

**Ko-lin Chin. *Chinese Subculture and Criminality: Non-Traditional Crime Groups in America. Contributions in Criminology and Penology, No. 29.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990) 208 pp., \$39.95.**

This is probably the first monographic study to examine in-depth the present criminal subculture of New York Chinatown, focusing on the youth gangs that have plagued the community during the past thirty years. As such, it makes a valuable contribution to the fledgling field of Asian American studies, whose scholars have yet to tackle this complex and sensitive topic, as well as to the disciplines of sociology and criminology. It will also help puncture the recently created stereotype of a monolithic, "model minority" Asian population singlemindedly pursuing success in schooling and business.

While the author traces the antecedents of the Chinese gangs to old secret and triad societies in China and Hong Kong, he asserts that their appearance in the US is a direct consequence of the new wave of post-1965 Chinese immigration to the US. With the influx of many new immigrants, including many young people, after a long hiatus imposed by the Chinese exclusion from 1882 through the fifties, the old Chinatown community became destabilized and found itself unequipped to deal with a myriad of new social needs and problems. Faced with school and family problems, lack of good jobs, and the difficulties of language and assimilation, some of the young immigrants drifted into delinquency. Immigrants also brought investment, new business vitality, and enhanced economic opportunities, conditions ripe for criminals to flourish. The larger American society and law enforcement establishment only began to pay attention to the gangs when their activities spilled beyond Chinatown into drug trafficking and money laundering, no longer confined to extortion, protection, and petty street crimes within their own ethnic community.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this work is the author's apparent ability to penetrate the gang culture itself. Thus he was able to describe, often with minute details, the behavior and conduct of the gangs in their various activities—from extortion, robbery, and prostitution, to drug trafficking—and chart the territorial bases of the various gangs within New York Chinatown.

Finally, the author also provides discussions that are briefer of gang violence, recruitment of members, comparison of Chinese with other ethnic youth gangs, and societal reactions to the gangs, particularly within Chinatown itself.

Although clearly written for the sociology and criminology specialists (the book is almost overly burdened by references to scholarly studies and theories), this book can also be of interest to the layman, because many of us have a fascination with gangs, particularly in Chinatown, where images of tongs and triads have fueled our popular imagination for a long time. This book will disabuse the reader of old stereotypes, while adding a new appreciation about the complexities of the growing Asian population in this country.

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