

THE ETHNIC IDENTITY  
OF THE  
CHINESE COMMUNITY OF TALLAHASSEE:  
CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN PROCESS

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## Sample Questionnaire

### General Information

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Occupation
4. Marital Status
5. Number of children and their names
6. Place of birth
7. For what reason did you come to the U.S.? (Education, Business, etc.)

### Family Information

1. Do any family members besides yourself live here in the U.S.? If so, where?
2. How many of your relatives live in your native country?
3. Do you keep in contact with those family members living here in the U.S.? When do you contact them? For what reasons?
4. Do you keep in contact with family members who are living in your native country? When do you contact them? For what reasons?

### Family and Religious Practices

1. Do you belong to any established religious institution? (Ex. Christian, Buddhist)
2. At what times do you get to see your family? Do you travel to your native country to see your relatives?
3. What do you do when a family member dies? What happened when a family member died when you were a child? What happens now?
4. What happens when a family member in your native country gets married? What happens when a family member living here in the U.S. marries? What happened when a family member got married when you were a child? Has it changed since then?
5. What happens when a baby is born to your family here in the U.S.? What happens when a baby is born to the family in your native country? How is the baby's name decided upon?

### Personal Attitudes and Values

1. How did you feel when you came to the U.S.?
2. How do you feel about American culture? Are there many differences between Chinese and American culture?
3. Is Tallahassee very different from a big Chinatown? In what ways?
4. Do you feel you have become Americanized? In what ways? Do you feel you have changed since coming to America?

### Chinese and Christianity

#### Non-Christian

1. What do you think of Western Christianity?
2. What do you think of the Chinese who have converted to Christianity?
3. Are there any of your family members who have converted to Christianity?

#### Chinese Christians

1. Why did you convert to Christianity?
2. What do you think of the Chinese who have not converted to Christianity?
3. Are there any of your family members who are not Christians?

## Dedication and Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank my parents, their patience and support have remained unswerving. I would also like to thank the Rooney family for their help and support. This thesis is dedicated to the Chinese community of Tallahassee. I have learned much about the Chinese culture, religion and unexpectedly, much about myself. The Tallahassee Chinese are a unique community and they have justifiably won both my admiration and respect.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of Problem

- I. Introduction to Investigations
- II. Statement of Problem
- III. Methods of Investigations
- IV. Thesis Statement
- V. Review of Chapters

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of Problem

### Introduction

In August 1985 I became interested in investigating the Chinese community of Tallahassee. I consulted with Dr. Bruce Grindal, a professor of Anthropology at Florida State University, and he advised me to attend his graduate course, Contemporary Folk Religions, which taught the methods and techniques of ethnography and afforded an opportunity to engage in field research among the Chinese community. In addition, I enrolled in other University courses that provided basic background information and a better understanding of the Chinese culture and religion. These courses lent insight toward the intricacies and complexities of the religious world of the Chinese. Over the following months I became involved in various Chinese community events. Personal interviews were conducted at individual's homes and events of the Chinese community.

When I first began this project I entered with the eyes of a Westerner. I understood religion to be an independent institution with a specific body of doctrine and beliefs. Religion, I believed, constituted going to church on Sunday and obeying the rules. I attempted to look for religion in the Western sense in a Chinese setting, and discovered that the Chinese concept of religion differs dramatically from that of Americans. In addition, I found the Chinese community to be a very close-knit and reserved group. The most difficult task was to change both my perception of religion and my view of the Chinese culture.

### Statement of Problem

I wish to investigate the Chinese community of Tallahassee, Florida, focusing upon the religious and cultural changes the Chinese have experienced in accommodating to a new and foreign environment. To what degree have the members of the community maintained their ethnic identity and to ~~what~~ extent have they assimilated into the host society? What factors have contributed to the maintenance or change of ethnic identity? With the family being a basic and essential element of Chinese religion, how has the family, its presence or absence, affected the religious and cultural identity of the Chinese community? How has the age of the individual, their religious affiliation, their social status, degree of education, and their personal position towards traditional Chinese religious thought influenced the degree to which the Chinese preserve their cultural tradition? These questions will be investigated in the following chapters.

### Methods of Investigations

In investigating the dynamics of ethnicity and assimilation within the community I have narrowed my methods to participant observation and personal interviews. The events which I have been able to observe and participate in were: The North Florida Chinese Organization Annual Fall Picnic, the Chinese New Year Festival sponsored by the Chinese Student



Organization, a private Chinese funeral, and various get-togethers with the employees of a local Chinese restaurant. Through these events I made initial contact with various members of the Chinese community and arranged subsequent personal interviews. A questionnaire has been derived from these personal interviews and focuses upon different aspects of ethnic identity according to each individual. The questions range from general individual and family information to personal attitudes and opinions. Some interviews were informal, conducted during Chinese community events, while others were more structured, using a tape recorder at the individual's home or office.

In these interviews the questions varied, conforming to individual attitudes. A trait of the Chinese culture which I discovered during these personal interviews was a lack of proselytization. I discovered the Chinese have a dislike of preaching or talking about one's personal beliefs. They consider religion an individual and private affair and maintain a respectful distance. The Chinese do not attempt to criticize another's religion and rarely do anything to interfere with the rituals sacred to other religions. Those who brag about themselves and preach or testify about their religion are frowned upon by the rest of Chinese society. The Chinese adapt an attitude of humbleness and modesty and consider speaking of oneself as equal to selfish, empty boasting. The Chinese seem to approach devotion inwardly with solitary meditation and

outwardly in good moral conduct.

In this thesis, I wish to examine the Chinese experience in America. And, more specifically, I wish to examine the religious aspects of the Chinese culture and the changes that have occurred when Chinese settle in American society. A multiplicity of factors are involved in the Chinese process of acculturation; family, social status, and personal preference towards traditional Chinese religious thought. My study focuses upon how the immigrated Chinese have maintained their original religious and cultural identity and to what extent have they assimilated into the American culture.

Through personal interviews and participant observations, a web of interconnecting social groups has appeared within the Tallahassee Chinese community. The design of these groups relies upon degree of education, social status, and age of the individual. Some groups operate to assimilate completely into the American society, while others strive to maintain their ethnic identity and traditional culture. I would like to examine these social groups of the Chinese community and how their existence has affected the processes of acculturation.

Both the family and social networks have greatly influenced the Chinese assimilation into American society and their maintenance of ethnic identity. Even though my investigations have<sup>v</sup> only scratched the surface, I hope to reveal the complexities and problems faced by the Chinese living in the diaspora.

### Review of Chapters

The second chapter presents a review of literature regarding the Chinese experience. Chinese religion and culture is examined in the first section, exploring the different schools of religion within the Chinese culture. A description of the traditional Chinese family and its role with Chinese religion and culture is also investigated. The second section explores the Chinese immigration into the U.S. while the last section examines Chinese religion and culture today in the U.S. This chapter is employed to provide a basic background or framework upon which the succeeding chapters can build upon.

Chapter three outlines social occasions within the Chinese community. A history and background of Tallahassee and its Chinese population is given, from the 1960's to today's Chinese community. The third chapter presents an overall view of the Chinese community, describing various public and private events when Chinese get together. Most of this material was obtained through participant observation. My ethnographic research within the Tallahassee Chinese community has categorized the social groups into four segments, restaurant owners, professionals (i.e. University professors, state government workers), University students, and blue-collar workers. The establishment of various Chinese social organizations and a description of the Chinese community as a whole is provided to draw an accurate picture of the Chinese community in

Tallahassee.

In Chapter four I wish to examine the attitudes, values, and life experiences of differing segments of the Chinese community with regard to ethnic identity. In examining the attitudes of individual members of the Chinese community, I am particularly concerned with the role of the family - both here and at home, and the role of traditional religious beliefs - how they have affected both the processes of acculturation and maintenance of ethnic identity. The material for this chapter has been derived from personal interviews, both formal and informal, and attempts to explain the diverse attitudes of the Chinese community.

The fifth and final chapter offers a comparative interpretation of the Chinese in Tallahassee with Chinese in other Metropolitan areas in the U.S. Interpretations will be drawn from the review of literature and ethnographic research. Concrete or definite conclusions cannot be drawn since the Chinese community and the city of Tallahassee are constantly growing and changing with each passing year. Even though my research has not been as extensive as desired, I will attempt to present an accurate picture of the Chinese community of Tallahassee and its efforts to maintain their cultural and ethnic identity.

Seen in its entirety, I have only touched the tip of an enormous iceberg. The research and information I have gathered has helped me to begin to comprehend the immense complexity of

the Chinese and their religion. The Chinese people have often told me that the purpose of every religion is to teach how to be good and do what is right. This unique community has opened my eyes to many new worlds and have justifiably won both my admiration and respect.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

- I. Chinese Religion and Culture
  - A. Yin-Yang and Taoism
  - B. Ancestor Worship  
Shang-ti  
Sacrifice  
Family Solidarity and connection with religious worship
  - C. Confucianism
  - D. Buddhism
  - E. The Traditional Chinese Family
  
- II. Chinese in the U.S.: A History of Acculturation
  - A. Chinese Immigration into the U.S. (1820-1882)
  - B. Chinese Exclusion Period (1882-1943)
  - C. Chinese Integration (1943-present)
  
- III. Chinese Religion and Culture Today in the U.S.
  - A. Chinatown
  - B. Chinese Family and Social Life

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### Chinese Religion and Culture

The concept of religion is a very broad and complex subject, yet in this investigation a Chinese author best describes it as:

"a system of beliefs, ritualistic practices and organizational relationships designed to deal with ultimate matters of human life such as the the tragedy of death, unjustifiable suffering, unaccountable frustrations, uncontrollable hostilities that threaten to shatter human social ties, . . . Such matters transcend the conditional, finite world of empirical, rational knowledge, and to cope with them as an inherent part of life man is impelled to seek strength from faith in such nonempirical realms as spiritual power inspired by man's conceptions of the supernatural."  
(Yang, 1942, p.1)

In China a rich variety of religious expression has existed which have incorporated many different forms of philosophical-religious thought and practice. The three most influential ~~are~~ Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. To view the several sects of doctrine as Chinese religion is to read Western experience into a different context. The use of the term "religion" in the singular sense is intended to convey the interpretation that the character of religious expression in China is above all "a manifestation of the Chinese culture." (Thompson, 1979, p. 1)

"In China lay people did not usually belong to an institutionalized sect, nor did their religious life have anything to do with signing articles of faith . . . religion in China was so woven into the broad fabric of family and social life that there was not even a special word for it until

modern times, when one was coined to match the Western term." (Thompson, 1979, p. 2)

The early Chinese world view has been characterized by a regularity which Westerners would term as "law", but this "law" lacks the Western concept of an outside "lawgiver." (Thompson, 1979, p. 1) There were three main features of this regularity -- first, cyclical processes (rhythms of human life, night and day) second, processes of growth and decline (the rise and fall of generations, birth, maturity, old age, and death) and third, bipolar complementarity. Bipolar complementarity meant not only that everything had its opposite but that these opposites such as night and day, were necessary and complementary to each other. These three features were expressed in the symbol of Yin and Yang. In the ancient world view Yin and Yang were not a struggle between good and evil principles but were equally essential forces in the ceaseless process of an impersonal universe.

Behind or beyond the workings of heaven, Yin and Yang have their source in the Tao. (Thompson, 1979, p. 7) The Tao translated means "the Way" or "the Path". Next to Confucianism the most influential native philosophy of the Chinese has been that of the Taoist School. Tao was seen as the process under the surface of things, the reality behind or within appearances. The application of the Taoist philosophy lies in its text, the Tao Te Ching, written by an old sage, Lao Tzu. (DeBary, 1980, p. 48) The teaching the Tao Te Ching



is based upon an underlying principle (Tao);

"which is the source of all life, human and natural, and the basic, undivided unity in which all the contradictions and distinctions of existence are ultimately resolved . . . The way of life which accords with the basic Tao is marked by a kind of yielding passivity, an absence of strife and coercion, a manner of action which is completely spontaneous, effortless, and inexhaustible." (DeBary, 1980, p. 50)

It is about which nothing can be predicted but because of which all phenomena exists. Without going into the metaphysical aspects of Taoist philosophy, the Tao may be equated with the laws of nature or nature itself.

Although the universe functions through the "law without a lawgiver" there appeared at the same time a personalized power of importance in the thinking of the ancient Chinese. In the Five Confucian Classics and also in the inscriptions on Shang period (1751-1111BCE) oracle bones are found references to a deity named Shang-ti or Lord-on-High. Shang-ti was seen the chief god of the ruling family. He was the divine ruler who watched over human society and the processes of the universe. Beneath Shang-ti were a number of lesser deities of the sun, moon, stars, wind, rain, mountains, and rivers. In addition to these deities the Chinese also believed that their ancestors, upon death, continued to exist in Heaven (t'ien) and had a definite influence upon human affairs and everyday life. (DeBary, 1980, p. 5) This and other evidence has demonstrated the close relationship between religious worship and the family that exists in the Chinese culture.

The importance of the family is a specific distinguishing characteristic of Chinese society, and the function of the ancestor cult is a specific distinguishing characteristic of the Chinese family. The concept of ancestor worship makes religion to the Chinese more of a family matter than a matter of individual choice. Since ancient times the family has been vital to the survival of the Chinese society. China arose as an agrarian culture and needed the many hands of a large family for agriculture to prosper. Ancestor worship has played an indispensable role in reinforcing the cohesion of the family. To better understand the status of the ancestors, one may turn to the earliest literary records, dated during the Chou Dynasty (1123-221 BCE). In the Shu Ching (Book of Poetry) the family ancestors are pictured as dwelling "on high" in some sort of association with Shang-ti. (DeBary, 1980, p. 5) Their powers seem to derive from this position, and the ancient Chinese believed their ancestors, after death, still assumed a personality which held the original position or status in the hierarchy of the family. These ancestors were also able to intercede with Shang-ti to send down blessings or calamities. (Thompson, 1979, p. 44)

From these ancient times there arose a mutual dependence between the dead and the living. If the dead were not properly buried with the correct rituals and observances, they could forever exist in purgatory, therefore they became dependent upon their living ancestors for correct observance

of ritual. The living family also depended upon their ancestors for good fortune. Sacrifice was a way in which the living could placate the ancestor spirit.

"These sacrifices were of the utmost importance in securing the blessings and protection of the spirits, and any move to neglect them, perform them improperly, or perform sacrifices to which one was not entitled would, it was thought, bring about misfortune and calamity. The sacrifices to ancestors in particular were of vital importance to the welfare of the family or clan, for the ancestors had the power to aid or punish their descendants according to their pleasure."

(DeBary, 1980, p. 5)

The religion of the family is, in a sense, the religious institution of China and the ethical views of Confucian tradition were a rationalization and extension of family virtues. (Thompson, 1979, p. 13) Confucian canon strongly believed that the tradition and ritual of ancestral sacrifice was the element that maintained cohesion and control in the Chinese family. The ritual of sacrifice was the force behind filial piety in the family system. Confucius and the educated elite took a more rationalistic or cautious view of ghosts and spirits but still believed that rites of ancestor worship were essential to maintaining the order of the family. Hsun Tzu (340-245 BCE), a Confucian philosopher, describes in the Li Chi the phenomenon of sacrifice;

"Sacrifice is because of the emotions produced by memories, ideas, thoughts, and longings; it is the extreme of loyalty, faithfulness, love and reverence; it is the greatest thing of the rites . . . and of beautiful actions . . . The Sage plainly understands it; the scholar and superior man accordingly performs it; the official observes

it; among the people it becomes an established custom. Among the superior man it is considered to be a human practice (Tao), among the common people it is considered to be serving the spirits."  
(Thompson, 1979, p. 47)

In interpreting Confucian one might construe ancestor worship as a "reverence" rather than "worship". Yet in the above quoted paragraph more than one view of ancestor worship is seen; the common man established ancestor worship as a fundamental basis of religion and an adequate description of Chinese religion must include the beliefs of the common people as well as the views of the educated elite.

Around the time of the birth of Christ the Indian religion of Buddhism had reached the Chinese in the context of Buddhist monks and Mahayana texts. The Buddhist religion introduced new concepts concerning the afterlife and these notions became inextricably meshed with older Chinese ideas. "Karma was originally an impersonal physical 'law' . . . As popularly interpreted, however, it became sort of a merit and demerit system according to which the condition of one's future existence was determined by one's past actions."

(Thompson, 1979, p. 12) In incorporating Buddhist theory into the Chinese notion of ancestor worship, sacrifices became a special function of both professional priests and family heads. To the family in general, sacrifice did not need a consecration, the sacrifices to their ancestors were simply a continuation of the duties of filial piety. On the other hand, sacrifices and rituals of great importance such

The Chinese were welcomed since they provided cheap labor that were vacated by white laborers who left their jobs in large numbers to search for gold. As a result, economic opportunities arose for the Chinese in mining, domestic and manual labor. Figures reveal some curious facts about Chinese immigration; 65,758 Chinese arrived between 1850 and 1859, yet the total number of Chinese in America in 1860 was only 34,933. Despite the deplorable domestic conditions in China nearly fifty percent of the Chinese immigrants returned home. The Chinese immigrants to America were almost exclusively male, and were "sojourners" out to make their fortune and return home to their wives. (Chen, 1980, p. 15) The proportion between sojourners and settlers was roughly 50:50.

But as soon as it had begun the gold fever subsided, leaving gold seekers penniless and their dreams unfulfilled. The white laborers' first thought was to return to their original jobs but the labor market had changed. There was intense competition induced by an oversupply of laborers and a sudden decline of jobs when many mines shut down. The competition became tougher as more laborers were thrown into the job market with the completion of the Pacific Railroad in 1869. The competition for a small number of jobs led to conflicts between competing groups. The favorable economic opportunities which were presented at the outset to the Chinese were quickly snatched away as poor economic conditions provoked agitation against foreign workers, particularly the

Chinese. S.W. Kung describes these events;

"When immigrants come in greater numbers than can be economically absorbed, a hostile attitude on the part of the dominant population makes assimilation seem difficult. As a consequence comes a popular demand to exclude or at least restrict newcomers."  
(Kung, 1962, p. 165)

White workers, due to the tension of job scarcity, began to feel that the Chinese immigrants were threatening their employment opportunities. Hostilities were directed at the Chinese which led to violence, discriminatory aggression, and eventually legislative antagonism. (Eng, 1977, p. 37) The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 suspended immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years, and entry for the wives of Chinese laborers then in the U.S. was forbidden. The Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited naturalization and was the first exclusive racial immigration law passed by U.S. Congress. The Scott Act of 1888 stated Chinese laborers who left the U.S. could not return and 20,000 Chinese laborers had their re-entry certificates revoked. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1904 extended, reenacted, and continued all past exclusion laws restricting Chinese immigration without a time limit. (Chen, 1980, p. 138) Thus the tension of employment competition developed a situation where the Chinese not only became the victims of prejudice and violence, but they also became victims of institutionalized racism in the form of enactment and enforcement of discriminatory legislation.

Anti-Chinese violence spread like an epidemic in the north along the West Coast in 1885. In 1886, the concerted movement to "clear the Chinese out" continued, and thirty-five California communities reported expulsion between January and April, 1886. Driven out of the small towns, many Chinese left for China, others were forced to take refuge in the larger Chinatowns such as those in San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles. Exclusion transformed the old Chinatowns into isolated Chinatowns -- part fortress, part haven and refuge. In Gold Rush days there were several Chinatowns in California, but most of them gradually disappeared as the gold-mining industry declined. By the 1850's some 10,000 Chinese passed into Washington and Oregon following the mining discoveries there and then into western mountain states such as Colorado, Nevada, and Arizona in the 1860's and 1870's. After the completion of the first transcontinental railway, the Chinese immigrants in 1869-70 migrated to Chicago, Mississippi, New York, Boston, and Georgia. (Chen, 1980, p. 186)

The real diaspora, however, took place later. In the 1880's, at the height of the anti-Chinese movement, San Francisco Chinatown filled with over 30,000 people, mostly those fleeing from the anti-Chinese riots that hit the smaller West Coast cities. But as the crisis faded, more Chinese fled the unfriendly climate of the West. As J. Chen describes;

"Between 1890 and 1900, although the total population of Chinese in the United States declined by 17% from 107,488 to 89,863 and San Francisco's Chinese community dropped from 25,833 to 13,954,

New York's increased from 2,048 to 4,874 and Brooklyn's 600 doubled. The number of Chinese in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Baltimore, Washington, and New Orleans tripled. Chinese appeared in ten cities where a decade before there had been none. Their means of livelihood were now restaurants, shops, and laundries in the Northeast and East and groceries in the South. They avoided as much as possible any economic competition, especially labor, with white workers."

(Chen, 1980, p. 186)

This exclusion was not to be lifted until 1943 when an alliance was formed between China and the U.S. in the war effort against Japan. The Repeal of Chinese Exclusion Acts signed F.D. Roosevelt in 1943 provided an annual quota for all persons of Chinese race and gave the Chinese the right of naturalization. By 1943, 52% of the Chinese in America were native-born American citizens. The Chinese community was now almost wholly urban. The social profile of the Chinese communities and Chinatowns changed by the increasing number of Chinese going into business. It took little capital to set up a laundry. And this was why laundries figures so largely among Chinese occupations. In 1920, 30% of all Chinese were engaged in laundry work. (Chen, 1980, p. 198)

In the forty-three years since the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, the progress in dismantling the institutionalized discrimination and mental prejudice has been slow and devious. Back in 1850's the overwhelming majority of Chinese immigrants were farmers, artisans, and workers. During the next forty years there was not much change in this occupational pattern. Only toward the second quarter of the 1900's did Chinese-



Americans in larger numbers begin to master the skills of high-income money making. The first generation of American-born Chinese-American citizens with a Western education, began to make their influence felt in Chinese communities. But by the second generation, the American-born Chinese broke the confining barriers of the Chinatowns and took up scholastic careers, research and teaching; they became doctors, lawyers, accountants, nurses, and took clerical and other white-collar jobs; they went into insurance, real estate, and banking. (Chen, 1980, p. 220) With these social changes, there was no going backward. Those who took refuge in Chinatowns had come out into the mainstream of American life. Supported by the 1943 repeal of the Exclusion Act and subsequent laws, the Chinese of America by direct action and political pressure have continued to press for complete rejection of exclusionist policies and discrimination.

## Chinese Religion and Culture Today in the U.S.

### Chinatowns

It is quite natural that immigrants should tend to live together in respective communities, holding on tenaciously to their old-world customs, their native language, and revered traditions. Strangers in a strange land seek refuge and comfort among their somewhat-established compatriots, where they often develop organizations to meet fundamental needs. Another reason, slightly sinister, for these self-segregated foreign communities, is the apprehension of hostility from the dominant population; sometimes these apprehensions have become realities.

Chinatowns developed first from the immigration of people seeking economic and social betterment. (Kung, 1962, p. 198) Until 1943 the Chinese were not permitted naturalization and assimilation remained a very slow and tedious process, with racial and cultural differences aggravating the difficulties. But it must be emphasized that Chinatowns are not synonymous with the entire Chinese community in the U.S. As soon as a Chinese person has improved his economic status sufficiently or can accept a position superior to any that Chinatown can offer, he usually leaves and settles in a better residential portion of town. (Kung, 1962, p. 198)

Most Chinatowns are situated near railway stations because the early Chinese wished to be accessible to relatives and friends. The Chinatowns of San Francisco, New York, and a

few other cities will remain for many years because of their historical, commercial and picturesque importance. Yet elsewhere Chinatowns are rapidly receding, sometimes because of a general economic decline in the city, sometimes because of a decline of Chinese residents. Professor Rose Hum Lee has found that if a city's total Chinese population falls below 360, or if the total population of the city is below 50,000, the city can scarcely support a Chinatown indefinitely. (Kung, 1962, p. 200)

"With less prejudice and discrimination against the Chinese, and with more and more Chinese desirous of being assimilated into American society, those Chinatowns with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants will in the not too distant future go out of existence."  
(Kung, 1962, p. 200)

As the Chinese gradually disperse among the white population, the usefulness of even the important Chinatowns becomes doubtful. The tourist attraction may in fact induce many Chinese shopowners to get together and preserve the name of Chinatown. With the disintegration of economically sufficient Chinatowns, only laundries, restaurants, and gift shops tend to remain in the community. Yet with or without the Chinatown's existence the structure of the family has been the stabilizing force behind the Chinese. Chinese family and social life is thus examined to better understand the changes the Chinese have had to make in adjusting to American society.

### Chinese Family and Social Life

To understand Chinese family life in America one must keep in mind the ideals outlined previously in the discussion of the traditional Chinese family. Family allegiance and loyalty has continued to be of the utmost importance, and the discipline of filial piety has been instrumental in maintaining order and harmony within the family. Though Chinese family life in the U.S. still tends to follow to a certain extent the pattern of traditional Chinese family characteristics, the application of that pattern differs in degrees according to individual families. (Kung, 1962, p. 208)

The factors of traditional family traits and their maintenance depend largely upon the parents' education, birthplace, profession, place of residence, and, to a great extent, the length of time that this country has been home. There has been considerable adjustment of the Chinese to American family lifestyles, especially by those Chinese families who have moved out of Chinatown to live among middle-class whites. Many things such as mass education, urbanization, and increased employment of women have contributed to a disintegration of parental control over children. All these factors have had an impact on the Chinese immigrant family. A rigid traditional Chinese family structure can no longer exist, even in Chinatown.

The second generation Chinese-Americans, born in Chinatown and educated in China, have been the bridge which has

joined China and America. (Lee, 1965, p. 45) Although they are neither temporary sojourners nor completely Americans, their family orientation has departed from their parents. They have resolved that the American-born would be educated completely in America, however they must also learn to speak Chinese as well as English and become accustomed with Chinese traditions of their ancestors. This has been an uphill battle since Chinese-American children view parental order, such as to attend a Chinese language school, as interfering with their attempt to become acculturated into American society. The problem which seems to face succeeding generations of Chinese-Americans is what is called "cultural conflict." (Lee, 1965, p. 141) The "cultural conflict" for the Chinese-Americans appears when they are faced with the problem of deciding which obligation has priority over the other; family obligation as well as acculturative obligation. However, each succeeding generation of Chinese-Americans face less problems within the family as his orientation and attitudes become more and more westernized.

Even though the Chinese are becoming better adjusted to American ways, some unique Chinese attitudes still remain. Most older Chinese are disinclined to make last will and testaments no matter how well educated the family might be and this neglect may later cause the family serious trouble. Another ancient tradition is that of removing bones from the cemetery to be transported for interment to the old hometown

in China. (Kung, 1962, p. 211) Children have the responsibility of making certain that their ancestors' remains are buried together in the proper places.

"No fewer than 1,300 sets of bones are still being stored after ten years in San Francisco warehouses, awaiting transportation. Two cemeteries in San Francisco have been releasing bones every ten years for shipment to China . . . The year 1947 was the last one in which bones were released; and since then only 500 out of a total of 1,800 sets have been shipped." (Kung, 1962, p. 211)

But with the permanent settlement here of Chinese families, many families have decided to inter their bones in this country and soon, presumably, there will be no bones subject to transportation.

The social life of the average Chinese does not extend far outside his own social circle. Opportunities for participation with other Americans are few and limited. Yet the average Chinese family is busy socially. It has more days to celebrate and more occasions for family gatherings than do families in China: the Chinese New Year, the May Fifth Festival, August 15, the Full Moon Festival; as well as the western holidays of Easter, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. With the Spring Festival Party guests as well as members of the family are invited to fill as many as ten to fifteen dinner tables. And the rotation of invitations may last many months. Of all occasions, none is more exciting than the Chinese New Year Festival. In Chinatowns celebrations begin early in the

afternoon with parades and last for days. The individual social life of the average Chinese is by no means cramped; his chances for visiting friends and relatives are many, because most Chinese belong to district of family associations. (Kung, 1962, p. 213) But the social distance between most of the Chinese and Americans is still far apart. As long as Chinese immigrants are not fully accepted on the basis of character and achievement social gaps will be hard to close.

I have depicted some major aspects of the life of the Chinese-Americans as it is in Chinese communities. Though today Chinese no longer feel restricted to the area of Chinatown, nevertheless some of them still prefer to live within its walls. Beyond the walls of Chinatown the Chinese must face additional walls of discrimination and prejudice which the white society has constructed. Those that have surmounted the walls of Chinatown must endeavor to overcome the barriers to assimilation into American society. Such a group is the Chinese community of Tallahassee and with my investigations I hope to show what a "special class" they are.

Chapter Three: Social Organizations and Social Occasions within the Chinese Community

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### Chapter Three: Social Organizations and Social Occasions within the Chinese community

#### History and Background of Tallahassee Chinese Community

Over the past twenty years the city of Tallahassee has grown and diversified and so has its Chinese community. Tallahassee is the capital of Florida and also the location for Florida State University and Florida A & M University. The city's main function is the operation of state governmental departments and the location for the state legislation sessions. Tallahassee's population has grown from 116,214 in 1960, to 142,231 in 1960 and 190,329 in 1980. In 1985, the city's population expanded to 213,451. (Florida Census Count, 1985) The state of Florida's population has grown rapidly over the last twenty years and Tallahassee has grown with it. Since Tallahassee is the state capital many of its job opportunities are provided through the governmental departments. Florida State University also provides job opportunities within its university system and teaching staff. Tallahassee does not boast of any major industry or commerce other than farming and other light industries. The Chinese community of Tallahassee has grown also with the city's population and have experienced many changes during the past twenty years.

In the 1960's the Chinese community numbered less than fifty. There were university faculty members and a few state government workers. The majority immigrated from Hong Kong

and Taiwan. However, their immigration route did not take them directly to Tallahassee. The greatest number took a route which placed them initially on the west coast. Those who wished to travel further usually proceeded to areas in Texas. If the Chinese had the proper immigration papers and credentials, they applied for governmental positions or teaching positions in the universities. The major occupations held by Chinese in Tallahassee in the 1960's were university faculty members, state government employees, and students. But the students, even though they made up a major portion of the Chinese population, cannot be considered a viable part of the community since most returned to China after completing their academic studies.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the Tallahassee community towards the Chinese during the 1960's was very conservative. Discrimination which had restricted black Americans also encompassed the Chinese. The older members of the community who arrived in Tallahassee in the 1960's have commented that Tallahassee was more discriminatory in their employment and social attitudes than other cities they had encountered in the northeast and western U.S. Job opportunities were restricted to visiting professors and state government workers.

In the 1970's the community's behavior towards the Chinese was still discriminatory, but as the city of Tallahassee grew in population and economical status, the city's job opportunities expanded into more international

areas, such as import/export and foreign industries. Qualified Chinese were welcomed to fill these positions. In addition, the universities in Tallahassee were expanding and more Chinese students, both from Taiwan and mainland China, began coming in larger numbers for academic studies.

Today the Chinese population in Tallahassee is approximately 200 to 300. This growth has occurred over the past five years. The majority of the Chinese population has come from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Some have come from mainland China, mostly university students or those working in conjunction with the state government and the Republic of China. Over the past five to ten years there has been a growing number of international residents in conjunction with the university and state government and the position of the Chinese in Tallahassee is not as visible, and consequently the city has become less prejudiced in its attitude towards the Chinese.

However, the attitude of the Chinese towards Tallahassee contrasts dramatically from the attitude of the outside community. Where as over the past ten years the Tallahassee community has become more tolerant and accepting, the Chinese community remains close-knit and insulated. The Chinese community still remains very family and group-oriented. The Chinese have expanded their job occupations to include doctors, restaurant owners, and other professional fields. But many still voluntarily socially segregate

themselves from others of the Tallahassee community. The degree of isolation and socialization with the Tallahassee community will be discussed in the next chapter.

The city of Tallahassee has not developed a Chinatown, mainly due to its small size. There has not been a sufficient number of Chinese in Tallahassee to develop a Chinatown. Historically, the Chinese population has been small and has not existed in Tallahassee for a long time. The Chinese in Tallahassee also have not experienced the historic pressure towards segregation as described in San Francisco in the previous chapters. Even though Tallahassee has grown over the past twenty years, its expansion has not included the development of any sort of Chinatown.

Today's Chinese community has developed three major community organizations. These are the North Florida Chinese Association, the Chinese Christian Organization, and the Chinese Student Organization. These various organizations sometimes promote social occasions for the Chinese community. These social occasions are events when the Chinese get together and assert their sense of community. The social events discussed in this chapter can be categorized as public events (Chinese New Year Celebration and Fall Picnic) or private occasions (private Chinese funeral). With these social occasions, the Chinese community has attempted to maintain its collective cultural identity. In discussing these social occasions a description of the community

organizations will be given and their struggle to both maintain a cultural heritage and assimilate into the larger Tallahassee community.

#### North Florida Chinese Association's Annual Fall Picnic

The North Florida Chinese Association is a volunteer organization and numbers around 100. They provide welcome and aid to Chinese just arriving in Tallahassee by providing services to the Chinese members of the community. One example of such a community service is a newly formed language school. This school is provided for community members who cannot afford to send their children to a Chinese language school in Taiwan or elsewhere. With the Chinese community assimilating more and more into the American society, the younger generations of Chinese have grown up not speaking Chinese adequately. Some Chinese parents worry that their children will grow up not knowing their mother tongue so the Chinese Association has organized a Chinese language school. The Chinese language school meets every Saturday for two hours. The Florida State University School of Music has provided classrooms where sixty students, ages ranging from six years to high school, are taught by ten volunteer Chinese teachers. The teachers are members of the Chinese Association and teach without pay. This school can be considered the Association's effort to preserve their cultural heritage.