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Volume 7, numéro 1-2, 1985

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081324ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081324ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Hoe, B. (1985). Chinese Community and Cultural Traditions in Quebec City. *Ethnologies*, 7(1-2), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081324ar>

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# Chinese Community and Cultural Traditions in Quebec City

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*Ban Seng HOE*

Despite the fact that Asian minorities settled in Quebec before the turn of the century, there have been few studies on their history, community organizations and cultural traditions. Even less analytical research on the persistence and change of an ethnic tradition within the socio-cultural context of Quebec has been carried out.

This article will make a broad examination of the Chinese community and its folk tradition in Quebec City, and will explore the interrelationships between the community organization and its cultural traditions. In other words, an attempt will be made to explain to what extent the community has contributed to the continuity of its traditions and to what extent its traditions have contributed to the community's integration. It will also inquire briefly into the effects upon both the community and its traditions of policies emanating from a larger society.

Community is defined as an ethnic group which seeks to maintain its structural arrangements and folk culture. The community members share a common language, common customs, traditions, beliefs, a group identity, a sense of belonging, a distinctive associational pattern and an internal functional institution, all of which cater to its own needs and problems.

Cultural tradition is defined as the traditional elements of life and culture maintained and transmitted by a social group, a community, or a society. It encompasses all available folk culture genres such as folktales, customs, proverbs, folk sayings, material folk culture and folk life.

## **THE COMMUNITY**

According to elderly Chinese informants, the Chinese came to Quebec City before the turn of the century. They first concentrated

around Côte D'Abraham and later moved to the present locality at St. Vallier East. Most of the Chinese came from the Szu I district (T'ai Shan, En Ping, Kai Ping and Hsin Hui) of Southern Kwangtung.

The number of Chinese at the beginning of the settlement as small. *Le Soleil* (May 2, 1910) reported that there were 60 Chinese in Quebec City.<sup>1</sup> *L'Événement* (November 4, 1911) noted that the total Chinese population in the city was 110. *L'Événement* (March 17, 1923), quoting the provincial census of Quebec in 1923, claimed that there were 98 Chinese in the city and no women. However, according to an estimate by the Chinese themselves, there were 450-500 Chinese in 1923, when the Chinese Exclusion Law was proclaimed. L'Abbé Caron, who served the Mission Chinoise Catholique for more than 30 years, estimated in 1940 that there were 230 Chinese, 50 of whom were laundrymen and the rest working in the restaurants; and that there were no Chinese women.<sup>2</sup> The population was reduced to 350-400 during the Second World War period. It was not until 1947, when the Chinese Immigration Law was repealed, that the city Chinese population started to increase again. With the coming of Chinese women and children, the sex-ratio of the population gradually became balanced. The Census of Canada reported that there were 128 Chinese (104 males and 24 females) in 1951; 216 (135 males and 81 females) in 1961; 255 (135 males and 120 females) in 1971. In 1975-76, the Chinese Cultural Center estimated that there were 750-800 Chinese, including 120 families. The population composition had changed from predominantly male to a more balanced sexual distribution. The immigration law had affected both the structure and the family life of the Chinese community.

The first Chinese association formed in Quebec City was said to have been the Chi Kong Tong, a secret political organization that aimed to overthrow the Manchu dynasty and to restore the Ming Empire. However, due to a lack of members and financial resources, the association was closed down before the Second World War.

There was no earlier Chinese community association, although *Le Soleil* (May 2, 1910) reported that there was a discussion to form "une société de protection mutuelle" among the city's Chinese:

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1. *Le Soleil* (November 21, 1910) also reported that there were five Chinese families at Saint-Roch. This could be a mistake, as there were not many Chinese women among the immigrants at this time.
  2. Adrien Caron, "La Mission Chinoise de Québec". *Bulletin de l'Union Missionnaire du Clergé*, 5/6, April 1940, 225-232.

Environ soixante membres de la colonie Chinoise à Québec se sont réunis, hier soir, à l'Auditorium où ils ont jetés les bases d'une société de protection mutuelle.

Outre les célestes québécois, il y avait à l'assemblée quelques délégués de Lévis et de Montréal qui ont pris une part active à la discussion.

L'assemblée d'hier n'a été que de courte durée et l'on n'y a fait qu'un travail préliminaire qui doit être continué à une réunion qui sera tenue sous peu.

The overthrow of the Manchus and the founding of the Nationalist Government in 1911 was reported in the local press. *Le Soleil* (January 31, 1912) described 17 Chinese who went to a barber to have their plaits cut off, in order to prove their allegiance to the new government:

Dix-sept fils du Céleste Empire après mûre considération ont décidé pour prouver leur allégeance au nouveau gouvernement de leur pays de faire couper leurs tresses de cheveux tel que le prescrit un édit du gouvernement.

Tous se sont rendus hier à l'atelier de barbier 'Boujou' sur le rue St. Jean où l'opération a été pratiquée avec célérité et succès par les coiffeurs de M.J.E. Bouchard.

Les Célestes transformés en un tour de main partirent tout souriant de l'aventure emportant avec eux le petit rouleau de cheveux qui hier encore (faisait leur) gloire et leur ornement.

The Kuomintang was established in the city around 1920. It was a political party affiliated with the Republican government of China. The Kuomintang prospered during the Second World War when most of the local Chinese, inspired by Chinese nationalism and the war against Japan, joined the organization. It was said to have had between 120 and 150 members at this period. However, due to the recognition of the Peking regime by the Canadian government in 1970, its membership has dwindled. In 1975-76, it had only 10 or 15 members, mostly elderly people; its activities were mainly socio-recreational.

It was perhaps the political rivalry between the Kuomintang and the Chi Kong Tong (later known as the Chinese Freemasons) between the 1920s and the 1940s that prevented the formation of a unified Chinese community association. In 1939-45, a community-wide "Anti-Japanese Association" was formed to help China in her war effort against the Japanese. The Association collected donations for China and helped to pool resources. As a result of these shared experiences, a Chinese community association was formed after the war. However, with the decline of the Freemasons, the community association was virtually under the control of the Kuomintang from the 1940s until 1970. This was indicated by the fact that the same executive officers

occupied positions simultaneously in both organizations, which also shared the same office building.

The Chinese community association traditionally claimed to represent all the Chinese in the city. Its objectives were to provide welfare assistance and mutual protection. With the recognition of the People's Republic of China, some Chinese began to oppose the association, as it was controlled by the Kuomintang. Because of this political cleavage, and also because of a need to have a common place for the Chinese to meet for socio-cultural activities, a Chinese Cultural Centre was established in December, 1969. The aims of the Centre were to promote Chinese culture and traditions, and to represent the community vis-à-vis the larger society. The Centre is presently located at 617 rue St. Vallier est and claims to have about 150 members. It has received grants from the Secretary of State to organize its educational and cultural activities. It received \$2,000 in 1973; \$5,000 in 1974; \$7,000 in 1975 and \$5,000 in 1976.

Catholic missionary work began in the Chinese community in about 1910. "Cinq fils du Céleste Empire ont été baptisés (à l'église St. Mathieu), suivant leur rite et admis à la foi Chrétienne" (*Le Soleil*, March 29, 1909). A Chinese was baptized as a Catholic on February 20, 1914 (*Mission Chinoise Catholique* records). *Le Soleil* (April 24, 1922) reported "une cérémonie du baptême d'un jeune Chinois, dans la paroisse de Beauport."

Sister Marie Loyola and Sister Saint Georges served the Chinese community between 1914 and 1924. In 1919, "les soeurs de L'Immaculée-Conception visitent tous les Chinois de la ville. A leur suite M. Gaullin, les autres laïques, les religieux qui s'occupèrent de la mission eurent le même objectif: atteindre tous les Chinois, au moins les visiter tous. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The Archbishop of Quebec donated a small church to the Chinese community in 1924. Père Pârome and later L'Abbé Caron served the Chinese community successively from 1924 to 1964 when the church was sold. The Mission Chinoise Catholique then moved to premises at St. Roch. The sisters from the Soeurs de L'Immaculée Conception have continued to work for the Chinese community since.

Between 1925 and 1947, the Mission Chinoise Catholique records showed that there were 16 children and 56 adults baptized in the Mission. Père Caron estimated that in 1940 within the "diocèse de Québec", 36 Chinese were baptized, "dont 14 baptisés in articulo mortis.

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3. Adrien Caron, *op. cit.* p. 229.

Des 22 autres, 4 sont décédés, 5 sont retournés en Chine, 7 sont éparpillés en Canada, et il en reste 6 dans le diocèse."<sup>4</sup> In 1968, according to Père Caron again, there were 177 Chinese Catholics in the city (81 adults and 96 children) and 246 non-Catholics (118 adults and 128 children).<sup>5</sup>

In 1969, a Chinese Catholic priest was engaged for the community, and an altar was set up in the Chinese Cultural Centre. The church attendance was said to be very small, 15 to 20 people in 1975-76.

Historically, the Chinese were mainly engaged in hand laundries and restaurants businesses. The laundries were prevalent around the turn of the century as they were easier to set up. All that was needed was a little capital and long hours of work. It was, in fact, a form of folk occupation. The number of Chinese laundries reported in the city seems to have varied between 10 and 30 in the period 1900-1910. *Le Soleil* (November 19, 1910) reported there were 30 laundries on September 19, 1902, 19 on March 23, 1910, and 23 on November 19, 1910. Père Caron noted that the numbers of Chinese laundries in the city was 35 in 1936.<sup>6</sup>

The Chinese laundries encountered many problems with the public. A letter addressed to the editor of *Le Soleil* (November 17, 1909) suggested that there should be "taxes sur les buanderies." It also quoted a Toronto Chief of Police as saying that "Les Chinois n'ont pas de morale. Si cela est vrai, assurément ce ne sont pas les gens que l'on devrait amener dans notre milieu." Of the 19 laundries found in Quebec City in 1910, "neuf ont été trouvées dans un état malpropre. Il y avait de un à quatre occupants dans chaque buanderie et les dix-neuf comprennent en tout 62 chambres." The *comité d'hygiène* of the city then "décida qu'une loi municipale sera passée pour tenir sous une plus étroite surveillance toutes les buanderies faisant affaires à Québec." (*Le Soleil*, March 20, 1910).

A report in *Le Soleil* (October 29, 1910) asked Québécois not to frequent Chinese laundries, as the Chinese "amassent des piastres qui leur permettent plus tard d'aller vivre en 'pacha' en Chine." The report also urged "Un moment de réflexion ouvriers québécois, et bien vite vous comprendrez que c'est faire fausse route que de prendre le chemin des buanderies chinoises, au détriment des autres québécois. . . ."

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4. Adrien Caron, *op. cit.* p. 231.

5. An interview with Père A. Caron, Québec City, 1975-76.

6. *Ibid.*

On November 26, 1910, *Le Soleil* further asked "Pourquoi envoyer son lavage dans une buanderie chinoise alors qu'il y a des buanderies où nos citoyens travaillent péniblement à gagner leur salaire. . . . Comprenons d'abord la nécessité d'encourager nos industries canadiennes de préférence à ces buanderies chinoises dont les propriétaires s'empresent une fois leurs goussets bien remplis de retourner au Céleste Empire. . . . Encourageons encore nos autres industries, nos marchands, car c'est le devoir d'un patriote et d'un vrai citoyen."

*Le Conseil Central National de Métiers et du Travail* organized a session in 1910 to discuss "le moyen de prendre de protéger les buanderies locales et canadiennes lesquelles emploient des centaines d'ouvriers et d'ouvrières contre l'envahissement des laveries chinoises qui se multiplient de façon alarmante. . . . Cette question est longuement discutée par les délégués qui dénoncent en termes énergiques ces buanderies malpropres. On a aussi fait voir leurs dangers tant au point de vue économique qu'hygiénique pour la classe ouvrière de faire laver leur linge par les Chinois. . . . Il est en conséquence résolu que le *Conseil Central National* ira aux informations quant aux règlements des buandaries et prendra un moyen légitime de mettre un terme à cet état de choses dangereuses." (*Le Soleil*, November 16, 1910).

In supporting the view put forward by the *Conseil National de Métiers et du Travail*, *Le Soleil* (November 19, 1910) emphasized that "Les buanderies Chinoises font un tort considérable à nos buanderies nationales. . . . Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que chaque Chinois se fait un salaire de \$25.00 par semaine. Et tout l'argent que nous leur donnons ainsi ne profite aucunement à notre ville: car, 75 p.c. au moins de cet argent est envoyé en Chine. . . . ces ateliers de Chinois sont pour la plupart des foyers infects, où ceux qui les fréquentent sont exposés à contracter des maladies, et nous n'ignorons pas non plus que ce sont trop souvent, de même que leurs restaurants, des centres d'immoralité. . . . On nous assure que si nos buanderies locales recevaient l'encouragement qu'elles méritent, il n'y aurait pas de chômage pour les ouvriers de cette industries et dans leur foyers ce serait le bonheur et l'aisance. Encourageons les nôtres."

Public outcry against Chinese businesses was not confined to the laundries. Chinese restaurants also came under attack. *Le comité de législation* discussed "la question des restaurants Chinois. . . l'échevin Goulet. . . parla de la tenue peu recommandable de ces lieux où le public a accès durant toute la nuit et où il se passe des scènes auxquelles il est temps de mettre fin. . . . Plusieurs de ces

restaurants chinois paient un loyer qui dépasse souvent de cinq fois le prix ordinaire. Ils peuvent faire ces dépenses car ils reçoivent à toute heure de la nuit des couples et personnages douteux qui ne regardent pas au prix qu'on leur demande." (*Le Soleil*, May 3, 1910).

Because of this regulation, "Hin Juan, sur la rue de la Couronne, abandonne les affaires, déclarant que le commerce ne paie plus avec le nouveau règlement." (*Le Soleil*, August 5, 1910).

The earlier Chinese immigrants in the city encountered racial discrimination and hostility. An "Anti Yellow Peril League" was formed in Montreal in 1913 with branches across the province of Quebec. "La Ligue (contre Le Péril Jaune) s'oppose absolument à l'immigration des Jaunes dans le Canada. Elle entend organiser des succursales dans toute la province de Québec. . . . Tout renseignement au sujet de la Ligue devra être demandé au secrétaire-trésorier M. Miles, Greenfield Park, Québec." (*Le Soleil*, July 9, 1913).

Many incidents concerning Chinese being assaulted and robbed were reported in the local press. *Le Soleil* (August 28, 1903) noted an incident:

Deux Chinois qui tiennent une buanderie sur la rue St. Joseph ont été attaqués dans le noir. . . par une bande de jeunes turbulants. Il paraît que les jeunes gens étaient entrés dans la buanderie et se mirent à faire du tapage. Les Chinois essayèrent de les mettre dehors. Les passants voyant la chose, entrèrent et (se mirent) à battre les Chinois.

Other newspaper headlines such as "Chinois assailli et volé," "Assaut Brutal," and "Des Chinois ont été fort malmenés" were frequent (*Le Soleil*, June 19, 1905; December 14, 1905, April 3, 1907); it indicated that the Chinese had a hard and difficult life in Québécois society. Not only did they encounter beatings on the streets, their places of businesses were also under constant harassment and subject to disturbances. The following four press reports serve as examples:

*L'Événement* (May 29, 1905) reported that:

. . . trois jeunes gens en gagnettes entrèrent au restaurant chinois de la rue du Pont. . . . Après s'être délectés de chop suey et autres mets orientaux, deux des compères s'esquivèrent de la salle, laissant leur compagnon plus ivre qu'eux, dans l'ancre chinois. Soit qu'on ne les eut pas payés, soit qu'ils voulurent faire une farce jaune, les marmitons célestes fermèrent la porte à clef avant que leur troisième client n'eut le temps de rejoindre ses compagnons dans la rue. . . . Soudain passèrent deux conducteurs de camions qui, entendant dire à une femme que des Chinois assassinaient un Canadien, défoncèrent la porte du restaurant et firent irruption dans la salle du prétendu crime. Ils n'avaient pas plus tôt ouvert la porte que la foule éclatait d'un grand éclat de rire en voyant bondir dans la rue le prisonnier hagard, échevelé, livide. . . .



*Le Soleil* (August 9, 1906) records:

Il y eut grand rassemblement hier soir sur la rue du Pont causé par la conduite plus que repréhensible de certains bambins voire même des jeunes gens qui ont fort malmené les Fils du Céleste Empire qui tiennent une buanderie dans cette rue. . . Ces malappris non contents de crier des injures ont même lancé des projectiles de toutes sortes dans le logis de ces pauvres Chinois.

*Le Soleil* (January 4, 1910) reported that:

Une bagarre sanglante a eu lieu. . . dans le restaurant chinois situé au numéro 29 de la rue de la Couronne. . . le Chinois propriétaire du restaurant qui a raconté que. . . deux individus. . . entrèrent (dans) son établissement et demandèrent à dîner. Le céleste leur demanda d'avance le paiement de la note mais sur leur assurance qu'ils paieraient une fois le repas consommé il leur servit tout ce qu'ils demandèrent et après le festin il leur presenta le compte. Pour toute réponse l'un des dîneurs lanca un vigoureux coup de point à la figure de Chinois. . .

One more report by *Le Soleil* (August 4, 1910) notes that:

. . . le Propriétaire de la buanderie chinoise H.S. Yuan, 37½ rue St. Joseph, Jacques-Cartier, était occupé à travailler dans sa cave, quand des petits garçons lui lancèrent de la boue par le soupirail. Le Chinois sortit alors de son établissement, mais les jeunes malappris avaient disparu.

Québécois attitudes toward the Chinese appear to have changed from hostility to accommodation since the Second World War. It is generally agreed that today there is less discrimination against the Chinese. Nowadays the Chinese are scattered all over the city, with heavy concentrations in Charlesbourg (50 families), Limoilou (20 families), Ancienne Lorette (15 families), Ste-Foy (20 families) and Les Saules (7 families) in 1975-76. The biggest surname groups are the Hwang, Tam and Seto. These surname groups do not form a clan organization of their own, as their numbers in the city are relatively small. They do get together from time to time for socio-cultural activities.

With the advent of the modern mechanized launderette, Chinese hand laundries have all but gone. The Chinese today are mostly concentrated in restaurant businesses. In 1975-76 there were 21 Chinese restaurants in the city with a grocery store, three gift shops, two physicians, a lawyer, and a few technicians and other professionals.

## CULTURAL TRADITIONS

In the old days, most of the Chinese were preoccupied with the problems of economic survival. Some said that they led an "eat, sleep and work" life. There was little time for festivity and cultural activities. A few might go for a game of mahjong or go visiting on Sundays.

Most of them were said to have been rooted in peasant traditions and were conservative in their way of life. They were hard-working and thrifty. Two of the Chinese festivals to which they held fast however, were the Chinese New Year and the Ching Ming festival.

One of the earliest celebrations of the Chinese New Year was recorded in *Le Soleil* on February 6, 1902, which stated that:

Tous les Chinois à Québec se préparent à fêter joyeusement le jour de l'an, dans la nuit d'aujourd'hui à demain vendredi. . . .Les Chinois ont plusieurs louables coutumes en rapport avec la célébration du jour de l'an. Mentionnons celle qui oblige tous les Chinois, sans distinction, de payer leurs dettes avant la grande célébration annuelle. Ainsi que nous le disons plus haut, les fêtes commenceront ce soir, à minuit. Les fils du ciel se rendront alors visite jusqu'au jour. Les Chinois ne se souhaitent pas la bonne année d'une façon aussi banale que les 'barbares' de l'Occident. La formule consacrée est la suivante: 'Puissiez-vous devenir riches!' Les fêtes Chinoises durent de dix à quinze jours: pour les Chinois riches, elles se divisent en cinq parties: le sacrifice au ciel et à la terre; 2e adoration des dieux et des idoles de la famille; 3e culte des ancêtres; 4e hommages aux parents et aux grands-parents; 5e visite aux parents et aux amis. Il va sans dire qu'on observe les rites les plus antiques et les non moins solennels.

Both *L'Événement* and *Le Soleil* reported the Chinese New Year festivities on January 30, 1911. "Pour la circonstance, les Chinois de Québec se sont fait des visites nombreuses avec force compliments, salutations et souhaits de toutes sortes. . . .Un Chinois ne peut commencer heureusement une nouvelle année sans avoir payé tout ce qu'il doit." (*L'Événement*, January 30, 1911).

The Ching Ming festival was usually organized by the older generation who paid respect to departed spirits at the grave sites. It is a "tomb sweeping" event carried out once a year. They brought food, drink and flowers for the deceased. The organization of the Ching Ming festival usually involved most of the members of the community. Many would donate money and food for the occasion and some would participate in the commemoration ceremony at the graveyard. Since the founding of the community association after the Second World War, the Ching Ming festival has been organized by the association and the Kuomintang party. In other words, the festival was organized in the name of the entire community.

Because of racial hostility in the old days, most Chinese looked inward into their own community, seeking comfort and assistance. People of a common surname gathered together informally for socio-cultural activities such as the Ching Ming event, birthday celebrations and New Year's parties. The gathering of a surname group reinforced

the traditional ideology of clanship and common lineage. It provided a basis for social grouping and mutual concern.

The Chinese Cultural Centre has been able to coordinate community cultural events for the past few years, with the support of several multicultural grants from the Secretary of State. It organizes picnics, film shows, food fairs, banquets for the elderly and the Chinese New Year party. In 1976 a New Year cultural performance was organized by the Centre with folksongs, a Tai-chi demonstration, a fashion show, and many folk dances such as the "Flower picking dance," the "Veil dance," the "Ribbon dance," the "Farmer dance," the "Stick dance," and "Moon festival dance," the "Sword dance," and "Hat dance," and the "Chop stick dance."

It is to be noted that socio-cultural events organized by the Centre were usually assisted by sisters from the *Mission de l'Immaculée Conception*. One of the sisters interviewed hopes that the Centre will serve as a link with the larger society and thus help integrate the Chinese into Québécois life.

The Centre was also concerned with the welfare and mutual protection of community members. An informal "credit banking system" known as the "Three Benefits Society" was organized to lend money at low interest to members. "Three benefits" means advantageous interest for the borrowers, lenders and the Society. The Centre served as a focal point for socio-recreational activities for the local Chinese, especially during the period between 1973-76, when many cultural activities were organized.

Ancestor worship, the Dragon boat festival, the Mid-autumn festival, and life-cycle celebrations are organized by some families in the city. Special food and cakes are prepared for the occasions, and they are exchanged between friends and relatives. For the New Year, for example, a fish dish is usually prepared, because the Chinese pronunciation of the word "fish" is synonymous with "left over", meaning that there will be plenty of food left over for the family. Special precautions not to speak "unlucky words" are still observed by some families. For example, the words "death" and "failure" should not be mentioned at all during the New Year period.

It appears that the persistence of certain transplanted Chinese traditions is due to their remaining functional in the new social setting. For example, many Chinese folktales that I collected are connected with the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. It is a story related to three "sworn brothers" of different surnames who founded a kingdom together. They are the symbols of righteousness, loyalty, courage and cooperation. Many episodes of the story were collected in Chinese

restaurants, especially in those restaurants which were operated jointly by persons of different surnames. It seemed that in the old days, the Chinese went into business together by word of mouth and mutual trust; the repetition of this story might serve to reinforce the Chinese tradition of trust and solidarity, even though the partners were not related by blood. The story is well known all over China. The following two episodes were collected in Quebec City:

*The "Sworn Brothers" at the Peach Orchard*

In the declining years of the Han dynasty, there was an uprising against the Han emperor led by the "Yellow Turban." One of the distant descendants of the Han royal family, Liu Pei, was distressed about the situation and wanted to restore peace to the country. One day, on looking at a notice requesting the people to join the army, Liu made a deep sigh, expressing sorrow. A big man, Chang Fei, who stood behind Liu earlier, asked what they could do about the situation. Chang said he had some wealth and would like to dispose of his money for the revolutionary cause. He then invited Liu to go to his house for a discussion.

On their way there, they stopped at a tea house for a rest. After some time, they saw a huge tall man come by. Liu was so impressed by his personality that he invited him for tea. On further discussion, it was learnt that his name was Kuan Yu and he was on his way to join the royal army. They later discovered that they all shared the same aspirations and goals in life: to help the country and to restore peace and order. Chang invited Kuan as well to go to his home.

It was peach blossoming time. The three decided to be sworn brothers. The ceremony took place in a peach orchard behind Chang's house. They swore that even though they were born at different times and dates, they would die at the same time and on the same day. Since then, the three were very loyal to and cooperative with each other, sharing many sufferings and hardships together.

*The "Righteous" Kuan Kong*

Kuan Kong was known for his courage, generosity and righteousness. During one of the battles with the forces of Ts'ao Ts'ao, the founder of the Wei Dynasty, Kuan Kong was defeated and was captured. Instead of killing him, Ts'ao Ts'ao spared his life and gave him honour and comfort. However, Kuan Kong was obliged to serve his "sworn" elder brother Liu Pei. He left Ts'ao later in order to join his brother.

In subsequent years, there were wars and conflicts among the three kingdoms. One day, Chu-ko Liang, a famous military adviser, sent Kuan Kong to fight Ts'ao Ts'ao. He urged Kuan not to spare the life of Ts'ao if Ts'ao was defeated; otherwise his own head would be cut off.

As predicted by Liang, Ts'ao lost the battle and was ambushed by Kuan during his escape. Remembering the kindness which he had received from Ts'ao when he was captured before, he spared Ts'ao's life and let him go.

He returned to Liang and expected to be beheaded. However, Liang was so impressed by his righteousness and great sense of gratitude, that he was forgiven.

In some of the educated and professional Chinese families, stories concerning great and famous men in Chinese history were told to children. The parents hoped to inculcate in them a sense of duty and achievement. The following two stories serve as illustrations:

*The Story of Szu Ma Kuang*

Szu Ma Kuang was a famous Chinese scholar. One day when he was young, he was playing with a group of children. One boy accidentally fell into a big water "jar" and was drowning. All the children ran away upon seeing the incident. But Szu Ma Kuang, with his quick thought and intelligence, threw a big stone at the jar and broke it. The boy flowed out with the water, and his life was saved.

*How Ts'ao Chih Weighted An Elephant*

Ts'ao Chih was a famous Chinese poet. One day, some people in his home town wanted to test his intelligence. They brought along an elephant and asked him to weigh it. Ts'ao put the elephant in a boat and marked the water level on the side of the boat. He then loaded the boat with rocks and later weighed the rocks and thus knew the weight of the elephant accordingly.

The earlier Chinese were known to work hard for little economic gain. Many of them earned enough to cope with the basic necessities of life; very few amassed great wealth. What made them work so hard for such long hours? What was the moral basis of their existence? The answer may be partially found in the proverbs that I collected from the elderly laundrymen and restaurant workers. These proverbs reflect cultural values of endurance, patience and delayed gratification. The following is a list of examples:

1. It is better to sacrifice present enjoyment for the good of the future.
2. You will harvest what you sow in the spring time.
3. If you want to be better than the others, you should be willing to taste the bitterness.
4. There is no hard work in this world, all you need is your determination and strong will.
5. Patience is golden.
6. Stand firmly on the ground and do your share of the work dutifully.
7. We should be able to swim or sink together: a common will can build a city.
8. Hard work will be rewarded and playfulness has no benefits.

9. Sacrifice your own interests for the family.
10. Be thrifty and save for tomorrow.
11. Be practical, accepting lowly positions while hoping for better ones.
12. You will reap benefits by being humble; but by being proud, you will be lost.

Chinese folk cuisine appears to be a functional tradition in the Quebec environment. The food is appreciated by the larger society; and it also helps the Chinese earn a good living. One informant noted that without Chinese food, 95% of the local Chinese would be out of work.

The most popular Chinese foods are variants of North American "chop suey," "Chow mein," "Fried rice," "egg fooyong," "dried spare ribs" and "sweet and sour pork"; many others are adaptations of Cantonese cuisine to the local situation. However, there are some dishes that are not prepared in other parts of Canada, such as "Tourtière Chinoise" and "Les pattes de cochon à la Cantonnaise."

Local Chinese restaurant owners usually buy their spices from the large Chinese centres in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Sometimes local spices and ingredients are used as substitutes, and as a result the taste of the food will be slightly different from place to place. For example, Worcestershire sauce is used to replace soya sauce and Western cabbage is used as a substitute for some Chinese vegetables. This is especially evident in some food businesses jointly owned by a Chinese husband and a French wife.

One of the most unique and typical Sino-Québécois foods is "Québec Fried Noodles." It was said to have been invented by Wah Fatt during the Depression years. There was a shortage of rice at that time, and Wah Fatt had to use macaroni as a substitute. He boiled the macaroni and drained it in cold water, then fried the macaroni with onion, celery, mushroom, green pepper, bean sprouts, together with garlic, soya sauce, salt, sugar and monosodium glutamate. It tasted so good that very soon most Chinese cooks in the city of Quebec imitated it. It continues to be popular even today. One interviewee emphasized that at one time in a few restaurants, 20 to 25% of the orders was for "Québec fried noodles."

Some Chinese foods have been influenced by French cuisine; for the food has to suit the Québécois palate. Both restaurants and laundries are service businesses; they depend on the needs of an urban clientele. Because of the new language law and Québécois nationalism, all Chinese restaurants today have to have a French language

menu. In the old days, Père Caron noted that only in Chinese restaurants could one see English signs and an English menu.<sup>7</sup> In order to satisfy new language requirements, some Sino-Québécois vocabularies have begun to appear; for example, "Potato frit with chicken," and "Chow mein au poulet take out."

The younger generation of Chinese brought up in Québécois society is fast being acculturated to Western forms of life. They speak French and understand to some extent Québécois culture and traditions. With greater acceptance by the members of the larger society, they actively participate in the city's socio-cultural life. Already, there is evidence of a Sino-Québécois popular tradition which consists of English, Chinese and French cultural elements. For example the lullaby, "A pair of tigers" in Mandarin, "One without the ears, and the other without a tail," is sung to the tune of "Frère Jacques." A literal translation of the lullaby is as follows:

A pair of tigers, a pair of tigers  
 chasing me, chasing me;  
 One without the ears, the other without the tail,  
 really horrifying, really horrifying.

The Chinese have come a long way from the racial discrimination of the first half of the century to their gradual acceptance by members of the majority after the Second World War. Earlier discrimination had pushed the Chinese to look inward for their security and comfort in the community, and thus they perpetuated some of the traditional peasant traditions and way of life that they brought over from China. Today, with greater opportunities for socio-economic mobility available to all, the Chinese are able to participate in Québécois society and to experience a gradual cultural change. They are adjusting and adapting to the cultural impetus in Québec.

## CONCLUSION

Ethnic studies in Canada usually focus on immigration, assimilation and community structure, and seldom deal with the dynamics and change of a minority tradition, or the effects upon that tradition of the policies of the larger society. Tentative findings from field research in 1975-76 indicate that there are two significant factors that have hampered the continuity and preservation of Chinese traditions in Québec. The absence of women and the lack of family life due to the Chinese Exclusion Law passed in 1923 prevented the main-

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7. A. Caron, *Ibid.*

tenance of Chinese folk culture in the family and in the community; for both the women and children are important carriers and transmitters of folk traditions. The Immigration Law also affected Chinese life and organizations which are essential for the survival of folk traditions; an ethnic tradition needs a community base.

The lack of leisure time due to long hours of work in the laundries and restaurants also retarded the growth of folk traditions, as the struggle for the economic necessities always takes priority over cultural activities. As one laundryman in response to my request for a laundry song remarked, "when you are with a hungry stomach, how could you sing?"

Post-war changes in the Chinese immigration law, and the reduction of racial discrimination have not only enabled Chinese family members to get together, but have also enhanced their opportunities to participate in national cultural life. At the same time, surviving folk traditions are given a functional and a Canadian justification. For example, the celebration of a Chinese New Year is used as an occasion to communicate with members of the larger society. Dignified and respectable members of Québécois society are invited to sample Chinese food and to enjoy Chinese folksongs and folk dances. With the encouragement offered by the multicultural policy and the awarding of cultural grants, many folk traditions are being revived for festive occasions.

The formation of traditional associations did provide the Chinese with a network of relations in which to carry on their socio-cultural life. It was, indeed, a sustaining force within the community to continue its own traditions. The organization of the Chinese New Year and the Ching Ming festival by the traditional associations, and the performances of folksongs and folk dances at the Chinese Cultural Centre, did convey a cultural identity and a common sense of belonging to the community members. Such festivals and performances give impetus to the continuity of folk traditions. These traditions in turn consolidate community relations and group realignment.

The earlier Chinese immigrants in Québec City came principally from the Szu I districts of Southern China. They brought a village tradition and a peasant life style. The lingua franca of the community at that time was based on Szu I dialects, and the traditions were essentially Szu I traditions. These traditions were maintained and observed by the traditional community associations.

The arrival of post-war, well-educated and professional Chinese has brought some changes in cultural traditions. The dialects of the community today are no longer the Szu I, but a combination of Hong



Kong Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, and Teochiew. Many educated Chinese speak both English and French; and some even speak Spanish and Italian. Their folk traditions are a mixture of Chinese, English and French cultural elements. And some of these traditions are maintained by the cultural organizations based on Western models. Life-styles have also changed in accordance with different social class and professional status. It is no longer entirely the life of a laundryman and restaurant worker. The young generation is being gradually drawn into the mainstream of Québécois life, and possesses different world views and cultural perspectives within the context of Québécois society.

From the discussion thus far, it is evident that both the structure of the Chinese community and its socio-cultural life have been affected by the policies of the larger society, and will continue to be so affected. The pressures of life, the problems of ethnic identity and the common concerns for economic survival will certainly affect the Chinese way of life and traditions. They have to adapt and change in accordance with the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of Québec.

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