



# **Surviving the City: The Chinese Immigrant Experience in New York City, 1890-1970 (Pacific Formations)**

*Xinyang Wang*

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## **Surviving the City: The Chinese Immigrant Experience in New York City, 1890-1970 (Pacific Formations)** Xinyang Wang

This innovative work explores the multifaceted Chinese experience in New York City. Incisively questioning accepted wisdom and easy cultural assumptions, Xinyang Wang persuasively illustrates that economic forces more than racism influenced immigrants' life decisions. Wang argues that rather than being passive victims, the Chinese were economic actors making rational choices for survival. Wang answers such questions as why for the first half of the century New York Chinese continued to live in white neighborhoods despite severe discrimination there, why they retained their group loyalties even at the expense of fighting discrimination, and why they chose not to join the established labor movement. The author shows how, with the rise of an enclave economy in the 1950s, the New York Chinese began to make different survival choices. Now more took up residence in Chinatown, loosened the bonds of regional and kinship networks, and unionized. By avoiding strictly culturalist explanations and incorporating a comparative analysis of Italian immigrants in the city, Wang erases long-standing stereotypes about the Chinese American experience and brings it into the mainstream discourse on America's immigrant history.

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