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你吃了吗? Have You Eaten?: Using the Westernization of Chinese Food to Explain the Transformation of the Chinese Identity in America

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Using the Westernization of Chinese Food to Explain the Transformation of the Chinese Identity in America

By

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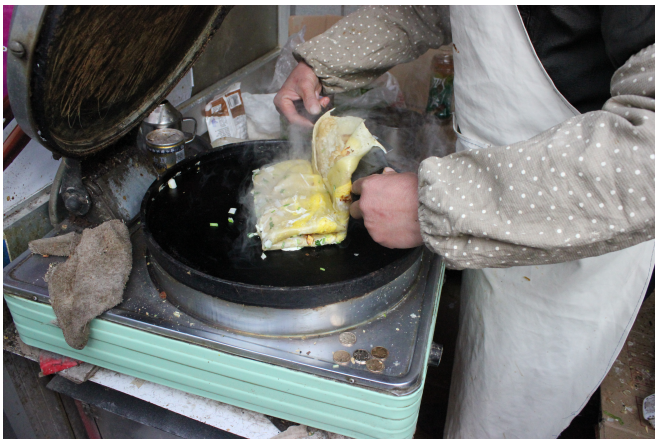
Preface

My father hates chop suey. Out of familial loyalty, I should also hate chop suey. Yet, after spending the past year researching Chinese food in America, I can no longer make myself hate this American-made creation. Chop suey, a dish made of chopped up meat, vegetables, and a variety of sauces is not found in China. While this dish can be credited with being the icon of Chinese American cuisine's drastic difference from the cuisine of China, it must also be credited with bringing success to many Chinese restaurants in the United States. When I came to this conclusion, I realized that I would finally have to try this infamous chop suey. This meant I would have to admit to my father that I had to finally try this dish, for the sake of my research.

I was always told to dislike chop suey, because it symbolized what my father would often refer to as "inauthentic Chinese food" or to put it simply, "bad Chinese food." Some may consider my father's comments "food snobbery" (at times he is a food snob and would never admit it), but my father is far more than that when it comes to Chinese food, and food in general. Out of anyone I have ever met in my life, my father truly loves food; he is the most content when he is sitting with my family, specifically at a round table, eating great food. This is why my father loves Chinese food and the culture that surrounds this cuisine. In many Chinese restaurants, the atmosphere encourages families to dine together, especially the use of the round table, which enhances conversation because no one is left out based on where they are seated. At other restaurants, my father requests a round table, but often a restaurant does not have one available is already taken. At our favorite Chinatown restaurants we get this luxury without even asking.

During my semester abroad in Beijing when I would speak to my father, I would spend a great amount of time describing the food I had just eaten, and he would enviously listen to every

word. He was especially attentive when I first described to him my favorite food in China the glorious *jianbing* 煎饼. I found my *jianbing* lady, located directly across from my dorm, on my second day in China, and I instantly fell in love. My father would often begin our conversations with, "How was your *jianbing* this morning?" I knew he was hooked as well.


My daily breakfast, the *jianbing*

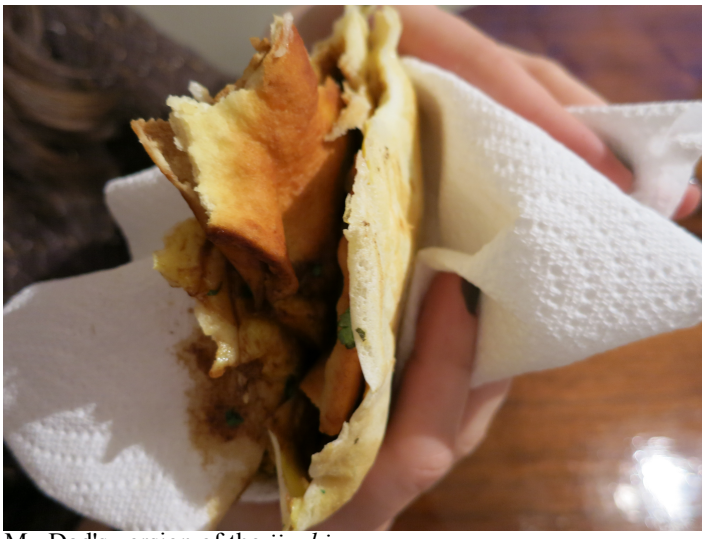
A *jianbing* is a traditional snack that is often enjoyed for breakfast. It is made of a crepe that is fried lightly on a round griddle, topped with an egg and sprinkled with cilantro, scallions, a *baocui* 薄脆 (crispy fried cracker), and folded to perfectly fit into one's hands.

Unfortunately, my father was unable to try this breakfast sandwich until a year after I came back from my semester abroad for we could not seem to find it anywhere in America despite it seeming to be a food Americans would love. We finally achieved success in January of 2013 when he learned of a place in Flushing that offered the *jianbing!* My father was no stranger to the Flushing Chinatown. A Queens native, he knows the streets of Flushing very well. More recently, my Dad and I would swing by Flushing to pick up Chinese food on our way back from picking me up at LaGuardia Airport. All of this time, we had only been a few blocks away from finding this traditional Chinese dish, but did not know it.

The first try at getting a *jianbing* resulted in a huge disappointment. While we were on line, the restaurant ran out of eggs and could no longer make *jianbing* on that day. Never one to give up, especially when it comes to food, my father and I visited the same restaurant two weeks later, and my father finally got to taste what he had heard about for over a year. Unfortunately, it

was far from the *jianbing* I had in Beijing. In fact, it was terrible. Once again, we were forced to drive the hour home disappointed and even worse, hungry.

However, my disappointment did not last. Five days after the trip to Flushing, I woke up ready to make the eight-hour drive to Ohio for my final semester of college. Coming up the stairs, a rather distinct smell filled the air. This distinct smell was none other than the smell that brought me such joy during the four months in Beijing: the smell of *jianbing*. I rushed downstairs to find my father making his rendition of this dish, which he had gotten up at 5 a.m. to prepare. His version truly mirrored the sandwich I remembered and so cherished during my time in Beijing. Not only did this prove that my father is an incredible chef and person, but it also proved that when one really tries, one can find *jianbing* in America.


My Dad's version of the *jianbing*

But the questions remain unanswered. What was chop suey anyway, and why should I hate it? And why is the *jianbing* not available in every American Chinese restaurant?

Acknowledgements

To my jianbing lady of Beijing for introducing me to my love, the jianbing.

To the Henry Copeland Fund for Independent Study that allowed me to travel for two weeks to the incredible San Francisco and explore where it all began.

To Sue Min for her stories, for opening her home and restaurant to me, and for her enthusiasm that rejuvenated my passion for this topic when I needed it most.

To my family for showing me the importance of food…and to never say no to it, for proving the beauty of round tables, for our family dinners, and for being you.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the changing Chinese American identity through the changes to Chinese food. Understanding one's identity is a difficult task because of its abstract nature; using a concrete element such as food, makes this task far easier. This method of using food to describe the Chinese American identity is especially helpful because of the importance placed on food in Chinese culture. For the Chinese, food is central to their identity because it is believed that the correct intake of food achieves a balance in one's life. It is also helpful, because the Chinese restaurant in America is a common sight and many Americans' only exposure to Chinese culture. Through a study of the changing Chinese American identity from the Exclusion Era in America to the present and through a study of the changes of Chinese cuisine in America over the same period of time, we can see how these changes mirror one another and allow for an understanding of what is the Chinese American identity.

Introduction

In China, instead of asking, "How are you?" in daily conversation, the more common question is, "Have you eaten?" or "*Ni chi le ma*?" That's how central food is in Chinese culture. Food is a necessity as it is a basic need for human survival—common knowledge for all. For the Chinese, food is central to their identity because food plays an important role in successfully creating balance in their life. Placing food as such an important part of one's life is far from a new idea in Chinese culture. From the beginning of Chinese civilization, Chinese food is seen as a fundamental to life.

Changes in food and changes in identity mirror one another. Given that it is easier to track changes in food because it is concrete, I have chosen to explore the journey of Chinese food in America and use those changes to understand the changing Chinese American identity.

With the ever-increasing effect of globalization in our world, the Chinese identity is constantly being negotiated as many Chinese are moving out of China and spreading their roots throughout the world. It is becoming increasingly difficult to describe the Chinese identity, especially in countries other than China where there are large Chinese populations. This is especially true when one attempts to describe the Chinese American identity. The Chinese American identity has been forming and changing since the Chinese arrived on American shores in the middle of the nineteenth century to work in the mines and on the railroads. Describing the Chinese American identity is further complicated when one traces their immigration to America and the changes: from initial acceptance to discrimination, to the Exclusion Acts. The Exclusion Acts directly targeted the Chinese and limited their immigration into the United States. Their identity in America was shaped by the discrimination that they faced here during the late nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century.

To begin understanding the transformation that occurred to both the Chinese identity and Chinese food once they arrived in America, one must first understand all that the Chinese identity of China comprises. In the first chapter, the central ideas that encompass this identity will be discussed. The most central characteristic of the Chinese identity is the idea of China being a 'middle kingdom.' The Chinese saw their advanced civilization of the "middle kingdom" to be superior to the surrounding barbarian tribes.

Another crucial aspect of Chinese identity is Chinese cuisine. In the second chapter, the background of Chinese food and the importance that the Chinese place in preparing one's meal will be explained. In each Chinese meal, there are specific elements that must be included for it to be considered a proper meal and sufficient to maintain one's health. It is these characteristics that are generally lost in the Chinese cuisine found in America.

When news that gold was found in California reached China, many saw this as a way to support their families who were struggling. This was during the time when many Chinese were struggling as a result of the fall of the Qing Dynasty. In this chapter, the journey from China to America and what the Chinese experienced once they arrived in America will be explored. From the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the Chinese immigrants initially were accepted but then suffered discrimination for many years. While the first Chinese in America were accepted by society, this soon changed when America's economy took a turn for the worse. The Chinese in America took the blame for the hardship and lack of jobs for Americans and were seen as a threat to the American worker. Not all Americans disliked the Chinese and their presence in America, but the vast majority fully supported the Exclusion Acts. The Exclusion Acts remained in effect for over 100 years and relegated the Chinese to second-class citizens.

Thus, to understand Chinese identity in America (and Chinese food), we must understand the Exclusion Acts.

In the next chapter, we will look into the one hundred years of Chinese exclusion. The Chinese remained in America despite the poor and hostile treatment and needed to work increasingly hard to survive in the harsh society that America was for them. Important to the Chinese American's life during the exclusionary era were the *huiguan*, or companies whose main duty was to assist the Chinese. The Chinese were often segregated in Chinatowns, or ghettoized communities. Chinatowns were filled with drugs, prostitution, and gambling which did little to improve the opinions the Americans had towards the Chinese. While these Chinatowns had many negative characteristics, it was in Chinatowns that the Chinese survived in America, and where the transformation of Chinese culture (and food) into Chinese American culture occurred.

The Chinese in America were considered second-class citizens, and because of this, everything they produced was also given this label. The first Chinese food served in America was unlike the food found in China. It will be discussed in this chapter by observing the appearance of Chinese cuisine throughout America. Some of the reasons for the change in Chinese cuisine once in America are straightforward, such as the ingredients present in China were not found in America. Others can directly be traced back to the opinions that were formed of the Chinese by the Americans. The opinions of the Americans forced the first Chinese restaurants in America to be cheap and fast. Americans' opinions of the Chinese were low. As a result, their expectations were low as well.

After the exclusionary laws were eliminated, more Chinese were able to enter the United States. With the greater Chinese population, came a wider variety of Chinese food. The following chapter will explore the Chinese food industry in this country following the

Exclusionary Era. The Chinese food power is just a result of its popularity in American society. While more people are becoming aware of the difference between the Chinese food in America and the majority of Chinese food found in China, it is still a cuisine dominated by dishes that hardly resemble the original cuisine. Yet, the food business has given the Chinese economic stability in America and has had a significant impact on the Chinese American identity.

Now that there is a large and permanent Chinese American population established in our country, there is now a more complex Chinese American identity. While it may be just as difficult to describe the Chinese American identity as every other identity, it is tangible enough for one to attempt a succinct description. This chapter will identify both what the Chinese American identity is and the difficulties that arise in describing it. The difficulty in describing this identity is due to the fact that while many Chinese are very successful there are also a significant percentage of Chinese Americans who are very poor, work in menial jobs and live very segregated lives.

In the final chapter, I show how the Chinese American identity mirrors the changes that occurred to Chinese American food. Native place, language, family, and food form the Chinese identity and because native place, language, and often family were left behind in China, it is the food that remains and becomes an even more important aspect to both the formation of the Chinese American identity and understanding how that identity has changed over time.

Chapter One

The Chinese Identity, from the Beginning to Today

"The traditional view of being at the center of existence has always been an important aspect of being Chinese."[1]

Is there a Chinese American identity? I believe there is. In order to determine that, we need to first understand what the Chinese identity in China is.

中国, The Middle Kingdom

The first evidence of a Chinese identity can be seen in the Mandarin word for China, 中国 *zhongguo*, which translates to 'middle kingdom.' The first character, 中 *zhong* translates to "central" or "middle," while the next character, 国 *guo* means "state" or "states." This word started as the name of the capital of the great Chinese civilization, but by the fourth and third centuries BCE, it was used as the name for the different areas of the Zhou Empire.[2] The translation of *zhongguo* brings out an overarching theme of the Chinese identity; namely, the Chinese as culturally superior. Whatever being part of the "*Zhongguo*" meant, it was assumed to be superior to anything "non-Zhongguo." The Chinese believed they were superior to the neighboring barbarians. They were surrounded by "the Yi in the east, the Di in the west, the Rong in the north, and the Man in the south."[3] The Chinese saw themselves as far more advanced than their neighbors because of their sophisticated culture with a specific language, settled family, and advanced food production. Besides *zhongguo*, *hua* and *xia* were introduced

[1] David Yen-ho Wu, "The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities," In *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, ed. Tu Wei-ming (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 160.
[2] Hans Van Ess, "Chinese Identity," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of China*, 1 ed. Daniel Leese (Boston: Leiden, 2009), 188.
[3] Wu, "The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities," 161.

during these centuries as ways to refer to China. These words focus on the ritual and ceremonial aspects of Chinese culture. Those who inhabited lands surrounding China did not have this rich culture, which again demonstrated the superiority of China.

Zhongguo, or "The Middle Kingdom" is still the Mandarin term used to describe China, suggesting that this past way of distinguishing China from those of lesser cultural sophistication is still of critical importance today to the Chinese and their identity. While there are other aspects of Chinese identity, this idea of being at the center of civilization is the overarching theme.

The language

Another reason the Chinese felt they were superior to the barbarians is that the Chinese had an advanced language and writing system. The Chinese language, or *Hanyu*, *Huayu*, or *Zhongwen*, has a complex history because of the varieties and strands that now exist and their similarities to one another. Language allowed the Chinese to communicate with one another, but also gave them the ability to create a written history, far more advanced and reliable than the common use of oral history. Despite the great variety of Chinese "dialects," the common language for 3,000 plus years is the written language. This is what distinguished the "*zhongguoren*," or people of Chinese descent, from their non-Chinese neighbors. This advanced way of communication creates much pride for the Chinese and their identity.

The languages of Korea, Japan, and Vietnam all stem from the Chinese language, especially their writing systems. The significance is seen when one notices that all three of these countries had to formally break away from the Chinese written language and form a language of their own to create an identity. Yet, all three of these languages still have writing systems that

use Chinese characters, highlighting the influence of the Chinese language on areas close to China.

The Han

China's vast history and cultural continuity binds and connects the Chinese into a unified identity. The Chinese identity is more based on their shared culture and history, rather than modern ideas of nationality or citizenship.[4] Rarely was an ethnicity issue brought into the equation. When it was, the Chinese were referred to as 'Han.'[5] The idea of Han Chinese is another significant influence in the Chinese identity. The Han people are a broadly defined cultured and ethnic group of China that makes up ninety-two percent of the Chinese population. The Han ethnic group was formed during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)**,** the most legendary dynastic civilization of Chinese history. In English, Han is sometimes used interchangeably with Chinese because of the significance of Han in the Chinese identity. Yet, there are more ways to explain the Chinese identity beyond being just of Han descent. While the idea of Han makes up a significant part of the identity, especially concerning the creation of language, there is far more to the Chinese identity. This is especially true today because of the resurgence of protecting the smaller ethnic groups that continue to exist in China. However, even the process of identifying these is based on the presumption of the "Han majority."

Surprisingly, the discussion of a Chinese identity as a complicated notion is a recent idea. As Wu claims, "For centuries the meaning of being Chinese seemed simple and definite: a sense

[4] Wu, "The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities," 116.
[5] Van Ess, "Chinese Identity," 119.

of belonging to a great civilization and performing properly according to the intellectual elites' norm of conduct."[6] Here, Wu is describing the Han ideal.

Confucius' wisdom

In describing identities, religion often plays a crucial role. Yet this is not the case for the formation of the Chinese identity. The cultural ideals that form the Chinese identity are almost always connected to the Confucian ideals. While some consider this to be a religion, it is more of a way of life, via Confucius' guidelines. The idea of being Chinese and what it means to be Chinese relates directly to what Confucius is understood to have shared in his teachings. Confucianism revolves around reflection on human nature and the ability for everyone, through self-cultivation, to become a sage—an ultimate human. Confucius teaches the Chinese how to run their lives in order to reach sagehood and how to be in a continued state of self-improvement. In Confucius' teaching he stresses the importance of how one being civilized is equivalent to one being Chinese. (In his texts, to maintain the traditions of the Zhou Dynasty.) This basic idea is a reference point for much of the ideals of the Chinese.

The daily actions of the Chinese and their decisions directly reflect the importance they place on the family. In order to remain respected in society, individuals must lead a life to benefit their family and not bring shame to the family—an idea called filial piety, or filiality. The idea of filiality also extends to the importance of ancestor veneration, or caring for the elders in one's family. These acts of familial care and respect all fit under Confucius' ideals. As Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng believes, "Within a Chinese society that continues to embrace Confucian values, the

[6] Ibid., 176.

social self is expected to conform in thought and act to social expectations."[7] Because Confucian values dictate the way one should successfully live his or her life, a sense of freedom, or individuality is not a significant part of the identity. When one does not adhere to these filial expectations, shame and disgrace is brought to his or her family.

Confucius' ideals and teachings lead to the idea of 'Chineseness'. (中国人的国民性 *zhongguorendeguominxing*) Chineseness has become a common topic of discussion in recent years, although it first came into the picture before the birth of Confucius.[8] The idea of Chineseness is often described as a scale to determine how Chinese an individual feels he or she is based on actions throughout his or her lifetime. It is this idea that tries to explain what is "Chinese" and what makes one more "Chinese" than another person. This scale is determined mostly by an individual's ability to fit into the culture of the Chinese, rather than purely on being ethnically Chinese.[9] One has to work to obtain this Chineseness—it is not necessarily something one is born into. There may be an ethnic assumption (i.e., I will never be Chinese), but there is still an assumption of "Chineseness" as a cultural attainment – this becomes more important in the diaspora.

The "yellow" race

Along with the previous key characteristics that encompass the Chinese identity, there are also stereotypical ways that one can use to describe the identity. The idea of the Chinese being a "yellow" race is another key element to the identity, especially in overseas Chinese settings. Since ancient times, the Chinese were seen as having skin of a "yellow" color and were therefore

[7] Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng. "Transnational Self in the Chinese Diaspora: A Conceptual Framework," *Asian Studies Review* 30, (2006): 223.
[8] Tu Wei-ming, "Cultural China; The Periphery as the Center." In The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today, ed. Tu Wei-ming (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 2.
[9] Ibid., 3.

different from those in the western world. As Van Ess describes, "Although in China the yellow color had been considered the color of the center since ancient times, the Chinese seem to not have considered themselves 'yellow.'"[10] Because the Chinese never thought of themselves as yellow, describing the Chinese this way can easily be considered hurtful and wrong. The Chinese being a yellow race became significant based on the Nationalists of China in the nineteenth century. It first arose from the mythical Yellow Emperor, or the founding father of this yellow race. If one is a descendant of the Yellow Emperor, he or she is Chinese.[11] With this in mind, the idea of being of the 'yellow race' can also instill pride and a sense of belonging to the Chinese, rather than simply being a racial stereotype. Nevertheless, in the diaspora/overseas, the 'yellow race' also became inferior to being 'white.'

The modern identity

Describing the Chinese identity is becoming increasingly more difficult in the modern world with globalization affecting the lifestyle and daily routines of the Chinese. Also, an awareness of Chinese diversity has led to questions of what the identity is. As Myron Cohen emphasizes, "Being Chinese is far more problematic, for now it is as much a quest as it is a condition."[12] The complicating factors arose during the western invasion of Chinese culture in the mid-1800s. Witnessing the advancement of western nations, made the Chinese question their superiority and see the need for their nation to truly modernize. Yet, this modernization was not without conflict. Many times in this push, a serious tension existed between the traditional China and the China of the future. The identity was greatly affected by this tension, with the constant questioning of how China would fit into the modern age. Would China still retain its traditional

[10] Van Ess, "Chinese Identity," 120.
[11] Ibid., 120.
[12] Myron Cohen, "Being Chinese: The Peripheralization of Traditional Identity," *Daedalus* 120, vol. 2 (1991): 108.

values if it became a dominant player on the world stage? The rise of China as a superpower affects the Chinese identity and adds more complexity to it.

The complexities of what came to be in this modern age are especially true for Chinese living outside of China, specifically Chinese Americans. This will be discussed in later chapters. While many Chinese still associate their identity with the ideals of the past, these ideals are far less significant and pertinent to the younger generations. Yet, even with the tension between traditional and modern, the idea of a Chinese identity is still important today. The question of 'what does it mean to be Chinese' still binds the Chinese together, no matter where they are in the world, perhaps more so in the 21st century than ever before.

Chapter Two

China's Chinese Food

"Everyone eats and drinks; yet only few appreciate the taste of food."
-Confucius, *Doctrine of the Mean*

The balancing acts in Chinese food

In Mandarin Chinese, there are two words for food that are most commonly used; *fan* 饭and *cai* 菜, perhaps comparable to "food" and "cuisine." While one might consider these two words to be synonymous, this is not the case. There is a vast difference between these two words that contribute to the complexity that is Chinese food. *Fan* describes food of starch and grains, while *cai* is the vegetables and meat of the meal.[13] Without the correct balance between *fan* and *cai,* a meal is not complete or suitable for its diners. As K.C. Chang, a notable Chinese anthropologist describes, "Without *fan* one cannot be full, but without *cai* the meal is merely less tasteful."[14] Many dishes are only composed from either *cai* or *fan*, but other dishes, such as the wonton encompass both types of food.[15] It is the focus on the balance of savory and necessary food that makes this cuisine so appealing and far more complex than one might believe.

The necessary balance between *cai* and *fan* is further complicated when the Chinese introduce the importance of the balance between *yin* and *yang*. Without this more subtle balance, the meal is not adequate and one's health is also said to be compromised. Striving for this balance is an important feature of the everyday lives of many Chinese as it is this principle that is said to regulate one's body.[16] Different foods contribute to either yin or yang and maintaining

[13] K.C. Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (London: Yale University Press, Ltd., 1977), 7.
[14] Ibid., 10.
[15] J.A.G Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2002), 25.
[16] Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 7.

these ideals allows one's good health to remain intact. As Chang describes, "When yin and yang forces in the body are not balanced, problems result. Proper amounts of food of one kind or the other may then be administered (i.e., eaten) to counterbalance the yin and yang disequilibrium."[17]

Another important aspect of cooking Chinese food is the appearance of different flavors. As J.A.G Roberts describes in his book *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West*, "Balance is achieved by including dishes representing the five flavours, which are defined as salty, bitter, sour, acrid, and sweet."[18] It is this focus that allows such diversity in the Chinese cuisine.

The third important spiritual and nutritional aspect of Chinese food comes from the Chinese term '*bu*', meaning 'to repair, to patch, mend.' Roberts describes the importance of foods in this category, "Many foods, usually in the form of easily digestible, high-quality protein are said to be *bu*, and by eating them one may enhance one's *qi*."[19] Characteristics like *bu* and *yin-yang* and how they are incorporated into cooking make Chinese cuisine so complex. These complexities suggest that excellence in Chinese cooking goes beyond cooking technique to encompass more subtle complexities of nutritional and spiritual well-being.

The history of Chinese food

The long history of Chinese cuisine adds another dimension to its complexity. As K.C. Chang explains, "Chinese food certainly has variety, and it also has a long documented history, probably longer than any other food tradition of comparable variety."[20] One of the earliest

[17] Ibid.,10.
[18] Roberts, *China to Chinatown,* 26.
[19] Ibid., 27.
[20] Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture,* 4.

references of Chinese food and its importance in China can be traced back to the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BCE) and some important texts of that period, Zuo Zhuan and MoZi. These works describe the cauldron as the main symbol of this dynasty.[21]

Chinese cuisine was forced to adapt to the constant occurrence of difficult situations in history. In order for the Chinese to adjust to these difficulties, Chinese food had to be versatile and sustainable. For survival, the Chinese needed to take advantage of every crop and species of animal that existed in China. To withstand hardship, the Chinese gained a vast knowledge of wild plants and learned how to use these plants in their cuisine. The Chinese also created advanced methods of preserving their food. As Chang describes, "Chinese people were ever ready in the event of hardship or scarcity."[22] Although the Chinese might not have recognized it back then, it was hardships that directly contributed to the diversity and creativity of Chinese cuisine, within and beyond China.

The fervor some had for Chinese food is described most convincingly by Kenneth Hom, a famous Chinese chef and food author, "For us food is more than a passion, it is an obsession, and good eating is believed to be essential to good living."[23] Hom describes the importance of food in Chinese culture and the reason these feelings exist. For the Chinese, family togetherness is the center of life. Meals, especially family meals, encourage the togetherness of families and loved ones. Doreen Yen Hung Feng, notable food author, states, "The joy of eating is given great importance in China; and cooking, through the decades, has been dreamed and fussed over, in times of want as well as in times of plenty, until it has ceased to be plain cooking, but has grown and developed into an art."[24] The Chinese cuisine has become a marker of identity and pride for

[21] Kenneth Lo, *Chinese Food* (England: Penguin Books Ltd.), 11.
[22] Ibid., 9.
[23] Roberts, *China to Chinatown,* 25.
[24] Ibid., 27.

the Chinese. As described by Chang, "That Chinese cuisine is the greatest in the world is highly debatable and is essentially irrelevant. But few can take exception to the statement that few other cultures are as food oriented as the Chinese."[25]

Food in ritual

The importance of Chinese food to China is also shown by its use in rituals. In Chinese culture, food is a part of ritual—the two could never be separate. The Chinese have specific rules for the right foods to be served for each special occasion during the year. For example, food is a crucial part of worshipping ancestors and showing filial piety. Not surprisingly, ritual is said to have started with eating and drinking, as claimed by *Liji*, *the Book of Rites*. This work is traditionally attributed to Confucius. Certain foods are considered more appropriate when showing respect to one's ancestors, or sacrificing to a spirit. Food is also used to keep away the ghosts that may haunt one's family. Besides religious rituals, food also played an important part in the rituals of important leaders in China. For example, a ruler had a specific meal plan that, as Roel Sterckz states, "ensure the proper passage of time and hierarchy."[26] Sterckx also explains how a king would eat four meals a day that symbolized the four seasons of the year. Confucius is also credited with an important role in creating the connection between ritual and food. Confucian texts assert that proper consumption of food would help cultivate one's morality and successful life.

The ingredients

[25] Kenneth Lo, *Chinese Food*, 11.
[26] Roel Sterckx. "Food and Philosophy in Early China," in *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx, (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.), 43.

Every aspect of Chinese cuisine has a story and a specific function. It is best to start the journey of understanding this cuisine by focusing on the main ingredients of this cuisine. As K.C. Chang describes, "Chinese food is above all characterized by an assemblage of plants and animals that grew prosperously in the Chinese land for a long time."[27] The most common of all Chinese cuisine ingredients is rice. While rice is crucial to Chinese cuisine, it is only one part. As previously mentioned, *cai* and *fan* are used to describe food in Mandarin Chinese. A meal is not considered complete without both of them.

The sauces and flavors in Chinese food added to Chinese food add flair and variety to Chinese cuisine. The most famous and well-known of these sauces is soy sauce. The Chinese often use vinegar to add to the food's flavor. The variants of flavors add complexity and a unique quality to the cuisine of China. There are five main flavors of Chinese food; salty, bitter, sour, acrid, and sweet.[28] The Chinese consider a meal to be complete when all five flavors are included in the dishes.

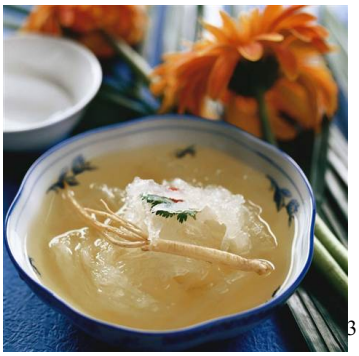
Along with ingredients, sauces, and flavors, the methods used to create the dishes contribute to Chinese cuisine's uniqueness. The methods of cooking Chinese food include stir-frying, red-cooking, clear-simmering, steaming and cooking "drunken" foods.[29] The first method, stir-frying, is when food is chopped and cooked quickly in a wok with intense heat to insure flavor. Red-cooking is less known by name to the western audience, but is also often used. Kenneth Lo describes red-cooking as follows: "A mixture of soya sauce, with a sprinkling of sugar, some dry sherry, salt, M.S.G., chopped ginger, garlic, and onion is a basic addition to many dishes and makes almost any kind of meat tasty and appetizing."[30] Clear-simmering is

[27] K.C. Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture,* 6.
[28] Roberts, *China to Chinatown,* 26.
[29] Lo, *Chinese Food*, 10.
[30] Ibid., 12.

basically the same as red-cooking, but without the use of soy sauce. Steaming is used with all foods, including pastries and desserts. Finally, the method of cooking "drunken" foods is when meat or fish are cooked and marinated in wine or sherry for a few days. All of these methods create unique tastes that have been used in China for thousands of years.

In elite Chinese cuisine, there are four delicacies that are often found on a banquet's table to show the importance of the meal or the wealth of the host. These four delicacies are: birds nest, shark fin, bears paw and the sea cucumber.

Birds Nest Soup is made from the nest of the swiftlet, a tiny bird found in southeast Asia. The swiftlet's nest is made by its saliva, which creates the texture of the soup. Humans harvest the nests and sell them to restaurants to serve with chicken broth.

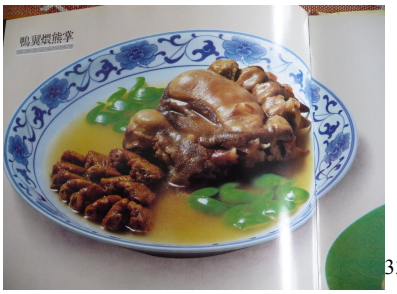
 [31]

Shark Fin Soup is often served at weddings and banquets and was first seen in the Ming Dynasty. Controversy surrounds this delicacy because of the methods used to hunt the sharks.

[31] "World's strangest aphrodisiacs," accessed February 1, 2013, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/35303044/ns/travel-destinations/#.URmCx6HBNSA.

[32]

Bears paw is an ancient delicacy of China. This is also boycotted because the bear is an endangered species. It is said to be one of Mencius' favorite foods.



[33]

Sea cucumber is an animal related to starfish and sea urchins and gets its name from its shape. It is cooked in a variety of ways and is supposed to be very good for one's health.


[34]

More than one cuisine

One of the most common misconceptions associated with Chinese food is the idea that it is only one cuisine, as we tend to see in Chinese food in America. Rather, Chinese cuisine encompasses many different cuisines and styles of food from all regions of China. As K.C. Chang explains, "Since ingredients are not the same everywhere, Chinese food begins to assume

[32] "Shark Fin Soup," assessed February 1, 2013, http://kurungabaa.net/2011/10/15/shark-fin/.
[33] "Greed and biodiversity," assessed February 1, 2013, http://www.fuchsiadunlop.com/tag/bears-paw/.
[34] "Snapshots from Asia," assessed February 1, 2013, http://www.seriouseats.com/2008/01/snapshots-from-asia-phallic-sea-cucumbers.html.

a local character simply by virtue of the ingredients it uses."[35] In Beijing, Northern China, the most famous dish is the Peking duck, which is often served on a pancake with a hoisin sauce. Besides the Peking duck, the Northern cuisine favors noodles, dumplings, and bread.[36] The Northern cuisine uses onions, garlic, scallions, and wine to create its vibrant and original tastes.[37] The South, or Guangdong province, was the first cuisine served in America since a majority of the first Chinese Americans emigrated from this area. This cuisine often uses stir-frying and the use of rich chicken broths. The Eastern cuisine, Shanghai, is famous for its sweeter taste compared to other Chinese cuisines. Here, chefs use red-cooking, and large amounts of soy sauce, vinegar, and brown sugar. This cuisine is also known for dim sum, or as described by J.A.G Roberts, "snack foods composed of a filling of chopped meat, fish or vegetables in a dough or thin wrapping and steamed or deep fried."[38] The Western cuisine of China, known as Sichuan, is well-known for its spiciness. In this region, black and Sichuan peppercorns are often used and the food is far oilier than other parts of China. Nowadays, one can find every type of Chinese cuisine throughout China because of the availability of food and the ease of mobility within China. However, little of this variety has been transferred to North America.

Preparation

The extensive preparation of Chinese food is often seen in the amount of planning that is involved in formal meals. What dishes are served and when they are served during the meal is crucial to the Chinese cuisine culture. There is a specific order to the food during formal Chinese meals. The meal normally begins with cold dishes, followed by warm meat or fish. Then the

[35] Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture,* 7.
[36] Francine Halvorsen, *The Food and Cooking of China* (USA: John Wiley and Sons Inc.), 5.
[37] Jacqueline M. Newman, "Chinese America Food," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, ed. Gordon Campbell. (Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.
[38] Roberts, *China to Chinatown,* 23.

savory vegetable dishes are served. The final course of the meal is normally a soup. Rice will be on the table at all times to be combined with other dishes and to soak up the sauces of these dishes. Francine Halvorsen describes in her book, *The Food and Cooking of China*, the importance of the organization of the Chinese meal, "Food—its selection, preparation, and consumption – is a cause of harmony for the mind as well as for the senses."[39]

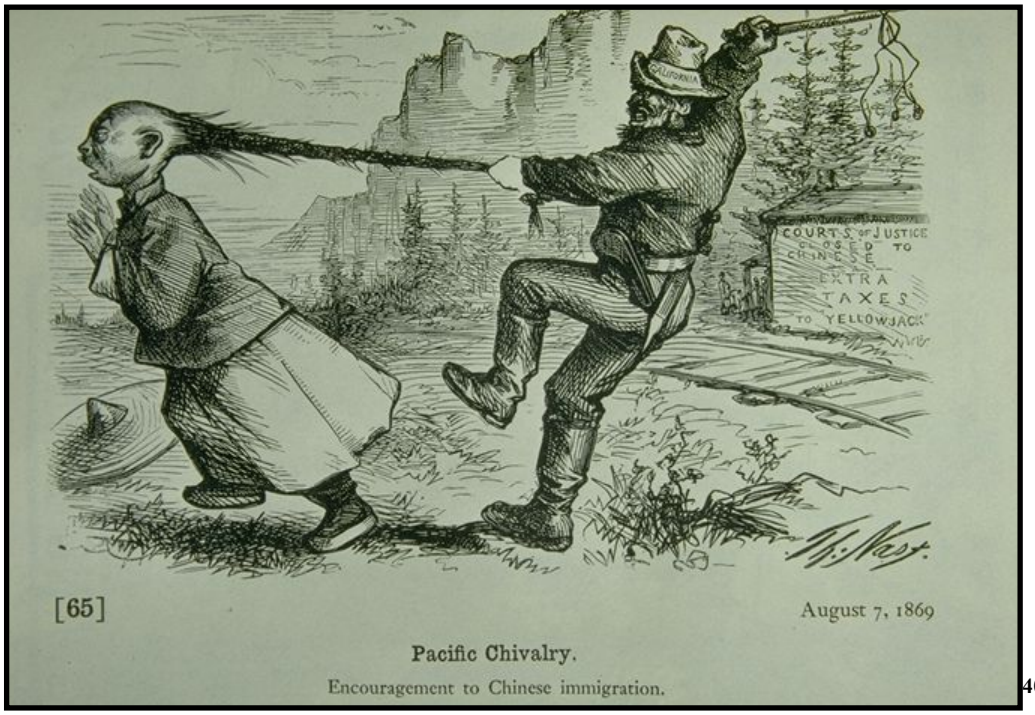
Summary

The Chinese consider their cuisine an art, and because of this, great care is put into every step of cooking, serving, and eating a meal. The right balance of the specific ingredients, the methods of cooking these ingredients, and how these ingredients are presented is painstakingly handled. Americans do not see this at Chinese American restaurants. While most cultures place food as an important element in their daily routine, the Chinese believe their cuisine is central to their being.

[39] Halvorsen, *The Food and Cooking of China,* 3.

Chapter Three

The Exclusionary Era



[40]

The Chinese Exclusions Acts had a significant effect on the Chinese food served in China. Even before the Chinese arrived, they were considered second-class citizens because of the views of missionaries and others who had come in contact with them in China. These negative feelings towards the Chinese were only increased when it was believed that they were stealing Americans' jobs, by accepting low pay and poor work conditions. Americans feared the Chinese and believed the Chinese produced lower quality goods.

The journey to America

[40] Thomas Nast, "Pacific Chivalry," cartoon. August 7, 1869, from http://www.csub.edu/~gsantos/img0048.html, assessed February 24, 2013.

There are many ways to understand the journey of the Chinese to the American shores, but the most comprehensive way would be to use Stanford M. Lyman's five phases. These phases not only outline the important events of the Chinese Americans, but also the changing opinions of Americans towards the Chinese. In this first section, we will only discuss the first three phases, from the years 1785 to 1943, because these were the decades that specifically involved large amounts of Chinese workers migrating to American shores and the formation of the exclusionary ideas and laws.

1785-1850

The first of these phases, from 1785-1850, begins even before the Chinese arrived on American shores.[41] American missionaries visited China, and when they returned from China, brought back the first knowledge of this Chinese civilization. It specifically involves the opinions of the missionaries towards the Chinese and how these ideas were told to Americans back home. It is during these years that the first stereotypes of the Chinese were brought to America and false notions were spread to many Americans.

1852-1910

Lyman names the second phase, from 1852-1910, the "Sinophobic Movement."[42] Here, we see the first laws being introduced that have to do with the right of the Chinese to work and belong in America. This anti-Chinese movement began in California mines and spread throughout the rest of the country.

1910-1943

[41] Stanford M. Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974), 55.
[42] Ibid., 55.

The third phase is called, "Period of institutional racism and social and personal prejudice (1910-1943)."[43] It is during these years that the exclusion acts were in effect and the Chinese were forced to live in the confines of Chinatowns.[44]

Throughout China's long history, emigration was never important to its citizens. Prior to the nineteenth century, there was minimal migration and only to nearby regions, such as Taiwan and Malaysia. This all changed during the final years of the Qing Dynasty. China was unraveling in all aspects of life. Imperialists' invasions brought the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion. These significant events led to the breakdown of the internal social order. Beyond this, farmers were in trouble because of the absence of arable land, which led to famines. In addition to environmental concerns, the feudal system, an integral aspect of Chinese historical success, was failing and long periods of warfare had weakened the empire.[45] When the Chinese heard of a shortage of labor in America, men jumped at the opportunity for secure work, no matter how far they had to travel from their homeland. As Wang GungWu states, "This emigration offered life and hope, and these Chinese met the challenge with a fortitude and enterprise that confounded their own governments and elites back in China."[46] America was seen as the land of opportunity, and the Chinese were attracted to the idea of becoming wealthy quickly from the gold that could be found in this distant land.

The majority of Chinese immigrants came from Canton, a southern port of China.[47] The journey to America was very dangerous and long for the hopeful travelers. The Chinese had to travel to Macao or Hong Kong both of which were under foreign rule. From these two locations,

[43] Ibid, 55.
[44] Ibid, 86.
[45] Jack Chen, *The Chinese of America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 7.
[46] Gung Wu Wang, ed. Daniel Leese, *Brill's Encyclopedia of China*, (Boston: Leiden, 2009) "Chinese Overseas" 124-125.
[47] Ibid., 16.

ships were able to cross the Pacific Ocean to America.[48] Companies were formed to handle the voyage from theEastern world to America. In 1866, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was the first to bring the immigrants over to America.[49] Conditions in ships varied, but were never first class. The journey lasted anywhere from thirty to sixty days. As Jack Chen describes, "Travelers in steerage were bundled together shoulder to shoulder and head to toe in poorly ventilated holds. Water was scarce, and the food prepared in the ships' galleys was poor." [50] People would travel in cargo vessels with only as much as a narrow bunk.[51] The more immigrants traveled to America, the more people wanted to join in this industry of immigrant travel, and competition soon increased among different companies. The Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company went into business a few years after the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.[52] It is said that during that years of the greatest number of Chinese immigrated to America, as many as 200,000 people were brought to America by these ships.[53]

The Chinese arrival in America

The Gold Rush of 1849 and all of its hoped-for employment opportunities seemed like the perfect escape from the conditions many experienced in China. The U.S. census indicated that in 1860, over 33,000 Chinese lived in America, and in 1880 that number rose to 105,465.[54] The Chinese were attracted to the idea of a new life full of wealth through gold. Another contribution to this influx of Chinese immigration was the building of the railroad, which needed

[48] Ibid., 21.
[49] Ibid., 22.
[50] Ibid., 23.
[51] Ibid., 23.
[52] Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 8.
[53] Ibid., 8.
[54] Xiao Huang Yin, "China: People's Republic of China." in *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965*, ed. Mary C. Waters, Reed Ueda & Helen B. Marrow. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 340.

inexpensive labor to be completed. The majority of these immigrants were men who came planning to send money back to their families in China. Once they gained enough funds to have a secure retirement, they would then return to their homeland. This is the concept of the "Chinese sojourner," a constant theme in the history of Chinese migration. Few believed they would remain in these new lands for the rest of their lives. However, plans often changed and most remained in the United States for far longer than they had originally expected.

While most Chinese immigrants settled in California and the Northwestern states where mines were plentiful, a few Chinese went to other parts of America. Several Chinese were reported as being brought to the south to replace African Americans in the fields.[55] New York received an influx of Chinese during these years as well.[56] The Chinese were also used in industries besides mining and building the railroad. They were influential in the agricultural and fishing industries, bringing the successful practices used in their homeland to America.[57] In fact, the Chinese are said to be the first to bring commercial fishing to the west coast of America.[58] The Chinese were also hired as factory workers in San Francisco and surrounding cities.[59] In addition to the better-known industries, Chinese are reported as working in the cigar and tobacco industries. By 1876, 7,500 Chinese were working in these industries.[60]

In the beginning of this mass immigration, American communities usually tolerated the Chinese, but these attitudes changed when the status of America's economy became depressed. Shortly following the Civil War, America experienced a drastic economic depression and the hardships that came to American citizens in the west were often blamed on the Chinese.

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[55] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America*, 8.
[56] Ibid., 27.
[57] Ibid., 20.
[58] Ibid., 23.
[59] Ibid., 21.
[60] Ibid., 22.

Although Chinese immigrants had become a part of the community with occupations, such as cooking, laundering, and retail for the mining public,[61] rarely were the Chinese able to work in jobs other than menial jobs. This pattern of discrimination during the exclusion years held the Chinese back from entering professions that would allow them to improve their financial standing in American society.

The shift

During this time, as more and more Chinese migrated to the United States, the economy continued to experience significant depression and hardship. This period included the Panic of 1873.[62] The state of the economy gave strength to the idea that the Chinese were stealing the jobs of Americans. This idea was especially apparent in California, where the most of the Chinese immigrants were found. The Chinese made up twelve to twenty-three percent of the different mining counties.[63] As Mark Kanazawa states in his article discussing the moods of Americans towards these new Chinese immigrants, "The state experienced steady and persistent deficits, with annual expenditures far outpacing revenues."[64] Because the Chinese made up such a significant percentage of the population, many of the economic hardships were blamed on their presence in America. The Chinese were often the scapegoat and punished because of the status of the economy. Philip H. Kuhn describes this situation, "The decades of the 1870s and 1880s, during which the anti-Chinese movement was at its height, were years of economic

[61] *Historical Encyclopedia of American Labor.* Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004. s.v. "Chinese Exclusion Act," http://credoreference.com/entry/abcamlabor /chinese_exclusion_act (acessed February 21, 2012), 1.
[62] Ibid, 1.
[63] Mark Kanazawa, "Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California," *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no 3 (2005): 781.
[64] Ibid., 785.

depression."[65] The status of the economy also allowed for more brutal treatment towards the Chinese laborer and ultimately led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

The Chinese laborer in America was the cause of much distress for many American citizens. Many companies hired workers from China because they were willing to work for lower wages than Americans. In 1888, James A. Whitney described this situation in his book, *The Chinese and The Chinese Question*: "Competition with Chinese labor is simply competition with the conditions under which the Chinese laborer chooses to exist. But the Caucasian can neither eat the food, nor breathe the air, nor sleep in the dens that are opulence and comfort to the Chinese coolie."[66] This statement illustrates the significant difference between perceptions of the American and Chinese worker, and suggests how it was more preferable for mine owners and other entrepreneurs to hire the Chinese. It was already difficult to find jobs for Americans, but the Chinese presence made this even more challenging. The competition that was now present created negative feelings towards the Chinese and led to very poor treatment and discrimination in many communities. The 1871 Massacre illustrated the hatred of the Chinese held by many Americans. During this Massacre, 500 white men went to the Chinatown of Los Angeles and robbed, attacked, and brutally murdered 17 Chinese men and boys by hanging. This massacre is only one such example of the heinous crimes Americans committed towards the Chinese during this exclusionary time.

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[65] Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008)

[66] James A Whitney, *The Chinese and the Chinese Question* [book on-line] (New York: Tibbals Book Co., 1888, accessed 20 February 2012); available from http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/4286014?n=1&s=6&printThumbnails=no, 113.

The exclusionary legislation

Throughout the history of Chinese migration to the United States, legislation restricted the number of Chinese that were allowed to remain in America. Lyman describes the laws attacking the Chinese in three categories. The first specifically limited the Chinese from immigrating into the United States. The second limited the occupations for the Chinese. The third were laws with "punitive or harassing intent."[67]

The most significant of these laws was the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Workingmen's Party, led by Denis Kearney, began the push for this bill to be passed in Congress. The Workingmen's Party held strong anti-Chinese beliefs, and in 1878, party leaders embarked on a tour throughout America to promote this idea. In 1880, both political parties are reported as supporting the exclusion of the Chinese. This agreement led to the Chinese Exclusion Act just two years later. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act that banned any Chinese immigration—besides merchants and their families, and those remaining in America only temporarily such as students and tourists. In world history, this was the first law ever to ban a group of immigrants from a specific country. President Chester Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was renewed in 1892 and renamed as The Geary Act. It was named after California congressman Thomas J. Geary and restricted Chinese immigration until the 1920s.

Harsh treatment of the Chinese

When Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, Angel Island, off the coast of Northern California, strictly enforced its guidelines. Angel Island, also known as the 'Ellis Island

[67] Lyman, *Chinese Americans*, 63.

of the West,' plays a critical part in the history of Chinese Americans. This is the case not only because of the great number of Chinese Americans who arrived on American shores by way of this island, but also because of the ruthless treatment those who crossed this land endured. As H.M. Lai explains in the article, *Island of Immortals: Chinese Immigrants and the Angel Island Immigration Station*, "It was the detainees at Angel Island Immigration Station who sampled the full flavor and effect of the exclusion laws."[68]

At Angel Island, the Chinese Exclusion Act was enforced. The Chinese were given no rights whatsoever when officials questioned them to see if they were worthy of entering the United States. As Lai describes, "The belief at the Bureau of Immigration was that the Chinese were a people 'deficient in a sense of the moral obligation of an oath,' and inspectors held all Chinese claims for right of admission suspect until proven otherwise."[69] It is often reported that the inspectors at Angel Island asked questions that were practically impossible for the incoming Chinese to answer correctly. These inspectors also were reported inquiring about women's private lives and other inappropriate matters. Treatment of the Chinese at Angel Island is not well known and provides an excellent example of the cruelties that Chinese endured when emigrating from China to the United States.

Beyond the treatment experienced at Angel Island, the Chinese endured extreme discrimination in other areas as well. Kanazawa describes the treatment the Chinese received: "They encountered virulent discrimination and ultimately, legislative prohibitions on further immigration when Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882."[70] In the beginning, the Chinese were treated like other immigrants from different countries, but as time went on the

[68] H.M. Lai, "Island of Immortals: Chinese Immigrants and the Angel Island Immigration Station." *California History* 57, no. 1 (1978): 93.
[69] Ibid., 89.
[70] Kanazawa, "Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California," 779.

treatment worsened. As Roger Daniels describes in his article discussing Chinese immigration, "[Chinese] began to be attacked by many whites, at first verbally and then with often fatal mob violence...if what happened to the Chinese in the United States had occurred in Russia it would have been called a pogrom."[71]

Throughout the years that different exclusionary laws were in effect, the Chinese often experienced assaults, arson, and even murder. The Chinese were also discriminated in court, as Philip A. Kuhn describes: "Legislation deprived them of the normal civic freedoms (the right to testify in court, to serve on juries, to vote, and to own land)."[72] No other immigrants had these restrictions so distinctly defined by the United States.

An important year for not only the Chinese living in America, but also all Asians, was 1924 when the Immigration Act of 1924 became law. This law allowed immigrants to enter into the United States through a national origins quota, but continued to exclude all immigrants from Asian countries.

World War II

The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 marks the beginning of the end of the Exclusionary Era. The Chinese were already at war with Japan because of the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. The Americans' negative feelings to the Chinese were transferred torwards the Japanese because of this attack. China and America were joined together in war against the Japanese.

America also used China as a way to gain status and prestige in the East Asian world. It was also a belief that China was on its way to becoming a democratic country through the

[71] Roger Daniels, "Immigration to the United States in the twentieth century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*, ed. Christopher Bigsby. (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2006.), 76.
[72] Kuhn, Ch*inese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*, 205.

leadership of Chiang Kai Shek. This movement in China was symbolized by Madame Chiang's visit to America in 1943, where she traveled throughout America attempting to show China's commitment to creating a democracy.[73]

Almost instantly following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the two countries became allies, but the Exclusion Act was still in effect. Pearl S. Buck, known for her authorship of *The Good Earth*, saw this as a real deterrent to the future of these two countries' relations. Buck and her husband, Richard J. Walsh, began the fight to abolish the Exclusion Act. On May 25, 1943, Pearl S. Buck, Richard Walsh, Bruno Lusker, and Henry Luce formed "The Citizen's Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion and Place Immigration on a Quota Basis."[74] Together they began the process of bringing an end to the Act. The committee began to spread the word about the unfairness and wrong of the Exclusion Act through different publications and forums.[75] Their ideas caught the attention of Congress. In 1943, Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act, but still placed a limit of 105 Chinese citizens per year to be allowed in the United States under the Magnuson Act.[76]

Following World War II, on December 28, 1945, Congress passed the War Brides Act and on June 26, 1946 Congress passed the Fiancée Act.[77] This allowed wives and fiancées of Chinese military veterans to come to America and become citizens. Finally, the female Chinese population was able to expand a little in America. Yet, it is important to note that even though the Exclusion Acts were repealed, the quota was still low and the Fiancée's/War Bride Acts mostly allowed only the Chinese wives of United States servicemen to come to America.

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[73] Xiaohua Ma, "The Sino-American Alliance During World War II and the Lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Acts," *American Studies International* 38, no. 2 (2000): 47.
[74] Ibid., 51.
[75] Ibid., 52.
[76] Daniels, Immigration to the United States in the twentieth century," 83.
[77] Philip P. Choy, *San Francisco Chinatown: A Guide to Its History and Architecture* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2012), 56.

1949-1965

Following World War II, while America was experiencing a period of tranquility, the Communists and the Nationalists were fighting a civil war. From 1946 to 1949, the war was fought. The war ravaged the entire country and left it in disrepair.[78] The Communists won the war, and with that victory, came a Communist China and the resulting strained China-US relations. This strain in relations came at the time of the "anti-Communist hysteria of the 1950s"[79] in the United States. The United States believed it had "lost China" to the Communists.[80]

Another point of contention had to do with Taiwan and its independence from Mainland China. Following the Nationalists' defeat in the Civil War, the Nationalists were driven into exile in Taiwan. The United States was determined to keep Taiwan out of the hands of Communist and constructed an independence movement to maintain the separation of Taiwan and mainland Communist China.[81] The United States support of Taiwan's independence and China-United States relations has been strained because of it. The Chinese saw the United States purely on the side of Taiwan and their need to separate from the mainland.[82]

Post-1965

The Chinese quota in the Magnuson Act was in place until the Immigration Act of 1965, which placed a cap of 170,000 immigrants per year. The law was formally named "Immigration

[78] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America*, 119.
[79] Ibid., 131.
[80] Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2010): 182.
[81] Ibid., 183.
[82] Ibid., 205.

and Nationality Act" and was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on October 3, 1965. This push towards a less strict immigration limit can be specifically traced to the Civil Rights movement occurring around the same time.[83] It also came at a time when there was increasing pressure of the United States to be far less isolationist, and more supportive of globalization and a world that could work together. The population of the Chinese American community was finally able to grow for the first time in its history of being present on American soil. However, it was still limited because of the state of US-China relations.

[83] L. Ling Chi Wang, "Politics of the Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Law" (Paper presented at The Repeal and Its Legacy, Proceedings of the Conference on the 50th Anniversary of the 1943 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, San Francisco, California, 1993): 3.

Chapter Four

Life During the Exclusion Acts

A Chinaman's chance…meaning "no chance at all."[84]

Fear and fascination

Many reports of the first Chinese presence in America, describe the fear and dislike of Americans towards the Chinese. Yet, some Americans were more welcoming emotions towards the Chinese and viewed them with a sense of fascination and curiosity.

Prominent writers of this time often wrote about the positive characteristics of the Chinese to make Americans realize that the Chinese could contribute to the success of America. One such writer, Frederick Douglass, had hardly any contact with the Chinese, but still supported this group because he believed they could bring greater diversity to America. "The Chinese in themselves have first rate recommendations. They are industrious, docile, cleanly, frugal; they are dexterous of hand, patient of toil…"[85] Douglass discusses his wish for an America of more acceptance towards those of diverse ethnic origins and in the process, improve the American society and image. Other examples of the fascination of the Chinese can be seen in the newspapers and magazines of this time. In the *Home Journal* on February 15, 1851, a reporter described the Chinese in "*The Chinese in San Francisco*."[86] The portrayal of the Chinese is positive and the author is very open to learn more about these new immigrants. This article described a Chinese funeral, and while the author knows little about Chinese rituals, he does not write about them in a negative, judgmental way. This positive opinion of the Chinese can also be

[84] Yuwu Song, editor. *Encyclopedia of Chinese-American Relations*. (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2006), 67.
[85] Frederick Douglass, "Our Composite Nationality 1869." In *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History*. ed. Thomas A. Tweed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 68.
[86] "The Chinese in San Francisco," *Home Journal*, February 15, 1851.

found in an article in the *New York Observer* on August 10, 1854. This article discusses the Chinese presence at the Fourth of July celebrations in San Francisco.[87] The Chinese participated in the Fourth of July parade and the author reports approvingly of their presence and their enthusiasm at this extremely patriotic American event.

The huiguan

Along with new attitudes towards Chinese encouraged by American writers, the new Chinese immigrants were assisted by the different Chinese organizations in America. When the Chinese first came to the United States, they formed organizations that assisted them. Such organizations existed throughout China since the fifteenth century as a way to "protect group economic interests and to perform certain charitable and social functions for fellow *Landsleute* [countrymen] away from home."[88] These organizations are formally called *huiguan* 會館, or "a traditional and lawful association of fellow-provincials away from home, either visiting or on business."[89] When the Chinese first arrived in California, they used these organizations as a way to deal with community relations, and the more Chinese that came to America, the more significant these organizations became.

The first of the *huiguan* in America started in 1851, was named *Sanyi Huiguan* (Sam Yup Association) and was formed with members from Guangzhou.[90] Following this first *huiguan* came various others, each representing a different place of China that offered its own language

[87] "Chinese in San Francisco--Dr. Scott." *New York Observer and Chronicle (1833-1912)* 32, no. 32 (Aug 10, 1854): 250. http://search.proquest.com/docview/136595469?accountid=15131.
[88] Him Mark Lai, *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions* (California: Altamira Press California, 2004), 40.
[89] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America*, 46.
[90] Lai, *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions,* 41.

and significant culture.[91] Once the *huiguan* were established organizational bodies, the six most important Chinese district associations of California came to be called, The Six Companies, or the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA).[92] These six were the Sam Yup Company, Yeong Wo Company, Kong Chow Company, Ning Yung Company, Hop Wo Company, and Yan Wo Company. A *huiguan* existed for every significant region of China that the Chinese were from.[93]

The various *huiguan* differed from one another based on their focus in the Chinatown society. The Sam Yup companies were in charge of the majority of laundries, small shops, and restaurants in San Francisco, and the Sam Yup spent their time running the "tailoring, repair, mending, and butcher businesses."[94] People from Zhongshan, China helped bring the fishing industry of China to America and the Yee and Lee families were responsible for the cooking and running of the new Chinese restaurants.[95]

The *huiguan* were often called "companies" because of their various duties. The leaders were normally the most knowledgeable and successful in business.[96] Members of the groups paid fees for the services offered.[97] These companies were often responsible for medical care, food, and temporary lodging, and were used by the Chinese when they first arrived and needed guidance in this new world. The best way to describe a *huiguan* would be a "cultural shock absorber,"[98] or as Shih Shan Henry Tsai explains,

> All matters affecting the general interests of the Chinese in America were referred to this body. It settled disputes between individuals and the companies, decided strategies for contesting or seeking relief from unconstitutional or burdensome

[91] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America,* 49.
[92] Ibid., 45.
[93] Ibid., 47.
[94] Chen, *The Chinese of America*, 19.
[95] Ibid., 19.
[96] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America,* 49.
[97] Yuwu Song, *Encyclopedia of Chinese-American Relations*, 6.
[98] Philip Choy, *San Francisco Chinatown: A Guide to Its History and Architecture*: 189.

> laws, devised ways to curb the importation of prostitutes, and arranged for public dinners and other celebrations.[99]

The companies also assisted with the religious aspects of the Chinese immigrants' lives. They often took responsibility for shipping the deceased Chinese back to China for their families to properly bury them. Without these companies, there would have been no formal organizational body in Chinatown, and the Chinese situation in America would have been even more chaotic.

These *huiguan* also worked to improve the negative opinions held of Chinatowns during the Exclusion Era. They often dealt with the many legal issues that the Chinese faced because of society's discrimination towards them. They could easily be considered the government of Chinatowns, because the Chinese tended to remain distant from America's regular governmental bodies. At times, the *huiguan* were focused on bringing an end to the Exclusion Acts, but this was rarely at the forefront of their duties. The organizations were less effective than they could have been, because they fought with each other. This fighting took away from the time that could have been spent improving the lives of the Chinese. Also, the organizations had no real way to influence legislation or Congress. So, they were primarily focused on promoting the immediate needs of their members.

The Chinatowns situation

The unpleasant conditions in Chinatowns provided proof to many Americans as to why the Chinese must be segregated from their society. Instead of integrating with the American community, the Chinese were isolated and avoided most interaction with other Americans. This segregation highlighted the cultural differences between Chinese and Americans. Chinatowns were often plagued by poverty. This reinforced stereotypes about Chinese as unsanitary. As

[99] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America,* 48.

described by Jack Chen, Chinatowns were "part fortress, part haven and refuge, part ghetto-preserver,"[100] While the majority of immigrant groups lived together when they first arrived in America, the Exclusion Acts forced the Chinese to live together for almost a century.[101] And in San Francisco, while the areas just outside of Chinatown were well-kept and upgraded, Chinatown became increasingly more run down as the years went on. The majority of the Chinese lived in boarding houses often with ten or more Chinese in one small room. This crowded way of living contributed to the poor hygiene in Chinatowns.[102] This was also intensified because few Chinese had families in their new home because of the immigration restrictions that continued to exist.

Beyond the generally bad conditions, Chinatowns were also filled with drugs, prostitution, and gambling. The stereotypical Chinatown as described by Raymond Rast was a "labyrinth of opium dens and hideouts beneath the streets of Chinatown."[103] The Chinese introduced opium smoking to America and set up many opium dens in Chinatowns that attracted some Americans to these parts of town.[104] It is interesting to note the irony here, for earlier in history, the British (and other Europeans) introduced the practice of mixing opium and tobacco to the Chinese, and actively promoted the opium trade in China. The opium addiction plagued many in Chinatown, and it also was another reason for Americans to look down upon the Chinese. Gambling was also very common in Chinatowns. It was the luck aspect of gambling that attracted the Chinese; they believed that through gambling they could instantly find success in this new land.[105] Prostitution also plagued the Chinatowns. For the Chinese, this was due to

[100] Chen, *The Chinese of America,* 181.
[101] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America,* 35.
[102] Raymond W. Rast, "The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (2007): 36.
[103] Ibid., 30.
[104] Lyman, *Chinese Americans*, 99.
[105] Ibid., 96.

the shortage of women because of the immigration restrictions on allowing families. Young girls were kidnapped from China to be placed in prostitution houses in America.[106] Gambling, smoking opium, and prostitution in Chinatowns truly dampened the prospect of success for the Chinese in America and for the Chinese creating a better image for themselves in the exclusionary times.

As mentioned previously, prostitution became such a common sight in Chinatowns because of the drastic shortage of women. As Lyman states, "During the entire period of unrestricted immigration more than 100,000 men but only 8,848 Chinese women undertook the journey to America."[107] Even worse, out of the already small number of Chinese women in America, many left soon after arriving because of the awful experiences they had in this new land. This created a "Bachelor Society" in the Chinatowns and once again harmed the Chinese image in America. Beyond the image issue, the shortage of women prevented the establishment of a second generation of Chinese American citizens until after the 1940s and 1950s.

Many often focus on the negative aspects of the first American Chinatowns to form in America, yet in doing so we completely ignore the critical role these communities played in helping the Chinese withstand the exclusionary years. Chinatowns were a 'home away from home' for the Chinese. They had support from not only the organizations, but also from other Chinese who were struggling with the same conflicts and issues. While the Chinese did not always support each other like a brotherhood, Chinatowns were created and their existence helped the Chinese survive in America.

[106] Ibid., 94.
[107] Ibid., 87.

Moving beyond the West

When the railroads were completed in 1869 and gold could no longer be found, the Chinese realized the need to move away from the west to find new employment. This was also made more urgent by the harsh treatment of the Chinese, specifically in the west. The anti-Chinese movement in the west forced the Chinese to move away from California and the rest of the west.[108] Because eastern America had a far smaller Chinese population, the discrimination towards the Chinese immigrants was far less severe, and the Chinese found themselves somewhat more welcome in these areas of America. This caused the Chinese population in the west to decrease, or at least to stop increasing as rapidly, and the Chinese population in the east, specifically in New York, to rise.[109] This population increase is illustrated by the appearance of chop suey restaurants in New York as early as the 1880s. While there was still a significant number of Chinese in California and the west, the Chinese began to move elsewhere in America and found some success in a variety of different industries and professions. However, with the Exclusion Acts in place, and the limited economic, cultural and assimilation opportunities for the Chinese, the generally negative 'ghetto' experience of Chinatowns that started in California were copied in other major cities, especially New York.

[108] Chen, *The Chinese of America,* 186.
[109] Ibid., 186.

Chapter Five

Chinese American Food: From Chop Suey to Richard Nixon

"Chinese food, like the food of any other culture, varies according to its region of origin, the social class of those who produce it, and that, even within China, it is subject to continuous change. Chinese food in the West has been adapted to suit the circumstances under which it has been received, but this adaptation has not gone so far as 'creolization', the term coined to denote cultural mixing to the extent of dissociation with any one particular culture."[110]

Well…what is it?

To begin this rather broad and open question, one should use Jennifer 8. Lee's method of describing Chinese American food, "It's American, it just looks Chinese."[111] If ethnic cuisines want to be successful in America, they are forced to transform themselves to be 'American approved.' They must be shaped to fit our tastes and must give up many of their traditional characteristics. The Chinese term for this is '*meiguorende kouwei*,' or food cooked to 'American taste.'[112] While the Chinese food found in America possesses many Chinese food elements, it has transformed further and further away from the Chinese food of China. As Kenneth Lo states, "[Chinese food] suffers a sea change when removed from its native shore."[113] It is American – but not "really." It remains Chinese – but not traditionally.

The most basic of changes from the Chinese food of China to the Chinese food in America has to do with the ingredients used. As explained in the introductory Chinese food section, the Chinese take great care to create a balance between the *ts'ai* and *fan,* or starch and grains versus meat and vegetables. This fundamental balance is basically ignored when cooking

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[110] Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West*, 219,
[111] Jennifer 8. Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food* (New York: Twelve Hachette Book Group Inc., 2008), 16.
[112] Nicole Mones, "Double Happiness," The New York Times, August 5, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/05/magazine/05food-t.html (accessed 13 February, 2013).
[113] Roberts, 9.

Chinese food in America, as the majority of dishes are composed of far more meat than vegetables. Rarely would one take the time to prepare a traditionally balanced Chinese meal in America. The key to balanced Chinese food is more veggies, less meat, and less oil, quite the opposite of Chinese food found in America. While many of the dishes found on Chinese restaurant menus in America can be traced back to dishes found in China, the traditional ideals of balance are always compromised by the use of more sauce, or more meat, or more oil.

The most significant change to Chinese cuisine in America is the absence of cuisine from a variety of regions. In China, Chinese food is not just one cuisine, but rather an umbrella that encompasses food from all of the different regions of China. Chinese American food has combined all of these regions into one basic cuisine that in the beginning was based on the cuisine found in southern China. The food first served in America was mostly the cuisine of Canton, where the majority of Chinese immigrants came from.[114] Today, southern Chinese cuisine is still what is mostly found in Chinese American restaurants. Chinese American cuisine is thus missing out on the variations that the other regions of China bring to the table. The absence of variation contributes to its limited characteristics. This was especially true when Chinese cuisine first came to America. While the main reason is Americans were not ready to try more than the likes of chop suey and chow mein, the lack of immigrants from other regions also contributed to this. American's preference for meat also contributed to the changes in Chinese cuisine in America. The American palate preferred to have meals that included meat, and a side of vegetables, while the Chinese preferred the opposite.

[114] Ibid., 3.

The beginning of Chinese food in America

Chinese food first came to America with the first Chinese who worked in the mines and on the railroad. Yellow silk triangle flags identified the first Chinese restaurants that existed in America.[115] These first restaurants were referred to as "chow-chows."[116] While many Americans avoided these restaurants out of dislike for the Chinese, there were other Americans who tried and enjoyed this new cuisine and continued to go to them. These restaurants appealed to American workers in the same areas that the Chinese worked, all men without much money to spend. Americans interacting with the Chinese at these restaurants may not have changed the early views of Americans towards the Chinese, but eating at these restaurants did begin to change the American palate.[117]

The first Chinese food served at these restaurants was typically an "all you can eat" system that would cost no more than one American dollar. "Some of the first Chinese 'restaurants' were little more than cheap dining cellars, where customers ate as much as they wanted for a dollar, spitting bones and gristle onto the floor."[118] While most Americans would have never spent money on something that was labeled "Chinese," the cheapness of these establishments brought Americans in to try the food. Along with being cheap, the first Chinese restaurants were infamous for being unhygienic, a characteristic that turned many away.[119] Even with all of these negative stereotypes that surrounded the Chinese restaurant, some people still flocked to them because they met both economic need (cheap food) and some cultural curiosity.

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[115] Chen, *The Chinese of America*, 57.
[116] Gish Jen, "A concise history of Chinese takeout," *Slate Magazine*, 2005 Apr. 25, http://www.slate.com/articles/life/food/2005/04/a_short_history_of_the_chinese_restaurant.html (accessed 2013, February 6).
[117] Samantha Barbas, "I'll Take Chop Suey: Restaurants as Agents of Culinary and Cultural Change 669-685," *Journal of Popular Culture* (669-685): 670.
[118] Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 48.
[119] Roberts, *China to Chinatown*, 213.

These first customers became loyal and can be credited with Chinese cuisine still being available in America today.

Chop suey was one of the first dishes to be served in Chinese restaurants. It came to America in quite a roundabout way. The exact origin of this dish is debated and many stories have arisen to describe its creation. One story has it that Li Hongzhang, one of the leading statesmen during the end of the Qing Dynasty, created this dish during a visit to America in 1896. The legend goes that Li Hongzhang was not impressed by American cuisine and wanted food made by his own cooks. However, a shortage of ingredients forced his chefs to be creative and so—chop suey was invented.[120] Even though this story may not be true, it does mirror reality in that the limited availability of ingredients forced changes to what Chinese food was served here.

More often, the Chinese working on the railroads are credited with creating chop suey to feed the Chinese workers. They used scraps from the previous days' meals. Whatever story is true, the important thing is chop suey was created in America, and there is no dish in China that is like it. News of chop suey spread, and it became quite a success. It was a perfect way to bring a variation of Chinese food to America; it appealed to western tastes and all of the ingredients were available in America.

Along with the increase in Chinese restaurants, Chinese food's popularity could be seen in America's popular culture of the time. Louis Armstrong's jazz song "Cornet Chop Suey" became quite a hit when it was released in 1926. The 1925 song "Who'll Chop your Suey when I'm gone?" with music by Sidney Becket and lyrics by Clarence Wlliams also highlighted the chop suey craze that existed in America at that time. Another proof of Chinese food's popularity was its ability to attract tourists to San Francisco. According to J.A.G Roberts, "Soon people of

[120] Ibid., 139.

all nationalities were flocking to Chinatown to eat."[121] Many were very surprised that Chinese food would make San Francisco a place of interest for many Americans in the west. Even in the early 20th century, during a period of intense discrimination towards the Chinese, interest in visiting Chinatowns demonstrated that Americans both feared and were fascinated by the Chinese.

Why was it not the Chinese food of China?

As mentioned above, Chinese food first came to America when the Chinese began work on the mines and railroads. The cuisine came to an America that discriminated against the Chinese and expected that everything they created was of lesser value and worth. As a result, Americans expected Chinese food to be cheap and fast. A concrete example of this cheapness is the creation of chop suey, which mirrored the lower class of the Chinese identity.[122] Chop suey, basically chopped up vegetables and meat and topped with (far too much) sauce, perfectly fit into the expectation of Chinese food in an America that greatly disliked this immigrant group but also had some interest in them. The meat and vegetables in this dish were basically scraps and could not be eaten on their own, and was nothing like the delicacies that might be seen on tables in China. The status Americans gave the Chinese immigrants did not give the Chinese a chance to bring the Chinese cuisine of China to America. In Americans' eyes, Chinese food was chop suey.

Chinese cuisine was altered by American tastes. As Haiming Liu describes, "As chop suey and other popular Chinese dishes became less Chinese in their culinary content, they simultaneously appeared more 'authentic' in their culinary identity. Thus, the Chinese restaurant business emerged as the most visible and enduring emblem of the Chinese in the United

[121] Iris Chang, 47-48.
[122] Haiming Liu, "Chop Suey as Imagined Authentic Chinese Food: The Culinary Identity of Chinese Restaurants in the United States," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 18.

States."[123] In other words, this version of Chinese food was what Americans believed authentic Chinese food to be.

The sojourner mentality of the Chinese overseas also played a part in the changes to Chinese American food. Because the Chinese believed their time in America was temporary, they did not feel the need to take the time to bring the intricacies and art of Chinese food into America. The sojourner mentality also resulted in the shortage of women in the Chinese American community: men came over temporarily to make money, sent it home to their families, and expected to soon return to China. This truly changed the face of Chinese food in America. In a Chinese household, the woman was in charge of cooking and cleaning inside the home, and the man's role was working outside. The man was never home and therefore, never learned to cook. When these men came to America and ended up becoming chefs, they could only use the very basic family recipes that they remembered. As a result of the shortage of women, men were the ones who created the "classic Chinese restaurant aesthetic." The men were not concerned with the decor of the restaurant. So, what we get is cheap fast food made by men and for men. This was true at least at the beginning.

American resistance to the 'exotic,' specifically with what to eat, also impacted what Chinese food would be served in the United States. Chinese restaurants had to move away from the traditional to satisfy the more bland palates of Americans. Restaurants can be agents of innovation and creativity if those eating are willing to try new tastes. However, there are limits to what people try and many Americans were not interested in exploring the unknown, especially the unknown that came from the Chinese.[124] This factor, combined with the pressure on Chinese

[123] Ibid., 2.
[124] Barbas, 669.

to assimilate and the limits on traditional Chinese ingredients, led to the very limited range of "authentic" Chinese American food.

The chef in Chinese restaurants also impacted what was served. Many of the chefs who cooked at these early Chinese American restaurants were not chefs in China. Out of necessity, they chose to become chefs after witnessing the hostility in the mining and other industries. The first Chinese chefs in America, as Jacqueline Newman describes, "were poor working-class men who cooked and served the foods they remembered eating before they left Southern China."[125] They were never Chinese men who ate the fine foods of China, nor were they trained cooks who knew much about the finer points of Chinese food. Even today, the pay of Chinese chefs is minimal and as a result, the well-trained Chinese chefs are not interesting in coming here to work. As Andrew Coe describes, "one of the many problems was that young cooks with any ambition refused to work for $4,000 a year, so most of the food was prepared by old timers whose method were mired in the past."[126]

The Chinese chefs in America could not find the ingredients here that could be found in China and that were critical to many dishes. The ingredients in Chinese and American foods were very different. This was especially true with meats. Newman describes the Chinese views of meat: "To them, meat meant pork; chicken was a luxury; beef was rarely encountered; and lamb was virtually unknown."[127] Yet, Americans loved beef, chicken, and other meats; so the Chinese had to make the foods of China with far more meat than they were used to. "What they knew best was hunger and satiating it by eating lots of grain foods, mainly rice and noodles."[128]

[125] Newman, "Chinese American Food," 3.
[126] Andrew Coe, *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 214.
[127] Newman, "Chinese American Food," 3.
[128] Ibid., 3.

While many ethnic foods change once they are served on the American table, this was especially true for Chinese food given the low regard that many Americans had toward the Chinese. The Chinese were forced to change their cuisine to survive in this hostile environment. While Chinese food in today's America is still far from what it is in China, it has nevertheless become a major cuisine in the food industry. It is worth noting that it has succeeded significantly by following the original patterns: inexpensive, fast, and limited.

The key players in Chinese food's popularity in America

In some respects, the Chinese food industry in America has come a long way since the exclusionary time, both in popularity and acceptance. There are some key reasons for this as explained in this section.

1. Chop Suey

The "foodies" of America often criticize chop suey because it is not a true Chinese dish; it was created in America for Americans. However, the success of chop suey helped Chinese restaurants succeed and that in turn helped the Chinese succeed in this country. Chop suey's success helped the Chinese move out of Chinatowns. The Chinese were able to make a profit by selling inexpensive foods. This gave them the economic resources to move to the suburbs away from the Chinatowns. Today, this also allows them to compete with the fast food chains in America. The inexpensiveness of chop suey also helped Chinese restaurants succeed during recession. While many high-end restaurants were forced to close, Chinese restaurants did well

because of their exoticness and cheapness.[129] While chop suey may not be a dish found in China, it has to be given credit for the role it played in improving the lives of the Chinese in America.

2. Bombing of Pearl Harbor

The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 by the Japanese had a significant effect on the feelings of Americans towards the Chinese. Americans no longer saw the Chinese as a threat and enemy, as the Japanese quickly took this position away from the Chinese. The Chinese were now seen as allies because they too had been attacked by Japan, and Americans wanted to work with China to fight against this common enemy. While the shift to one of positive feelings towards the Chinese was hardly instantaneous, they were no longer seen as a low class in American society, whose presence threatened America's economy. While this effect was reduced a bit after World War II, the war did help raise the status of the Chinese in America.

3. Jews and Chinese food

It is a common perception that Jews around the world eat Chinese food on Christmas Day, either before or after viewing the latest blockbuster at the movie theatre. At times, many label this a "cliche," but, over the years, the Jews have always made up a large share of Americans who went to Chinese restaurants. This support is one of the main reasons the Chinese have experienced success in the American food industry and survived in America even through the treatment of the exclusion era. The connection between the Jews and the Chinese extends far deeper than the tradition of attending Chinese restaurants on Christmas; in fact, Chinese food is often considered the second Jewish cuisine. "The cuisine of China has emerged as American Jewish comfort food, earning a seat of honor in the assembly of contemporary ethnic

[129] Coe, *Chop Suey*, 241.

practices."[130] The Chinese did not scorn the Jews, like many other European immigrant groups did, because the Chinese did not wish for another group to experience the cruelties they had to endure,[131] and there was no legacy of anti-Semitism in Chinese culture.

This deep connection between the Jews and the Chinese existed in New York City. The Jewish and Chinese neighborhoods were adjacent to one another; both inhabited the lower east side of Manhattan.

The calendar is also an important reason for this connection, because the Chinese did not observe the Christian Sabbath; they were opened on Saturday nights and Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath occurs on Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown, and after a long preparation of Shabbat dinner, few Jewish women would want to cook another meal on Saturday night or on Sunday. The Chinese restaurant was also inexpensive and nearby.

The Jews also favor Chinese food because they can eat according to their kosher dietary needs. At a Chinese restaurant, there is no milk in Chinese food so Jews could eat meat without milk and not break their kosher codes to eat at these restaurants. The first Chinese kosher restaurant was Bernstein-on-Essex, which opened in 1959.[132] This restaurant was the first of the Chinese restaurants that were either completely kosher, or explicitly served kosher dishes. For instance, the Cho-sen restaurant in Queens goes completely kosher for Passover every year.[133] Even those Jews who do not eat a strict kosher diet favor eating those once restricted foods chopped and mixed with unrestricted ingredients, rather than eating a full piece of pork.[134]

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[130] Hanna Miller, "Identity Takeout: How American Jews Made Chinese Food Their Ethnic Cuisine," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 29, no. 3 (2006): 430.
[131] Ibid., 455.
[132] Coe, *Chop Suey*, 201.
[133] Jennifer 8. Lee, "Sweet and Sour Veal, and some Matzo, for Passover," *New York Times*, 2009 Apr. 15, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/15/nyregion/15chosen.html?n=Top%2fReference%2fTimes%20Topics%2fSubjects%2fF%2fFood (accessed 15, Feb. 2013).
[134] Miller, "Identity Takeout: How American Jews Made Chinese Food Their Ethnic Cuisine," 431.

Beyond all of these reasons for the connection between the Jews and Chinese food, there is also one crucial cultural connection—the importance of family. The way the Chinese organize their meals is quite similar to a Jewish family dinner: all together, and family-style, that emphasizes the importance of one's home life.[135] In both cultures, family is central to their way-of-life and a dinner of Chinese food celebrated this characteristic of Jewish culture, without breaking one's wallet. As Miller states, "The savoring of Chinese food is now a ritualized celebration of immigration, education, family, community, and continuity."[136]

It is also important to note that there now exists a group of Jews living in Beijing that all come together to have Chinese food on Christmas.[137] Even though they may have Chinese food everyday, they eat Chinese food together on Christmas Day. While members of every class, racial, and religious group consume Chinese food, there is something about the connection between the Jews and the Chinese that has helped the Chinese succeed in America.

4. *The Tourist trade*

Now that the Exclusion Acts are a thing of the past, the Chinatowns seen today in various cities of America are far different than those that existed in the late nineteenth when the Chinese first arrived in America. Yet, the Chinatowns of the Exclusionary Era and those of today both recognized that appealing to tourists would bring success to their restaurants and businesses.

The tourist appeal of Chinatowns began when travel guides in the late nineteenth century recommended the chow chows in San Francisco. The travel guides describe the nature of Chinatowns and recommended them as a way to see the China many had only read about. "Chinese restaurants became so beloved by San Franciscans of all races that in short order they

[135] Ibid., 457.
[136] Ibid., 458
[137] Lee, "Sweet and Sour Veal."

became a featured selling point to encourage Americans to visit the city."[138] While Chinatowns becoming tourist attractions greatly added to the success of the Chinese, it also encouraged Chinatowns to appeal to the tourist trade and form their businesses based on what the tourists would want to see. More money is spent on the decor of Chinese restaurants in Chinatowns, than on the actual food. Today's Chinatowns could be considered theme parks,[139] constructed to purely impress the tourists that visit every year. Chinatowns are often designed in ways to appeal to people and not to show the visitors what China is really like.

5. President Richard Nixon

President Richard Nixon played a critical role in improving the way Americans look at the Chinese. President Nixon visited China in 1972, a trip that not only altered diplomatic history, but also the way Americans viewed Chinese cuisine.[140] As Coe notes, "The status of Chinese food in the American culinary scene has always been linked, albeit loosely, to the state of international relations between the two countries."[141]

Jennifer 8. Lee refers to these feelings as "The Nixon Syndrome."[142] Nixon's visit to China in 1972 brought a new wave of American interest in China and their culture. Witnessing Nixon's fascination with China sparked Americans' curiosity about China.[143] For the first time, many Americans were able to see the difference between the authentic Chinese culture and the culture they observed in America. Americans were interested in understanding Chinese culture in its home setting.

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[138] Iris Chang, 48.
[139] Haiming Liu and Lianlian Lin, "Food, Culinary Identity, and Transnational Culture," *JAAS* 12 (2009): 138.
[140] Coe, 225.
[141] Ibid., 247.
[142] Jennifer 8. Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food*, 174.
[143] Roberts, 166.

President Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, organized the monumental trip to China. There were two specific reasons for the trip to China: the first was to distract Americans from a treaty between the United States and China regarding Taiwan's status, and the second was, as Andrew Coe describes, "for the campaign, they needed to show Nixon as a confident, sophisticated world leader: negotiating international agreements, conversing with Chairman Mao, contemplating history at the Great Wall of China, and eating authentic Chinese food."[144] The main banquet meal of the visit was filmed by various news stations and broadcast throughout America and the world. It was seen as a coming out for China, with China rejoining the world.[145]

When Nixon returned from China, eating Chinese became the "in" thing to do, specifically in New York. "In the NY food world, Chinese was hot; and it was just at this moment that President Nixon made his groundbreaking trip to Beijing."[146] Nixon's trip also inspired an "authenticity revolution"[147] in the food world in regards to Chinese food. One can still find traces of the "Nixon Syndrome" in today's Chinese food world. In 2011, to commemorate the opening night of the opera, *Nixon in China* by John Adams, the owner of Shun

[144] Ibid., 234.
[145] http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/may/15/on-china-henry-kissinger-review "Shanghai, February 1972: President Richard Nixon, centre, dines with Premier Chou En-lai (left) and Shanghai party leader Chang Chun-chiao at the end of his historic visit to China. Photograph: Bettmann/Corbis."
[146] Coe, Chop Suey, 224.
[147] Gish Jen, "A Concise history of Chinese takeout."

Lee, a famous Chinese restaurant in Manhattan, brought the meal of Nixon's visit back to the restaurant.[148] It was the same meal, albeit a bit pricier.

Summary

Chinese America food has traveled a parallel path of modification, transformation, and acceptance that Chinese Americans have traveled: always becoming more American but still Chinese even as the difference between authentic Chinese food and authentic Chinese American food has grown.

The Americans' acceptance of the Chinese is the key to the Chinese food transformation in this country: from Chinatown ghettoes becoming tourist destinations, to the "benefits" of World War II, to association with Jewish communities, and finally, President Nixon. Through all of this, we see how Chinese food has become the popular cuisine that it is today.

[148] Florence Fabricant, "Nixon in China, the Dinner, is Recreated," *New York Times*, 25 Jan. 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/26/dining/26nixon.html (accessed 14 Feb. 2013).

Chapter Six

The Power of Chinese Food

"I just love Chinese food. My favourite dish is number 27."
-Clement Atlee

The today

In today's America there are over 40,000 Chinese restaurants, more than the number of McDonald's, Burger Kings, and KFCs combined.[149] For some, this may be a shocking statistic, but to put the spotlight on the 30,000-person[150] city of Wooster, OH, while there are the usual number of fast food establishments for any comparable American city, there are also six Chinese restaurants.[151] While there are a few "ethnic" (e.g., Mexican) restaurants in Wooster and the area, there are more Chinese restaurants than any other "ethnic" food group. In addition to Wooster's six, there is one in Orrville and one in Rittman, both other small towns in the county.

In today's world, the majority of Western towns have either an established Chinese restaurant, or one that will be "opening soon."[152] The *Center for Culinary Development* surveyed children, aged ten to thirteen, on what was their favorite type of food. Thirty-nine percent of these children said it was Chinese, while only nine percent said their favorite was American.[153] Needless to say, Americans love their Chinese food, and it has come a long way from the Exclusionary Era.

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[149] Jennifer 8. Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food,* 10.
[150] 2011 United States Census S.v. Wooster, Wayne County, Ohio. Accessed through google.com/publicdata.
[151] Century Link/ Phone Directory, Wayne –Holmes Countywide, March 2013.
[152] Roberts, 9.
[153] Michael Luo, "As All-American as Egg Foo Yong." *New York Times*, September 22. 2004. Accessed February 5,2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/22/ dining/22CHIN.html.

The power of Chinese food

From the first arrival of the Chinese in America to today, Chinese restaurants have existed and created stable occupations for the Chinese even when they were discriminated in American society. While the restaurants changed over time, one important characteristic remained the same: Chinese food is a "bang for your buck."[154] Its affordability allows for all to enjoy this cuisine and escape from what some may call the monotony of "typical American" meals. Many restaurants also play up this advantage by encouraging families to attend their restaurants for these family-friendly-styled meals at a discounted rate.

The achievement of Chinese restaurants is not only admirable for their ability to withstand the treatment during the Exclusion Acts, but also because the vast majority of these restaurants are all independent establishments.[155] Instead of having corporate organizations, likeas the larger fast food restaurants have, Chinese restaurants are managed separately. The local level determines what Chinese food is served and how the restaurants are organized.

Takeout, and delivery, and Chinese restaurant franchises, oh my!

Many may be surprised that takeout Chinese food is an American innovation and not widely offered in China. Until recently, this convenience was not offered in China at all. Takeout Chinese food in America came about during the 1950s, around the same time that the veterans of WWII moved with their families to the suburbs and the new, innovative electronic device known as the television came to be in homes.[156] "Using small waxy paper cartons for chow mein and

[154] Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicle: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food*, 249.
[155] Ibid., 267.
[156] *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, Andrew F. Smith editor (Oxford University Press: New York) 2004, Volume 2, 526.

chop suey, these ethnic restaurants standardized distinctive takeout packaging that became synonymous with their foods."[157] Today, we call these boxes 'oyster pails.' They are one of the main symbols used to denote Chinese food. The company, Fold-pak, makes the vast majority of these boxes. "Fold-Pak boxes from the East and West Coasts of the United States are made slightly differently. On the East Coast, the wire always runs the short length of the box; on the West Coast, it run the long way. In Texas, you'll see both."[158] Normally, these boxes are stamped with a red label of a traditional Chinese symbol such as a pagoda with the words "Thank You." After all, they are thankful for our patronage.

Along with the takeout containers, Chinese restaurants menus have also become a significant symbol of this cuisine. The look of these menus are very similar, be it in Wooster, OH or Albany, NY. "The editor of *Chinese Restaurant News* has estimated that 80 percent of those forty thousand or so eateries serve a limited Chinese American menu – a short roster of dishes like kung pao chicken, hot and sour soup, egg rolls, beef with broccoli, and General Tso's chicken."[159] No matter where one is in the United States, they can find a Chinese restaurant with these familiar dishes. The takeout menus throughout this country are similar not only in what they serve, but also how the menu is set up, and what specific elements are included. For the majority of the takeout menus in the United States, the restaurant advertises that their restaurant is "low-priced" or "affordable." Another common feature is a lunch special or a dinner special that will offer the customer a full meal for a very low price. The takeout craze spread rather quickly and soon became available in the majority of Chinese restaurants in America.

In order for a restaurant to stand out, the owner had to make innovative changes such as delivery service. The first appearance of a home delivery option for Chinese food was on the

[157] Ibid., 526.
[158] Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicle: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food*, 141.
[159] Coe, 251.

Upper West Side of Manhattan and can be traced back to Misa Chang in 1976. She opened a Chinese restaurant, *Empire Szechuan Garden* on Broadway and West 97th Street.[160] In the first weeks that her restaurant was open, she hardly made a profit and felt the need to try something new; she decided to bring the food directly to her customers. Takeout was already established and fairly common in Chinese restaurants. Delivery was innovative and allowed customers to eat tasty Chinese food in the comfort of their home. Misa Chang began passing out her menu to the various apartment buildings near her restaurant. Her idea took off, and she was soon forced by demand to hire many deliverymen to handle the amount of orders received.[161] The other Chinese restaurants in the same areasaw this success and began to offer delivery as well. Misa Chang created a phenomenon that today dominates the food industry and is offered by restaurants of all cuisines.

Despite the fact that the majority of Chinese restaurants are "mom-and-pop" establishments, Chinese food corporations and franchises have existed since the early 1970s. The most popular of these include P.F. Chang's China Bistro, Manchu Wok, and Panda Express. P.F. Chang's aspires to be more of an upscale Chinese "fusion" restaurant, while Manchu Wok and Panda Express are mostly found in food courts at malls, airports, and train stations. Another popular Chinese restaurant form is the "All You Can Eat Buffet." Here customers can pay a single fee and eat for as long and as much as they want. The appeal to many American diners perhaps needs no explanation.

Supermarkets also play a role increasing the popularity of Chinese cuisine. Many now sell Chinese ingredients to allow Chinese cooking in the home. One can find brands like *La Choy*, *Chung King*, and *Annie Chun's* in most supermarkets. When *La Choy* and *Chung King*

[160] Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicle: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food,* 27.
[161] Ibid., 28.

first came to the supermarkets, they were used as a way to encourage American housewives to cook Chinese food. Friends Wally Smith and Ilhan New in Detroit founded La Choy in 1922. Neither Wally nor Ilhan were Chinese (Wally was from Michigan, Ilhan from South Korea), but they saw the business opportunity of making Chinese food accessible to all. In the 1960's, Jim Henson was commissioned to create a series of La Choy TV commercials with his famous muppets. The brand, *Annie Chun's*, is far newer than *La Choy* and is made with all natural ingredients. "Annie Chun founded the company in 1992 with the dream of creating healthy, delicious Asian foods that would introduce America to the diversity of Asian foods and flavors."[162] Trader Joe's has a section within their stores, Trader Ming's, that offers this store's rendition of Chinese food. Chinese food can now be consumed economically without leaving the comfort of one's home.

The new age of Chinese food

Although the Exclusion Era is a far distant memory for the Chinese, a form of "food discrimination" still exists in our society with respect to Chinese food. As Andrew Coe explains, "Like their ancestors fifty and a hundred years ago, most Americans still expect Chinese food to be cheap, filling, familiar, and bland."[163] Although we have seen throughout history a drastic change in the way the Chinese are treated in America—Chinese food is still plagued by the discriminatory opinions of the past. As Roberts describes, "The very cheapness of Chinese food in such places, the boorish behaviour of a minority of customers, the ignorance and indifference

[162] "Our Food." Annie Chun's. accessed February 15, 2013, http://www.anniechun.com/.
[163] Coe, 251.

of many customers not only on the subject of Chinese food, but also on many if not all aspects of Chinese culture…"[164]

In today's America, one can find three types of Chinese food: Chinese food for the Chinese, Chinese food for others, and 'post modern' or fusion Chinese food.[165] This array of Chinese food now available in America leads one to believe that Americans are now slightly more aware that the Chinese food found in many restaurants is not what is served in China. Unfortunately, this does not mean that Americans are more to give up their favorite dishes such as General Tso's and Lo Mein. Americans are still resistant to try the exotic tastes of Chinese food that one would find in China; rather, they continue to expect the food that has been the usual fare in Chinese American restaurants. In the same way that cultural stereotypes limit ethnic groups in society, similar stereotypes limit the range of Chinese food.

On the other hand, adventurous eaters are becoming more and more common and a new age of innovative Chinese food is being brought to the table that allows for an increasing amount of creativity in this cuisine. Many describe this cuisine as Chinese fusion or hyphenated Chinese, mixing Chinese food with cuisines of other cultures.[166] These new tastes and ideas are once again putting the 'hip and cool' back into Chinese food.[167] One of the most famous of these fusion chefs is Wolfgang Puck.[168] Puck's restaurant, Chinois, is credited as being one of the first Asian fusion restaurants to feature dishes such as "Sauteed Dungeness crab cakes with Louisiana shrimp, warm mushroom salad lobster lemon grass sauce" and "sizzling calamari and rock

[164] Roberts, 209.
[165] Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicle: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food,* 212.
[166] Julia Moskin, "Craving Hyphenated Chinese," *New York Times*, September 21, 2005. Accessed February 2, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/21/ dining /21chin .html?pagewanted=all.
[167] Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicle: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food,* 212.
[168] Coe, 248.

shrimp salad served in a wonton cup with Chinese chili paste."[169] In these dishes, one can find glimpses of both traditional American and Chinese foods, a creative combination of the two. The more fusion restaurants existing in the world, the more creative the hyphenations are. For instance, there are Indo-Chinese fusion restaurants, or Latin-Chinese restaurants that offer a variety of creative dishes.

The next change to Chinese food on today's table is one that dominates all other cuisines of the world—the focus on being healthy. Sue Min Lee, a Wooster, OH Chinese restaurant owner, makes all of the food in her restaurant with her own healthier recipes. Sue only cooks with the freshest of ingredients, and while this makes her job far more difficult, she believes it is necessary to give her clients healthier food. The menu of Sue's restaurant was chosen based on whether or not the Chinese food that was so often Americanized was good for one's health or not. Not surprisingly, she recognized the majority of Chinese American cuisine was high in fat, sugar and calories; and therefore, she decided to make up her own recipes with healthier ingredients. Other Chinese restaurants in America are also joining the "Healthy Chinese Food Train," and offering customers healthier options, such as steamed vegetables, brown rice, and lighter sauces. While many still prefer their General Tso's Chicken and Mandarin Beef, clientele now have the option to be healthy even in a Chinese restaurant. However, even with these expanded options, the Chinese food prepared by and for Chinese is still mostly "in the kitchen" and rarely "on the menu."

[169] "Menu of Chinois," Wolfgang Puck Website, http://www.wolfgangpuck.com/content/files/foodmenu_Chinois%20newmenuJanuary2011.pdf, accessed February 6, 2013.

Sue Min's Chinese Gourmet

Many people drive down Madison Avenue in Wooster, Ohio and are unaware of a hidden gem of a restaurant that graces the Wooster community. *Sue Min's Chinese Gourmet* could easily be missed because of the absence of signs on the restaurant. Sue Min had often been asked by friends and neighbors to open a restaurant in Wooster after they had tried her Chinese food. She finally took action in 1991 when she spotted an advertisement of a restaurant for sale in Wooster, Ohio. This restaurant originally featured classic American grub to feed those participating in the auction house located in the back of the building. In the beginning, with the auction house was still running, she continued to serve American food from the back window that led to the auction house, and served Chinese food in the main dining area. She would cook the hamburgers on the side of the wok and would call this creation "the woker." Today, the restaurant still features American food via a children's menu, but the majority of food offered is Chinese food.

Sue Min was born and raised in Taipei, Taiwan and moved to America for graduate school at Kent State University where she met her husband. Together they moved to Wooster, Ohio. When the restaurant first opened she was working as a full-time school counselor. She continued to work full-time as a school counselor and also managed to get the restaurant up and running. Needless to say, she saw her children very little during the early years of the restaurant. Yet, these long days did not faze her because it was how she had always structured her life. She had learned at a very young age of the importance of discipline and hard work in getting ahead in life and obtaining success.

Sue Min's restaurant is far from the other five Chinese restaurants that are present in the small city of Wooster. Rather than focusing on the decor of the restaurant like many other

Chinese American restaurants do, her focus is on the food. Not only is the food she offers extremely tasty, but her food far healthier way than what other Chinese restaurants serve, and her food is more similar to the cuisine found in China.

"Healthy" Chinese American food is a relatively new theme, but Sue Min has focused on this since the beginning of her restaurant. Her food contains no MSG, lard, or trans-fat and everything served is made and served that day. Because of her limited hours (to the distress of many clientele), the quantity of food she needs to prepare is smaller than a similar sized restaurant that is open ever day. As a result, only needs to make a smaller quantity of food, for a smaller amount and she can focus on making her food with fresher ingredients. Sue Min's sauces are all her own recipes and are far healthier than the sauces of other restaurants. While she told me of a few instances when customers did not get the sauces that they were used to getting and asked for their money back; however, these instances were few and far between.

It is important to note that *Sue Min's Chinese Gourmet* is located in the Midwest, not always known for the ethnic food culture that we find on the two coasts of America. To find a restaurant as unique as Sue Min's in the Midwest, let alone, Wooster, Ohio is a gift. Yet, there is still a great resistance to try anything but the familiar dishes found in Chinese American restaurants. The most requested dish in Sue Min's restaurant is the sweet and sour chicken. But this common request does not faze Sue Min, because she has her own unique version of this dish. She is also very accustomed to the resistance to trying new foods. In the Midwest, people are often not interested in broadening their palate; their comfort level is meat, potatoes, and corn. Anything beyond these basic foods is too much for some people. People are often not willing to take the extra step, but Sue Min's restaurant encourages people to try new dishes that are similar to the more common ones.

Spotlight on NYC's and San Francisco's Chinatowns

The two largest Chinatowns in the United States are New York City's and San Francisco's, both cities with the largest populations of Chinese. As we have seen, the first Chinatowns were segregated areas within cities that the Chinese could inhabit freely during the Exclusion Era. While in the past, Chinatowns contained Chinese restaurants and the homes Chinese immigrants, they are now places for Americans to obtain a glimpse of the Chinese culture. Chinatowns can be considered cultural theme parks,[170] or tourist attractions; mixing immigrant experience with consciously planned cultural tourism. Both San Francisco and New York City's Chinatowns have expanded beyond the narrow, ghettoized areas of the past. In fact, both cities possess two Chinatowns: one that could be considered for the tourists and one for the Chinese. This shift to the two Chinatowns in both cities can be largely attributed to the growing costs of real estate in these cities.

San Francisco, the first Chinatown in the United States, is still constricted to twenty-square blocks, in the downtown part of the city. The majority of these blocks have been transformed into highly-promoted tourist attractions, yet many restaurants or at least the structure of these restaurants have remained unchanged since the first days of the Chinese in America. As Bonnie Tsui observes, "Brightly colored lanterns and flags hung liberally, and trolley cars running down one of its streets added to what seemed to me a 'Straight from Old China!' amusement park air."[171] The second Chinatown is located on Clement Street, which not only features what many told me are "the true Chinese restaurants," but also offers a variety of other ethnic cuisines. Clement Street is where many travel to with the goal of finding the food that can

[170] Liu and Lin, "Food, Culinary Identity, and Transnational Culture: Chinese Restaurant Business in Southern California," 138.
[171] Bonnie Tsui, *American Chinatown: A People's History of Five Neighborhoods* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 15.

be found in the cuisine's native land. Both are tourist attractions, but for different tourists seeking different "authentic" experiences.

New York City's Chinatown was founded a few years following San Francisco's, since it took longer for the Chinese to establish themselves in the eastern part of the United States. New York's Chinatown is far bigger in size than the one of San Francisco and is located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. It is bordered by the streets Lafayette, Worth, Grand and East Broadway. The most famous street and the center of NYC's Chinatown is Mott Street. The second Chinatown of New York City is located in Queens, specifically Flushing. Flushing, or "the best neighborhood in New York for tasting the true and dazzling flavors of China,"[172] is the place to visit in New York if one is focused on eating what the Chinese Americans choose to eat. Recently, many describe the majority of the cuisine found in Flushing as Taiwanese because of the presence of many Taiwanese emmigrants of Flushing. This allows for a different cuisine and experience than the one found in New York City's original Chinatown.

Obsession with authenticity

In recent years Americans are becoming somewhat more aware of how not alike the Chinese food found in America and the Chinese food of China are very different. This is especially true for those focused on purely eating the "authentic" or the "real" food that one would find in its native place. The search for this type of Chinese food is not new to diners; the constant search for authenticity began with the Bohemians as early as the 1880's. "They recast Chinatown as a vital preserve of authentic, premodern culture, conveniently if curiously located

[172] Julia Moskin, "Let the Meals Begin: Finding Beijing in Flushing" *New York Times*, July 30, 2008. Accessed February 1, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/30/dining/ 30flushing.html?pagewanted=all.

amidst the swirl of modernity. [173] Before this, Americans never questioned the type of food as being authentic or inauthentic because it was all Americans knew of the Chinese cuisine.

Many Americans go out of their way to find the Chinese food of China, but Andrew Coe believes there is an easier way to determine what type of Chinese food you will receive at a certain restaurant. One only has to look at who is eating at the restaurant, specifically the ratio of Chinese to non-Chinese, "Whichever group dominates, the seats will inevitably have the most influence of what is served, and how. If you don't see any immigrants or their descendants at the tables, then you know that American tastes will rule the meal."[174] The authenticity issue has become so important to some, like Nina and Tim Zagat, the creators of the *Zagat Restaurant Surveys*, begged for there to be more Chinese chefs in America so the Americans could finally know what is the real Chinese food.[175] There will always be more Chinese American food restaurants in America than restaurants that serve the Chinese food found in China, there is a shift towards many wanting the Chinese food of China in their restaurants and people are asking for these authentic dishes.

How has America changed Chinese food in China?

While there has been much discussion concerning the westernization of Chinese food found in America, it is also interesting to note what America's culinary world has done to the Chinese food in China. The changes that came to China's food were especially noticeable during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The influx of foreign citizens, specifically athletes, forced the

[173] Rast, "The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917," 38.
[174] Coe, 251.
[175] Nicole Mones, "Double Happiness."

Chinese to create an official list of English translations for traditional dishes offered.[176] Often Chinese food translations were made to seem extremely unappetizing such as, "The 'red-roasted lion's head' — braised pork served with a mane of bok choy leaves — is now 'stewed pork ball in brown sauce.'"[177] The publicity given to Beijing during these games also showed the world the number of McDonald's and KFC's that were established in this metropolitan city.[178]

Along with the changes seen because of the Olympic games, the atmosphere of restaurants has changed due to the influx of cross cultural business exchanges between China and the United States. Business men and women who travel on business to China stay in upscale hotels in the main cities and rarely experience the China beyond these hotels and the food of their restaurants. Even though it is in China, the Chinese food served in these restaurants is suited specifically for foreigners—place settings, small plates, garnishes, or what some may call, "Chinese food on white plates."[179]The restaurants offer both chopsticks and Western utensils, and often Americanized Chinese food such as General Tso's chicken and even American food, such as French fries. Instead of showing tourists the traditional food of China, the hotel restaurants serve the food familiar to what their guests would find in their hometown. Thus, this globalization is perhaps nothing more than a slight expansion of the range of the already well-established tradition of Chinese American food.

[176]Jennifer 8. Lee, "China Orders Up Menus for Tourists." *New York Times*, June 25, 2008, accessed February 13, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/25/dining/25chinese.html?pagewanted=print.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Coe, 249.
[179] Suemin Lee. Private Interview, Wooster, OH, February 18, 2013.

Chapter Seven

The Chinese American Identity

"Like orphans, they came to occupy a marginalized position sandwiched between generations, cultures, languages, and geographies. Even as they resented being measured by the ethnicity standards of the immigrant generation, they also refused to succumb to American mainstreaming"[180]

But first…what is the "American identity?"

Before beginning the discussion of what is the "Chinese American identity," it is necessary to attempt to define what is the "American identity," specifically the American identity that was forming during the massive immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One of America's ideals was to be a diverse culture that accepted and welcomed all immigrants. However, instead of accepting all, Americans have had a narrow view of who is allowed to consider themselves "American." And it is the case that this debate has been formed around the norms of "white" Anglo-American culture. Any group that gains "American" status has to conform to some extent to these norms.

The need to leave behind significant aspects of one's identity is especially true for the Chinese. Europeans were accepted more quickly because they met the norms of "white" Anglo-American cultures; the Chinese did not. The Chinese were seen as far different from those from Europe and because of this were expected to let go of many key aspects of their identity to fit into the American society. The Chinese had to prove their worth to Americans and give up many characteristics that were regarded rather highly in their old land. First, they had to transform their outer appearance to look more American. This included cutting their hair and changing the way they dressed. They were also forced to change their religious beliefs. When the Chinese came to

[180] Gloria Heyung Chun, *Of Orphans & Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture & Identity* (New Jersey: Rutgers University, 2000), 1.

America, their identity was greatly changed because if they truly wanted to be considered "American," they had to get rid of many important aspects of their lives in China. This included their language, their religion, and the way they dressed, these important markers of one's identity, especially one's identity in America. Those who wished to be "American" were expected to lose not only certain physical characteristics of their old identities, but also their beliefs that were an important part of their lives in China.

The Chinese American identity

The Chinese American identity is far more challenging to describe than the Chinese identity. The Chinese American identity is still a puzzle to many scholars because of its constant fluctuation from the time the Chinese first arrived in America to today. The more the Chinese move away from their native lands, the more the idea of what it means to be Chinese widens, as we see in America. This identity was always changing based on the way the Chinese were viewed by Americans. As a result of the way Americans saw the Chinese, the Chinese were often unsure of whether they were in Americans' good graces or considered an unwanted minority. The Chinese American was also conflicted because of the different directions it was pulled in during the exclusion era and still today. This self is also in constant conflict between what one's original country demands, and what one's new country expects and if a compromise of both selves is possible.[181] The Chinese American identity consists of many layers because of the struggles they faced in America and the constant self-conflicts.

[181] Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng. "Transnational Self in the Chinese Diaspora: A Conceptual Framework:" 234.

Huaqiao, huayi, huaren

To begin to understand the complexity of the Chinese American identity, one only has to refer to the idea of *huaqiao, huayi*, and *huaren*. These three words are used to describe "Chinese overseas," and the different types that now exist. The creation of terms for those living overseas represented acceptance by the Chinese government towards those abroad.[182] All three of these words define people who are ethnically Chinese, but are citizens of another nation. *Huaqiao* was originally used by the revolutionary followers of Sun Yat-sen. The People's Republic of China introduced *huaren* and *huayi* in the 1960s. *Huaren* are all those of Chinese descent who live outside of China and *huayi* are all those of Chinese descent who were born abroad.[183] These three terms characterize the different generations of Chinese overseas and suggest the complicating factors that arise in the relationships among the different generations.

The generation problem

As suggested by *huayi* and *huaren*, another major point of contention in forming the Chinese American identity arises because of the differing ways that the generations exist in America. When the Chinese first arrived there was only one generation (i.e., men arriving without families) and this generation was still very connected to the traditions and way of life that existed in their homeland. Today, a second and third generation exists in America and with each year, these Chinese Americans travel further away from the way of life in China and the traditional aspects of Chinese identity. The newer generations are considered by most to be far more "American" than the first generations that arrived on American shores. This is especially

[182] David Y.H. Wu and Harry J. Lamley, "Introduction The Hawaii Chinese: Their Experience and Identity over Two Centuries,"*Chinese America: History and Perspectives* (January 1, 2010). http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-2273034011.html, 9.
[183] Ibid., 11.

true because these new generations never lived in China and never fully experienced Chinese culture in China. Therefore, they feel disconnected from the tradition and heritage of their family's origins. This is the cause of much distress to the older generations who want to still feel connected to their native place and want their offspring to also feel this connection. Problems occur because the new generations are conflicted between what is expected from being Chinese and what is expected in this new land in order to feel like one belongs. Many times, the Chinese risk bringing shame to their families if they completely disassociate themselves from the culture of traditional China. Although we are witnessing an increase in Chinese Americans wanting to return to their Chinese roots and culture, there is a fear that the Confucian ideals and other dimensions of Chinese identity are disappearing from Chinese American society. The younger generations are criticized for straying further and further away from the traditions and values that have existed for over five thousand years in China. China believes that if those living overseas feel connected to China, they will assist in making China more successful. This is especially true because of how successful many Chinese Americans now are in their new life in America. China is encouraging greater contact between China and America to keep the traditional Chinese identity alive in these younger Chinese Americans.

The "sojourner" mentality

The "sojourner" mentality of Chinese immigrants also plays a crucial role in the formation of the Chinese American identity. This is described in L. Ling Chi Wang's, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," where he places the overseas Chinese identity into four distinct categories. The first category mentioned is called 'sojourner mentality.' This mentality continues to play a part in the formation of the Chinese American

identity and is perhaps the most concrete reason the younger generations will always feel the pressure to remain tied to their ancestral roots.[184] To review, the sojourner mentality. with respect to the Chinese, describes the idea that people will only stay abroad for a specific amount of time to send money to their family back home and in the end, return home to live out the rest of their lives in the comfort of their homeland. While some Chinese returned to China after a stay in America, the vast majority were not sojourners because they remained in America and formed a life for themselves here. For some, this was a choice and for some, this was not a choice. Yet, because many subscribed to this sojourner mentality, they did not feel the need to assimilate into American society and remained in Chinatowns and areas mostly populated by other Chinese migrants.

The idea of Chineseness is just as important to the Chinese American identity as it is to the Chinese identity. Yet, for the Chinese overseas, Chineseness can be used to describe the conflict between wanting to be Chinese, wanting to be American, and wanting to be able to have both identities at the same time. An individual's Chineseness depends on how Chinese he or she feels, but also how the Chinese community sees the individual and whether or not the individual is accepted into this community. The community (both Chinese and American) is the more powerful force in defining one's Chineseness because it is what is directly connected to their homeland.

China-US relations

Throughout history, the changing relations between China and the United States impacted the Chinese American identity. The relations between both countries directly affected

[184] L. Ling Chi Wang, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," In The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today, ed. Tu Wei-ming (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 186.

Americans' interests towards China and China's culture. From 1882 to 1943, Chinese citizens were excluded from entering the United States because of the Exclusion Acts. In 1943, the Exclusions Acts expired and with that, the American government allowed 105 Chinese citizens a year to enter the United States. With the expiration of these exclusionary laws, more Chinese came to live in the United States and appreciation of Chinese culture improved, as well as acceptance to the Chinese. This acceptance was further increased when the United States and China became allies during World War II and the Chinese were no longer completely segregated within American society.

Following these better relations during World War II, China officially became a Communist nation in 1949 under the rule of Mao Zedong. The Chinese Americans had to once again prove their worth to Americans because of the anti-Communist views that existed in America at this time. China becoming Communist was seen as "losing China," a great ally.[185] With the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, 170,000 immigrants per year were allowed to enter America, including Chinese immigrants. In the 1960s, the population of Chinese Americans increased by 84 percent[186] and with that came the development of the Chinese identity in America. The positive attitude towards China was again seen when President Nixon visited China in 1972. The relations were further improved when Mao passed away in 1976 and Deng Xiaoping took over, China began its push to modernize and move away from Communism, and closer relations were being formed between US and China

China's recent economic successes have made the country a leader on the world stage. The Chinese overseas have been greatly affected by the success of China. This also has affected the Chinese American identity. When Deng Xiaoping took power we see the push towards

[185] Chun, *Of Orphans & Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture & Identity*, 72.
[186] Roberts, 164.

modernization and with that the economic improvement of China. A good example of this is Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reform and Openness policies, or 改革开放 *gaigekaifang.*[187] These policies focused on modernizing China in four areas: agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military. This reform brought great success to China, and with that, pride in China as a nation for both the Chinese living in China and the Chinese living in America. As Andrea Louie states, "China reopens to the outside world and as increased transnational flows of people, ideas, capital, and goods allow people of Chinese descent around the world to interact with one another."[188] This describes not just the impact of China's "rise" on overseas Chinese cultural pride, but also the new opportunities to be networked to the homeland.

The media

Another significant impact on the Chinese American identity has come from the availability of information about China in both China and America.[189] This change is both good and bad for the status of Chinese American identity. While it does connect Chinese Americans to what is happening in China, it also brings to light the differences between these two groups and their situations. For instance, the Chinese are now aware of how "American" many of the Chinese Americans have become and how they seem to have lost aspects of Chinese culture. The Chinese Americans are now able to learn about the situation of those living in China and express concern about their homeland. This category of people are what L. Ling Chi Wang refers to as 'alienation', or the 'uprooted'.[190] They are the educational elite that came to America because the

[187] Andrea Louie, *Chineseness across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 646.
[188] Ibid., 19.
[189] Ibid., 645.
[190] Wang, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," 209.

education found in America is far better than that of China.[191] These elites had lost faith in China's ability to modernize and succeed.

The Chinese find success in America

While America has provided opportunity to the Chinese, this has come with a price. They have lost their cultural connection to their homeland and the more they remain in America, the more they become Americanized. When the Chinese first arrived in America, many people thought the Chinese would not thrive in this country. As Wang states, "Politicians, labor leaders, and Christian ministers all thought that Chinese racial, cultural, and personality traits, seen from the prevailing religious and biological perspectives on race, were incompatible with 'American character'."[192] Many believed the only way the Chinese were going to be successful in America was if they could assimilate. Assimilation was only considered successful if one completely repressed their Chinese values.[193] A cliché to describe this is called a 'banana', which claims that the individual is Chinese or 'yellow' on the outside and American, or white on the inside.

Today's Chinese Americans are disproving the idea that economic and cultural success is not possible for Chinese immigrants. Following the 1965 Immigration Laws, Chinese Americans have experienced great success in America. In order to be successful in their new home, one must overcome the obstacle that occurs in L. Ling Chi Wang's third category called 'assimilation'. The majority of Chinese immigrants still experience the obstacle of the inability to feel fully American or fully Chinese. Once they are able to create somewhat of a balance between these two identities, they can finally feel as if they are both and American. In fact,

[191] Ibid., 209.
[192] Ibid., 185.
[193] Chun, *Of Orphans & Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture & Identity*, 5.

Chinese Americans are now considered a 'model minority'[194] in American society, although this is at times scrutinized because it ignores the diversity of the Chinese Americans.[195] The idea of being a 'model minority' pegs the Chinese as a homogenous group, which has not been the case since even before the 1960s. The Chinese Americans are diverse in regards to economic place and where they came from in China. The Chinese presence in America could be considered a bipolar society because of the split between extreme success in high-level positions and those in "low-skilled manual service occupations."[196] While the Chinese as a whole are far more successful now than they were prior to the 1960s when the exclusionary laws were in effect, many still struggle to succeed in America.

This trend of success can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s when many Chinese moved from Chinatowns to the suburbs.[197] When the Chinese moved out of Chinatowns, they were able to achieve a stable place in society. In most cases, this was a result of the United States educational opportunities open to the Chinese. When an increasing number of Chinese were hired in more professional and respectable positions, the status of the Chinese was improved.[198] Yet, by moving out of Chinatowns, the Chinese lost aspects of their Chinese identity.

For the Chinese in America, education is seen as a key way to achieve success. The Chinese see the power of an American education as the best way to assimilate successfully into "White America."[199] The focus on receiving a quality education is not a new ideal for the Chinese. This stems from Confucian ideals that have existed in Chinese society for thousands of years.[200] The success of many Chinese Americans is creating a sense of pride among this

[194] Wang, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," 185.
[195] Benson Tong, *The Chinese Americans*. (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000.), 175.
[196] Lyman, *Chinese Americans*, 137.
[197] Manying Ip, "Chinatowns" In *Encyclopedia of Modern China*, 247.
[198] Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America*, 188.
[199] Wang, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," 202.
[200] Tong, The Chinese Americans, 173.

community towards their new identity, or what Wang calls 'ethnic pride.'[201] It was these feelings that led to the Chinese student movement, similar to the Black civil rights and Black Power movements.[202] Instead of 'Black Power' it was 'Yellow Power.'[203] They were focused on gaining justice and equal rights for Chinese Americans, and were finally proud of being Chinese Americans. It is interesting to note that the Chinese and their fight for civil rights was minimal compared with others (Black, Latino), perhaps because these movements put ethnic identity in the foreground, something Chinese immigrants tend to be less comfortable doing, even today.

Assimilation: is it ever possible?

The hardships endured by Chinese Americans while forming a Chinese American identity can always be traced back to the numerous directions they were pulled in based on the needs and requirements of China, America, and the Chinese community in America. Until the individual can create somewhat of a balance between all three, success for the individual will never occur. This also plays a huge role in the complexity of the Chinese American identity that does not exist in the Chinese identity. As Anthony Reid states, "The Chinese are one of many global diasporas, and share the common tensions between the attractions of homeland, the negotiations of host land, and the novel excitement of connecting with a global community."[204] Some would consider achievement of this balance as proving one's full assimilation into American society. Others would not believe that the achievement of this balance is possible and therefore assimilation is also an impossible feat. In order to truly determine whether one is assimilated, all must agree on what it means to be assimilated.

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[201] Wang,"Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," 206.
[202] Ibid., 206.
[203] Chun, *Of Orphans & Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture & Identity*, 123.
[204] Anthony Reid, "Chineseness Unbound: Boundaries, Burdens and Belongings of Chineseness outside China," *Asian Ethnicity* 10, no. 3 (2008), 197.

The Chinese Americans are obsessed with winning acceptance wherever they inhabit.[205] This need for acceptance pushes the Chinese to adapt and change in order to fit into American society. Once again a balance is hard to achieve. It is very challenging for the Chinese to fully assimilate into American society because of the need to balance the very foreign culture of China with the American culture.

[205] Wang, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," 204.

Chapter Eight

Does the Food Mirror the Identity?

"To the ruler, the people are heaven; to the people, food is heaven."
-Ancient Chinese proverb

The changes to the Chinese identity in America mirror the changes to the Chinese cuisine in America. The changes to Chinese cuisine after arriving in America provide a concrete example and illustration of how significantly the Chinese identity was changed in America. Food and cultural identity are closely related. Kandice Hauf believes a productive way to understand the Chinese culture is through food. As she describes, "Since everyone eats, it [food] makes a foreign culture more approachable."[206] A central aspect to the Chinese identity, both traditionally speaking and today, is the Chinese cuisine. As the Chinese identity is diverse and complex, examining Chinese cuisine makes this diversity more comprehensible.

This relationship between identity and food helps us to further understand the Chinese American identity. Both the Chinese American identity and Chinese American food are distinct categories, and while their definitions are still unclear, these categories do exist and do mirror one another.

In the beginning, the Chinese were generally accepted by American society and allowed to work in the menial positions on the mines and railroads. Things quickly changed however when the economy went sour and Americans began to believe the Chinese were stealing jobs from hardworking American citizens. Hatred towards the Chinese arose and with that came the Exclusion Acts. It is these exclusionary laws that directly affected how the Chinese were perceived in America. Every important cultural characteristic they brought from China was in

[206] Kandice Hauf, "Using Food to Teach about Chinese Culture," *Education About Asia* 16, no. 3 (2011): 1-8. http://www.asian-studies.org/eaa/Hauf_16-3.pdf (accessed February 11, 2012), 1.

America diminished and lowered in status. As C. Cindy Fan describes, "The experience of Chinese Americans, including the evolution of their identity and ties with their homelands, are intricately related to the changing contexts of race relations in the U.S."[207] The Chinese became categorized as among the lowest in society and everything they created gained that label as well. These discriminatory views allowed no chance for the Chinese identity (and their food) to develop fairly.

The Chinese identity was the first to be affected by this status. The Chinese went from believing they were the center of civilization as described by the 'middle kingdom,' to a status in America of second-class citizens. Everything they knew about their identity was diminished. A perfect example of these changing characteristics to all things Chinese is the food that they made in the *Chow Chows* for both their fellow Chinese and for American citizens. Meticulous preparation and ingredients following traditional values and ideals that were said to maintain one's health no longer characterized the cuisine. Chinese food was only seen as a way to satiate their customers quickly and cheaply and not encourage other negative feelings. Chinatowns, exclusionary laws, and discriminatory stereotypes thus shaped the Chinese restaurant economy and culture.

Relating the Identity to Chinese/ United States Relations

Since the Chinese first arrived in America, relations between the United States and China affected the Chinese identity, and with that came the change to Chinese American food. The relations between both countries directly affected Americans' interests towards China and China's culture. From 1882 to 1943, Chinese citizens were excluded from entering the United

[207] C. Cindy Fan. "Chinese Americans: Chinese Americans: Immigration, Settlement, and Social Geography." In *The Chinese Diaspora*, ed. Laurence J.C. Ma (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 283.

States. In 1943, the Exclusions Acts expired, but with that, the American government still allowed only 105 Chinese citizens a year to enter the United States. The end to the ban of all Chinese immigrants from the United States allowed, in a very small way, for Americans to see more clearly what it meant to be Chinese. In the 1940s, an article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* described Chinese as among the best type of food in the world.[208] With this new knowledge about the Chinese, their acceptance widened, but not significantly.

This acceptance was further widened as the United States and China were allies during World War II. The Chinese were still among the lowest of statuses in American society, but the status of the Chinese was somewhat improved, and an increasing number of Americans both visited Chinatowns and ate at Chinese restaurants. Their position in America was also improved when some wives of the Chinese were allowed to come to the United States for the first time. The Chinese Americans no longer lived in a purely bachelor society and families were finally brought back together. Wives also brought their knowledge of food and could assist at the Chinese restaurants.

The theme of increasing acceptance is continued in the sixties when an increasing number of Chinese immigrants were allowed to enter the United States every year as a result of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.[209] After 1965, the population of Chinese increased by 84 percent[210] and with that came more changes to the Chinese identity in America. As Liu and Lin state, "When a new wave of Chinese immigrants arrived, they brought in new tastes, created new businesses, and built new communities."[211]

[208] Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West,* 164.
[209] Liu and Lin, "Food, Culinary Identity, and Transnational Culture" 138.
[210] Roberts, 164.
[211] Liu and Lin, 135.

A public change to the way Americans viewed the Chinese came with Nixon's visit to China in 1972. His visit brought a new wave of American interest in China and their culture. Seeing Nixon's fascination with China sparked American's curiosity.[212] Americans began to see the differences between the Chinese culture in China to what they observed in America. This was one of the first times in history when many Americans became interested in learning about Chinese culture in China. Americans asked for the food they saw Nixon eat in Beijing. This food was different from the chop suey, chow mein, and egg foo yong that they were used to in America, and affected how Americans viewed the Chinese here.

Identity Resilience

Chinese American food also suggests the resilience of the Chinese identity. As Liu and Lin describe, "Food is an expression of ethnic resilience."[213] The American experience for Chinese immigrants was far from pleasant because of the treatment they received from Americans. Yet, even with the countless setbacks, they survived and maintained a community that today is thriving. It shows the resilience and resourcefulness of Chinese Americans.[214] Chinese food deserves significant credit for this survival because it became a way for Chinese to make a living and survive even through all of the hardships and discrimination. Chinese restaurants demonstrate the entrepreneurial drive of immigrants and their focus on being successful in their new country.[215] Although Chinese food in America is not the cuisine of China, its continued popularity in the United States has allowed many Chinese immigrants to lead successful lives in America. Food is a concrete example of ethnic resilience, but also cultural

[212] Roberts, 166.
[213] Liu and Lin, 150.
[214] Rast, *Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown*, 58.
[215] Roberts, 207.

negotiation. The Chinese, through their determination, learned to survive in a hostile environment, and in the end, achieve great success for themselves and their families.

The Generations of People, the Generations of Food

The food found in America's Chinese restaurants has gone through a series of changes and transitions. Directly related are the differences that exist among the different generations of the Chinese in America. The first generation present in America was forced to suppress their culture in response to discrimination and to avoid further harsh treatment by American citizens. These Chinese were expected to work in positions that served others or occupations that improved the infrastructure in America, such as mining and railroad building. It should be noted that this "first generation" lasted nearly a century (or more) due to Exclusion Acts and discrimination. Today's second and third generation present in American society can go into occupations in any field and truly experience success. These generations are no longer directly hindered by the Exclusion Acts.

The achievement of these younger generations of Chinese Americans is fostered by their education in the American school system. Through hard work, discipline, and motivation, the Chinese Americans can excel and qualify for any occupation that they desire. The immigrant's children and grandchildren of immigrants are making more money than the immigrants ever did. The immigrants are proud of their decision to move to this new country and their part in bringing this success to their families. The later generations often work in the medical and scientific fields.[216] A significant reason for this can be attributed to the pressure from the parents to obtain a better place in society than their parents were able to have. While many disagree with this type of childrearing, popularly known as the "tiger mother," some have other views of describing this

[216] Sue Min, Private Interview.

pressure. Sue Min Lee explains, "The main reason behind these types of child raising is the hope that their children may live better life than theirs."[217] The difference in generational ideals also comes with changing views of many Chinese in regards to wealth. In the past, many considered monetary success shameful. This was an ideal specifically of the older Chinese scholars and they would have highly disapproved of the predominant capitalistic views of today's world. Yet, these views are changing as the older generations witness the lives of their children and grandchildren. At the same time, the 40,000 Chinese restaurants are still a major employer of new "immigrants."

Circulatory Migration Cycle

The Chinese saw the success that could be gained from the food business and saw it as a way to improve their place in society. They were obsessed with the notion of assimilating in America and pushing themselves to achieve a better place in American society. Yet, once the views of Americans began to change towards the Chinese and the Chinese gained greater respect in society, they still cooked the same cuisine of a cheap and fast nature. While many areas of the Chinese food in America can mirror the Chinese American identity, the traditions of Chinese American food still reflect ongoing cultural expectations of Chinese in America. Chinese restaurants in America are indicators of the changing status of the Chinese and the emergence of a Chinese American culture, but they still ironically reflect the key characteristic of the Chinese, which is a focus on improving their place in American society. The discriminatory past still haunts the Chinese and they do not wish to risk how far they have come in America by serving food that Americans are not willing to try.

[217] Ibid.

For the Chinese in America today there is still a struggle to feel a sense of belonging in their new home. Although the Chinese feel an increased sense of pride being Chinese and China being a world power, there are always tensions in wanting to be Chinese, wanting to be American, and wanting to be both Chinese and American. We may consider this a circulatory migration cycle of Chinese culture. For Chinese food, this circulatory migration revolves around American wanting "real" Chinese food, wanting the cheap and fast Chinese food, and wanting both. In today's society one could consider the Chinese in a time of "chop suey," all of the categories chopped up and mixed together to create both a complex Chinese-American identity and a cuisine.

Conclusion

When scholars study Chinese identity, most mention food and its importance to the identity's formation. The same occurs when scholars research Chinese food: food's place in forming the Chinese identity is only mentioned. However, these ideas are rarely more than a small point in the research. The Chinese identity and Chinese food are normally studied as parallel entities, rather than being studied as they are in actuality: intertwined entities that depend and are formed by one another. My study pursues this connection, specifically as they mirror one another in America.

The reason behind using the word "mirror" in regards to comparing the Chinese identity and Chinese food is important to mention. One uses a mirror to see something more clearly, not necessarily perfectly. I have not argued that the changes that occur to both the Chinese identity and Chinese food after they arrive in America are completely identical to one another. What I have tried to show is their transformations in America contain many similarities that can be used to understand the changes in each. The Chinese identity is complicated. Using something as specific as Chinese food to show the changes to the Chinese identity allows some comprehension. Observing the changes to the identity is difficult to see, but noticing the changes to food is easier.

Food is central to the Chinese identity because of it exemplified Chinese civilization, in its ability to create a balance in one's life. The Chinese believe that if the correct food is eaten at the appropriate times and in the correct amount, one's life will remain balanced. This leads to the great amounts of time, care, and effort that are all part of preparing a meal in China. As mentioned before, the focus on food in China is simply seen when one is walking down the street and hears the greeting, "*Ni hao, ni chi le ma*?" or "Hello, have you eaten?" This common phrase

shows that the Chinese believe that what you eat determines how well you are, or as the saying goes, "What you eat is equal to who you are." This importance and care was to a great extent lost once the Chinese food was brought to America because the Chinese were a displaced people subject to discrimination and abuse. When one asks the question of "Why was both Chinese food and the Chinese identity transformed once they reached America?," the most important place to turn is the Chinese Exclusion Acts that lasted for over one hundred years in America. When I first began my research, I had no idea of their relevance in answering this question. These Acts are the most significant reason for the changes that came to Chinese food in America, and therefore the transformations to the Chinese identity.

When the Chinese came to America to work in the mines and on the railroads, they were seen as a threat to the American worker, and the government took action to keep the Chinese from migrating to America. Once the Chinese arrived in America, they were not seen as the superior beings that they felt they were in their homeland, as described by the "middle-kingdom" ideology. These people were segregated in ghettoized Chinatowns and were hardly given a chance to succeed in this new society. Their identity was no longer stable, a necessary factor to achieving success in a new land. The Chinese were treated as second-class citizens and whatever they produced received this label as well.

How the Chinese reacted to the Exclusion Acts shows the resilience of Chinese Americans and their identity. For the Chinese, the food business was critical to this resilience. Even though the Chinese were excluded and brutally treated in the early years, they continued to survive in a society that only wanted them to fail. During the one hundred years of exclusion, they remained in this country and persevered through all of the hardships and difficulties. As mentioned previously, there are now more Chinese restaurants in America than McDonalds,

KFCs, and Burger Kings combined and one can hardly find a city of any size without a Chinese restaurant. Even through all the setbacks and discrimination that the Chinese experienced, they continued to persevere and today are improving their lives in America through their hard work and dedication. The restaurant culture, however limited, was key to this survival.

Although much time has passed since the exclusionary era of the past, one can still observe the lasting effects of the legislation in today's America, again pointing to its importance. The Chinese American identity remains a bi-polar identity because while there are many Chinese working in successful occupations, while many still work in menial positions. This identity is in constant flux because of the past exclusionary era dictating the present feelings of many Americans. Chinese food is still expected to be quick, cheap, and tasty and rarely does it challenge the American palate with more exotic flavors and tastes. The Chinese are aware that the Chinese American restaurants are successful because of the way the cuisine was transformed to fit what Americans would want and are afraid of risking their success by bringing in new dishes.

Family, language, food, and place form the Chinese identity that we see in China throughout its vast and impressive history. These important elements were stripped away one-by-one when the Chinese moved to America. Often all that remained was the food. Unfortunately, the food could not be the food of China because of the transformations that were required based on the American palate and the opinions towards the first Chinese that arrived. Yet, food continues to play a critical role in the forming of the Chinese American identity, even if it is in a significantly different way. The Chinese food economy allows us to see the success that has come to Chinese Americans and their ever-improving status in American society.

Epilogue

What is East Asia?

"By the early nineteenth century, the great civilization of East Asia had evolved over the course of three millennia and had spread outward geographically from its ancient point of origin in North China, developing in the process distinctive variants in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam."[218]

The interest in studying this area of the world can be traced back to its growing importance towards Americans via its population size, growth in power, and difference in culture.[219] With a population near a quarter of the world, and growing every year, East Asia demands attention from the West. While there has been disagreement over what countries form East Asia, today one considers China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam to form this region.[220] But, more broadly, one must still ask especially if one is an East Asian studies major – what is East Asia? What are we studying? While Europeans and Americans had been studying this region for centuries, modern East Asian studies as a term and discipline may be said to begin with John K. Fairbank and Edwin O. Reischauer's 1960 and 1965 monumental books; *East Asia: The Great Tradition* and *East Asia: The Modern Transformation*.

Yet, far more important than the geography to the forming of this region are the connections they share via tradition and ideals. One man, Confucius is seen as a central figure in the cultures of all East Asian countries. It is clear they are connected by their Asian ideals or "Confucian identity."[221] Confucian ideals revolve around the achievement of social harmony and

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[218] John K. Fairbank and Edwin O. Reischauer, Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 3.
[219] Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 5.
[220] Ibid., 3.
[221] John H. Miller, *Modern East Asia: An Introductory History* (Armonk, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), xii.

placing the group over the individual.[222] These beliefs form a common culture of East Asia that focuses on language, and the presence of an ideal culture that everyone should aspire to. Confucius also points to the importance of family. As Fairbank states, "For each individual, the family was the chief source of economic sustenance, security, education, social contact and recreation. Through ancestor worship, it was even the religious spiritual focus."[223] The importance of this Confucian tradition in each East Asian country cannot be belittled, even when it comes to seeing the ways each struggled with its Confucian heritage in the push towards modernity.

East Asian cultures place a huge amount on the importance of tradition. This becomes problematic because of the conflicts that arise between the push towards modernity and the pull from tradition. The push towards modernity is a binding experience of these countries that came about following the contact with the West. Before this, these countries were semi-isolated from the rest of the world. The rapid modernization that East Asia went through is how many often characterize this part of the world. Yet, much of this modernization was calculated and chosen based on what would work with the traditions, not all was due to Western pressure.[224] This shows the importance of fitting the modern entities within the tradition, rather than fitting tradition into modernity.

What does it mean to study East Asia?

As an East Asian studies major, I learned first hand the complexities of this region of the world and one's inability to study it classically. Rather, one must use many disciplines to study this region and understand what makes East Asia, East Asia. As Fairbank states, "To understand

[222] Ibid., xii.
[223] Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition*, 28.
[224] Ibid., 6.

East Asia's modern history one must grasp not only East Asian civilization as a whole but also the distinctive variants within it."[225] Through this major, I was required to study East Asia through History, Anthropology, Sociology, Religion, and of course, the Chinese language, allowing me to see this region from a variety of different scholarly approaches. This is especially necessary because of the various ways that one can categorize East Asia. For Fairbank and Reischauer, they believe East Asia is defined in three ways - geography, common "Confucian" culture and language.[226] With this variety, many disciplines are required. Not only did this approach allow for my interest and excitement in learning about this culture remain intact, but I also feel my knowledge is more well-rounded and useful because of it.

Another element of importance to achieve an understanding of this region was to spend time in the region itself. This was critical to understand the culture and its complexities and history. I chose to study abroad in China during my junior year because of all my efforts studying Mandarin Chinese during my first two years of college. Through the mastery of language, one understands the culture. This is particularly true in China because of the importance that is placed on language and its place within the Chinese identity. Until I spent a significant amount of time in the region, I only read of its vast culture and the importance placed in China on its own traditions. My time abroad allowed me to witness the importance of Chinese identity firsthand and live inside the culture. My studies of East Asia have necessarily been China-focused, in part because of Wooster's curriculum and in part because one must engage China in any study of East Asia. While East Asia is much more than China, China is and has been the largest and dominant culture.

[225] Fairbank and Reischauer, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation*, 9.
[226] Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Traditions*, 3.

Where does my Senior IS fit into East Asian studies?

The study of East Asia is complex and broad, especially when it comes to choosing one's Senior Independent Study topic. Because of the various topics one can choose to focus on in this region, one must use one aspect of one country to focus on. I chose to focus on food because of the ability for all to relate in its importance. The focus on China came because of my time spent abroad and my interest in their cuisine and its transformations. Food becomes even more crucial in East Asia because of its place in achieving a balanced life. The study of food also allowed me to continue exploring a topic through a variety of different disciplines because of the complexity of Chinese food that arises through its connection with the Chinese identity. Just as I did via my East Asian Studies major, I looked at food through its History, Anthropology, Sociology, and language. Once again, I was able to approach this topic in various ways to allow for a full understanding of my topic.

There is no doubt that when we study East Asia, it tends to be China-centric because of this country's dominance on the world stage. While my study also focuses on China, it may suggest similar characteristics among other East Asian countries. This is especially true in regards to my explorations on migration and Diaspora, two ideas that are central to East Asian culture when their society is disrupted by social and natural disasters. Thus, my approach to studying China and East Asia emphasizes the global dimension of East Asian studies. The dynamics of this study require well-rounded knowledge of East Asia, which I was able to achieve through studying this region via various lenses through the study of food.

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“Shanghai, February 1972: President Richard Nixon, centre, dines with Premier Chou En-lai (left) and Shanghai party leader Chang Chun-chiao at the end of his historic visit to China.” Photograph: Bettmann/Corbis, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/may/15/on-china-henry-kissinger-review.

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