Introduction to Chinese American Genealogy

Henry Tom
May 9, 2019
FamilySearch Chinese Genealogy Workshop
Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
Is Chinese genealogy research possible without being Chinese literate?

Yes, with modern technology, it is not only possible, it can also be done successfully.

As an American Born Chinese (ABC), who cannot read or write Chinese, I successfully compiled my Chinese family lineage of 148 generations spanning almost 4,700 years.
Goals

1. Tracing your family lineage

2. Visiting ancestral village & environs guide & information

3. Connecting with relatives in village & China managing relationships

4. Create legacy for future generation

All of the above …………. 
Overseas Chinese

Chinese have emigrated to countries all over the world from various provinces of China, there are millions of overseas Chinese, hence, Chinese genealogy has many flavors.

Chinese genealogy is the basic foundation for research within the context of the host country where the Chinese have settled.
Overseas Chinese Heritage

Origins in China
with continuing
Origins in overseas countries
( America )

Chinese American Immigrant Experience

American Born Chinese ( ABC’s )

First Generation: Transitional Generation

Chinese and multi–ethnic American ancestry
Chinese American Genealogy

Chinese Genealogy + Chinese American Immigrant Experience

Language

Family Genealogy books &

Documents

Clan Genealogy books

Ancestral halls

Field work

Government & public sources & documents

Using traditional genealogy techniques

Online archival searches
Online Databases

Federal Sources & Documents

Database for Chinese immigrants who entered San Francisco, CA and Honolulu, HI, 1881-1955:
University of California at Berkeley, Business and Economic Research with the collaboration with the National Archives and Records Administration.

No longer available online, however, they are available from our workshops

US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
http://www.archives.gov/
The U.S. federal archives has many records of interest to Chinese-American genealogists. For more information, see Chinese Immigration Records
http://www.archives.gov/research/chinese-americans/

US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
New York, USA. National Archives and Records Administration- Northeast Region (New York), [April 1998].
is the largest genealogy organization in the world. FamilySearch, historically known as the Genealogical Society of Utah, which was founded in 1894, is dedicated to preserving the records of the family of mankind. Its purpose is to help people connect with their ancestors through easy access to historical records.

The FamilySearch resources available to the public include records of names exceeding 4 billion collected worldwide (much of it available online), the Family History Library in Salt Lake City (hailed by genealogists as the top research and collections library in the world), and almost 5,000 FamilySearch Centers worldwide. https://familysearch.org/search
Private Sources & Documents

The museum is dedicated to promoting exhibitions, education and research relating to Chinese-American culture and history in the midwestern United States.

This online exhibition developed by the Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum commemorates the vital role of Chinese labourers in constructing the railroad linking the east and west coasts of the United States.

Introduction to the Chinese Exclusion Act Files  http://www.paperson.com/history.htm
Based on a solo show, "Paper Son", written and performed by Chinese-American Byron Yee. Includes examples of immigration documentation relating to two individuals and containing valuable genealogical information.

Museum of Chinese in America  http://www.mocanyc.org/
The New York-based Museum, dedicated to reclaiming, preserving, and interpreting the history and culture of the Chinese and their descendants in the Western Hemisphere, is an important repository of archival materials about Chinese life in America.

San Diego Chinese Historical Museum  http://www.sdchm.org/
The Museum's mission is "to collect, preserve and share the Chinese American experience and Chinese history, culture and art to educate the community and visitors."

Canada : Vancouver Public Library  http://guides.vpl.ca/Chinese-American
Language & Literacy

* Recognizing Chinese names in a genealogy lineage - takes practice, dedication, perseverance and time.

Beyond recognizing the Chinese characters of ancestors – there is the issue of “traditional” versus “simplified” Chinese characters.

Books & Lineages

Many overseas Chinese cannot read or write Chinese – so Chinese genealogy books & lineage charts can be major impediments.

Sources

Photographs
Official documents
Family documents
Maps
Diaries
Oral histories
Family histories
All family members
Names
Technology for Chinese Characters

Language: Online software for translations & conversions traditional & simplified Chinese characters

MWSnap 3:
Screen Tool for Capturing Images of Chinese Characters
http://download.cnet.com/MWSnap/3000-2072_4-10524228.html

COCR2:
Converts images of Chinese characters into actual Chinese characters
Optical Character Recognition Tool /Chinese Characters
http://users.belgacom.net/chardic/cocr2.html

ABBYY FineReader 14 Standard Scans images of Chinese characters & converts them into actual Chinese characters & also translates them

Google Translate, Pleco, Mdbg, Wenlin - Chinese Dictionaries
In the lower left corner of the input box, click on the pencil icon and write the Chinese character: https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&tab=wT

Chinese Characters - True Type Fonts
Romanizations

Pinyin / Wade Giles / Cantonese / Traditional / Simplified

Xie / Hsieh / Tse / 謝 /
Xu / Hsu / Hui / 許 / 许

Google (online tool) Romanize in Pinyin, definition, pronunciation, translates to simplified or traditional Chinese characters

http://www.google.com/language_tools?hl=en

Mandarin Tools:
http://www.mandarintoools.com/multi–romanizations
Online Dictionaries & Translators

Dictionaries - Translations
Pleco Chinese Dictionary
http://www.mandarintools.com/
http://www.njstar.com
Wenlin
http://www.google.com/language_tools?hl=en
http://babelfish.altavista.com/

Translations of Chinese to English:
is expensive - need the help of a Chinese reader to advise on what needs to be translated & find others to share costs.
Concepts and Terminology

Linking Lineages:
Chinese genealogy is not biographical, the focus was to document the clan & family lineage trees.

Linking a series of family lineage segments - so that a pedigree of over 140 generations is possible.
Chinese Genealogy Books

**Jia pu** 家譜  family register
**Zu pu** 族譜  clan register
**Zong pu** 宗譜  ancestor / general register

**Village genealogy book** – Jia pu / Zu pu – can provide the direct line of descent (pedigree) of all the male ancestors of your father (your family lineage)

**Clan Progenitor / Primogenitor:**

**shiqianzu:** 始迁祖  First migrating ancestor: province, county, town / city, village – parallel generation counts

* family lineage on non sequential pages
Chinese Genealogy Books

Libraries in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and USA –

85% published & 15% manuscript

Private & family sources -

85% manuscript & 15% published
Ancestral Halls
Chinese Names

Given birth name – a name of expectation

Chinese people usually have 3 character names - the first character is the family name, second character is the middle name, 3rd character is the given name. The 2nd & 3rd names usually combine to form a very auspicious name with regard to intelligence, wisdom, wealth etc - a name of "expectation" - generally given by the hopeful parents to a newborn child. Generally, the middle name is the same for that generation of siblings or first cousins of that generation – regardless of gender.

Genealogy name “hao” (號) given when Chinese males marry

Most Chinese family clans have a family/clan poem, each character of the poem represents a generation. When Chinese males get married - they get a "genealogy name" a (hao). The first character - the family/clan name remains the same, the second character (bon-pie) is the character from the family poem that represents his generation and the given name - generally describes that person - as he turned out as an adult. The designation of a hao is not generally practiced anymore and the method of assigning a given name can vary.
Generational Poem

Tom Clan Generational Poem

爾昌友延嗣，捷開文裔光，
宗傳世澤遠，晉本立道隆，
積善家國重，學業廣成芳

Pinyin Romanization
Er Chang You Yan Si, Jie Kai Wen Yi Guang
Zong Chuan Shi Ze Yuan, Jin Ben Li Dao Long
Ji Shan Jia Guo Zhong, Xue Ye Guang Cheng Fang

Translation
If your life is prosperous and flourishing, even your friends will continue refurnishing or establishing temples in remembrance of you and your family. This helps to establish a cultured and civilized society.

If your family continues to be successful generation by generation, it continually benefits the world and makes it more beautiful. Its success is secured only while you are an honest, truthful, and virtuous person with a moral life.

Doing kindly deeds is very helpful for your family and country. If you are successful at this and study well, it may help you to be remembered for generations.

Genealogy name “hao” (號) given when Chinese males marry

譚
Tom family / clan name

世
“si” world (bon-pie)
character from family clan

generational poem

強
“kuan” strong

This Tom Generational Poem was translated by Yongping Zhao and edited by Henry Tom
November 23, 2005
Generational Poem

Er Chang You Yan Si, Jie Kai Wen Yi Guang
Zong Chuan Shi Ze Yuan, Jin Ben Li Dao Long
Ji Shan Jia Guo Zhong, Xue Ye Guang Cheng Fang
The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the only law in American history to deny citizenship or entry based upon a specific nationality. The only Chinese allowed into the US were merchants, students, diplomats, and sons of citizens. Hence, Chinese sought ways that would allow them to stay / come to America – even illegally.

A major unintended consequence was the US Federal government collected & created massive amounts of information on Chinese immigrants that can now be researched for family history and genealogy. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

The Chinese government never collected detailed information on the people, it was the village genealogy book that became the unofficial source of family documentation.
A "paper son / daughter " is a term used for young Chinese immigrants coming to the United States prior to 1956 who claimed to be a son of a citizen but were, in fact, sons / daughters on paper only.

The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 destroyed city hall that contained all birth records in San Francisco. As a result, thousands of Chinese men claimed to have been born in San Francisco and the US government had no choice but to accept their claims. Because of this loophole, some Chinese men would travel to China and fraudulently claim the birth of a son or daughter during their visit and return with birth certificates for children they never had.

These birth certificates created slots so that they could be bartered and bought, to bring Chinese to the America. When a young Chinese boy attempted to enter the US as a son of a citizen, he was subjected to a rigorous interrogation by US Immigration Officials to determine if the applicant was a true son of a citizen. Many of these boys would have to memorize details of a village in China and these facts would need to match up with other interviews conducted, usually with the “ paper “ father and other witnesses. Thus, the paper “surname “ was not necessarily the true surname of the “ paper “ son / daughter.
How to Start?

Chinese Surnames:

true surname:
paper son or daughter?

recognizing Chinese names of ancestors

family / clan genealogy books

* ancestral village & nearest larger market town

– lineages only found at the village level –

Chinese government has never kept such records

father, grandfather, great grandfather
Guangdong (Kwangtung) Province

Key locations:
- Sunwui (Xinhui)
- Toishan (Taishan)
- Hoiping (Kaiping)
- Yanping (Enping)

Major cities:
- Guangzhou (Canton)
- Taicheng city
- Macau
- Hong Kong
- Sam Yap
- Sze Yap

Other locations:
- Namhoi
- Punyu
- Shuntak
Provides:

where the ancestral home is located
where relatives reside & are buried
location of ancestral hall
source of the village genealogy book…

and if possible visit your ancestral village from where your parents & ancestors originated from to go overseas
Online Village Database

Index of Clan Names By Villages (4 volumes) published by the American Consulate General, Hong Kong in the 1960s.

Search for village by surname or by village name in Chinese, Cantonese romanization, or Pinyin. Toishan, Hoiping, & Sunwui completed.

Village information includes map location by military grid coordinates, however, they do not have the maps.

I posted these maps on the SiYi Forum website: http://siyigenealogy.proboards.com/thread/2264/village-db-maps

http://villagedb.friendsofroots.org/about.html
A remarkable trait about overseas Chinese immigrants is that when they die in a foreign country – their gravestone has their Chinese name, the names of the province, county, and ancestral village name.

Finding the name of the ancestral village & its location – then gives you possible access to the village genealogy book that contains the family lineage.

Reading Chinese Gravestones by Doris Yau-Chong Jones

https://beneathbukitbrown.wordpress.com/a-guide-to-reading-engravings-on-chinese-tombstones/
Reliance on English & translated Chinese sources;

Books:

“You are Royalty: A Guide to Your Chinese Ancestor “,  A. R. Chinn
email: twoupman@yahoo.com
Website: http://houseofchinn.com/

“The Origin of Chinese Surnames”,
CHUNG Yoon-Ngan
email: chunyn@sdf.lonestar.org

“Chinese American Names: Tradition and Transition”, Emma Woo Louie
On-line Chinese Genealogy Forums

SiYi Genealogy
legacy1.net/
Forum
http://siyigenealogy.proboards.com/

Chinese Surname Queries
http://www.ziplink.net/~rey/ch/queries/

Latest Story

Hoisanva (Taishanese) 台山話 – Lesson 1

Preface Hoisanva 台山話 occupies a unique position in Chinese dialects. According to Professor Horowitz, a visiting professor of Chinese Classics in Columbia University in 1958, it is probably the only dialect that is very close to the dialect that was spoken during the Spring and Autumn period in Chinese history, about 2,500 years ago. Other…

What’s new

With great pleasure we would like to announce that Gene, a renowned linguist, has agreed to share the lessons he developed on Hoisanva or Taishanese (台山話). Each lesson is…

Chinese school classmates

In early November received an email from my friend John. It was one of those
On-line master index to over 50,000 Chinese family genealogies –
The General Catalog of Chinese Genealogies – 10 volumes (2008)
On-line Chinese Genealogy Sources

Family History Library

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

On-line searches with Chinese characters

GEDCOM, an acronym for GEnealogical Data COMmunication, is a specification for exchanging genealogical data between different genealogy software


China Collection of Genealogies, 1239-2014 – over 13 million images
https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1787988

Major Genealogical Record Sources in Taiwan (1976)
Library Sources in America

Library of Congress - 800,000 vol., 4,000 local gazetteers
http://www.loc.gov/rr/asian/china-bib/

C. V. Starr East Asian Library – UC Berkeley
Chinese genealogies & gazetteers + 900,000 volumes
Weekend Seminar - UC Berkeley – July 13-14, 2019

Harvard University - Yenching Library – 475,000 vol.
Chinese genealogies & local gazetteers

Princeton University - 425,000 vol.

Yale University - 413,000 vol.

University of Chicago - 361,000 vol.
# Overseas Chinese Associations

Associations to help overseas Chinese – organized by:

- Province, county regions, county, city, Chinese dialect;
- Economic, guilds, mutual aid societies & martial arts groups;
- Kinship: multiple family surnames, by surname, multiple associations of the same surname;

Surname associations can have international chapters throughout the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City, State, Zip Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chew Lun Ben Assn.</td>
<td>219 W. Cermak Road</td>
<td>Chicago 60616 U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Lun Assn.</td>
<td>416 7th Avenue South, Seattle, Washington</td>
<td>98104 U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Clan Association</td>
<td>1641 E. Broadway Tucson</td>
<td>85719, Ariz. U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Lun Benevolent Assn.</td>
<td>602A H. Street N.W. Washington D.C.,</td>
<td>20001 U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Lun Assn.</td>
<td>2300 S. 6th Avenue Tucson Arizona,</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Lun Assn.</td>
<td>90 Hudson Street,</td>
<td>Boston Mass U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huo Kao Yang Tong</td>
<td>47 Mott St., Apt. 55 New York</td>
<td>10013 N.Y. U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tse Clanmen Assn.</td>
<td>649 Hill Place Los Angeles</td>
<td>Calif., 90012 U.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoy Clanman Association</td>
<td>336 Union Street, Vancouver</td>
<td>B.C., V6A 1X9 Canada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreign & Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureaus
& Offices in Guangdong Province, China
Guangdong Overseas Chinese Affairs

http://gocn.southcn.com/english/
Email: gdsfqb@gdnet.com.cn
Add: 8 Haishan Jie, Ersha Island Guangzhou 510105
Tel: +86-20-87353375
Fax: +86-20-87352060

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau of Enping Municipality
恩平市外事侨务局
http://waishi.enping.gov.cn
Email: wsb@enping.gov.cn
Add: 33 Xidi Henan Road, Enping
Tel: +86 750 7776536
Fax: +86 750 7772238

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau of Heshan Municipality
鹤山市外事侨务局
http://waishi.heshan.gov.cn/
Add: 338, Xincheng Road, Shaping, Heshan
Tel: +86 750 8982061
Fax: +86 750 8983217

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau of Kaiping Municipality
开平市外事侨务局
http://wqj.kaiping.gov.cn/index1.asp
Add: 18 West Changsha Yanjiang Road, Kaiping
Tel: +86 750 2215216
Fax: +86 750 2286842

Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco
Younger generation - study, discovering ancestral villages, escorted 2 week tour of SiYi region, presentations after tour
Preserving the Past for the Future

Create Chinese American genealogy scrolls

Monograph on family origins in China and America

Update clan / family genealogy books in China

Distribute multiple copies of clan lineage that includes your family branch

English narration & navigation of family lineages in Chinese clan genealogy book

Find multiple clan & family lineages to confirm & verify your own family lineage – includes a “linking” ancestor [progenitor]
Tan Genealogy: Heritage and Lineage

Tan is the Chinese character, romanized with various spellings such as: Tom, Thom, Tan, Tam, Tham, Taam, Tarrn, Tarr, Tarm, Horn, Hun, Harn, Harm, in most cases, these spellings are English transliterations of this Chinese family surname.

The interest and research on Chinese ancestry and genealogy is a quest for our own identity, of who we are, where we come from, and how we have changed; it provides a metric for how far we have come and survived since the arrival of our ancestors, and is a record of the cumulative influences shaping what we are today.

It would be wonderful if we could all speak, read and write Chinese in both its traditional and simplified forms, unfortunately, this is not the case and this situation must not be allowed to discourage you in researching your family/clan genealogy. Perhaps in the next life, I will have all these language skills – admittedly, it is harder but not impossible to find your place in the family genealogy lineage.

It is also not necessary to try and compile 30 or 40 generations of lineage, if you can identify 2 or 3 of your ancestors in the family lineage – you will have discovered the entire span of lineage before them and also established your place in the lineage.
One Chinese genealogy aficionado decided to do an assortment of monographs. As my ancestors made all manner of sacrifices to protect, preserve, and pass on our clan & family lineages for 4,700 years.

For me, I feel it is my obligation & duty, with a deep sense of moral commitment - to at the very least, update my clan & family lineages & preserve them for our family’s future generations.
Chinese American Genealogy Sources

Chinese Immigration and the Chinese in the United States
https://www.archives.gov/research/chinese-americans/guide

Chinese Family History
Group of Southern California

Patti Dung:
Patricia Dung <patriciadung@gmail.com>
Genealogy Workshops

2019 Chinese American Genealogy Conference
June 8 - 9, 2019
25 West 43rd Street, 18th Floor New York, NY
CUNY School of Labor and urban Studies
Hosted by:
Asian American / Asian Research Institute (AAARI), City University of New York and Think ! Chinatown

Chinese American Genealogy Workshop
June 23 - 27, 2019   Las Vegas, NV
California Hotel & Casino – Maile Room
Genealogy Workshops

**Chinese American Genealogy Weekend Seminar**

**July 13 - 14, 2019**

University of California, Berkeley

**Chinese American Sources - UC Berkeley Libraries**

**Overseas Chinese Genealogy Workshop & Tours**

**November 4 - 22, 2019, Guangdong, China**

Pre-workshop - Xiamen & Meizhou – Nov 4 - 7

Workshop – Ancestral villages – Nov 7 – 18

Post-workshop (Hong Kong) Nov 18 - 22
My Coordinates

Thank you very much for your attention:

Questions?

Henry Tom
1987 N 165th Drive
Goodyear, AZ 85395
USA

480 980 8715 Mobile
Henry.Tom@Cox.net email