

Kenneth J. Guest. *God in Chinatown: Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community*. NYU Press, 2003.

There are many people who participate in the life of the church. To look at the ministry is not just the task of theologians or pastors. Sociologists have been studying churches, specifically, the immigrant church, for some time because they understand the importance of the role of the church in the life and community of immigrants to the United States. One such book is *God in Chinatown: Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community* by Kenneth J. Guest. Guest told a compelling, descriptive story of Fuzhounese immigrants, starting from the beginning and describing the reasons that drove tens of thousands of Fuzhounese to migrate to the United States, many times illegally, to seek a better life. Guest tells individual stories of the people he interviewed to provide a larger narrative of this immigrant population, delving into the history of Chinatown and the Fuzhounese, both in China and America. Guest paints a realistic and somewhat painful picture of the struggles of hopeful immigrants who come with a dream that is quickly shattered by reality.

Guest covers two important aspects of immigration in his narrative: class and religion. He covers class issues in the immigrant experience, especially in the economic conditions and the replication of hierarchies in the United States and how this influences the Fuzhounese immigrant community. Secondly, he wanted to study the immigrant religious experience, because the religious community is one that supported the life of the immigrant in Chinatown. Additionally, Guest noticed that Fuzhounese religions had become globalized, as the host and home countries are tied together by a world that has been made smaller with technology and had become mutually influential. Furthermore, he studies how immigrants use their faith as a frame to understand their immigrant experience, being able to find meaning and identity through faith.

Guest covers the development of four different faith congregations, including a Buddhist temple, Daoist temple, Catholic, and Protestant churches. However, his main focus was on Christianity with an in depth study of two Christian churches that were both founded by and serves exclusively the Fuzhounese population. In this book, Guest is able to discuss the importance of the sending context of Fuzhou and the way that the church is able to connect it and the United States, as well as how central the church has become in the life of an immigrant and the impact of the growth and strength of the church in Chinatown had on the church in Fuzhou.

Yet, the church is not a perfect institution and in spite of the positive attributes, there were conflicts and problems within the church as well. Unfortunately, while Guest acknowledges that there are conflicts and problems that occurred within the churches, he does not go in depth with these issues. For example, the Church of Grace experienced problems surrounding class and kinship differences, as well as power struggles between founding members and the vision of the leadership. Yet, Guest did not spend a lot of time discussing this aspect of the church, nor discuss how the church views or resolves the conflicts it faces, instead moving on to describe many different factions of the church itself.

This book provides great insight into the life of immigrants and how religion, especially Christianity, plays a practical, influential role in their lives. As church leaders, it would behoove us to better recognize the dynamics of what brings people to our faith communities and how we can better support immigrants and understand the immigrant experience in navigating this new world that accepts and rejects us at the same time.

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