

Consuming Chinese Culture?

Chinese Cultural Center in metropolitan Phoenix

(International Metropolis Conference, Lisbon, October 3, 2006)

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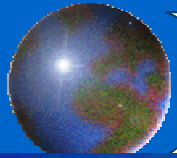
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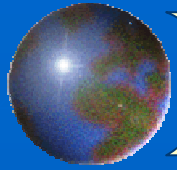
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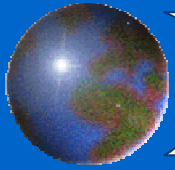
Chinese/Asian Theme Malls: Phoenix





Changing Immigration

- **Given the changing nature of a global economy**
 - increasingly relies on knowledge-based development and the accelerated global competition for “talent capital” in addition to financial capital,
 - many advanced economies in the world are further tapping into the large talent pool and wealthy people in developing countries to fulfill their needs for a highly-skilled labor force and capital investment
- **In the meantime, the same advanced economies and their corporations**
 - increasingly rely on international migrants, both documented/legal and undocumented/unauthorized, to fulfill the domestic needs of lower-skilled sweat laborers, and
 - even replenishing the population base and allowing for sustainable growth.

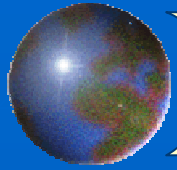


Background

- **In addition,**
 - **international geopolitics marked by ideological differences and strategic interests,**
 - **and imbalanced economic development levels among nation-states**

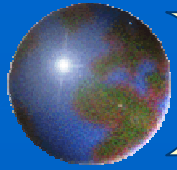
further complicates the contemporary world economy and population dynamics.

- **Such new immigration dynamics results in immigrant neighborhood change in the U.S.**
 - **Ghettos; Ethnic Enclaves; Ethnoburbs;**
 - **“Heteolocalism”, Community without Propinquity, connected through social, cultural and religious networks: Zelinsky & Lee, 1998; Zelinsky 2001;**
 - **Cultural Communes: Ling 2005**



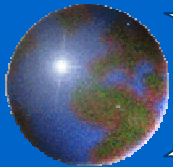
Outline of the Presentation

- **Briefly review the history of Chinese immigration to Phoenix area;**
- **Focus on how Chinese Americans are utilizing the Chinese Theme Mall: Chinese Cultural Center and**
- **How Chinese identity has manifested, or culture consumed through such activities**

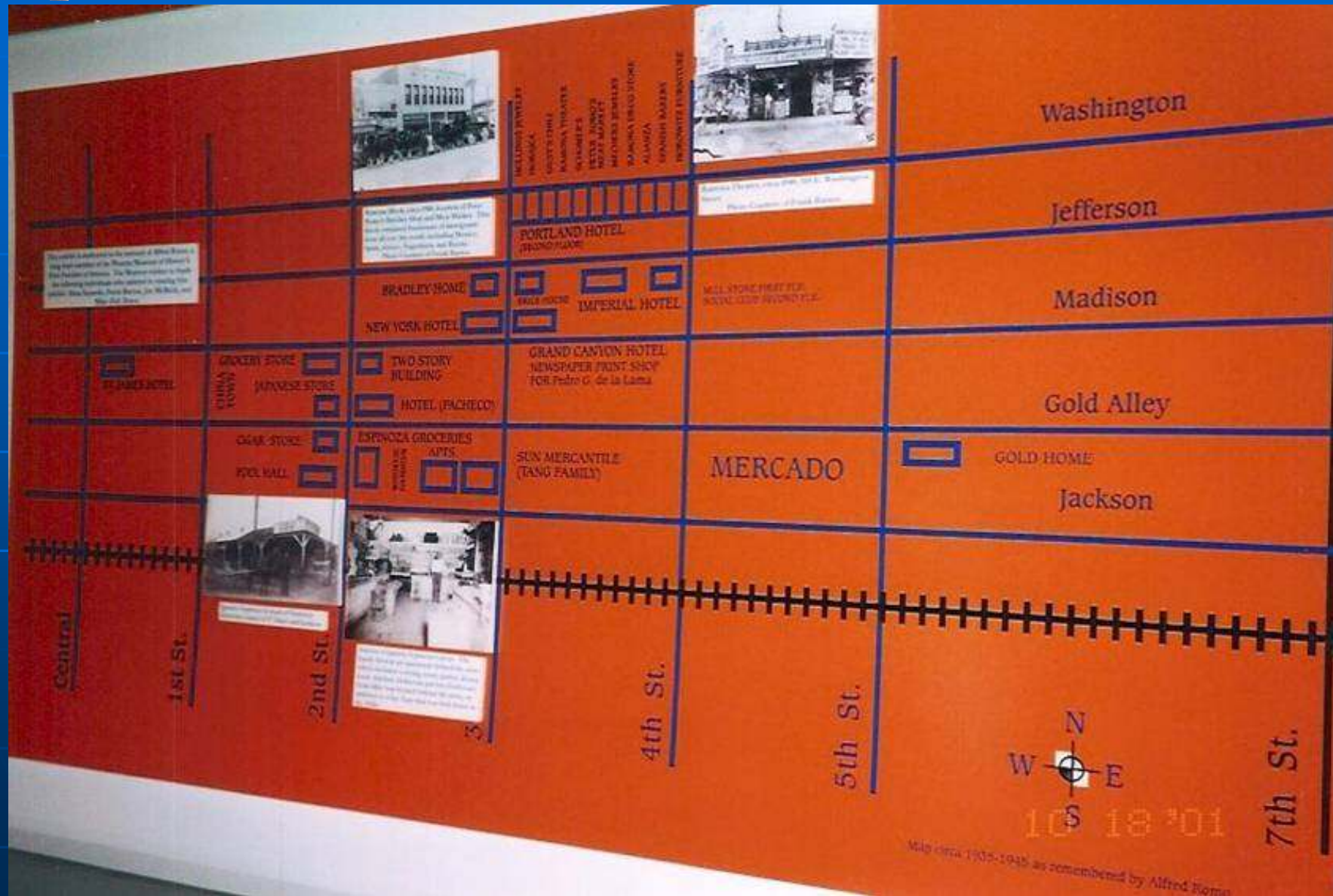


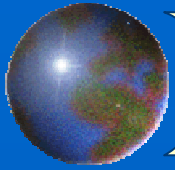
History of Chinese immigration to Phoenix

- **Due to its geographical proximity to California and as one of the major settlement centers since the territory days of Arizona, Phoenix has been a somewhat small-scale magnet for Chinese immigrants since the late 19th century**
- **Chinese immigrants joined railroad building from California to Arizona in 1870s and have settled in the state ever since. Despite such long history of Asian settlements however, the traditional ethnic enclave, downtown Chinatown in Phoenix was wiped out several times**



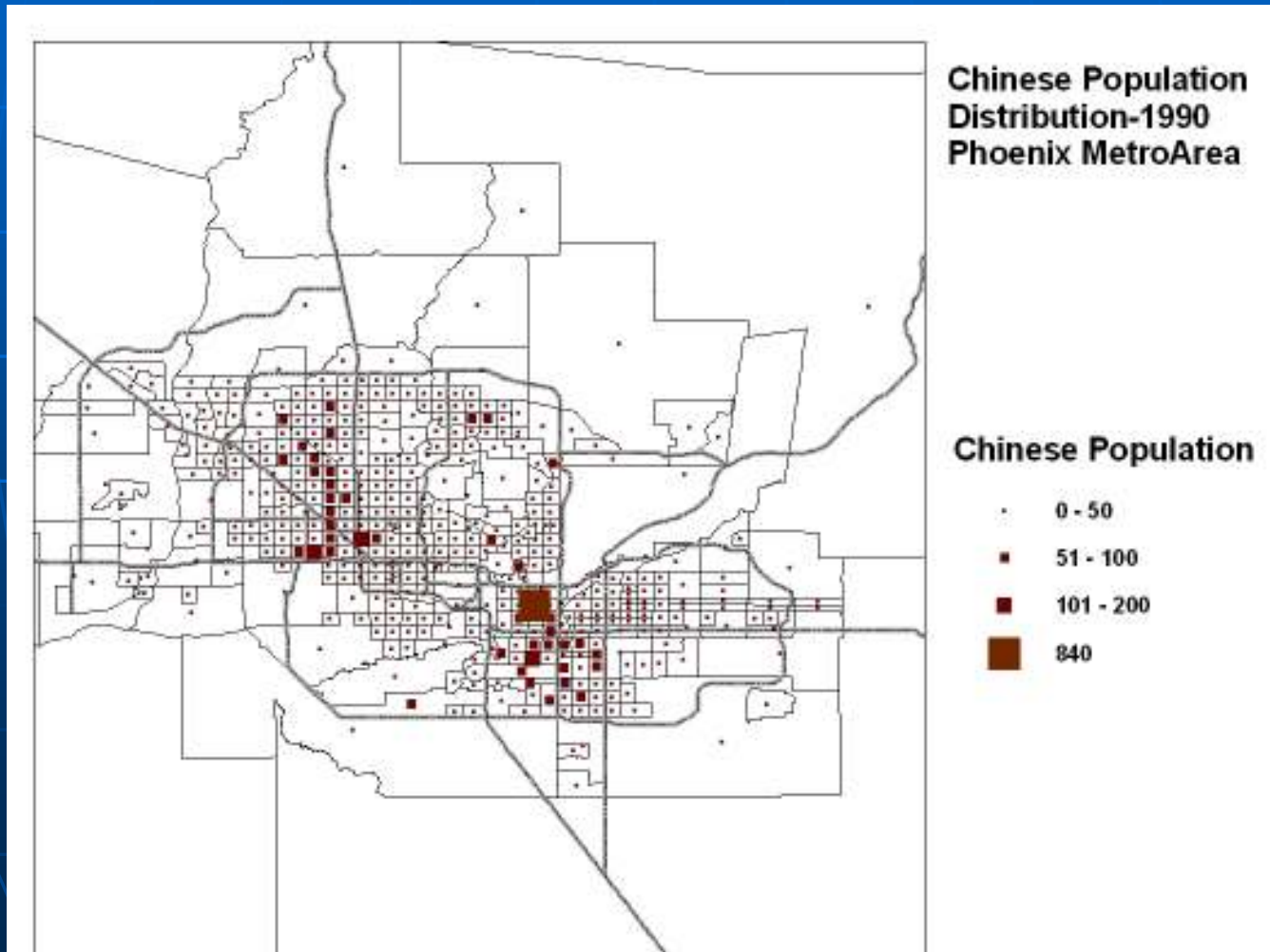
Phoenix's Historical Chinatown

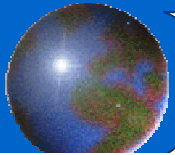




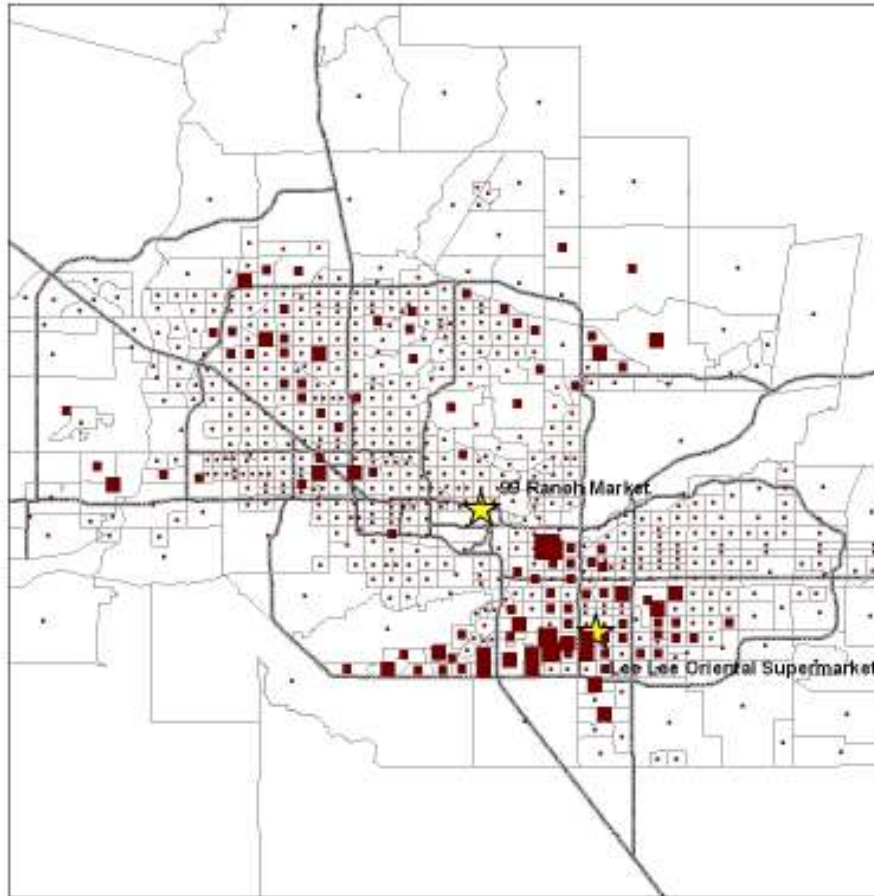
Contemporary Chinese Distribution Patterns

- **Current number of Chinese Americans has yet to reach a critical mass to form an enclave or ethnoburb**





Contemporary Chinese Distribution Patterns



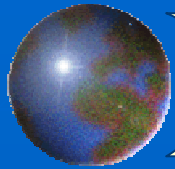
Chinese Population Distribution-2000
Phoenix MetroArea

Chinese Alone or in
Combination with other Groups

- 0 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 200
- 201 - 323
- 419

According to 2000
census: 15,516 of
the 66,445 Asians
in Maricopa
County are
Chinese





Metropolitan Phoenix

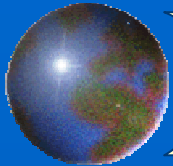
- Chinese ethnic businesses 'Spill over' from CA



- “Silicon Desert”:
production & back offices

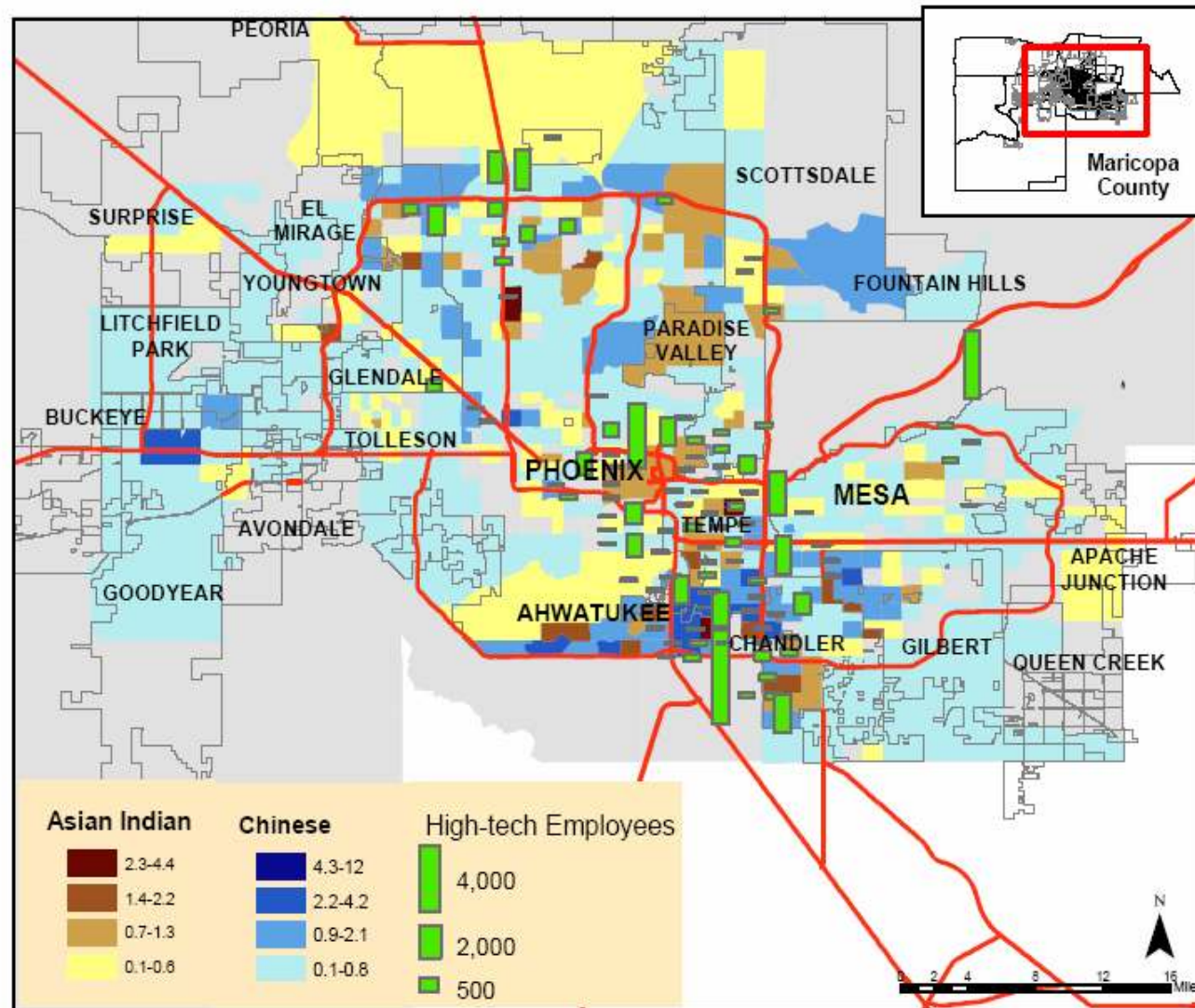


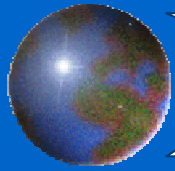
Source: <http://www.civicpride.com/>



Metro Phoenix

2000 Asian Indian/Chinese by Census Tract
Compared to High-tech Employers

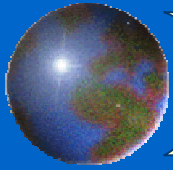




Phoenix Chinese Cultural Center

- **Funded by COFCO**
- **Traditional Chinese Garden**
- **Commercial Activities**
- **Cultural Events**



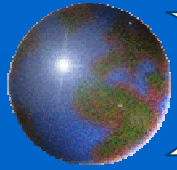


Phoenix Chinese Week

- Phoenix Chinese Week, organized by local Chinese Americans, has been the most influential annual Chinese New Year celebration in Metropolitan Phoenix since 1991



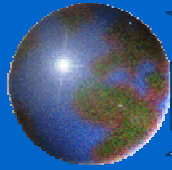
In cooperation with the Phoenix Sister Cities Commission, and alternating between two sister cities: Chengdu and Taipei, Phoenix Chinese Week is a one-week celebration of Chinese New Year geared toward the general public.



Phoenix Chinese Week

- **Chinese Week Committee:** an independent non-profit organization with over 40 volunteering organizers & over 100 sponsors and advertisers;
- **Aim:** to promote cultural awareness and educate young generation;
- **Chinese Week Preparation:**
 - monthly meeting in a Phoenix Chinese restaurant from the end of previous year;
 - Weekly meeting during January and February
- **Chinese Week Activities:**
 - Weeklong events
 - 3-day weekend cultural festival





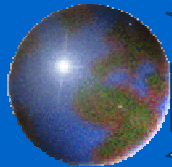
Phoenix Chinese Week and CCC

- Chinese Cultural Center as site:
 - “offers a matched background for Chinese Week” with the surrounding Chinese architecture, supermarket, stores and restaurants;
 - attracts large amounts of potential customers each year to the businesses at the Center.” – Ling Lin Lee



Debates among commercialization of Chinese Week:

- Among organizers
- Among participants

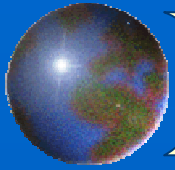


Phoenix Chinese Week and CCC

- Organizers' wrap-up meeting:
 - "we should offer more cultural/educational booths"
 - "but we need commercial sponsors."
- ASU students:
 - "CCC offers me a chance to know Chinese Culture"
 - "CCC commercializes my culture, which I really don't like to see"
- The debate goes on and the same dilemma exists in many similar ethnic festivals in PHX and beyond;
 - Such festivals serve to connect an ethnic group that is geographically dispersed, but also becomes government-sponsored, and private sector-
endorsed commercial event.







Questions?
Your feedback and
suggestions are
greatly appreciated!

