with headquarters in Taiwan.79

Following the example of Western organizations, many clan associations scheduled periodic national conventions to discuss problems of mutual concern. The earliest, in 1923, was called by Suoyuan Tang (Soo Yuen Association), a combined clan association formed by the Lei (Louie), Fang (Fong), and Kuang (Kwong) clans.80 No hui guan, shantang, or tongxianghui have been able to organize such gatherings consistently. For example, Ning Yung Association, the largest hui guan, has convened only three conventions in the span of half a century—in 1928, 1933, and 1980.81

CHINESE CONSOLIDATED BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATIONS

Close upon the heels of the founding of CCBA-SF, Chinese diplomatic officials encouraged the formation of CCBAs in other large Chinese communities to lead and represent the community. CCBAs were founded in New York City (CCBA–NY, 1883) and Portland (before 1887).82 These efforts on the part of Chinese diplomats stationed in America even extended across international boundaries to Honolulu in the Hawaiian kingdom (1884), Victoria, British Columbia (1884),85 and Lima, Peru (1885).86 During the first half of the twentieth century, as Chinese in various parts of the United States developed a sense of community, most smaller Chinese communities also founded CCBAs. In each locality the CCBA functions as the local community leader to protect Chinese rights and to promote the community’s welfare.

In general, Chinese use the term Zhonghua Hui guan for CCBAs in the Midwest and the West, while eastern CCBAs, following the lead of CCBA–NY, tended to use Zhonghua Gong suo. The name in English is usually Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, although Honolulu members used the name United Chinese
Society and Seattle Chinese named theirs Chong Wa Benevolent Association. In a few instances the associations are known by such names as Huaren Lianhehui or Chinese Association. The name Chinese Six Companies, however, is applicable only to CCBA-SF. But regardless of differences in nomenclature, the aims and functions of these organizations are similar.

Organizational structures of modern CCBAs vary widely. CCBA-SF, the oldest and one of the most influential, adheres to a highly developed hierarchical structure evolved during the nineteenth century. Membership today is limited to the seven *huiguan* existing during the 1900s and conditions imposed for admission of new members are very restrictive. Newer *huiguan* and *tongxianghui* have not been accepted. Secret societies and Western-type organizations are also excluded, although their members as individuals can be part of the CCBA/*huiguan* system through their clan and district affiliations. Women play only limited and subordinate roles. Many Chinese Americans feel that this structure is overly restrictive and out of step with the complexities of a modern community.

The hierarchical relationships are not as clearly defined in CCBAs outside of San Francisco. Products of a more modern era, most other CCBAs admit onto their board of directors on an equal basis all eligible Chinese community organizations, including *huiguan*, *tongxianghui*, clan associations, secret societies, Chinese political parties, and even Western-type organizations such as churches and civic clubs. In a few communities, such as Honolulu, membership is on an individual basis. On the whole, CCBAs outside of San Francisco have structures more flexible and less exclusive in nature than CCBA-SF. For example, in 1958 seven women were elected to serve on Seattle’s Chong Wa Benevolent Association, and Ruby Chow became its first woman president the following year. The president in most CCBAs is usually elected to serve at least a year, instead of being rotated every two months, as in CCBA-SF. This, in theory at least, allows more time for familiarization with the office and enables the president to deal more effectively with community issues.

Due to the paramountcy of San Francisco as an economic, social, political, and cultural center for Chinese in America before World War II, CCBA-SF regarded all other CCBAs in the United States as branches and itself as the only organization entitled to be the representative for all Chinese in America. This was spelled out in the 1930 bylaws, which give the organization’s name as Zhu-Mei Zhonghua Zong-Huiguan, or General CCBA of the USA, the only CCBA to make such an all-embracing claim. During this period CCBAs in other parts of the country expected and usually accepted CCBA-SF’s leadership in actions affecting the common interest of the Chinese in America. Each CCBA, however, is autonomous in its local area. Thus, the role of CCBA-SF may be defined as the head of a confederation of CCBAs in the United States.

Over the years, however, as Chinese communities increased in population and affluence, some CCBAs have grown to equal CCBA-SF in influence and stature. This was especially true of CCBA-NY, which became the leading CCBA in the eastern half of the country and the principal rival of CCBA-SF for a leadership role in Chinese America. Also, since the 1960s a flood of Chinese immigrants and refugees from troubled areas of the world has settled in this country. These newcomers differ from the existing community in social backgrounds and political experiences. Some who are of Cantonese ancestry have participated in the CCBA/*huiguan* system. But by and large, the older groups in Chinatown communities have been reluctant to share their power with the new arrivals. Thus, the latter often have established institutions outside the CCBA/*huiguan* system to serve their own needs for mutual aid and socializing. This is especially true of the two largest groups, ethnic Chinese from Indo-China and the Taiwanese. Since these two groups in the 1980s comprised a significant percentage of the Chinese population, needless to say, the claim of the CCBA/*huiguan* system as sole representative for the Chinese in America is no longer valid. However, due to the intertwined relationship between the CCBA/*huiguan* system and the Chinatown business establishment, which has evolved over many decades, the Chinatowns remain the system’s bastion of power. But even here the CCBA has to share its prerogatives with the other newer civic organizations.

**Polarization and the Uncertain Future**

CCBAs and the affiliated district and clan associations are nominally nonpolitical organizations. But during the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese in America became increasingly
concerned as they saw a China divided by corrupt warlords and threatened by foreign aggression. Mounting nationalistic feelings and increasing activity by Chinese political parties, especially the Kuomintang (KMT), in the United States involved the CCBA/huiguan system more and more in actions on China political issues. For example, CCBAs led opposition to China President Yuan Shikai’s intentions to declare himself emperor in 1915. Even more often the CCBAs provided propaganda and logistical support for the Chinese government in its struggle against foreign aggression. They backed China’s fight against turning Germany’s special privileges in Shandong over to Japan in the 1919 Versailles Treaty, and after the Shenyang (Mukden) incident in 1931, they mobilized the community to raise millions of dollars to support China’s resistance to Japanese invaders during the succeeding years.

This important role played by overseas Chinese organizations in general and the CCBA/huiguan system in the United States in particular was well known to the various Chinese regimes. Chinese diplomats had always sought to channel this system into efforts beneficial to the home government. Qing envoys exerted their control after permanent missions were established in the United States, so much so that the CCBAs did not openly espouse the revolutionary cause until after the 1911 Revolution. Chinese government influence slackened during the early years of the republic when China was embroiled in civil war. Then in 1927 the Kuomintang (KMT) unified China and established a central government at Nanjing. The new regime immediately resumed efforts to reharness these organizations under its guidance. In 1933 the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission asserted its authority to supervise activities of Chinese organizations abroad. But even more effectively the KMT in America recruited more and more association leaders into the party and began weaving a network of control. This process accelerated during the Sino-Japanese War when many Chinese were spurred by nationalistic fervor. By the war’s end key Chinatown associations from the CCBAs on down were firmly controlled by the KMT to an extent never before achieved by any previous Chinese regime.

After the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949, the CCBAs and affiliated organizations continued to profess loyalty to the KMT regime, which had retreated to Taiwan. During the early 1950s KMT agents pushed the formation of anti-Communist leagues as part of each CCBA.

In 1957 the federal government was investigating Chinese immigration fraud and the Chinese community was threatened with mass prosecutions and deportations. Seizing this opportunity, the pro-KMT CCBA-NY president, Liang Shengtai (Shing Tai Liang), promoted a conference of the Chinese of America to discuss means to support Taiwan and her foreign policy, express opposition to the PRC, promote the welfare of the Chinese of America, and push legislation on behalf of Chinese refugees. CCBA-NY, together with CCBA-SF and others, then convened a National American Chinese Conference in Washington, D.C., in March 1957, which was attended by representatives from CCBAs in the United States. With the shadow of imminent immigration cases looming over the conference, the CCBA delegates agreed to establish the National Chinese Welfare Council (NCWC). NCWC meets periodically to discuss matters of concern to the Chinese of America. The agenda generally has included proposed revisions of immigration legislation and expressions of support for the Taiwan regime.

Another organization sympathetic to Taiwan is the Quan-Meizhou Zhonghua Huisuo Lianyihui, or Federation of Chinese Organizations of America (FCOA). Founded originally in 1977 in San Francisco as a federation of CCBAs in the United States, its stated objective was to increase interorganization contacts. In 1980 the federation expanded its membership to include CCBAs in the Americas and gave birth to FCOA, with a membership of fifty-seven organizations. It meets annually ostensibly to exchange views and to promote greater cooperation. For example, in the 1986 meeting the featured keynote speaker was Zeng Guangshun (Tseng Kwang Shun), head of Taiwan’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, who exhorted the delegates to continue their loyal support of the Taiwan regime. The conference agenda were such items as discussing methods to prevent infiltration of pro-PRC elements into the traditionist organizations, establishing Freedom Foundations to finance anti-Communist actions, and pushing for recognition of each CCBA as the leader of the local Chinese community.

By these actions, taking advantage of the anti-Communist atmosphere in this country, the KMT used the organizations in the CCBA/huiguan system, as well as umbrella groups such as
NCWC and FCOA, as propaganda vehicles for the Taiwan regime. Within various associations the KMT also took steps to ensure control by excluding from the leadership circle those suspected of being sympathetic toward the PRC. This has often led to intense behind-the-scenes intrigues and maneuvers in organizations before election time. Sometimes it has resulted in confrontations that split the membership and paralyzed activities.

The CCBAs have also been faced with another critical problem in the last forty years. The repeal of the Chinese exclusion acts during World War II and the subsequent lowering of many social and economic barriers to nonwhites have meant that Chinese have moved away from Chinatowns and reduced their participation in Chinatown activities. During the sixties and seventies the rise of social agencies and Chinese American civic and political organizations with connections to America's mainstream further chipped away at the CCBA/huiguan system's authority and influence in Chinese America. Interest and active participation in the system dropped precipitously.

Since the sixties, however, as the earlier immigrant leaders passed away or retired, they have gradually been replaced by a younger, generally better educated generation of leaders in some organizations. Many of these newer leaders have deeper roots and interests in American society than their predecessors. To many, China political issues are not top priority items. However, the wealth of these organizations is one reason motivating their continued active interest in the associations. (Some of the larger associations are very affluent. For example, in the 1980s the Young Wo Association has more than three hundred thousand dollars deposited in the bank and gross monthly rental receipts of over ten thousand dollars from its building.) Often due to the fact that their vital economic interests are usually not directly tied to the Chinatowns or the associations, the newer leaders express more interest in channeling the resources of their organizations into directions more responsive to the needs of the members, thus encouraging broader participation while also consolidating their own political base in the associations. They tend to take the lead in attacking those members who have taken advantage of their position as officers to advance personal economic interests. Cases involving alleged misuse of association real estate have been especially frequent. In the past few decades major internal disputes have arisen in several associations over such issues.

The newer generation of leaders has also been successful in introducing some innovative changes. For example, San Francisco's Hung On Association organized a youth group in 1960, and in the mid-sixties the Lee Family Association formed a nationwide credit union for members. Other associations worked with social agencies or local governments on community projects. One example is a community grievance task force organized by Boston's Office of Human Rights in 1969 under the auspices of Boston's CCBA. In another case, San Francisco's Soo Yuen Association started a senior citizens and weekend childcare program in 1970. An increasing number of associations are regularly disbursing scholarships to members' children to encourage scholastic excellence. A few are also moving toward greater involvement in American politics, endorsing candidates and contributing to campaign funds. In 1984 the Ning Yung Association went one step further and established a Political Action Committee.

The process of change, however, has been slow. Most associations still limit their activities merely to subsidizing and organizing visits to the cemetery and spring banquets. In many organizations the old guard still present formidable obstacles to substantial reforms. But the social conditions that enabled these traditionist organizations to come into being and gave them sustenance more than a century ago no longer can play the same influential role in Chinese American society today. And looking into the future, the activities described in the preceding paragraph may be just the type that can be undertaken to adapt these organizations to the needs of contemporary Chinese Americans and to ensure the organization's continued survival in the modern world.
NOTES

1. Nomenclature used by L. Eve Armentrout Ma, Chinese Politics in the Western Hemisphere, 1893-1911: Rivalry between Reformers and Revolutionaries in the Americas (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Davis, 1977), 64.


3. Some of the earliest huiguan were established in Vietnam around late Ming or early Qing dynasties. They were associated with temples dedicated to Tianhou or the Queen of Heaven, protector of seafarers. See Zhang, Wenhe, Yuenan Hunqiao Shihua (History of Chinese in Vietnam) (Taipei: Liming Wenhua Shiye Gongsi, 1975), 24.

4. Fu, Yunlong, Youli MeiLi Jia Tujing, Yuji, Juan 5 (Illustrations and descriptions of travels in the United States, annals, vol. 5) (n.p., 1889), folios 4, 5. Hereafter cited as Descriptions of Travels. The derivation of the term gongsi is obscured. The term had not been used in traditional social organizations in China. The earliest gongsi appeared to have been organized in the late eighteenth century by Triad settlers who developed the frontier regions of Borneo under the nominal rule of a native sultan. The colony enjoyed a great measure of autonomy, with the gongsi administering a self-contained political system modeled after the village system in China. The concept spread to Malaya when Chinese began to settle there in large numbers during the nineteenth century. The term was also used by some early huiguan; for example, in 1822 a Ningyang gongsi was established in Singapore. When Chinese emigrated to the United States they again found themselves in a frontier region where the governmental administrative apparatus was not yet fully developed, and they may have borrowed the concept of the gongsi from their compatriots in Southeast Asia. Since gongsi in modern Chinese is synonymous with the Western concept of "company," that apparently was the reason the latter became the accepted English translation of the term in the United States. However, it is by no means certain that this corresponded to the original meaning of gongsi.

5. Rev. A. W. Loomis, "The Six Chinese Companies," Overland Monthly (Sept., 1868): 221-27. Jinshan Zhengbu Sanyi Chong Juan Jianmiao Gongjiin Lubu (Book for recording contributions to build a temple proposed by the Sam Yup Association of San Francisco) (San Francisco, 1899), in its preface soliciting donations (dated spring 1899) states that "in the year ihhai (1899) the Sanyi Huiguan had been established 49 years . . . ." Since the Western and Chinese years do not match exactly, depending on the exact date, the association could have been founded as early as 1850.


7. Ibid., Jiu (Jin) Shan Chongjian Yanghe Guan Miao Gongjiin Zhongxinlu (Record of income and disbursements for rebuilding the temple of San Francisco's Young Wo Association). Hereafter cited as Record for Rebuilding the Temple of Young Wo Association. The preface gives the names of the founders of the association.

8. Li Gui, "Dongxing Riji" (Diary of a trip to the East), in Wan-Qing Haiwai Ji, Biji Xuan (Selection of notes by travellers abroad in late Qing) (Beijing: Haiyang Chubanhe, 1983), 110-110. Hereafter cited as "Diary."


10. Loomis, "Six Chinese Companies."

11. Daily Alta California, Sept. 8, 1863; Mar. 7, 1864.

12. Deed, George Atlee to Kong Chow, dated Feb. 12, 1866.

13. Eng Ying Gong and Bruce Grant, Tong War! (New York: Nicholas L. Brown, 1990), 31-32.

14. This historical error is found in William Hoy's widely cited The Chinese Six Companies (San Francisco: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1942), 2. The work was published as a public relations document to present a positive image of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of San Francisco (CCBA-SF) to the general public. Much of the information in the booklet was from interviews with former officers and older San Francisco Chinese. Some of the more readily available English-language historical sources were also utilized.

15. Huang Zunxian, "Shang Zheng Yuxian Qinshi Bingwen" (Reports to Envoy Zheng Zaoru), no. 18, Jindaishi Ziliao, no. 55 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanhe, 1984), 32-36. Hereafter cited as "Reports to Envoy." These were drafts of Huang Zunxian's reports written while he was Chinese consul general in San Francisco from 1882 to 1885. They were discovered in the archives of Mei Xian, Huang's native district, in 1980. Only Reports no. 18 through 37 were found, with no. 27 missing. The reports covered the period from Sept. 5, 1862, to Apr. 1, 1883, and gave much insight on the Chinese view of a critical period in Chinese American history. Huang Zunxian (also known as Huang Gongdu) was a supporter of the Reform movement in China. As consul general he helped to correct many abuses in the huiguan system and mediated many conflicts. Years afterward Chinese in San Francisco still remembered him and sang his praises.

16. "Anyi Tang Bo Yu-xing Suisi" (Rebuttal of Anyi Tang to the Yee Clan's complaint), advertisement in Chung Sai Yat Po, Nov. 18, 1909.

17. Liu, History 1, 164; advertisement, Chung Sai Yat Po, Oct. 11, 1909.
22. Li, "Diary."
26. Huang, "Reports to Envoy," no. 18.
27. Huang, "Reports to Envoy," no. 18.
28. Gunther Barth, *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 92; *Daily Alta California*, May 31, June 7, Nov. 17, and 18, 1853; *San Francisco Herald*, May 28 and 29, 1853. A preface written by CCBB President Ou Tianqi in *Record for Rebuilding the Temple of Young Wo Association* also stated that in the early years the huiguan "clothed, fed and instructed (new immigrants) like a father or teacher. If they did not listen, they were admonished by flogging."
29. Ow, Lai, and Choy, *Sam Yup Benevolent Association*, 150. According to existing records of the Sam Yup Association, the earliest titled scholar to fill its presidency arrived in 1882.
30. Zhang, Yinhuann, "San-Zhou Riji" (Diary of three continents), in *Wan-Qing Haiwai Biji Xuan* (Selection of notes by travellers abroad in late Qing), 127-56. Hereafter cited as "Diary of Three Continents."
32. Huang, "Reports to Envoy," no. 18.
35. Chung Sai Yat Po, Mar. 26, 1903.
36. "Report of Committee on Mines and Mining Interests."
37. Fu, *Descriptions of Travels*, folios 4-5.
38. Loomis, "Six Chinese Companies."
40. Fu, *Descriptions of Travels*, folios 4-5.
42. Chung Sai Yat Po, Mar. 26, 1903.
43. *San Francisco Call*, Nov. 20, 1882; Huang, "Reports to Envoy," no. 28, 53-54, and no. 29, 54-57.
47. Advertisement in Chung Sai Yat Po, Sept. 12, 1900.
48. Donghua Yiyuan 40-Zhounian Jinian Zhuan Kun (Special publication commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Chinese Hospital) (San Francisco, 1965), 28.
49. *Biyezheng Tekan* (Album of graduating students) (San Francisco: Chinese Central High School, 1937), 8. After the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed San Francisco Chinatown, the Qing imperial court sent forty thousand taels of silver (twenty thousand U.S. dollars) to the Chinese Six Companies for relief of victims. Subsequently, when CCBB-SF discovered that the funds were not needed for this use, it requested permission to borrow this money for construction of a new headquarters building. The Chinese envoy vetoed the idea, stating that the organization's functions were not related to charity. He suggested that establishing a Chinese school or expanding Tung Wah Dispensary would be acceptable alternative uses. CCBB-SF then used the money to build a new school building and used the ground floor for its headquarters. Classrooms were located on the upper floors. *Meiguo Jinshan Dahu Zhenai Banhui Zhengxinjiu* (Record of income and disbursements for the campaign to relieve victims of the earthquake disaster) (San Francisco: CCBB-SF, 1996), 1; Liu, *Anecdotal History*, 287-94.
53. Liu, *History 1*: 204. Quote from CCBB-SF minutes for 20th day, 7th moon, 32nd year (1906) of Guangxu. The *xiangyu* was a post established during the early Qing dynasty wherein a person appointed in each locality was given the responsibility of lecturing periodically to the populace, urging them to practice virtue and to lead peaceful lives. In time functions not directly
related to indoctrination were also assumed by the office. In some instances, especially in Guangdong, the xiangye became arbiters of local affairs. Villagers of certain localities also developed the custom of gathering in the xiangye offices to make decisions on matters of mutual concern. In other instances the xiangye assumed a policing function in neighborhoods and also organised defense against external threats. See Kung-Chuan Haiso, Rural China Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), 184-205.

54. Liang, Qichao, Xindalu Youji Jielu (A shortened account of travels in the new world) (Shanghai: Chung Hwa Book Co., 1936), 122-23.


56. According to one story, this term originally referred to titled scholars who came on diplomatic visas to be huiguan presidents. They were supposed to deal with the larger society in matters concerning the Chinese community in America. But since these officers did not understand English, the Chinese in America felt that they were useless; hence the derisive nickname that later was extended to apply to all CCBA-SF directors. Chinese Pacific Weekly, Mar. 14, 1968.

57. Tongxianghui is a rather general classification. The geographical area it covers may equal that of a shantang (e.g., Jiaying Tongxianghui is the modern name for Yingfu Tang belonging to Yan Wo Association), or subdivisions of the area covered by a shantang (e.g., Xiqiao Tongxianghui enrols members from one of the three principal emigration areas in Nanhai and is subordinate to Fook Yum Tong, the shantang for Nanhai immigrants). In other cases it is equivalent to huiguan (e.g., Sin Wei Association, Chiu Chow Association). Regional type associations also sometimes refer to themselves as gongguo (e.g., Nanping Gongguo [Nam Ping Association] for Emigrating immigrants).


60. Meishou Gangzhou Zong-Huiguan Xinxia Luocheng ji Quan-Mei Gangzhou Di-3 Jie Kenqindahui Kaimu Dianli, Gangzhou Tekan (Publication commemorating dedication of the new headquarters building of Kong Chow Association of America and the opening ceremonies of the third convention of Kong Chow people in America) (San Francisco: Kong Chow Benevolent Association, 1978), 58.

61. Zhao, Bingkun, "Langgang Zushi de Yuanliu ji Qi Jiben Jingshen" (The origin of the Longgang organization and its basic spirit), Lung Kong Quarterly, no. 79 (Fall 1975): 5-7. According to an essay in the Guangzhou Tongshi, a hill called Longgang with excellent fengshui characteristics was located near a Liu clan-village in Kaiping. This land was coveted also by nearby powerful clans. To forestall disputes over the hill, the Liu clan, using as rationale the story from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, allied itself with the Guan, Zhang, and Zhao clans to build a temple on it. Henceforth the name Longgang was used as one of the symbols representing the alliance of the four clans.


64. Zhang, "Diary of Three Continents," 127-56.


67. Huang, "Reports to Envoy," no. 18.

68. Ow, Lai, and Choy, Sam Yup Benevolent Association, 78, 83, 86.

69. The Oriental (Tung-Ngai San-Luk), June 1856.

70. Bylaws, Young Wo Association, 1966.

71. Ow, Lai, and Choy, Sam Yup Benevolent Association, 79.

72. This paper adopts the nomenclature used in W.E. Willmott, The Political Structure of the Chinese Community in Cambodia (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), 85. A traditionalist Chinese organization is one oriented toward traditional Chinese values, but not necessarily traditional in the sense of having existed in precontemporary China; i.e., its orientation rather than its existence is traditional.

73. Most schools have not been successful. Kong Chow Association operated a school from 1926 to 1936, while the Young Wo School had a slightly longer life, running from 1924 to 1942. From 1929 to 1933 Ning Yung Association also raised funds for a school but the plans were never implemented. The only successful school was the Nam Kue School established by the affluent Fook Yum Tong, which opened to students in 1920 and still exists.

74. The Oriental (Tung-Ngai San-Luk), Jan. 25, 1855.

75. Ow, Lai, and Choy, Sam Yup Benevolent Association, 75.

76. Most huiguan in the United States maintain liaison with related huiguan and regional organizations in the country and abroad. Today the Ning Yung Association has the most extensive nationwide network. It was established mainly to help enforce a nationwide boycott against the San Francisco Kuomintang newspaper Young China during the late 1920s and early 1930s. (Cf. Liu, History 2: 201-08).


81. Quan-Mei Taihahan Ningyang Huiquan Di-3 Jie Kenqin Dabiao Daihu Duk Sen Ning Yung Association (a commemorative publication for the third national convention of the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Association) (San Francisco: Ning Yung Benevolent Association, 1982), 64-69.

82. CCBA of New York celebrated its centennial in 1971 (China Tribune, May 28, 1971). A community organization similar to the Chinese Six Companies was probably established in 1871; however, CCBA-NY was officially founded and registered with the Qing government in 1883.

83. Letter from CCBA, Chaoyi Gongxu, Hetai, and Tongyuan stores of Portland to Sam Yup Association dated 24th day, 5th moon, dinghai year (1887). Quoted in Ow, Lai, and Choy, Sam Yup Benevolent Association, 141.

84. On his way back to China in 1881, Chinese envoy Chen Lamin donated one thousand dollars to the Honolulu Chinese community to build a United Chinese Society headquarters building. When envoy Zhong Zaozu arrived in the United States in 1882, he sent two representatives to Honolulu to push its formation. The society was registered with the Hawaiian government in 1884. Chinese of Hawaii (Honolulu: Honolulu Chinese Penman Club, 1929), 79-80; Huang, "Reports to Envoys." no. 18.

85. In 1884 Chinese merchants of Victoria, British Columbia, petitioned Consul General Huang Zuxian for permission to establish a CCBA. Permission was granted. He also sent Huang Xiquan (Huang Sih Chuen) to Victoria to help with the bylaws. To Commemorate Victoria's Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (1884-1959) Chinese Public School (1899-1959) (Victoria, B.C., 1950), 1-4.

86. In 1885 a Sociedad Central de Beneficencia China, or Tonghui Zhong Ju (Tong Huy Chong Koe), was founded in 1885 in Lima, Peru, where the Chinese community was under the jurisdiction of the Chinese legation in Washington, D.C. Ho, Ming Chung, Manual de la Colonia China en El Peru (Lima, Peru, 1967), 57.

87. In 1973, for example, delegates from the following organizations sat on the Stockton CCBA board of directors: Chungshan Association, Ning Yung Association, Sam Yup Association, Sze Yup Association, Lee Family Association, Mar Family Association, Wong Family Association, Yip Family Association, Gee How Oak Tin Association, Gee Tuck Sam Tuck Association, Lung Kong Tin Yee Association, Soo Yuen Association, Bao On Tong, Bing Kung Tong, Suey Sing Association, Ying On Association, Kuomintang, Methodist Church, Chinese Youth Club, and Cathay Club.

People's News, Jan. 20, 1973. Many cities have similar arrangements. The board structure of the CCBA-NY, however, is slightly different, with eighty-four directors selected from sixty organizations, plus eight directors each selected from Ning Yung Association, Liancheng Gongxu (Lin Sing Association), and Chinatown merchant establishments.

88. The role CCBA-SF saw for itself was stated in a letter from President Liang Yunhuai to Consul General Ye Keliang dated Oct. 30, 1925. Quoted in Liu, History 1: 179-80.


90. Ibid., May 17, 1919.


96. For example, in 1972 Joe Yue, prominent community leader alleged to be pro-PRC, was blocked from the presidency of Sue Hing Association. San Francisco Journal, Nov. 23, 1972.

97. For example, disputes between the two political factions in the Tsung Tsan Association resulted in several lawsuits during the mid-1980s.

98. Following are two examples: A dispute in the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association over ownership of its building in San Francisco Chinatown was tried in Superior Court in 1971. Chinese Pacific Weekly, Feb. 25, 1971. In 1974 the Fah Yuen Association board became engaged in a dispute with a former officer over leases on storefronts in the association's buildings. The latter had drawn up the leases when he was an officer. Advertisement in Sing Tao Jih Pao, Apr. 17, 1974.

99. Ow, Lai, and Choy, Sam Yup Benevolent Association, 86.

100. Chinese Times, Nov. 9, 1970.


102. Chinatown (Boston: Boston 200 Corporation, 1976), 16.