

Detention at Angel Island

First Empirical Evidence

Between 1910 and 1940 the Angel Island Immigration Station was the primary port of entry for Asians into the United States, the place of enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act and other anti-Asian immigration policies. Even in the absence of substantiating data, it is frequently asserted that almost all entering Chinese were detained at Angel Island and that they were detained for weeks, months, even years. This article presents the first empirical evidence on how long people arriving at San Francisco were detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station. The use of newly discovered data on passengers of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSS) for the period 1913–19 adds an empirical basis to our understanding of how immigration laws were administered in classifying and detaining aliens seeking to enter the United States, which arrivals were detained at Angel Island, and for how long. Results show that many Chinese were not detained at all; there was great variation in length of detention for Chinese who were detained; only some of this variation can be explained by the type of “exempt” status claimed for admission under the Chinese exclusion laws; Japanese arrivals had an even higher incidence of detention; and many detainees were either non-Asian, had come on ships from Central or South America, or were not “immigrants” at all.

During the era of Chinese exclusion (1882–1943), the intent of American law was to restrict severely and otherwise impede the entry of Asians— not merely “to distinguish between those individuals allowed to move freely and those who were not” (McKeown 2003: 377). For much of the period from 1910 to 1940, the main port of entry for Asians coming to the United States was the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay, where inva-

sive health examinations, lengthy interrogations, and detention made entry exceedingly difficult and unpleasant, even for Asians legally entitled to enter (Chan 1991b; Salyer 1995; Natale 1998; Gee 1999; Lee 2003). Yet detailed data on the detention process at either Angel Island or the better-known immigration portal on Ellis Island are completely lacking.

It is widely believed that just as the Chinese were singled out for negative treatment by the Chinese exclusion acts where eligibility for admission to the United States was concerned, so also they were given unequal treatment at the immigration stations. This is particularly true of Angel Island, where “Laws Harsh as Tigers” were enforced by the uniformed officers of the Immigration Service at the immigration station and, under other legislation, by those of the Public Health Service at the quarantine station (Salyer 1995). Roger Daniels (1997: 8) states that “all Chinese seeking admission through San Francisco were subjected to detailed scrutiny and delay, and almost all of them were detained on Angel Island. Even elite Chinese arriving with student visas, whose right to enter was guaranteed by both statute law and Sino-American treaties, endured long delays.” Erika Lee (2003: 82) concurs that “most [immigrants] were ferried to the immigration station on Angel Island. In contrast, most European immigrants arriving at Ellis Island were processed in a matter of hours.”

In the literature there are no data to substantiate any of these assertions about the administration of restrictionist immigration policies at Angel Island. Were Chinese actually more likely to be detained, or detained longer, at the immigration station than other passengers? Were some Chinese indeed more likely to be detained, or detained longer, than other Chinese? Was there uniformity in the application of the immigration laws, or was there randomness in the severity of the examinations’ outcomes? Despite the importance of Chinese exclusion and its enforcement, answers to such questions concerning the actual implementation of the Chinese exclusion acts have been based more on anecdotal than on systematic evidence.

Here we present the first quantitative evidence that might help provide satisfactory answers. In general, our data show that periods of detention were shorter than is commonly thought and that many Chinese were not held there at all, while many non-Chinese, and indeed many non-Asians, were detained. Among Chinese there was great variability in the length of detention, variability only partially explained by the status under which they claimed right of entry into the United States.

This article begins with an introduction to Angel Island, Chinese exclusion, and the question of enforcement. We then present newly assembled data from the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSS) on the detention of its passengers at Angel Island from 1913 to 1919. After describing the data and their limitations, including issues of representativeness, we discuss findings from the data's descriptive statistics. Next, techniques from inferential statistics are used to analyze the data further to see how factors other than origin, including class of accommodation and gender, might have played a role in determining the probability and length of detention. The conclusion summarizes the implications of our findings.

Chinese Exclusion, Angel Island, and Enforcement

“Chinese exclusion” refers to a series of acts of Congress designed to restrict severely the entry of Chinese into the United States: the Chinese Exclusion Act of May 6, 1882, officially a law “To execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese” (22 Stat. 58); the Geary Act of May 5, 1892 (27 Stat. 25); and the act of April 29, 1902 (32 Stat. 176), which continued the Chinese Exclusion Act “until otherwise provided by law.” Severe restrictions were imposed on other Asians, most significantly on Japanese through the 1907 Gentleman’s Agreement and on Indians and people from Southeast Asia through the Immigration Act of 1917. Only in 1943 did President Franklin Roosevelt formally “provide otherwise” and rescind the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Chinese exclusion era partially overlapped another era of severe restriction, one based on the Immigration Act of May 26, 1924 (43 Stat. 153), also known as the Johnson-Reed Act or the National Origins Act.¹ After 1924 limitations on immigration were based on “a constellation of reconstructed racial categories, in which race and nationality—concepts that had been loosely conflated since the nineteenth century—disaggregated and realigned in new and uneven ways” (Ngai 1999: 69). Visas were limited to 2 percent of a country’s share of the 1890 population census, and aspects of the “quota” system lasted until 1965.

Among the salient features of the Chinese Exclusion Act were presumptions about class. Because the Chinese exclusion laws were justified as preventing “coolies” from coming into the United States, there was a modest bias in the laws in favor of other classes, including Chinese students and

teachers, ministers, merchants, bona fide tourists, and dependents of these categories. These were the so-called exempt classes—those Chinese allowed to enter the United States despite the existence of the Chinese exclusion laws. The other important group of “Chinese” allowed to enter the United States included persons of Chinese ancestry born in the United States and their children—if the former could furnish proof of such native birth and if the latter could establish that they were the children of such parents.

Angel Island and the Angel Island Immigration Station (AIIS) differed from Ellis Island in a number of ways. Although the periods during which they existed overlapped significantly, those passing through Ellis Island were predominantly European, and the number of arrivals—12 million—dwarfed those at Angel Island. It is generally asserted that “Ellis Island was a way station, with most immigrants processed and released within hours, whereas Angel Island was a long-term detention center, where many Chinese were imprisoned for months, even years” (Chang 2003: 82). In this vein Lee (2003: 82) states that for Chinese arrivals “the average detention lasted two weeks.”

Until now these views have been based solely on anecdotal evidence. The AIIS administration building burned in 1940, and with it many of the administrative records.² One can only guess how many people were actually detained at Angel Island. Maria Sakovich (2002: 237–42) estimates that 340,000 aliens arrived through the Port of San Francisco between 1910 and 1940 but concedes that this figure omits deportees and passengers in transit and undercounts in certain years. If all but 30 percent of alien arrivals were detained at Angel Island, as shown in table 1, and we add in 50,000 probable deportees and those in transit, then during the operation of the immigration station almost 300,000 people were detained there. There is no comprehensive list of who was sent there or of how long they were detained. There are numerous individual stories, but the absence of systematic data leaves us in the realm of anecdote and surmise.

Him Mark Lai et al. (1980), for instance, have compiled many such stories. Robert Barde (2004) has written about Quok Shee, a Chinese woman detained at Angel Island for nearly 600 nights from September 1916 to April 1918. Her experience was atypical, because her detention is the longest known, but the story is extraordinarily well documented.³ Thus one author has played a part in contributing to the notion that new arrivals, especially the Chinese, were kept there “for months, even years” (Chang 2003: 82).

Table 1 Length of detention, by origin, 1913–19

Number of days	Origin										
	Chinese			Japanese			Non-Asians			Total	
	Number	Cumulative percentage	Cumulative percentage	Number	Cumulative percentage	Cumulative percentage	Number	Cumulative percentage	Cumulative percentage	Number	Cumulative percentage
0 days	4,332	24.0	10.4	496	10.4	62.0	4,045	62.0	8,873	30.2	
1 day	1,208	30.7	33.6	1,102	33.6	78.2	1,059	78.2	3,369	41.7	
2 days	1,611	39.6	66.4	1,560	66.4	87.6	613	87.6	3,784	54.6	
3 days	856	44.3	81.1	699	81.1	90.0	156	90.0	1,711	60.4	
4–7 days	4,188	67.5	94.1	614	94.1	94.6	300	94.6	5,102	77.8	
8–14 days	2,364	80.6	97.9	181	97.9	96.7	136	96.7	2,681	87.0	
15–30 days	2,076	92.1	99.1	58	99.1	98.8	136	98.8	2,270	94.7	
31–90 days	1,256	99.0	99.9	42	99.9	99.9	74	99.9	1,372	99.4	
91–180 days	164	99.9	100.0	1	100.0	100.0	5	100.0	170	99.9	
> 180 days	11	100.0					1	100.0	12	100.0	
Total	18,066			4,753			6,525		29,344		
All passengers											
Median	4		2	2		0			2		
Mean	10.0		3.0	3.0		2			7.1		
Standard deviation	(18.31)		(5.51)	(5.51)		(7.46)			(15.41)		
Only those passengers detained											
Median	6		3	3		2			4		
Mean	13.3		3.4	3.4		5.3			10.2		
Standard deviation	(19.97)		(5.72)	(5.72)		(11.47)			(17.58)		

Sources: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15, 1915–18.

Pacific Mail Data from Angel Island

To examine workings of the immigration process at the Port of San Francisco, we used data gathered by the PMSS during the years 1913–19. Founded in 1848, the PMSS began transporting passengers across the Pacific Ocean in 1867. A mail contract with the federal government provided a revenue base for establishing service between San Francisco and China and Japan, and over the years the PMSS became arguably the most famous American steamship line. In 1893 it was acquired by the Southern Pacific Railroad, assuring service for freight and passengers from Asia to San Francisco and on to New York via rail or to the west coast of Central America via the PMSS's ships in the coastwise trade (Kemble 1950; de la Pedraja 1992: 13–22).

In the years prior to the construction of the immigration station facilities on Angel Island, persons arriving whom the Immigration Service wished to detain were kept in a warehouse on the PMSS's Pier 40 in San Francisco. Though not isolated or remote like Angel Island, this facility was even more notorious for its wretched conditions. The PMSS owned and operated this facility, commonly known as "the detention shed," where detainees were kept at the expense of the shipping line that had brought them. Such private provision of facilities for federal detainees was not unique. In 1892 the Oriental and Occidental Steamship Company erected two wooden barracks that were capable of holding over 500 passengers detained at the quarantine station on Angel Island, run by the predecessor of the Public Health Service (Soennichsen 2001: 85). When the Angel Island Immigration Station facility opened in 1910, the detainees occupying "the shed" were simply transferred to "the island" ("Detention Shed Is Emptied of Chinese" 1910).

Our data are found in two account books kept by the PMSS, "Records of Amounts Paid for Account of Passengers Landed at Immigration Station, Angel Island, 1913–18."⁴ These detailed ledgers, each over 500 pages long, track what the PMSS owed the federal government for the upkeep of the company's passengers sent to Angel Island. Both ledgers are in the manuscript collection of the Huntington Museum and Library in San Marino, California.

The source of the records appears to have been the passenger manifest. Since 1819 U.S. law had required that the master of every vessel entering a U.S. port list each passenger "taken on at any foreign port" by name, gender, age, occupation or "calling," and country of origin.⁵ Following the 1891 legis-

Table 2 Number and origin of passengers arriving at Angel Island, 1913–19

Year	Origin			Total percentage	Total passengers
	Chinese (percent)	Japanese (percent)	Non-Asians (percent)		
1913	76.2	16.9	6.9	100	5,605
1914	63.9	26.9	9.3	100	7,675
1915	66.9	21.8	11.3	100	7,772
1916	22.5	0.3	77.2	100	1,075
1917	64.4	1.4	34.2	100	2,798
1918	39.1	0.1	60.8	100	2,706
1919	34.3	0.2	65.4	100	1,713
Total passengers	18,066	4,753	6,525		29,344

Sources: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15, 1915–18.

lation establishing the Immigration Service, the manifests collected by the Immigration Service generally included only aliens onboard, with all Chinese and Japanese, including those born in the United States, considered “aliens” for this purpose. For every PMSS ship that arrived in San Francisco from a foreign port, the company’s clerk apparently entered into his ledger each alien passenger’s name and number from the manifest. The clerk then entered the in and out dates for each passenger staying at the immigration station’s hospital and/or the AIIS detention barracks, plus the cost of upkeep at each facility. In addition, the ledgers frequently included some indication of country of origin, whether the passenger had cabin or steerage accommodations, the basis on which any Chinese were admitted as exempt from the Chinese exclusion laws, and whether a person was deported or allowed to transit to a third country.

We entered these data on all 29,344 passengers included in the records of 303 ship arrivals between May 13, 1913, and August 16, 1919 (table 2). The total length of detention for each detainee, our “total stay” variable, is calculated as the sum of days spent at the AIIS detention center plus any time spent at the immigration station’s hospital. Nearly 94 percent of the “total stay” is generated by time spent in the detention center; fewer than 6 percent of the passengers went to the immigration station’s hospital, and for those who did, the median stay was 5 days (mean 7.8). In a number of cases a stay at the detention center barracks was interrupted by time spent at the hospital, and in a very few instances there were gaps in the dates of their stay,

indicating that they may have been allowed to go to the mainland but were subsequently recalled.

Some additional, interesting characteristics of the population of passengers are not presented in the tables. Most passengers in the database were from ships crossing the Pacific, but 22 percent were from PMSS ships that plied the west coast of Central and South America, representing 14 percent of all those detained. While Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Indians) represented a significant proportion of those passengers from the coastwise trade (24 percent), they constituted an even larger percentage of the coastwise passengers detained (37 percent).

Who was included in the records of these voyages? It seems that all aliens—and here the Immigration Service treated all Asians as aliens, even if they were born in the United States—were included, whether they were in steerage or in cabin class. Virtually no non-Asian U.S. citizens were included; they undoubtedly would have been admitted with nothing more than a cursory shipboard inspection. To verify these assumptions, we inspected a dozen customs passenger lists which, in contrast to the passenger manifests provided to the Immigration Service, listed all passengers, whether aliens or not (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service n.d.-a, n.d.-b). We concluded that the PMSS records are a reasonable approximation of the universe of passengers “eligible” to be sent to Angel Island.

Limitations in the Data

There are several potential limitations in the data. First, it is possible that the data are not representative of the period they cover (1913–19). Second, while it is tempting to apply our findings to the entire life of the Angel Island Immigration Station, the data may not allow us to do so. How representative were the passengers of the PMSS? These were American ships; might passengers on the Japanese-owned Toyo Kisen Kaisha (TKK) line, the Chinese American-owned China Mail Steamship Company, or other non-American lines have been treated differently?

For the first half of our data period, the PMSS was clearly the dominant carrier of passengers between San Francisco and Asia. During the years 1913–15 the PMSS carried over 50 percent of the traffic going from San Francisco to Japan and China and presumably had a similar proportion of the inbound traffic. Although steamship lines participated in passenger “conferences” or

cartels to fix prices, there was enough nonprice competition to ensure that no one line would have an advantage in getting its passengers admitted more quickly than the others. The percentage of noncitizen/alien passengers was about the same on the PMSS (63 percent) as the other lines competing on those routes—the TKK (71 percent) and the China Mail Steamship Company (57 percent in 1917). We take this as a sign that arrivals were not given differential consideration solely on the basis of the passenger line on which they sailed. It seems appropriate to generalize from the PMSS figures for those years to the other lines bringing passengers into San Francisco.⁶

A major change in the PMSS occurred in late 1915, when the company sold its transpacific fleet, which reemerged the following year under different ownership. The change of ownership profoundly influenced both the migrations reflected in our data and the data themselves. Before the sale the PMSS had been a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The large ships of its Pacific fleet—the *Manchuria*, the *Mongolia*, the *Siberia*, the *Korea*, and the *China*—brought Chinese and Japanese as well as Russians and others to the United States, frequently sending them “in transit” to third countries, such as Mexico, Cuba, and Panama, in other conveyances owned by the Southern Pacific or the PMSS. When the PMSS reappeared in 1916 after its purchase by W. R. Grace and Company, it was a very different outfit. There were smaller ships, no Japanese passengers as Japan was not on its route, and no direct ties to the Southern Pacific Railroad (de la Pedraja 1992: 13–22; Kemble 1950).

For the years 1916–19 the PMSS had only a 10 percent share of the passenger traffic across the North Pacific. Thus for these years the PMSS data become less representative of the shipping business into and out of San Francisco. Even though there was no diminution in the level of Japanese immigration, the absence of virtually any Japanese passengers makes the PMSS data unrepresentative of Asian migration through that port for those years.

Changes in ownership were accompanied by bookkeeping changes as well. Where pre-1916 records showed a wealth of data on the Chinese passengers—remarks on the destinations of those in transit and the basis on which others were admitted to the United States—information of that sort was not recorded by the new ownership’s clerks. This limits the usefulness of the data from the 1916–19 period. Of note as well is the lack of information about gender for non-Chinese passengers. This is particularly unfortunate regarding Japanese passengers, as many so-called picture brides entered during this

period.⁷ While we do not know how many of them are in our sample, in 1916 the Immigration Service reported that nearly half of all arriving Japanese—immigrants and nonimmigrants combined—were women.⁸

Our method for determining a passenger's "origin" is admittedly unscientific. Prior to 1916 the PMSS clerks made various notations as to origin: Ch(inese), J(apanese), Rus(sian), and occasionally some other nationality. But beginning in 1916 this procedure was abandoned, reducing one to educated guesses—Nakamura is assumed to be Japanese, and Choy or Wong, even if the first name is Manuel or Christina, is taken to be Chinese. Some of the arbitrariness of this method is mitigated by the practice of entering Chinese or Japanese passengers on separate lists in the passenger manifests and by entries indicating only for the Chinese their category of admissibility under the Chinese Exclusion Act. There were probably some Koreans mingled with those designated as Japanese, but at that time they were not numerous.⁹

Several major discontinuities might affect the usefulness of the data. During 1914–15 the Panama Pacific Exhibition took place in San Francisco, and the exhibition's success particularly depended on the participation of Asians. It is conceivable that the Immigration Service was less stringent in its processing of Asian arrivals, especially laborers, during that period. However, we see no evidence for this in the data, and in any event, laborers represent but a small portion of our population. Another discontinuity was the political divide created by the Immigration Act of 1917, which created the so-called barred zone that effectively prohibited the admission of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.¹⁰ The immediate effect of this act on the number of Asians admitted to the United States was small, however, and we think it should not add to the limitations described above.

Finally, it must be noted that the brother of Anthony Caminetti, the commissioner general of immigration, ran the food concession at Angel Island. This may be why the Immigration Service was so serious about collecting payment for each and every meal. It would of course be cynical to wonder if detention spells were dragged out just for the benefit of the commissioner general's brother.

Findings from the Descriptive Statistics

We discuss first the descriptive statistics from the PMSS data that give us a general picture of how long people were detained at Angel Island. There

follows an examination of the principal factors that might have influenced variation in the length of detention: origin, class of accommodation, year of arrival, and for Chinese passengers, exempt status and gender. We leave for the inferential analysis section a discussion of other possible explanatory factors, such as whether a ship had a high percentage of passengers in transit or whether the ship had crossed the Pacific or had come from ports in Central America.

The question “How long were arrivals detained at Angel Island?” contains an implied “on average,” yet averages are sometimes misleading. We might ask, “Average for whom?” Shall we count every “alien” for whom there is an entry in the ledgers—even those who were inspected by the Immigration Service aboard ship but were not sent to Angel Island? If we include everyone in the data set, the mean stay was 7.1 nights, and the median stay was 2.0. Fully 8,873 of the “aliens” in the record (30 percent) never set foot on Angel Island; the number of nights for their stay was 0, and excluding them raises the mean considerably, up to 10.2 nights. For this latter group—those who were detained for any time at all—the median length of detention was just 4 nights (see table 1). Such large differences between the median and the mean indicate that the mean was pulled up by a relatively small number of people detained for very long periods.

Statistics on length of detention for arriving passengers are shown in table 1. Lengthy detentions were rare. Nearly 60 percent of the passengers were kept three or fewer days, with just over 5 percent kept longer than a month. The longest period of detention was for a Chinese arriving in August 1915: kept in the hospital for 31 days, in the detention center for 289 days, then deported, at a cost to the PMSS of \$109.55 plus return passage to Hong Kong, usually charged at \$51.

Were people of different origins accorded differential treatment? From table 1, it is clear that Chinese and Japanese were detained longer than all others, referred to in this article as non-Asians and including Hispanics, Russians, Germans, English, the sample’s 140 Indians, and a handful of passengers from the Philippines and Siam. Many Chinese (24 percent) did not go to Angel Island at all, but those who did were most likely to be detained for lengthy periods (19.4 percent were detained more than two weeks). Almost all Japanese (89.6 percent) were detained at Angel Island, but usually for only three or fewer days. Most non-Asians were likely to avoid Angel Island altogether or to have a very short stay there. Chinese comprised 70 percent

of those who spent any time at all on Angel Island, a rate that held constant over each individual year in the data set. Figure 1 demonstrates these differences in group detention profiles in a more graphic way: the Kaplan-Meier survival curves show the proportion of individuals in a particular group still detained after a given number of days.

Table 3 provides more detail on Chinese passengers. Some Chinese passengers were not detained at all, and the second data column in table 3 provides a detailed breakdown by “exempt status” for those Chinese who spent no time at Angel Island but were, presumably, admitted directly from the ship. It reinforces the conclusions that certain categories, especially “son of merchant,” tended to be detained longer or more often than others and that Chinese in almost any category might be spared detention on the island. This is consistent with the notion that Immigration Service inspectors were especially concerned with uncovering “paper sons,” although suspicion seems to have fallen harder on “alleged sons” of merchants, as the Immigration Service characterized them, than on “alleged sons” of natives.

As table 1 shows, “origin” counts for much of the variation in length of detention. But when looking at the wide variation among Chinese passengers only, several other factors are possible candidates, including the category under which people were admitted as exempt from the Chinese Exclusion Act, year of arrival, gender, and class of accommodation. Table 3 shows the mean and median length of detention for the various “exempt” groups—that is, those Chinese entitled to enter the United States—and for groups not entering the United States, which included those deported and those in transit to third countries.

Table 3 presents the various categories of Chinese admitted to the United States in descending order of their median length of detention. Ignoring those deported or in transit, two of the longest-detained categories were “son of merchant” and “son of native,” men generally suspected by the Immigration Service of trying to enter fraudulently as “paper sons.” Merchants and natives returning to the United States were, on average, detained for far shorter periods (5.0 days and 2.7 days, respectively) than were men claiming to be “son of merchant” or “son of native” (23.1 days and 16.0 days).

Table 3 also addresses our expectation that women were detained longer. In the early part of the exclusion era the Immigration Service tended to reject women as suspected prostitutes (Chan 1991a; Lee 2003: 93). However, following California’s Red-Light Abatement Act of 1913, Chinese and

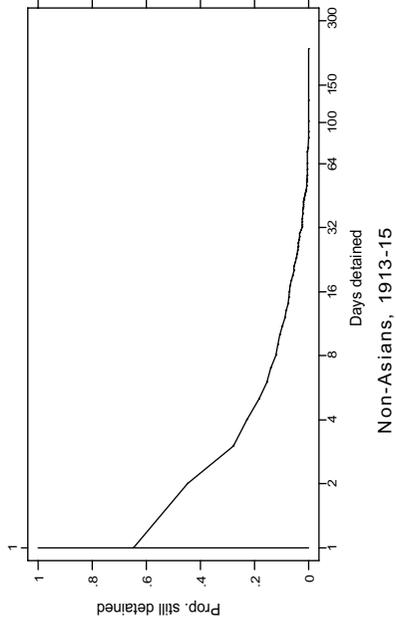
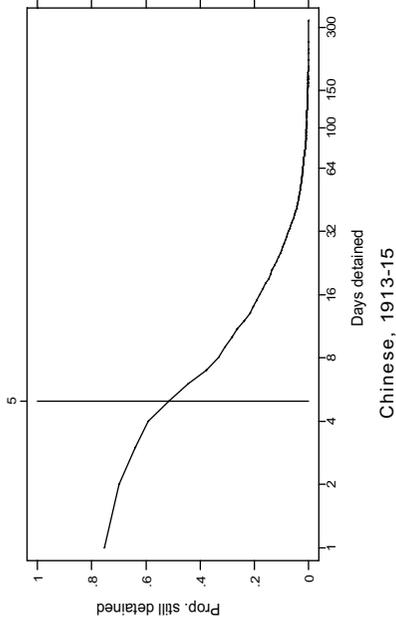
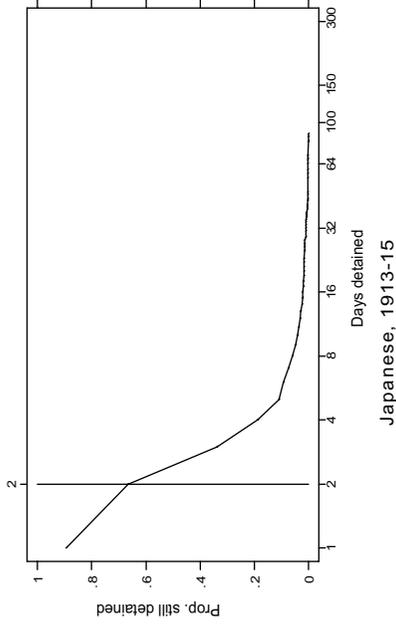


Figure 1 Survival curves of time in detention, by origin, 1913-15

Notes: Estimated Kaplan-Meier survival curves of the proportion of individuals detained on Angel Island during the years 1913-15. Logarithmic scale of the number of days detained. The vertical lines in each figure mark the median number of detention days for that particular group during the time period. The median for each group is different from the one reported in table 1 because the inferential analysis uses data for the period 1913-15.

Table 3 Length of detention of Chinese, by exempt status, 1913–15

Category	Number in category	Number detained 0 days	Mean number of days	Median number of days
Deported	757	18	34.0	24
Son of merchant	1,302	41	23.1	20
Son of native	1,705	428	16.0	12
Female dependent of native	138	17	11.1	9
Female dependent of merchant	160	18	10.5	7
Transit	3,895	157	6.3	6
Unclear	8	3	15.0	6
Bond	30	0	3.0	3
Section 6 merchant	53	9	6.2	3
Laborer	647	210	3.4	2
Merchant	1,938	385	5.0	2
Son of other exempt	43	19	8.5	2
Female dependent of other exempt	41	36	0.5	0
Hawaiian	60	56	0.2	0
Native	1,785	1,386	2.7	0
Other exempt	226	184	1.1	0
Son of laborer	4	3	7.8	0
Student	510	331	2.2	0
Total	13,302	3,301	10.0	5

Sources: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15, 1915–18.

other prostitution diminished and presumably became less of an issue in the “sifting” process (Yung 1995: 76). By 1915 the Immigration Service was following a Supreme Court ruling that “the lawful wife and minor children of a Chinese of the exempt classes may be admitted [without extensive documentation] . . . because the husband is entitled to the company of the wife and . . . the children” (quoted in McKeown 1999: 81). The data on the 339 passengers specifically identified as women, all of whom were Chinese, are presented in three sponsor categories in the table. The data for all Chinese women, however, confirm that they had a slightly higher incidence of detention than Chinese men (79.1 percent compared to 76.0 percent, statistics not reported in the table), but when they were detained, it was for fewer days than for men; their mean length of detention (9.5 days) was less than that of all Chinese men in the sample (10.1 days).

In looking at the length of detention of various “exempt” classes, the data might illuminate the actual operation of the exclusion process. Was this pro-

cess, at least in its 1913–19 incarnation, operationalized in such a way that it harassed all Chinese? Or had it become more selective and routinized, focusing its detention and inspection facilities on those whose documents were most likely to be fraudulent? The latter is in keeping with the interpretation recently advanced by Lee (2002: 55) that “the issuance and institutionalization of such documentary requirements verifying Chinese immigrants’ rights to enter, re-enter, and remain in the country codified a highly organized system of control and surveillance over the Chinese in America.” Its significance, as noted by Lee (*ibid.*), is that “this method of processing and tracking immigrants eventually became central to America’s control of immigrants and immigration in the twentieth century.”

Suspicious about the authenticity of their documentation had long plagued Chinese in their dealings with American immigration authorities. In addition to the authorities’ general suspicions of the honesty of all Chinese, certain forms of documentation were more open to fraud. Claims to “native” status were complicated by the destruction in the 1906 earthquake and fire of all birth certificates housed in San Francisco. “Domiciled merchants” already in the United States and desirous of returning obtained a form issued by immigration authorities in the United States, while merchants coming for the first time obtained a “Section 6 merchant” certificate from an American consular officer overseas. Claims to merchant status were undermined by suspicions that many Chinese laborers simply purchased a fictitious interest in a Chinese firm not for the purpose of actually doing business but for evading the exclusion laws. Immigration inspectors looked with extreme skepticism on claims of births and marriages having taken place in China. These suspicions were not unfounded, since Lee (1998: 353) notes “both Chinese and government sources estimated that ninety percent of the Chinese who applied for admission during the exclusion era did so under false pretenses.”

Also presented in table 3 are data on passengers who were not admitted to the United States. Passengers “in transit” to another country and thus with no intention of remaining in the United States were detained, on average, nearly a week. As one would expect, passengers eventually deported had the longest mean stay of any group (over one month); unfortunately we do not know the basis for their claim of eligibility for entry.

Table 4 looks at whether the treatment of arrivals changed over time. The period under consideration is rather short, a mere seven years, but even here there is, for example, a dramatic change in the mean stay for Chinese between 1913 (7.9 days) and 1915 (12.2 days). The cause of such change is not

Table 4 Detention by year, 1913–19

Year	All non-Chinese passengers		Chinese passengers	
	Mean (standard deviation)	Median	Mean (standard deviation)	Median
1913	3.5 (9.60)	2	7.9 (12.50)	5
1914	3.1 (5.79)	2	9.4 (13.01)	6
1915	3.7 (7.72)	2	12.2 (24.07)	4
1916	1.5 (4.87)	0	10.0 (15.63)	5
1917	1.1 (4.93)	0	7.3 (21.05)	2
1918	1.1 (6.52)	0	12.6 (20.00)	4
1919	0.7 (3.66)	0	14.9 (17.09)	12

Sources: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15, 1915–18.

revealed by the data, although the increased length of detention in 1915 seems to refute the notion that the Panama Pacific Exhibition led San Francisco to be more hospitable to arriving Chinese.

It was widely believed among travelers that the “better classes” were treated better in that they received more cursory health inspections and a greater readiness to accept claims to exempt status. Using class of accommodations as a proxy for socioeconomic class, our data (not included in the tables) confirm this, but in a limited sense. The 5.7 percent of passengers who traveled in “first cabin” had a mean detention time of just 0.7 days. This treatment was far more lenient than that of the 6.1 percent of passengers traveling in “second cabin,” with a median detention time of 6.1 days, and the 7.6 days of the majority of passengers who traveled in steerage. We explore this phenomenon further in the next sections.

Analyzing the Data as a Sample of All Arrivals

Can the results of the descriptive analysis be extended to the entire population of passengers arriving at Angel Island from 1913 to 1919? Assuming that

our 29,344 observations are a representative sample of the entire universe of passengers arriving at San Francisco during this period, we test whether and to what extent our sample findings might apply to all 95,000 “alien arrivals” (Sakovich 2002: 230–31) through this port.

We estimate a series of logit models to assess whether there was variation by origin in the odds of being detained, first for all 1913–15 arrivals, then for just Chinese passengers, because we have more detailed observations on the individual characteristics of the latter group. The estimated equation is

$$Y_{ic} = 1[\alpha + X_{ic}'\beta + P_t'\delta + \epsilon_{ic} > 0], \quad (1)$$

where Y_{ic} is an indicator variable equal to 1 if passenger i in voyage c was detained and 0 otherwise; X_{ic} is a set of recorded characteristics of passenger i , with specific recorded characteristics discussed in the results and analysis sections below; P_t is a vector of time indicators; and ϵ_{ic} is a disturbance term assumed to have a logistic distribution. These assumptions allow us to estimate the odds ratio of a one-unit increase in variable x_i as $\exp[\beta_i]$, where β_i is the coefficient estimate of x_i . In terms of interpretation of the estimates, the odds ratio compares the odds of detention given a change in one unit of variable x_i . These are reported in the analysis below.¹¹

In addition we estimate duration (hazard) regression models to ascertain whether the detention spells, not just the detention rates, differed by group or by individuals' characteristics. We experimented with various parametric and semiparametric specifications and determined that a generalized log-gamma model provides the best fit to the data. In this type of model, $\ln t_{ic}$, the natural logarithm of the “survival time,” or period of time detained, is expressed as a linear function of the covariates

$$\ln t_{ic} = \alpha + X_{ic}'\beta + P_t'\delta + \epsilon_{ic}, \quad (2)$$

where X_{ic} and P_t are as defined above, and ϵ_{ic} is a disturbance term assumed to have a gamma distribution. Again, the specific covariates used in the duration models are discussed in the results and analysis sections below. The effect of this accelerated-failure-time model is to change the time scale by a factor of $\exp[-X_{ic}'\beta]$ to fit the survival function, which in this case is the probability of still being detained given that the individual had already been detained t number of days. If the coefficient is positive (negative), the predicted period of time detained, or survival rate, increases (decreases), given a marginal increase in the value of the covariate (Stata Corporation 1999). The

reported coefficients based on this model are ordinally related to the period of time detained; that is, we can identify the characteristics associated with individuals' length of detention and rank the intensity of their effects. However, differences in the hazard rates by passenger characteristics cannot be computed analytically using this model.¹²

Since it is possible that there existed a large amount of idiosyncratic day-to-day variation in the decision to detain an individual and in the length of detention and that this variation may have changed from voyage to voyage, we assume in the empirical analysis that these unobserved factors are correlated within voyage but are independent across voyages. Therefore we allow the disturbance terms in both equations (1) and (2) to be correlated within voyage and implement a robust estimator of the coefficient standard errors by clustering the disturbance terms in the regression by the voyage in which the individual arrived.¹³

A distinction must be made between interpretations based on the descriptive results and inferences that can be made about the entire passenger population. Since the inferential analysis is based on the assumption of random sampling, it could lead to conclusions that diverge from the descriptive analysis. This may explain the results for women, one of the few instances where our conclusions from the descriptive statistics diverge from the inferential analyses. Thus the Chinese women who at first appear to have been only slightly more likely to be detained than Chinese men are demonstrated to have been significantly more likely to have been detained.

Probability of Being Detained

Table 5 examines the odds of detention for all passengers during the years 1913–15 and presents estimates based on logit statistical models. We estimate a series of models in which the odds of detention are determined by the individual's origin—Chinese or Japanese relative to all non-Asians, the omitted group that includes Russians, other non-Asians, and Indians; the class of accommodation in which the individual was traveling as a proxy for socioeconomic status—first- and second-class relative to steerage passengers, the omitted group; whether the individual was in transit as opposed to having the United States as final destination; the mean number of in-transit individuals in the voyage; and indicator variables for the years 1914 and 1915, allowing us to estimate the odds ratio of detention in those years relative to 1913. Since

good origin data for both Chinese and Japanese are available only for the period 1913–15, the analysis is restricted to those years. The analysis covers all individuals (table 5, regressions 1–2) and then nontransit passengers only (regressions 3–4).

Differences by origin in the likelihood of being detained are very marked. Japanese passengers were consistently more likely to be detained than all others during this period; for example, Japanese passengers were 4.5 times more likely to be detained than non-Asians (regressions 1–2) and 4.17 times more likely to be detained than Chinese passengers (standard error 1.25 [$p < 0.01$], not shown in the table). Interestingly, this difference in detention rates of Japanese passengers did not change substantially over the admittedly short period of 1913–15. We estimate a model which allows for the odds ratios of detention to vary by year for Chinese and Japanese passengers, relative to non-Asians (regressions 2 and 4). A chi-square test of the differences in the odds ratios between Japanese passengers and non-Asians over time fails to reject the null hypothesis that the odds of detention of Japanese passengers was constant over time ($\chi^2(2) = 0.81$, not shown in the table).

The odds of detention of Chinese passengers were not significantly different from those of non-Asians over this time period (regressions 1–4). However, detention rates for all groups increased significantly over the course of this period as shown by the odds ratio from the year 1914 and 1915 indicators. Passengers entering the United States were approximately 1.5 times more likely to be detained during 1914 and 1915 relative to 1913 (the coefficient is significant in regressions 1–3).

Estimates show that individuals traveling in first or second class were less likely to be detained than those in steerage, as can be noted from the estimated odds ratios, 0.06 for first-class and 0.56 for second-class passengers. It is thus reasonable to infer that individuals from relatively lower perceived socioeconomic status were substantially more likely to be detained. Also, the in-transit individuals were 10 times more likely to be detained than nontransit passengers. Lastly, the odds of detention did not change depending on the proportion of in-transit individuals in the voyage.

Detention Rates for Chinese Passengers

As shown in the descriptive analysis, there was substantial variation in the treatment of Chinese passengers depending on their individual characteris-

Table 5 Adjusted odds of detention for all passengers entering San Francisco, by origin and class of accommodation, 1913–15

Dependent variable	Passenger detained		Dependent variable	Passenger detained	
	Logit (1)	Logit (2)		Logit (3)	Logit (4)
Chinese, all periods (vs. non-Asians)	1.15 (0.21)	1.08 (0.20)	Chinese, 1913 (vs. non-Asians, 1913)	1.03 (0.32)	0.68 (0.20)
Japanese, all periods (vs. non-Asians)	4.82** (1.22)	4.56** (1.15)	Chinese, 1914 (vs. non-Asians, 1914)	1.41 (1.31)	1.40 (1.31)
			Chinese, 1915 (vs. non-Asians, 1915)	1.53 (1.38)	1.10 (1.39)
			Japanese, 1913 (vs. non-Asians, 1913)	6.35** (1.80)	4.58** (1.24)
			Japanese, 1914 (vs. non-Asians, 1914)	4.17** (1.50)	4.21** (1.50)
			Japanese, 1915 (vs. non-Asians, 1915)	5.21** (1.47)	5.18** (1.47)
Year 1914 (vs. 1913)	1.45** (0.20)	1.52** (0.22)	Non-Asians, 1914 (vs. non-Asians, 1913)	1.45** (0.20)	0.90 (0.33)

Year 1915 (vs. 1913)	1.36*	1.50**	Non-Asians, 1915	1.36*	1.03
	(0.20)	(0.21)	(vs. non-Asians, 1913)	(0.20)	(0.41)
First class	0.06**	0.07**	First class	0.06**	0.07**
(vs. steerage)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(vs. steerage)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Second class	0.56*	0.56*	Second class	0.56*	0.56*
(vs. steerage)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(vs. steerage)	(0.13)	(0.14)
In transit	10.16**		In transit	10.34**	
(vs. entering U.S.)	(3.11)		(vs. entering U.S.)	(3.17)	
Proportion of in-transit	1.39	1.52	Proportion of in-transit	1.39	1.55
passengers in voyage	(0.62)	(0.69)	passengers in voyage	(0.60)	(0.68)
Sample	All passengers	Nontransit		All passengers	Nontransit
Observations	21,052	17,157		21,052	17,157

Source: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15.

Notes: Odds ratios from logistic regressions reported; robust standard errors in parentheses, where correlation in errors is allowed within voyage. Statistically significant at $p < 0.10$ (+), $p < 0.05$ (*), and $p < 0.01$ (**). Columns 1 and 3 report estimates for the “all passengers” sample, whereas columns 2 and 4 report these for the “nontransit passengers” subsamples. The estimates reported for Chinese, 1914 and 1915, and Japanese, 1914 and 1915, are linear combinations of the main effect and an interaction term of the origin indicator and an indicator for the appropriate year and represent the odds ratio between the former and non-Asians for the year in question.

tics. We therefore estimate a series of logit models of the odds of detention to disentangle the variation in detention rates by these observable characteristics. A first specification uses the following explanatory variables: female passengers, relative to males; arriving from Asia, relative to those arriving from the Americas; an indicator variable for passengers with exempt status, relative to nonexempt passengers; and variables indicating in-transit individuals, the proportion of in-transit individuals in the voyage, the class of accommodation in which the individual was traveling, and year indicators, as defined above. A second specification further classifies passengers by specific exempt categories, relative to bonded laborers and sons of other exempt passengers; see table 6 for the complete decomposition.¹⁴ A “bonded laborer” was one who had “almost, but not quite, established his right to enter” and was released on \$2,000 bond pending resolution of his case.¹⁵ Since the only detailed characteristics for Chinese passengers in our data are for the period 1913–15, we restrict the analysis to that time frame.

The odds ratios of detention, by the available observable characteristics for all Chinese individuals arriving during 1913–15, are reported in table 6. Female passengers were 2.65 times as likely to be detained as their male counterparts (regression 1). When further decomposing categories by male and female subgroups, we see much more variation in the odds of detention of female passengers: female dependents of natives and of merchants were 5.1 and 6.0 times more likely to be detained than the omitted category, whereas female dependents of other exempt categories have 0.10 odds of detention relative to the omitted category (regression 2). Thus there was substantial variation in the treatment of females, largely a function of their sponsors’ exempt status. Chinese in-transit individuals were 12.6 or 11.3 times more likely to be detained than their respective nontransit counterparts, depending on the specification. Also, individuals in ships with a larger proportion of in-transit passengers were more likely to be detained; passengers arriving in a ship with one standard deviation (16.7 percentage points) greater proportion of in-transit passengers were 1.6 times ($3.68 \times 0.167 \approx 0.61$) as likely to be detained. This may have been because of congestion effects, as there were too few immigration officers for the passengers needing examination, or because a large number of in-transit passengers on any particular voyage made the inspectors suspicious and resulted in lengthier examinations.

Interestingly, individuals in first class were 0.12 times as likely to be detained as steerage-class individuals, whereas their counterparts in second

Table 6 Odds and length of detention: Variation by individual characteristics for Chinese passengers, 1913–15

Dependent variables	Detained passenger		Period of time detained	
	Logit (1)	Logit (2)	Hazard (3)	Hazard (4)
Female (vs. male)	2.65** (0.53)	0.53 (0.42)	0.07 (0.09)	-1.03** (0.12)
Arriving from Asia (vs. Central America)	0.57 (0.46)	2.95 (2.91)	0.23 (0.19)	0.30+ (0.17)
In-transit individual	12.61** (4.41)	11.34** (6.02)	-0.68** (0.08)	0.07 (0.33)
Proportion of in-transit passengers in voyage	3.68** (1.63)	2.23+ (0.95)	0.05 (0.14)	-0.09 (0.13)
First-class passengers (vs. steerage)	0.12** (0.05)	0.08** (0.03)	-0.63** (0.17)	-0.56** (0.17)
Second-class passengers (vs. steerage)	1.78** (0.33)	2.23** (0.58)	-0.41** (0.05)	-0.16** (0.05)
Year 1914 (vs. 1913)	2.21** (0.32)	3.25** (0.60)	0.08 (0.08)	0.26** (0.08)
Year 1915 (vs. 1913)	1.94** (0.33)	2.26** (0.48)	-0.10 (0.06)	0.03 (0.07)
Exempt individual (vs. nonexempt) (Groups below: See notes for groups compared to)	0.24** (0.10)		-0.53** (0.11)	
Native		0.07** (0.03)		-0.18 (0.32)
Laborer		0.64 (0.27)		-0.61+ (0.33)
Merchant		1.18 (0.52)		-0.40 (0.33)
Section 6 merchant		1.49 (0.54)		-0.18 (0.36)
Student		0.17* (0.12)		-0.22 (0.33)
Son of native		0.86 (0.35)		1.04** (0.32)
Son of laborer		0.10 (0.17)		1.85** (0.33)
Son of merchant		10.4** (5.70)		1.23** (0.31)
Other exempt		0.07** (0.03)		-0.06 (0.31)

Table 6 (continued)

Dependent variables	Detained passenger		Period of time detained	
	Logit (1)	Logit (2)	Hazard (3)	Hazard (4)
Female dependent of native		5.06+		1.63**
	(4.78)		(0.34)	
Female dependent of merchant		5.95+		1.52**
	(5.82)		(0.33)	
Female dependent of other exempt		0.10*		0.51
	(0.11)		(0.52)	
Hawaiian		0.02**		-0.79
	(0.02)		(0.52)	
Deported		13.15**		1.38**
	(6.66)		(0.34)	
Constant			2.20**	1.32**
			(0.26)	(0.39)
Observations	13,162	13,162	9,785	9,785

Source: Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913–15.

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses; statistically significant at $p < 0.10$ (+), $p < 0.05$ (*), and $p < 0.01$ (**). For logit regressions (columns 1 and 2), reported are marginal effects at the mean values of the explanatory variables; for AFT survival model regressions, coefficient estimates from a log-gamma model are reported. Omitted group for entry categories in columns 2 and 4 are bonded laborers and sons of other exempt individuals.

class were 1.78 times as likely to be detained. This result suggests that while the tactic of “buying up” from steerage to first cabin to avoid detention may have been a good strategy for Chinese passengers, “buying up” only to second cabin was counterproductive. Also, the estimate on exempt individuals, including ministers, officials, and students (see note 14), suggests that they were 0.24 times as likely to be detained as nonexempt passengers. Furthermore, table 6 shows that detention rates for Chinese individuals increased during 1914 and 1915 relative to 1913, as seen from the year indicator variables.

There was also substantial variation among the exempt and nonexempt categories (regression 2). Natives, students, “Hawaiians”—many of whom were actually Chinese—and other exempt passengers were significantly less likely to be detained than the omitted category, whereas sons of merchants were significantly more likely to be detained than the omitted group. The specific odds ratios can be seen in table 6, regression 2.

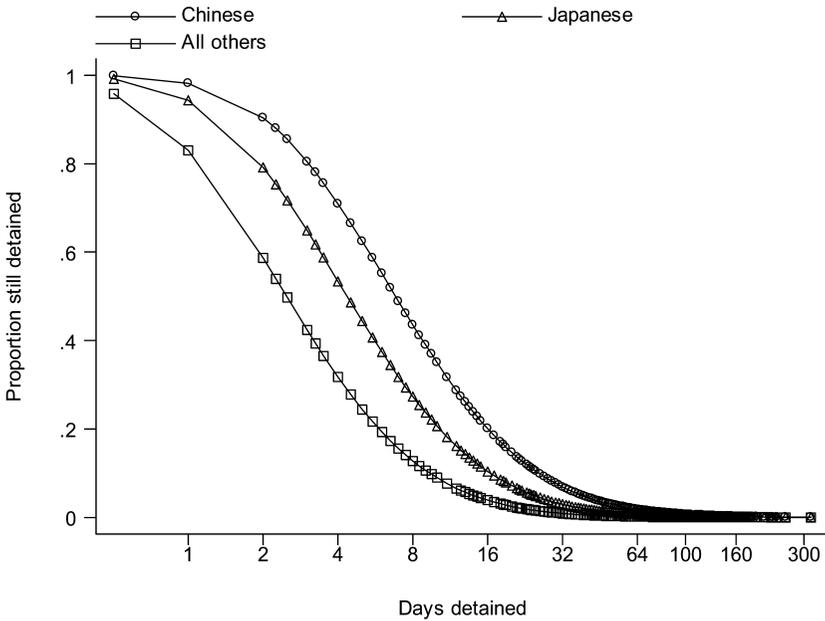


Figure 2 Fitted detention survival curves, by origin, 1913–15

Notes: Estimated survival curves of the proportion of individuals detained on Angel Island by the number of days detained. Fitted curves from the estimated accelerated-failure-time hazard model (gamma distribution). Logarithmic scale of the number of days detained.

Length of Detention for All Passengers

The following analysis expands the previous empirical results by estimating the variations in the length of detention by individual characteristics. This analysis allows us to compare whether the detention spells in general, not just the detention rates, differed by group. As discussed above, we estimate a series of duration models to determine the correlation between the passenger’s length of detention and the recorded individual characteristics: origin, year of arrival, class of accommodation, in-transit status, and proportion of in-transit passengers, as defined above. We present predicted survival curves by passengers’ origins from the estimated models in figure 2.¹⁶

Chinese passengers were likely to have significantly longer detention spells than both Japanese and non-Asian individuals. The joint $\chi^2(2)$ test statistic of these hypotheses is 371.9 ($p < 0.01$). Japanese and non-Asian passengers suffered similar detention spells during this time period; the coeffi-

cient from the duration model regression for Japanese relative to non-Asians is -0.13 (standard error 0.09 ; insignificant at usual significance levels). Lastly, in-transit passengers and first- and second-class passengers suffered significantly shorter detention spells than nontransit and steerage passengers, respectively.

Length of Detention Spells for Chinese Passengers

We use the survival model framework to explore the differences in relative length of detention for Chinese individuals by their individual characteristics (table 6, regressions 3 and 4) and present estimated survival curves of this model for various observable categories to show the magnitude of differences in detention spells (see figure 3). The estimated models are analogous to the logit detention rate models in terms of the explanatory variables included. Note that the coefficients of the hazard model should be interpreted as an ordinal difference: a positive (or negative) coefficient implies that the group of interest suffered a longer (or shorter) detention spell than the excluded reference group.

First, in-transit individuals were likely to be detained for shorter time periods than those not in transit; the coefficient estimate is negative (-0.68). However, this association is not robust to the decomposition of categories in column 4, so we cannot conclude firmly on this association. Females suffered, on average, similar detention spells as males even though they were more likely to be detained, as discussed earlier. Again, however, we discover substantial amounts of variation in the treatment of women based on their specific entry categories: female dependents of natives (coefficient = 1.63) and of merchants (coefficient = 1.52) suffered significantly longer detention spells than the reference group (bonded laborers and sons of other exempt), whereas female dependents of other exempts (coefficient = 0.51) did not suffer significantly longer detention spells, and other females (coefficient = -1.03) suffered significantly shorter detention spells than the reference group.

In addition, first- and second-class travelers were likely to be detained for significantly shorter periods than steerage-class travelers, as seen in both specifications; the estimates are -0.63 and -0.56 for the former and -0.41 and -0.16 for the latter. Interestingly, this analysis indicates that exempt passengers experienced significantly shorter detention spells than nonexempt

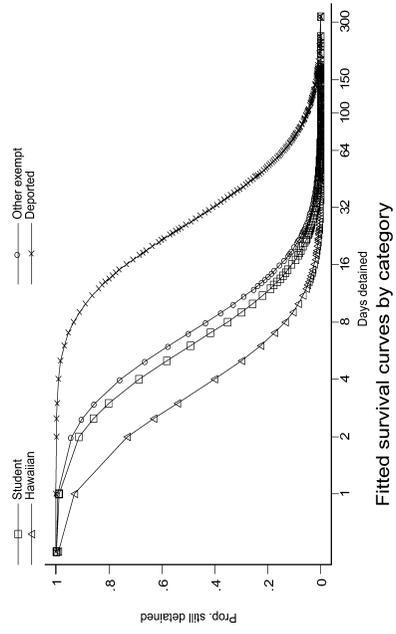
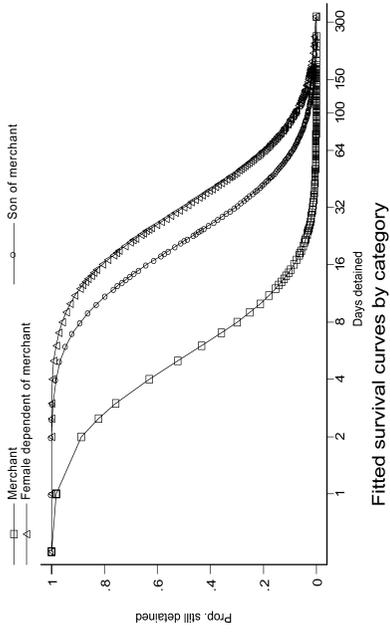
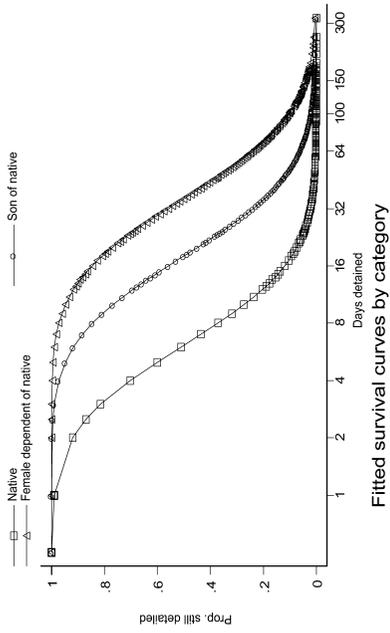


Figure 3 Fitted survival curves by category, Chinese passengers, 1913–15

Notes: Estimated survival curves of the proportion of individuals detained on Angel Island by the number of days detained. Fitted curves from the estimated accelerated-failure-time hazard model (gamma distribution); see table 6 for the estimated parameters. Logarithmic scale of the number of days detained.

passengers, even after controlling for the class of traveler. Such results suggest that immigration officials gave different treatment to different groups of Chinese depending on their perceived socioeconomic status and the immigration laws at the time.

To explore the extent of this differential treatment further, we decompose the exempt status category into the various assigned status groups, such as merchant, native, or student, and test whether there was significant variation in detention spells by observed detailed passenger entrant category (table 6, column 4). This decomposition demonstrates that natives, laborers, merchants, Section 6 merchants, students, other exempt passengers, Hawaiians, and bonded laborers and sons of other exempt suffered similar detention spells; none of these estimates is significantly different from 0. However, male and female dependents of natives and merchants did suffer significantly longer detention spells than the omitted group and also relative to their respective parent or sponsor categories. As expected, deported passengers suffered substantially longer detention spells than other passenger subgroups; most appealed their deportation, and administrative and judicial appeals took time, as Quok Shee's case demonstrated.

These results are illustrated in figure 3, which shows the predicted survival curves of each subgroup of interest. The top-left and top-right panels show the striking difference in detention spells suffered by dependent subgroups. Joint tests of equality in detention spells between merchants and their sons and female dependents and between natives and their respective dependents reject the null hypothesis of equal spells at 0.01 significance levels ($\chi^2(2) = 337.2$ and 168.1 , respectively). Note also the difference in the detention spells of eventually deported passengers from other subgroups (bottom-left panel). In summary, these results show quite graphically the varying relationship between length of detention and the particular exempt status of individuals attempting to enter the United States.

Conclusion

The data on which this article is based represent fewer than 10 percent of those who were detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station during its 30 years as a functioning Immigration Service facility. They do not change our basic knowledge about Angel Island: that Chinese made up most of the detainees and were detained longer than other groups. But the data do add some interesting and important findings.

We now know for certain that many Chinese were not detained at all. Most Chinese were detained for relatively short periods, the median period of detention for Chinese being six days. There was great variation in the length of time that Chinese were detained, significantly correlated to but not entirely explained by the type of “exempt” status under which they claimed eligibility for admission. Many of the people detained were not even trying to enter the United States but were in transit to a third country. Traveling in cabin class, for Chinese, as opposed to steerage was associated with a slightly shorter time in detention for those in first class but with a longer time for those in second class. Chinese women were much more likely to be detained than Chinese men but were not detained appreciably longer. Japanese were significantly more likely than Chinese to be detained but for substantially shorter periods. Substantial numbers of non-Asians, including many coming from Latin America and Russia, were detained.¹⁷

In three important ways the new data presented here might change our views of how immigration policy was administered. First, by the period under consideration, the exclusion process had grown far beyond the original goal of excluding or severely restricting Chinese laborers. Substantial numbers of Japanese, Russians, and Indians were caught in the net of exclusion and sent to Angel Island for detention.

Second, the large number of non-Asian detainees points toward a convergence of anti-Asian, pro-exclusion policies with the nativist, anti-immigrant sentiment that led to the Immigration Act of 1924, a quota system based on “national origins,” and the end of largely unrestricted immigration—except for Asians, of course, whose entry had long been restricted. Third, much of the variation, whether at a discrete point in time involving a single ship or across years, seems random; that is, uncorrelated with changes in official national policy. This is probably due to the proclivities of the staff at Angel Island and changes in local political pressures to enforce exclusion or not. But it also points to the larger problem, as Adam McKeown (2003: 378–79) has noted, that the exclusion laws “were a resounding failure in the more ambitious task of determining the status of each applicant.”

Our findings about rates and length of detention, based on data from 1913 to 1919, may or may not be applicable to the entire life of the Angel Island Immigration Station. The end of the First World War brought a vastly changed economic environment. With greater trade and a rise in tourism, ships used in the transpacific passenger business changed significantly after World War I. In the mid-1920s the American President Lines, successor to

the Dollar Line that had acquired the PMSS, began using very large, faster ships, as did its Japanese competitors (de la Pedraja 1992: 110–29). The arrival of large ships may have made inspection more difficult or created some other sort of congestion.

But the largest changes surely would have come from the Immigration Act of May 26, 1924, and the introduction of the national origins quota system. This act produced a dramatic decline in the number of Asians admitted to the United States. It also greatly changed the way arrivals were processed and their claims to admissibility vetted: previously, the “sifting” had been done on arrival by inspectors at the immigration station (Gee 1999); henceforth much but not all of it would be done by U.S. consular officers overseas charged with issuing visas in the passenger’s country of origin.¹⁸ While it is likely that people would not have been detained as long under this scenario, we have much anecdotal evidence, in the form of statements from detainees, that long periods of detention were not unknown (Lai et al. 1980; Yung 1991, 1999). Thus some of the patterns we discern for 1913–19 may have continued.

The experience of being detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station ranged, by all accounts, from unpleasant to harrowing.¹⁹ Saying that a particular group tended to be detained for a “relatively short” time is not intended to minimize the anxiety, humiliation, or pain that came with detention. Mere quantitative data cannot convey the quality of that experience, something better done in works such as Lai et al. 1980, which presents the recollections and poetic inscriptions of actual detainees at Angel Island, and Brownstone et al. 1979 for Ellis Island. But data presented here can give us some indication of how long and how frequently those arriving passengers were subject to such detention and what factors might have contributed to variation in the length of detention from one person to another.

Notes

We are grateful for the many helpful comments we received from David Card, Susan Carter, Ken Chew, Jan de Vries, Barry Eichengreen, Ted Miguel, Marian Smith, and the editor and anonymous referees for *Social Science History*.

- 1 For summaries of the various acts, see LeMay and Barkan 1999. A superb treatment of enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act is Lee 2003.
- 2 Many, but not all. The National Archives and Records Administration facility at San Bruno, California, holds 250,000 “investigation case files” and administrative

records. See Barde et al. 2003 on the development of a Web-based search engine for the investigation case files index (iber.berkeley.edu/casefiles). Chen (1940) alludes to records kept at the Immigration Service office in the city of San Francisco, but these records too seem to have been lost.

- 3 Case file number 15530/6-29, "Arrival Investigation Case Files, 1884-1944" (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service n.d.-c). According to Daniel Nealand, archival operations director, this is the longest-known period of detention at Angel Island.
- 4 See Pacific Mail Steamship Company 1913-15, 1915-18. As these dates suggest, the data coverage actually begins in mid-1913 and, the title of the latter volume notwithstanding, runs well into 1919. The authors are grateful to Dan Lewis and his colleagues at the Huntington Library for making these volumes available.
- 5 The legislation was the Manifest of Immigrants Act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 488-89); actual submission of the required information began on January 1, 1820. Microfilm copies of passenger lists for all ports are available at the National Archives and Records Administration. By 1913 the information provided on each alien passenger had expanded to encompass beliefs about politics, marriage, information on health, literacy, destination, and other variables. See Smith 1996 for details on the evolution of the passenger manifests.
- 6 U.S. Department of Labor 1912-32: 1915-20, table 23, "Passengers Departed from the United States, Fiscal Year Ended June 30."
- 7 "Women married by proxy, often to men they had never seen" (Daniels 1997: 6).
- 8 U.S. Department of Labor 1912-32: 1917, table 12, "Immigrant Aliens Admitted during Specific Periods, January 1, 1916, to June 30, 1917, by Races or Peoples and Sex"; and 1917, table 13, "Sex, Age, Literacy, Financial Condition, etc., of Nonimmigrant Aliens Admitted, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1917, by Races or Peoples."
- 9 We considered, but eventually decided against, recording as "Hispanic" all those with Hispanic surnames, many of whom arrived from Central America.
- 10 Other provisions of the act restricted immigration in additional ways as well as eligibility for citizenship.
- 11 Formally, the logit regression model assumes that the log-odds of success of Y_{ic} is a linear function of the predictor variables X_{ic} , or $\ln(\pi_{ic}/1 - \pi_{ic}) = \alpha + X'_{ic}\beta$, where $\pi_{ic} = P(Y_{ic} = 1)$. Therefore,

$$\frac{\pi(x_k = x + 1)/(1 - \pi(x_k = x + 1))}{\pi(x_k = x)/(1 - \pi(x_k = x))},$$

the odds-ratio, is equal to $\exp[\beta_k]$. See Casella and Berger 2002 for a detailed discussion of the logistic regression model.

- 12 Comparison of hazard rates can be done using other models within the accelerated-failure-time framework. However, these models did not fit the data well, and estimates based on these are substantially different than the inferences from the preferred gamma-distribution model.
- 13 This procedure corrects the standard errors by relaxing the independence assump-

tion of individual observations. See Rogers 1993 for a detailed discussion of correcting regression standard errors in clustered samples.

- 14 The “other exempt” category in these specifications includes ministers, officials, teachers, travelers, and others. Bonded laborers and sons of other exempt passengers were used as the omitted/reference group because these categories suffered the median detention rates in our sample, and this therefore simplifies the exposition.
- 15 U.S. Bureau of Immigration 1915: rule 5f. We are grateful to Marian Smith, historian of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for pointing out this distinction.
- 16 Parameter estimates from this model are not reported in the tables. These are available from the authors upon request.
- 17 Sakovich (2002) examines the treatment of non-Asians detained at Angel Island.
- 18 Sawyer n.d., volumes 2–6, covering the years 1911 through 1942, describes the experience of an immigration inspector attached to American consulates in China for just this purpose.
- 19 Bamford 1917 is a particularly poignant contemporary account by a sympathetic white missionary visitor.

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