

Drinking Tea in St John's:  
A Study of Diasporic Chinese Tea Drinking and Ethnic Identity

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## Abstract

Although tea has been an important part of Chinese people's lives for thousands of years, and is often taken along by Chinese tea-lovers when they move to Canada, little attention has been paid to the tea culture of Chinese immigrants in North America, especially from a folkloristic perspective. This thesis, therefore, explores Chinese tea culture by taking St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador as the research location. Drawing on historical sources, recorded interviews, and participant observation, this study shows that Chinese residents of St John's negotiate two different tea cultures. By placing their traditional tea drinking practices and the local tea drinking customs into different categories of their food system, Chinese immigrants and students use tea drinking to help define and construct their Chinese identity in the multi-ethnic context of St John's. Through an analysis of Chinese tea, this thesis hopes to contribute to the study of Chinese foodways and to further the understanding of cultural ethnicity in North America more generally.

Key Words: Chinese, tea, food system, identity

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## Chapter One:

### Introduction

#### From Trigger to Theme

Before I came to Canada, I lived in China for twenty-three years. I was born in a small city in Anhui (安徽) province located in eastern China. The Yangtze River and the Huai River are the two main rivers which run through this inland province from the south and north respectively; my home is close to the Huai River. In history, Anhui belonged to the core area of Chinese civilization. The Han people (汉族) represent the dominant majority in this province. I am Han, as were most people around me growing up, and I only knew a few minority group members in my adolescence who were of Hui descent (回族). However, I never realized that there was any difference between us. We spoke the same language, even the same dialect; we had classes together and had fun together. If there was any difference, it would be that the Hui enjoyed preferential benefits; for example, their minority identity entitles them ten to thirty bonus points in the National College Entrance Examination of China. After I went to Central China Normal University (华中师范大学) in Wuhan (武汉), Hubei (湖北), I met more people who belong to minority groups. This province is a diverse place and my classmates came from all over the country. But I only noticed differences between us in some specific situations, for example when they spoke to each other their own language or wore their unique regional dress. For most of the time, I did not have an awareness of any distinct cultural identity, mine or other people's. It was not until I came to Canada that I experienced the strong feeling of

being different from other people and of belonging to a minority. In St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador<sup>1</sup>, the local western culture, and western people's physical appearances, pushed me to think about ethnic identity.

I have been familiar with Chinese tea since I was very little. I still remember that my father went to work with a cup of tea in his hand, that my grandfather had teacups on his desk, and that we always had tea at home to greet guests. And, at restaurants, waitresses would serve you tea after you took a seat. I was used to tea and took it for granted. But I did not drink tea before I was ten. Actually, I stole my grandfather's teacup and took my first sip. The tea was so bitter that its strong taste would be engraved in my mind for the rest of my life. I thought there must be something wrong with senior peoples' taste. I did not drink tea again for quite a long time after that first try. When I was twenty and studied in Taiwan as an exchange student, my friend told me that the tea from the Ali Mountain region was very famous, so I bought two bags for my father as a gift. I tried this tea after I went back home. When the strong fragrance of the tea spread in my mouth, and I tasted the sweetness in my throat, my love for Chinese tea began.

In late August 2016, I came to Canada to study at Memorial University of Newfoundland. After I arrived in St John's, I had my first breakfast at Tim Horton's, the Canadian fast food chain. That was my first meal at Tim Horton's and it was this experience that planted the seed of my interest in studying tea. When I arrived at the order counter and asked the cashier, "What drinks do you have?" he replied, "Tea, coffee..." The word "tea" from his mouth froze me in the moment because tea was the first drink he listed. I could not believe that tea was such a common drink here.

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<sup>1</sup> Newfoundland Labrador is the official name but because my research does not extend beyond the island part of the province, I use "Newfoundland" and "Newfoundland and Labrador" interchangeably.

Though I knew about the famous British afternoon tea, I could not help being surprised. Growing up, I was familiar with tea more than coffee, and I had the stereotype that tea is the favourite drink of people in China or Eastern Asia, while Western people like coffee. Though coffee was not foreign to me, it was often associated with Western culture. The coffee sold in Chinese supermarkets or shops always had an English name, like Nestle coffee or Starbucks. In addition, coffee rarely appeared in my life. I, myself, seldom drank coffee, and for people in my generation, including my classmates and friends, coffee only was popular on the eve of exams to buy more study time. For my parents' generation, and my grandparents before that, tea rather than coffee was the necessary part of their lives.

After my initial surprise at the popularity of tea in Canada, I paid attention to local tea drinking habits whenever I encountered them. I witnessed tea drinking on and off campus and learned more about it from communicating with my North American classmates. Some of my American friends even told me that they drink more tea than coffee. Orange pekoe tea, usually sold under the Tetley brand, was the most popular tea I encountered in Newfoundland. It is sold in tea bags and I tried it several times both with sugar or/and milk and without. Every time I drank Tetley tea, I had a very complex response to it but I could not tell what it was at that time. Certainly, Tetley is different from Chinese tea in taste, especially when it is drunk with sugar or/and milk. But that strange feeling does not come from the taste only since it is ordinary for teas to have various flavours. It was only after I conducted the interviews with my Chinese interviewees a few months later that I found the answer. This will be further analyzed in Chapter Three.

My interests in ethnicity and tea came together in the winter semester of 2017

when I took a course in Material Culture with Dr. Diane Tye. To find a proper topic and an interviewee for my term paper, I contacted Chien-Ming Yeh and visited him at his restaurant, the Formosa Tea House, to try my luck. Chien-Ming Yeh immigrated to Canada from Taiwan with his wife Kuei-Fen Kuo. I had made his acquaintance earlier when I visited his tea house on the recommendation of my friends who were impressed by the Chinese food there. The first time I met him, he was drinking tea with his friends in the corner of his restaurant. They cozily leaned on their chairs while holding teacups in their hands. The winter afternoon sunshine slanted over traditional Chinese-style tables through the window. This peaceful picture left an indelible mark on my mind. So, when I needed an artifact to be the focus of my term paper, Chien-Ming Yeh's tea cups, and his restaurant more generally, came into my mind first thing. During our conversation, I found that his deep relationship with Chinese tea, and his rich stories of running his tea house, reminded me of my early attention to local tea drinking, and prompted me to focus my term paper on tea. I was only able to scratch the surface in that research paper but the idea gave birth to the topic of this MA thesis; I decided I wanted to explore the meanings of Chinese tea drinking in a foreign context.

Tea has been an important part of Chinese people's lives for more than one thousand years. While knowledge and techniques of tea planting, harvesting and processing developed over the past millennium, tea drinking became deeply interwoven into Chinese culture and is reflected in Chinese people's worldview, life attitudes and social activities. Moreover, imperial Chinese governments monopolized tea production for hundreds of years, and often used it as a diplomatic chip in international political and economic activities. Tea, therefore, in earlier times was

regarded as a unique cultural identity by the whole of China. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the British smuggled tea out of China and started large-scale production and commercialization of the plant in India that the Chinese monopoly was broken (Rose 2011). From then on, tea drinking was not restricted to Asia and people of an upper social class of Europe; it became a popular drink among people of all social statuses throughout the world. Nowadays, from the east to the west, people enjoy a wide variety of teas according to their preferences. In the current situation where tea drinking is so popular worldwide, can it still express the identity of Chinese people? How do Chinese people view and treat their own tea culture, as well as that of others, especially in a multi-ethnic context? These questions shaped my research.

To explore those questions, I located my research in St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, and focused on the tea culture of the local Chinese community. Since 1895 when the first Chinese immigrant arrived in St John's, the Chinese population of the city has increased to 1,870 in 2016. This represents the majority of the 2,325 Chinese people living in Newfoundland and Labrador (Statistics Canada 2019). In the same year, the population of Newfoundland and Labrador was 519,716, with 205,955 residents living in St John's city (Statistics Canada 2019). Though St John's is home to the majority of the province's Chinese population, Chinese people are still one of the minority groups in the city. In this context, how do Chinese residents of St John's preserve aspects of the Chinese tea culture they enjoyed in their former country? What do changes and adaptations in their former tea-drinking practices say about their integration into St John's? How does tea drinking interact with their identity? These three questions constitute the main issues I discuss in this thesis. More specifically, I ask what teas do Chinese residents drink and how do they consume them after they

have immigrated to St John's? How do Chinese people view Chinese tea in the western context and why? How do they negotiate different tea cultures? And how does tea help them to define and construct Chinese identity and bond with other Chinese individuals in a foreign context?

Through an examination of Chinese tea culture in the Chinese community of St John's, this research explores aspects of ethnicity in the context of modern globalization. In an age of increased ease of global travel, and the global flow of funds, commodities, and particularly information through the internet, people are able to come in contact with many other cultures and to see a broader world. Contemporary migrating groups are different from older generations of the early and mid-twentieth century and earlier who barely knew the new world before their travel. Living in such a time with an explosion of information, is it easier for immigrants to accept a foreign culture and integrate into the host society after their immigration? How do they deal with the larger culture of their new community? This research uses tea as an entry point to examine how Chinese people negotiate different cultures in the new environment of St John's in this present era. It is noteworthy that tea has its own particularity. Unlike Chinese restaurants which were brought to the rest of the world following the early international migration of Chinese people and became a manifestation of Chinese identity, tea started its globalization much earlier than the migration activity of Chinese. At the time the first Chinese immigrants arrived in Newfoundland in the late 1800s, for example, tea was already well known here, as it was in many other parts of the world. In this situation, how does a specific and ordinary article—tea—interact with the cultural identity of Chinese people? And, how does the integration of ethnic groups express itself against the background of

globalization? This thesis tries to answer these questions from the perspective of an insider.

Before further discussion, it is necessary to locate the place of this research and to define the community and its tea culture.

### The Location, Community and Tea Culture

St John's is the capital and the largest city of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This research is mainly restricted—although not exclusively—to the city of St John's. In exploring the local history of the Chinese community and Chinese tea, the scope of data collection will be extended to the surrounding area of St John's region and throughout the island of Newfoundland. While my own geographical location in St John's made it practical and convenient for me to do research in the city, it is also the most appropriate place in the province to study Chinese tea culture. As mentioned above, almost two thousand Chinese people were living in St John's in 2016. This number represents 80.43 percent of the Chinese population of the province, which makes St John's the best location to observe the performance of Chinese culture in Newfoundland and Labrador. Moreover, compared to Toronto or Vancouver where the Chinese population in 2016 numbered 631,050 and 474,655 respectively, St John's has a small Chinese community (Statistics Canada 2019a, 2019b). As Mu Li notes in his PhD dissertation, "Wanderers between Cultural Boundaries: Exploring the Individual Expressions of Chineseness in Newfoundland," until very recently "Newfoundland culture was portrayed as being homogeneously of Irish and English descent" (Li 2014, 2). Chinese people in St John's, therefore, are surrounded by western culture to a high degree. In these circumstances, St John's provides an ideal



environment to observe the interaction between members of the Chinese community and members of the host society who have a different culture.

The terms “Chinese community” and “Chinese people” should be clarified. “Chinese” is an ambiguous word in the English context. Nowadays it could, and often does, refer to people whose nationality is the People’s Republic of China (中国人), or to indicate people who share the same cultural legacy of 5,000 years or so originating from the Yangtze and Yellow River basins in today’s China (华人). However, as Mu Li notes, the term is complex. Li points out that the sense of Chinese national identity underwent a long process of construction from the introduction of the idea of nationalism to China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the founding of the Republic of China (中华民国) in 1912, to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国) in 1949 (Li 2014, 6). Furthermore, when considering Chinese national identity, the special conditions of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan also need to be considered. Hong Kong and Macao are both located on the western side of the Pearl River estuary in southern China, and they are the only two special administrative regions of China. Hong Kong was colonized by the United Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century, and was transferred to China in 1997 after 156 years of British colonial rule. Macao was conquered by Portugal as a colony also in the mid-nineteenth century. It was not until 1999 when the Chinese government resumed exercising sovereignty over Macao from the Portuguese Republic that this place re-emerged as part of China. People from Hong Kong and Macao, therefore, all experienced a change of nationality at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taiwan, located in East Asia, is an island close to the southeastern coast of mainland China. The dispute over the sovereignty of Taiwan has lasted for

more than half a century since the civil war of China in 1949. Some people of Taiwan claim Taiwan as an independent sovereign state, while others in Taiwan and mainland China insist that Taiwan is part of China. Therefore, it is problematic to define people from Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan by using the simple word, “Chinese,” and not considering their specific conditions and personal preferences.

The concept of “Chinese” becomes even more complicated when the overseas Chinese are taken into consideration. As Mu Li argues in his dissertation, intra-group diversity characterizes the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador; it includes both people who self-identify as Chinese and those who are identified as Chinese by others (Li 2014). The community is comprised of temporary or permanent residents who immigrated from mainland China; people from Hong Kong and Macao who left before and after the 1990s; people from Taiwan; people with Chinese heritage from places outside the national borders of China; and people whose families were originally from China and have lived overseas for several generations.

With the exception of the one native Newfoundlander I interviewed, my interviewees are either international students from various provinces of mainland China (including Jiangsu, Hunan, Jiangxi, Tianjin, Beijing and Shandong) or first-generation immigrants from Macao and Taiwan. International students from mainland China are Chinese in either way “Chinese” is interpreted, but it is more problematic to define my interviewees who immigrated from Macao and Taiwan as Chinese in terms of nationality. These individuals self-define in a range of ways. Some, much more than others, see their ethnic or cultural identity as Chinese.

Because of these complexities, in this study I do not define Chinese based on birthplace. Rather, I employ “Chinese” in the second sense of the word to refer to

individuals who claim to be culturally Chinese (see Ang 1998, Chow 1998, Chun 1996, Li 2014, Tu 1991 and 1994, Zhao 2004 for more analysis about the concept of “Chinese”). In this thesis those who feel that they share a Chinese cultural legacy are Chinese.

“Chinese tea culture” is the last concept to be defined before further discussion. Not only do people from different countries have different tea cultures, but people from different areas and ethnic groups in China have different tea customs. For example, the Kazakh, Uigur, Uzbeks, Tartar and Kyrgyz people who live in the northwest area of China, and Mongolian people who inhabit the Inner Mongolia province, like to boil tea leaves with milk and salt; Tibetan people who live in the southwest area prefer tea boiled with butter and salt; and Hakka people mainly living in southeastern China have their unique Lei Tea which is made of tea, rice, peanut, sesame, mung beans, salt. However, for some other ethnic peoples in China, especially the Han who account for 91.51 percent of the total population (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China 2011), black tea or plain tea is the most common way of their tea drinking. Technically, Chinese tea culture includes tea customs and knowledge of all fifty-six nationalities throughout China’s 9.6 million square kilometres but in this research, “Chinese tea culture” refers only to the mainstream tea culture in China that is usually limited to black tea or plain tea. It is the most representative tea culture of China, and moreover, it is what all of my Chinese interviewees were familiar with.

This exploration of Chinese tea and Chinese identity builds on existing scholarship in several areas: works on tea, especially Chinese tea; research on the Chinese diaspora in North America; and examinations of foodways and ethnicity. The

brief overview of relevant literature that follows lays a foundation for the rest of the study.

## A Brief Review of Relevant Literature

### Studies on Tea with a Focus on Chinese Tea

Existing scholarship explores Chinese tea in terms of the natural sciences and the humanities. Natural sciences, such as agriculture, biology, chemistry, and medicine, generally focus on the improvement of the technology of tea planting and processing, analysis of the chemical composition of tea, and the medical benefits of tea (Luo 1998, Mitscher and Dolby 1998, Zhu 2005, Chen et al. 2011). *The Journal of Tea Science*, founded in 1964, is a core science journal of tea studies in China. It is published bimonthly by Tea Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences to promote academic research and exchange on tea. For decades, this journal has contributed to scientific research on tea cultivation and breeding, pest control of tea trees, tea processing, the improvement of related technology in machinery, and the comprehensive utilization of teas in various areas, for example, medical care (*Journal of Tea Science* 2019). While this journal mainly publishes articles written in Chinese and focuses chiefly on Chinese tea, it also includes some research on tea grown outside of China and some articles written in English.

In the field of the humanities, the literature on Chinese tea can be divided into introductory works and case studies. Introductory works aim at comprehensively describing Chinese tea rather than exploring it from a specific angle. Its content generally covers a wide range of topics, including the history of tea in ancient China,

the tea ceremony, tea trade and related official policies in Chinese history, the relationship between tea and Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, tea drinking customs in different regions and ethnic groups at home and abroad, and the worldwide spread of tea. Representative works in this category are *Chinese Tea Culture* (2010) edited by the editorial board of the book series of *The Five Thousand Years of China*; Hong Li and Yanhong Bian's *Chinese Tea Ceremony* (2010); Ling Wang's *Chinese Tea Culture* (2000); Xijia Gu and Hairong Cai's *Tea and Traditional Culture* (2007); and Tong Liu's *Chinese Tea* (2012).

Case studies of Chinese tea mostly analyze it from a historical perspective and focus on the tea trade throughout the history of China. Shijian Huang (1993) and Dechen Tao (2015) explore the spread of tea in northern and western Asia through the Silk Road that links China to central Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Jihong Mu (2001), Chonglin Zhou and Wenfeng Ling (2010), and Zhongqiang Wang (2010) analyze the Tea-Horse Road that connects China's southwest areas with Tibet and Southeast Asia. Jingyu Wang (1987), Qimo Lin (2003), and Liqiang Lin (2005) examine the global trade of Chinese tea, especially between China and the United Kingdom from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sarah Rose (2011) and Robert Fortune (1853) focus on the specific history of how Chinese tea saplings were smuggled by Great Britain to their Indian plantations from 1843 to 1851. Daquan Jia (1991), Chunyan Huang (1999), and Mengliang Guo (2000) explore the law and policies of tea trade enacted by imperial Chinese governments in history. John C. Evans (1992) analyzes the complete history of tea in China from the era of legend to modern China. John Griffiths (2011) and Erika Rappaport (2017) focus their studies on the global history of tea from the seventeenth century and demonstrate how tea

played a role in the colonial wars and conflicts.

Noteworthy are two monographs on tea: *The Road of Tea*, written by Jiugang Deng (2008), and *The War of Tea*, written by Chonglin Zhou and Junlin Tai (2012). Deng's work traces the 200-year history of Sino-Russian tea-based trade on the road of tea in northern China from 1692 to 1905. It examines an aspect of the political and economic competition between imperial China and imperial Russia. By redefining both the First Opium War (1839-1842) between imperial China and the British Empire, and the British invasion of Tibet in 1888 (also known as Sikkim Expedition) as the wars of tea, Zhou and Tai's study explores the Sino-British conflict triggered by tea in the context of British global colonization between the seventeenth century and nineteenth century. In the humanities studies of tea, *Agricultural Archaeology*, published by the Jiangxi Academy of Social Science, is an influential journal in China. It annually publishes two special issues of tea study in history, culture and archaeology. Topics discussed in the special issues range from Chinese tea to English tea and Japanese tea, from the ancient Chinese tea culture to the modern development and protection of the cultural heritage of Chinese tea, and from locations of tea planting to the international tea trade of China in history.

In addition to historical studies of Chinese tea, some works—although only a few—analyze the relationship between tea and identity from the perspectives of folklore and anthropology. For example, “Hong Kong Style Yumcha and Hong Kong Identity” written by Shaowei Tan (2001) explores the construction and reinforcement of the identity of Hong Kong people through the Yum cha.<sup>2</sup> Tan argues that Hong Kong style Yum cha is a unique tea drinking culture that combines traditional

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<sup>2</sup> Yum cha is a transliteration of drinking tea from Cantonese to English.

Cantonese tea drinking with Western tea culture. The collective memory created by Yum cha cultivates Hong Kong people's cultural identity (Tan 2001). Hailan Zhang's "The Identity Transition of Hong Kong People: From 'Tang' Tea to Hong Kong Milk Tea" (2017), further examines how Hong Kong people, whose history bridges Chinese heritage and British colonial culture, construct their unique identity through the change of the local popular tea from "Tang" tea to Hong Kong style tea. Zhang points out that "Tang"<sup>3</sup> tea shows the early generations of Hong Kong people's recognition of their Chinese identity under the rule of the United Kingdom, while the creation of Hong Kong style milk tea manifests the local sense of belonging of Hong Kong rather than the bigger Chinese identity (Zhang 2017).

Although research on the intersections of Chinese identity and Chinese tea is limited, there are studies that analyze the national identity and social identity of Japanese tea and English tea. Tim Cross examines "the triangular relationship between truth, power and the self" in the Japanese tea ceremony over time. He contends that tea was once regarded as expressing the moral world of the nation; it was "a political tool in mobilizing support for colonial expansion and war" (Cross 2009, 3). More recently, however, tea has become "a commodity of cultural nationalism, a powerful symbol of communal heritage and identity" (Cross 2009, 3). Cross argues that the Japanese tea ceremony lays an ideological foundation for Japanese cultural values and speaks to presentations of Japanese cultural identity under the manipulation of politics, military and power (Cross 2009). Kristin Surak's careful ethnography demonstrates how the Japanese tea ceremony acts as a form of "nation-work," as she terms it, to maintain the national identity of Japan's past and present through the

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<sup>3</sup> Tang refers to a dynasty (618 A.D.-917 A.D.) of imperial China. The Tang dynasty was a very strong dynasty in Chinese history and was influential on the international stage. Therefore, some overseas Chinese call themselves Tang people and Chinatown is called Tang Town in Chinese.

distinction of tea between “us” and “them” at both the international and domestic levels. She traces the changing functions of tea from its beginning as an aesthetic pleasure of elite warriors in ancient Japan, to a symbol of the modern Japanese state in later times, and finally to the hobby of housewives in present. Through these phases she tells the history of Japanese tea and demonstrates how it has come to represent the whole nation (Surak 2012). Drawing on historical records, from nineteenth century English advertisements to Victorian novels, Julie E. Fromer focuses her study on the daily activities of tea drinking within the home and domestic space. She explores how the tea culture in Victoria England was inextricably connected with gender, social status, family, profession, and moral position, while also serving as an emblem of shared cultural identity within England (Fromer 2008).

#### The Chinese Diaspora in North America

From the end of sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century, a group of Chinese businessmen, artisans, and servants hired by the Spanish arrived in Mexico and Peru through the China-Philippines-Mexico Pacific trade route. This witnessed the early visits of Chinese to America (Li and Yang 1990, 3-9). The mass immigration of Chinese to North America began in the 1850s and they were the earliest first-generation Chinese immigrants to North America (Li and Yang 1990, 113-115). These Chinese were contractual workers who first engaged in gold mining in California and then participated in the construction of the Union Pacific-Central Pacific Railroad of the United States (Li and Yang 1990, 115-118). In 1858, some Chinese gold mining workers arrived in Victoria, British Columbia for the gold rush from the United States and this marked the beginning of Chinese immigration to Canada (Huang and Wu



2001, 26-47; Li et al. 2013, 14-46).

Chinese immigrants in North America have been the subject of many studies, including ones by folklorists. The *Journal of American Folklore (JAF)* has been publishing works on Chinese immigrants in North America since the late 1880s. Topics cover a wide range of Chinese cultural activities, such as funeral ceremonies, religious practices, festivals, stories, and food (Li 2014, 10-15). Early articles published in *JAF* (1880s-1990s) mainly focus on the identification and documentation of Chinese cultural performances. Among the forty-five articles about Chinese folklore published in this period, five of them directly record Chinese traditions in the context of North America. “The Ceremonies of the Chinese in America” is the earliest one. It summarizes an account published in the *Boston Herald* of November 25, 1886 documenting the first Chinese women’s funeral ceremony in New York (Unsigned 1888). W. W. N. reports a small piece of a Chinese legend which was regarded as a Chinese version of Rip Van Winkle (W. W. N. 1889). Stewart Culin, an American ethnographer, published several articles about the Chinese community within the nation. One of these articles describes his experiences of visiting meeting places of a Chinese secret society (Heaven-Earth-League) in the United States and his experiences of attending funerals of its members (Culin 1890). Another one depicts Chinese communities in America including their language, clan, dress, diet, religion, childlore, and festivals (Culin 1890a). Mary Chapman describes some facets of the lives of Chinese in Boston in terms of their population, housing, food, occupation and belief (Chapman 1892).

*California Folklore Quarterly* (renamed *Western Folklore*) is another journal which contributed to documenting and analyzing Chinese folklore in North America.

Like *JAF*, early issues (1940s-1990s) of this journal only document Chinese traditions practiced in North America, especially in the American state of California. Jon Lee shares some supernatural stories from his Chinese family and describes his observations and experiences of Chinese traditions practiced in California (Lee 1943). C. Grant Loomis shares some records of early Chinese immigrants' lore in Nevada, including religious activities, festivals, beliefs, and rites of passage, made by two journalists between 1867 and 1878 (Loomis 1946). William Hoy outlines seven native festivals of the California Chinese and makes an effort to explain the long survival of these Chinese traditions in a foreign land through a century of time (Hoy 1948). Mimi Clar records the celebration of Chinese New Year in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1958 (Clar 1958).

From the 2000s, analytical studies of Chinese cultural activities in North America have been published in both folklore journals. In *JAF*, Linda Sun Crowder's "Chinese Funerals in San Francisco Chinatown: American Chinese Expressions in Mortuary Ritual Performance," is a pioneer work. Through the lens of Chinatown funerals, Crowder explores how Chinese people negotiate and construct new hybrid identities in the context of urban America (Crowder 2000). In 2002 *Western Folklore* published its first analytical research, "Cultural and Intercultural Functions of Chinese Restaurants in the Mountain West: 'An Insider's Perspective'" written by Li Li. After a summary of the characteristics and preparation of Chinese food, as well as its meanings, Li focuses her study on the alterations and functions of Chinese restaurants in America. She argues that these restaurants present cultural identity, show cultural dynamism, and bridge the gaps between different cultures (Li 2002).

Though few articles published in these two journals centre on the Chinese,<sup>4</sup> these two studies reflect the areas of greatest interest to folklorists in the scholarship of the Chinese diaspora in North America: Chinese ethnic identity and Chinese foodways. Drawing attention to Chinese cultural performances, especially Chinese restaurants and foodways, researchers explore the expression, negotiation and re-construction of Chinese identity in North America, and examine strategies of Chinese communities to deal with the host environment. For example, Shun Lu and Gary Alan Fine explore the authenticity of ethnic food in America by using four Chinese restaurants in Georgia, United States, as a case study. They investigate these restaurants for their strategies to fit Chinese food into the market and find that Chinese restaurants are in a continuous process of adaptation or Americanization while their owners use “ethnic authenticity” as a marketing tool. The authors argue that “authenticity is not an objective criterion but is socially constructed and linked to [cultural] expectations” (Lu and Fine 1995, 535). Robin Clair et al. also focus their study on the topic of authenticity of ethnic restaurants but they especially highlight the insider perceptions rather than tourist’s (outsider) viewpoint. They argue that the construction of authenticity goes beyond food, food format and décor to publicity and reputation of the Chinese restaurants. Based on Clair et al.’s observation of a Chinese restaurant in the United States, the authors conclude that authenticity is closely connected to the restaurant owners’ relationships with their clientele (Clair et al. 2016). Nancy Yan also discusses authenticity. She tries to trace the origin of a dish—Wor Sue Gai—served in Chinese restaurants in the United States and concludes that “authenticity is not about origins so much as it is about claiming and who claims the cultural expression as rightfully their

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<sup>4</sup> Three other studies in these two journals also analyze the Chinese diaspora in North America. Due to their focus on Newfoundland, I review them below in the discussion of Newfoundland resources.

own” (Yan 2013). Based on a careful study of Chinese immigrants and Chinese restaurants in southern California past and present, Haiming Liu and Lianlian Lin recognize the changes in Chinese restaurant food from Americanized dishes to those that are diversely flavoured and more closely connected to food presently eaten in China. The authors suggest that this development is linked to a change in Chinese immigration. Early immigrants were often of Cantonese-origin but after 1965 Chinese immigrants came from diverse backgrounds and locations. They argue that instead of a complete assimilation, post-1965 Chinese immigrants show a transnational and multicultural identity by maintaining both their Chinese ethnicity and American identity at the same time (Liu and Lin 2009). This dualism is reflected in the move to serve a broader diversity of restaurant dishes over an earlier tendency to produce only Americanized dishes.

In addition, there are works that pay attention to the ordinary lives of Chinese immigrants and the changes in Chinese communities in North America. For example, Ban Seng Hoe (何万成), a Malaysian Chinese folklorist, studied the structure of two Chinese communities in Alberta in the context of a larger society. Hoe explores the relationship between the cultural and social intergradation of the Chinese and the wider environment of the host society. He concludes that “the greater the access to the wider opportunity structure, the lesser the stress on community solidarity and cultural traditions, vice versa” (Hoe 1976, iv). In another work, Hoe explores the life of the early Chinese immigrants who worked as laundrymen in Canada and uncovers their hardship from work and social discrimination (Hoe 2003). Hoe’s works provide folklorists with valuable first-hand accounts of Chinese immigrants’ experiences in North America.

## Resources on the Chinese Community in Newfoundland

Chinese immigrants have been arriving in Newfoundland since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Local newspapers, such as *The Daily News*, *The Evening Herald*, and *The Evening Telegram*, record information about early Chinese residents. For example, these three newspapers all reported the arrival of Fong Choy and Szeto Hing who are regarded as the first two Chinese in Newfoundland on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1895 (Connors et al. 2014, 1). Later information on Chinese residents of Newfoundland is recorded by the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (CANL) and the MUN Chinese Student Society. For instance, these two organizations co-organized a Chinese cultural festival in 1977 and published a booklet. This small booklet gives a comprehensive introduction to China including its history, geography and culture, briefly reviews the history of Chinese immigrants in Canada, introduces the medical care of modern China, and provides a list of Chinese restaurant in St John's that donated to the event (MUN Chinese Student Society and The Chinese Association of Newfoundland 1977). Jane Hong, Josephine Li, Jim Mah, and Mark Tang, members of MUN Chinese Student Society, conducted a detailed survey of all the Chinese known to them in Newfoundland in 1975; they collected data on the Chinese immigrants' background including their origins, population, occupation, education, and religion, and provided a brief history of the Chinese community's immigration activities and lives before 1975 (Hong et al. 1975). In 1978, another booklet, *The Chinese Handbook*, was produced by CANL with the purpose of trying to thoroughly enumerate the Chinese community in Newfoundland. This thin book lists the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the known Chinese people in the province, narrates the story of the arrival of early Chinese immigrants, lists the Chinese

businesses and professional Chinese people in and outside St John's, and records a census of the Chinese population in Newfoundland in 1978 (Chinese Association 1978). CANL also published three commemorative brochures. One is *Past, Present, Future—A Commemorative Book Honouring the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Chinese Community in Newfoundland & Labrador (1895-1995)* which documents a brief history of Chinese community in Newfoundland up to 1995, provides a census of Chinese population in Newfoundland in 1995, and describes their cultural performances and social activities (Chinese Association 1995). Another one is *Our Secret Recipes*, which collects forty-two Chinese recipes to commemorate the “Chinese Food Festival” of 1997 (Chinese Association 1997). The last is *Reflections of the Chinese Community—On the Occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (1976-2006)* which presents thirty-seven articles from the thirteen presidents of CANL and twenty-five Chinese immigrants narrating their memories of lives in Newfoundland (Chinese Association 2007). The latest publication from CANL is *Early Chinese Immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador* which briefly illustrates the history of the Chinese community in Newfoundland with historical pictures (Connors et al. 2014). Although useful and well-intentioned, these works are more like censuses or primary documents than analytic academic essays.

Scholarly works on the Chinese community in Newfoundland provide more detailed historical accounts. Margaret Chang<sup>5</sup> presents the stories of Chinese immigrants in their first decade (1895-1906) in Newfoundland and explores the challenges they faced from work and the hostile environment (Chang 1978, 1981).

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Chang is also the author of “The Chinese Arrive in Newfoundland” in *The Chinese Handbook* produced by the Chinese Association in 1978.

Marion Pit (1981) and Miriam Yu (1986) extend the time span of the history of the Chinese community to the 1980s and more fully depict their social life. Robert Hong (1987), John Kenneth Sparrow (2006), and Krista L. Li (2010) focus exclusively on anti-Chinese legislation. Hong unveils the labour-triggered conflicts between the newly-arrived Chinese and native Newfoundlanders at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and traces the history around 1906 of how the *Chinese Immigration Act* was enacted (Hong 1987). Sparrow compares the experiences of the Chinese immigrants in St John's prior to and after the Confederation of Newfoundland with Canada in 1949 and reveals how the restriction on Chinese immigration worsened their lives with tedious drudgery, social isolation, and violence (Sparrow 2006). Relying on a gender analysis through a historiography of the Chinese in Newfoundland from 1895 to 1906, Li examines the public portrayal of Chinese immigrants as morally corrupt, effeminate, and weak, and argues that such stereotypes cast these men as racialized others and finally "convinced Newfoundland legislators of the necessity of a Chinese head tax when labour-based arguments failed to do so" (Li 2010, ii). Margaret Connors (2014) explores how the local newspapers shaped the "otherness" of Chinese immigrants and stirred the public hostility and fear of them; she also uncovers the internal complexity of the Chinese community and their contributions to the fabric of pre-confederation Newfoundland society.

If historical studies make up half of the scholarly works on the Chinese community in Newfoundland, folklorists contribute the other half. From 1990s students in the Folklore Department at the Memorial University of Newfoundland have been paying attention to this group and analyzing the Chinese community's multi-faceted traditions of narratives, festivals, mortuary rituals, and foodways.

Nianqiang Zhu (1991) and Seana Kozar (1993) explore oral narratives circulating in Newfoundland Chinese with a focus on heroine stories and jokes respectively. While Zhu presents a corpus of Chinese jokes and uncovers how the joke repertoire indicates an internal diversity of Chinese and the “Chinese” as a whole in Newfoundland, Kozar examines how the heroine figure in Chinese narratives reflects the traditionally feminine role of Chinese women and the social expectations placed upon the past and present (Zhu 1991; Kozar 1993). Margaret Jillian Thomson (1993) and Mu Li (2018) both position their research on Chinese festivals in Newfoundland in the negotiation and integration of the Chinese community with/to the host society. Thomson looks at Chinese folklife and festivals on Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland and explores the interplay between the acculturation process of Chinese immigrants and their folk customs (Thomson 1993). Mu Li specifically focuses his study on the Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland. Li examines how an ethnic tradition developed into a public cultural event in the context of multiculturalism and argues that public celebration of ethnic festivals “blurs and connects various personal/group differences” and builds a united community (Li 2018, 306).

In addition, more studies examine Chinese traditions in order to understand the diasporic Chinese identity in Newfoundland. In his PhD dissertation, Mu Li (2014) asks “who is Chinese” and explores the social construction of Chineseness through individuals’ folkloric performances like foodways and festive customs among sub-groups of the Chinese community. Li argues that “Chineseness emerges from the tension between individuals with free will and individual agendas and the collective ideology of the ethnic as a whole, as well as from social and cultural conflicts between the ethnic community(-ies) and the host society” (Li 2014, 310). Building on his



dissertation, Li further develops his work on diasporic Chinese identity in later articles, including ones published in *JAF* and *Western Folklore*, such as “Performing Chineseness: The Lion Dance in Newfoundland” (2017), “Presenting Diversity and Negotiating Identity: Narratives of the Chinese in Newfoundland” (2018a), and “Emergent Chinese Diasporic Identity and Culture: Chinese Grave Markers and Mortuary Rituals in Newfoundland” (2018b). Drawing attention to the Chinese lion dance, Chinese narratives, and Chinese mortuary practice, Li explores how individual Chinese Newfoundlanders maintain, negotiate, and re-create their multiple and sometimes competing sense of being Chinese. He confirms the influences from the intra-group diversity of the Chinese community and the broader society and puts forward the concept of “creolized diasporic identity” or “new ethnicity” to interpret the Chinese diasporic identity in Newfoundland (Li 2017, 2018a, 2018b). Xingpei Li holds a similar opinion as Mu Li on the negotiation of the identity of Chinese immigrants in his study of Chinese graves in Newfoundland. However, instead of using “creolized diasporic identity” or “new ethnicity,” Xingpei Li adopts “transnational identity” to describe the hybrid identity of Chinese immigrants and highlight their willingness to connect with both their ethnic heritage and the host society (Li 2016a).

Chinese foodways have attracted the most interest in Newfoundland as it has in the rest of North America. Jianxiang Liu takes a close look at the daily meals and special festival foods of three Chinese immigrant families in St John’s, Newfoundland and finds that the two tendencies—to acculturate to the host culture and to continue the old food habits—exist in juxtaposition in the three families. She argues that “the occupation and social role of the family heads and their inclination either to

acculturate or to keep separate” are the most crucial factors in determining the degree of acculturation (Liu 1991, ii). Mu Li (2014a) responds to Lu and Fine’s research on the authenticity of ethnic food in his study of Chinese culinary traditions in Newfoundland. He agrees that authenticity is vernacularly constructed, and further demonstrates that to claim authenticity is to vie for authority, to separate “us” from “others,” and to negotiate “Chineseness.” In another article, Mu Li (2016) traces the history of the décor of Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland which he divides into three stages: early western-cafeteria style, later “traditional” Chinese style, and the contemporary style. He argues that the changing interior décor kept pace with the wider society and shows Chinese Newfoundlanders’ strategies to negotiate with the larger community. Similarly, Tanyan Ye (2018) looks at the authenticity of Chinese food and Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland. She argues that the judgement of “authenticity” is a declaration of one’s Chinese identity, and that the changing décor of Chinese restaurants shows Chinese immigrants’ desire to find a “third place” which can both preserve their ethnic heritage and meet the larger community’s expectations.

### Foodways and Ethnicity

Investigations of Chinese foodways in St. John’s builds on a large literature examining the connections of food and ethnicity more generally. Food has been a subject of study for a long time. The term “foodways” first entered American folklore studies in the 1880s (Brunvand 1996, 622). It was triggered by a struggling journalist and traveller, Lafcadio Hearn, who published a collection of Creole recipes of New Orleans to pay his debts incurred by a failed venture (Brunvand 1996, 622). Though Hearn’s book, *La Cuisine*, had poor sales, it was valued by folklorists for its abundant

examples of traditional cuisine. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, “food habits” entered the vision of American scholarship due to the work of the National Research Council’s Committee on Food Habits, which demonstrated the close association of foodways to cultural identity and community (National Research Council 1943, 1945; Mead 1964; Brunvand 1996). However, as Jan Harold Brunvand writes, “‘Foodways’ owes its intellectual identity to ‘folklife’” (Brunvand 1996, 624). In the 1970s American folklorists, such as Don Yoder and Warren Roberts, who were part of the folklife movement, broadened the range of genres studied by folklorists. They added material culture to the academic canon previously formed by verbal and customary expressions (Brunvand 1996, 624). By the late 1970s foodways was recognized within the discipline of folklore. It was regarded as the most inclusive genre which reflects accepted folkloristic approaches to “identity and community: age, ethnicity, gender, locale, occupation, religion” (Brunvand 1996, 625). According to Brunvand, foodways were “identified as ethnicity of last resort—the last bit of ethnic difference to be shed in America’s rush to assimilation” and thus have been heavily drawn upon by researchers (Brunvand 1996, 626).

Since the inception of the American Folklore Society (AFS) in 1888, ethnic groups have been a concern of American folklorists. Folklorists’ first task was to document the “survivals” of particular ethnic groups before they disappeared. They hoped to record evidence of Old-World folklore during the process of Americanization (American Folklore Society 1888; Dorson 1978). While scholars initially adopted an antiquarian approach to the collection of Old-World traditions, eventually they aimed to “gauge the various stages in the process of acculturation” by comparing the collected Euro-American material to Old-World folklore (Brunvand 1996, 479). From

1960s American folklore scholars extended their analyses of ethnic groups to the dynamics of ethnic interaction and “the wide variety of context in which ethnicity is constantly negotiated and renegotiated” (Brunvand 1996, 481). Gradually folklore scholarship on American ethnic groups paid more attention to the creation, maintenance and negotiation of ethnic boundaries.

The study of ethnic foodways runs parallel to other topics connected to ethnicity that researchers have worked on. After assigning the study of foodways to antiquarians and recipe collectors, scholars explored patterns of assimilation and acculturation of ethnic groups by examining both persistence and change in their food. Because changes inevitably occur in people’s diet from generation to generation, early examinations almost always concluded that ethnicity was declining. In later studies American folklorists moved their focus to the dynamics of ethnic culture and studied ethnic food within a wide variety of contexts. For example, Yvonne R. Lockwood and William G. Lockwood (1991) analyze interethnic relations and regionalism in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan by tracing how the Cornish pasty diversified, then standardized, and finally rediversified as it was transmitted from the Cornish to other ethnic groups. In its final transformation the pasty came to symbolize the Upper Peninsula region. Judith Goode, Janet Theophano, and Karen Curtis (1984) explore the continuity and change of food in an Italian-American community. They propose the concept of “meal cycle” and suggest researchers pay attention to the shared food system rather than individual food items and recipes. They state that the ethnic food system is not simply conservative, nor does it necessarily disappear over time. Rather, it is a complex process where foods are socially mediated, transmitted, and reinforced.

## Drinkways in Foodways

In recent years folklorists and others have expanded their study of foodways to include drink or drinkways. So far, alcohol is the most prominent focus. For instance, Matt Harvey's work, *Wine and Identity*, examines how winemakers link wine marketing with identity to attract tourists by engaging them in cultural and geographical heritage (Harvey 2013). In her book, *The Spirituality of Wine*, Gisela Kreglinger explores the deeper connection of Christian theology to wine and examines the production and consumption of wine (Kreglinger 2016).

Non-alcoholic beverages have not yet received much attention by folklorists and other scholars, but we can still name a few. Wendy Welch wrote an article on the importance of coffee to women and outlined its four effects: "helping them stay awake, [identifying] themselves as adults, [talking] socially with men in a relaxed setting, and communing with other women" (Welch 1997, 71). Paul Christensen described how tea functioned in his mother's life. It served as a womanly spiritual drink for his mother and her generation; it gave them solace and helped them to express their desires for freedom, respect and liberation from gender bias (Christensen 2001). Finally, Diane Tye examined church ladies' teas to reveal how the women used shared codes of presentation and etiquette at teas to demonstrate their belonging to a particular social group (Tye 2010).

This study of Chinese tea drinking among the Chinese community in St John's, Newfoundland builds on all of the areas of scholarship just described. In doing so, it tries to fill a gap in the research on the Chinese diaspora in North America in general, and in Newfoundland in particular from a folkloric perspective. As part of the growing recognition of the importance of drink as part of foodways, this work argues that the

study of Chinese tea illuminates important cultural dimensions and reveals aspects of identity.

### Fieldwork and Methodologies

In addition to published and archival material, much of the information in this thesis comes from the fieldwork I conducted in St John's. Recorded interviews and participant observation are the main folkloristic ethnographic practices applied in my fieldwork. Moreover, some of the information is from private conversations with my friends and even strangers on social occasions. Since this thesis explores the drinking of Chinese tea among first-generation Chinese immigrants and students in St John's, the interviewees included Chinese Newfoundlanders who immigrated here and Chinese international students attending Memorial University of Newfoundland who are in the habit of drinking Chinese tea or are familiar with Chinese tea. Interviews or conversations were also conducted with one Caucasian Newfoundlander in order to collect more information about local tea drinking.

My fieldwork spanned a year, commencing in August 2017 and ending in August 2018. The process of finding potential interviewees was difficult and time consuming because there are few specific places or activities for the public performance of Chinese tea drinking. Unfortunately for a fieldworker, Chinese tea drinkers do not wear a label saying, "Hi, I drink Chinese tea" and you cannot search for them on the internet like you can locate Chinese restaurants on Google Maps. I used recruitment scripts but none of my current interviewees were contacted through these notices. I had more luck finding potential interviewees through my friends, and then meeting other interviewees through their introductions. Although it took some time to build

connections with my interviewees, I finally interviewed sixteen people.

My interviewees include seven Chinese immigrants, eight Chinese international students, and one Caucasian Newfoundlander. The Chinese interviewees have multiple backgrounds in terms of their birthplace, first language, age, and occupation. Generally, they come from one of the three places: mainland China, Taiwan, or Macao. People from mainland China speak Mandarin; people from Taiwan can speak both Mandarin and Hokkien; and Macanese people can speak a little Mandarin but are more fluent in Cantonese. For this study, all the interviews with Chinese participants were conducted in Mandarin, since I can speak neither Hokkien nor Cantonese. Detailed age information is omitted here, because some interviewees, especially a few of the women, see age as a sensitive topic. In general, their ages range from the 20s to 60s. Most of my Chinese interviewees are either students or restaurants owners. Kelly Jones, a Newfoundlander, is the only Caucasian person I interviewed formally. For decades she has had a passion for tea, including Chinese tea. Kelly ran a tea shop, named Britannia Teas, located in downtown St John's a few years ago. Since she is experienced in tea, the interview with her gave me a better understanding of local tea culture. The following table provides a brief introduction to my interviewees.

Surname	Given Name	Birthplace	Mother Tongue	Occupation	Time move to Canada	Gender
Fan (范)	Fuqiang	Shandong* <sup>6</sup>	Mandarin	PhD student	2013	M
Ge (葛)	Ang	Beijing*	Mandarin	Masters student	2018	M
Hu (胡)	Emma	Taiwan	Mandarin	N/A	2008	F
Jones	Kelly	Newfoundland	English	N/A	N/A	F
Kuo (郭)	Kuei-Fen	Taiwan	Hokkien/ Mandarin	Restaurant owner	1995	F

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<sup>6</sup> The \* sign in the table means that the place is a province of mainland China

Li (李)	Leiguang	Macao	Cantonese	Restaurant Owner	2012	M
Li (李)	Lily	Tianjin*	Mandarin	Masters student	2016	F
Liu (刘)	Huizhong	Tianjin*	Mandarin	Masters student	2016	M
Sun (孙)	Zhengyi	Jiangsu*	Mandarin	Masters student	2016	M
Tong (童)	Jinjun	Jiangxi*	Mandarin	PhD student	2011	F
Wang (王)	Yi	Hunan*	Mandarin	undergraduate	2014	F
Wu (吴)	Zoe	Taiwan	Mandarin	Restaurant owner	1991	F
Wu (吴)	Leah	Taiwan	Mandarin	N/A	N/A	F
Xia (夏)	Jing	Hunan*	Mandarin	PhD student	2015	F
Yeh (叶)	Chien-Ming	Taiwan	Hokkien/Mandarin	Restaurant owner	1995	M
Zhan (詹)	Wenxi	Taiwan	Hokkien/Mandarin	N/A	1996	M

*Table 1: Information on My Research Participants*

I conducted my participant observation at the Formosa Tea House in downtown St John's. During my one year of fieldwork, I participated in and recorded two tea ceremonies there. Since tea ceremonies are not regularly organized at the Formosa Tea House, I was fortunate to be able to attend two of them. Participant observation of the tea ceremonies offered me a chance to document how Chinese immigrants drink tea in a formal context. It allowed me to observe interactions among people which contribute to shaping ethnic identity and to personally experience a tea ceremony in St John's.

The two tea ceremonies were both organized by the owners of the Formosa Tea House, Chien-Ming Yeh and Kuei-Fen Kuo. The first was held on January 21, 2018 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and the second one was held on April 1, 2018 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tea ceremonies organized at the Formosa Tea House consisted of two parts. Each event began with a presentation to introduce the tea and its utensils



centred on a specific topic. The second part was the actual tea ceremony during which the hosts made tea with their precious tea sets and shared it with all the guests. At both tea ceremonies, hosts and guests communicated and shared their stories. Chien-Ming Yeh is the person who organised the events and made tea for people. The theme of the first was how to know the quality of tea. There were three guests, Ainsley Hawthorn, Andrew J. Hawthorn, and Andy Kuo, along with the owners and me. Ainsley and Andrew are a married couple. Andy Kuo is Chien-Ming and Kuei-Fen's friend. He loves tea and played the role of translator at the tea ceremonies. The second tea ceremony focused on teapots and tea sets and attracted eight people. They were Andy Kuo, Yi Wang, Ruby Tang, Joan Hawn, Emma Hu, Emma's husband, and their two children. I helped Chien-Ming Yeh organizing this gathering by promoting it on Facebook and through Chinese social media, Wechat. Thanks to the funding of the Mary A. Griffiths Memorial Bursary for my research, I was able to donate some money to cover the expenses of this event. To gain a better understanding of Chinese tea and its relationship to the Chinese community in St John's, in Chapter Four I focus on the second tea ceremony to analyze aspects of Chinese tea culture.

As mentioned above, Chien-Ming Yeh and his Formosa Tea House are one of the factors that triggered my choice of Chinese tea as the topic of this thesis. Actually, he is also the key person in my fieldwork. Leiguang Li, Wenxi Zhan, and Emma Hu are all Chien-Ming's friends. I was invited by Chien-Ming to join he and his friends and made the acquaintance of Leiguang Li and Wenxi Zhan. I got to know Emma Hu and her family at the second tea ceremony. As mentioned earlier, Chien-Ming is the coach of MUN Badminton Club and when he invited me to join the club, I made friends with Fuqiang Fan, Jinjun Tong, and Yi Wang on badminton courts at the Field House of

Memorial University. Ang Ge's roommate Libin Wen also plays badminton. I met Ang at the Formosa Tea House where he was guided by Libin to buy himself a new teapot a few days after he came to Canada. I got to know Zoe Wu through Yi Wang who worked at Zoe's Crossroad Mini Mart as a part-time cashier, and Zoe is Yi's landlady. On the day I interviewed Zoe at her shop, her older sister Leah Wu was there and joined our conversation, so Leah became another interviewee of mine. I met the rest of my interviewees on different occasions. Jing Xia was my classmate in one of my graduate courses. Huizhong Liu, Zhengyi Sun, and Lily Li are all Masters students who enrolled at Memorial in 2016 when I did. I met Huizhong at the Toronto Pearson Airport, while I encountered Zhengyi at the Shanghai Pudong International Airport. Lily was my co-worker when volunteering during the welcome orientation in July 2017. I got to know Kelly Jones through my supervisor, Dr. Diane Tye, and course instructor Dale Jarvis, who is Kelly's husband.

I deeply appreciate all the sixteen interviewees for their help and support of my research, but not all of them are cited in this thesis. In the end I chose to focus on the more representative interviewees and typical viewpoints. I include more background information on those participants in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

## Outline

This thesis examines strategies to negotiate different tea cultures and the use of Chinese tea to express Chinese identity among first-generation Chinese immigrants and Chinese students in St John's.

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter One has introduced and contextualized my research through a description of how the thesis developed from an

initial confusion about tea to a formal study with specific goals. To lay a solid foundation of this study, I defined the location, community and the object I am going to explore, and I briefly reviewed relevant studies on tea, the Chinese Diaspora in North America, particularly in Newfoundland, and foodways and ethnicity. I also included an overview of my fieldwork and methodologies.

Chapter Three begins with an introduction to the Chinese community and Chinese tea in St John's past and present. The chapter explores Chinese immigrants' strategies for negotiating the differences between their own tea drinking practices and local tea drinking customs by positioning them in different places in their food system. It further examines how this decision is determined by perceptions of, and beliefs about, tea.

Chapter Four focuses on two functions of Chinese tea—as a boundary and a bridge—in constructing the ethnic identity of Chinese immigrants and students in social settings. Through an analysis of interviewees' tea drinking experiences with people from different cultures, and their reflections on the various tea cultures, this chapter first explores how Chinese tea helps create cultural identity. Through the description of a tea ceremony organized in St John's, this chapter then examines how tea acts as a bridge to bind participants to a faraway past and homeland, create a Chinese community in their new home, and finally build their ethnic identity.

Chapter Five concludes the thesis by reviewing the main points raised in each chapter. It discusses how this research on tea may contribute to an understanding of the Chinese community and the host society of Newfoundland and Labrador. It ends with suggestions for future study.

Before proceeding to an analysis of meanings, however, it is important to

understand the history of Chinese tea. The next chapter focuses on the commodity of tea itself in an attempt to reveal the deep interweaving between Chinese tea and Chinese people's lives. The chapter traces the history of Chinese tea in terms of its spread through China and the evolution of its production techniques and drinking methods. It points out that despite China's loss of its monopoly of tea on the international stage, its close association with tea still holds domestically today.

## Chapter Two:

### Globalization and the Changing Identity of Chinese Tea

There was a time that when people over the world mentioned tea, they were referring to Chinese tea. Before the nineteenth century, when the United Kingdom smuggled tea seeds and tea experts out of China and began to cultivate tea in India, China monopolized tea production and sales. By no later than the third century B.C.E., tea was a popular drink throughout China and from the seventh or the eighth century it began to spread outward over water and land to Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East, Russia, and Europe. With the development of the tea trade, Chinese tea culture spread over the world, and gradually the country was identified with tea. However, with tea's increased popularity in Britain, and with the more colonies Britain conquered, British tea drinking habits were carried to the wider British Empire. Tea then became a symbol of British life. Though China still produced most of the tea in the world, its association with tea was now shared by another country whose citizens were addicted to the drink. When Britain's tea factories in India started producing their own tea, China eventually lost its sole identification with tea in the eyes of the outside world. Throughout these developments, however, tea always maintained its importance inside the country. In this chapter I outline the history of tea and examine how tea culture developed in China. Lastly, I explore how China won and lost a worldwide identification with tea.

#### Tea and Chinese Culture

Yü Lu begins his book *The Classic of Tea* with the statement that “tea is from a

grand tree in the south” (Lu 1974, 59). Chinese tea indeed originates from the warm and humid southwest region of China. Today this region basically includes Szechuan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces. In Yunnan especially, a great number of ancient wild tea trees are found. One of them is estimated to be 2700 years old with a height of 26 meters and a canopy of over 30 square meters (Wu 2005; CCTV News 2013).

Although China has thousand-year-old tea trees, it is hard to determine the exact time when Chinese people had their first cup of tea. The first record of tea in Chinese history comes from *The Chronicles of Huayang*.<sup>7</sup> According to this book, tea was one of the tributes offered to the Chou emperor Wu in 1066 B.C.E. That tea came from a tea garden in southwest China (Gu 2007, 173). This record indicates that as early as 3,000 years ago Chinese ancestors had manually cultivated tea trees. After the first emperor of the Qin dynasty (259 B.C.E.-210 B.C.E.) united China, tea was shipped eastwards to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and was then gradually transported to other parts of China. No later than the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 A.D.), tea had spread throughout the country as a leisure drink (Gu 2007). Thereafter, the popularity of tea among people of different social status was frequently recorded in historical materials. For instance, Yan Feng who lived in the Tang dynasty (618 A.D.-907 A.D.), wrote in his book, *The Travels of Feng*,<sup>8</sup> that lots of tea shops and teahouses were open in cities by the 720s A.D. (Wu 2005, 175). By the Song dynasty (960 B.C.-1279 B.C.), Gou Li, a celebrity of his time, declared, “no matter the elite or the common, rich or poor, people all love tea” (Wu 2005, 175). An old Chinese saying, “firewood, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar, tea are the seven necessities

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<sup>7</sup> *The Chronicles of Huayang* (华阳国志) was written by Qu Chang (常璩) between 348 A.D. and 354 A.D. This book records the history and geography, as well as biographies of elite residents of south eastern China.

<sup>8</sup> *The Travels of Feng*<sup>8</sup> (封氏闻见记) was written by Yan Feng (封演) who lived during the Tang dynasty. As the title suggests, this book records Yan’s travel experiences.

to begin a day,” further confirms that tea has been valued as an essential part of Chinese people’s lives throughout a long part of the country’s history.

Over time Chinese tea experienced great changes in tea processing techniques and tea drinking methods. Before the Tang dynasty, the drink tea was made from fresh tea leaves or sun-dried tea leaves. At that time people generally made tea into a kind of tea-soup by boiling the tea leaves with green onion, ginger, and other spices (Wu 2005, 81-82). It was in the Tang dynasty that Chinese people invented practical tea processing techniques and started to produce green tea. The main process of this method is to steam tea leaves and compress them into tea cakes (Wu 2005, 80). At this time the common procedure for making a cup of tea was to dry a tea cake on the fire, followed by grinding it into powder, and then boiling the powder with water (Wu 2005, 144-145). During the Song dynasty, improved techniques for drying tea leaves meant that compressing the leaves into tea cakes was abandoned and the step of drying tea cakes on the fire before making a cup of tea was therefore omitted (Wu 2005, 144-145). Moreover, pouring boiling water over tea powder rather than boiling the tea powder with water became the main method of making a drink of tea. This way of brewing tea powder to make tea is called whipped tea by Japanese scholar Kakuzo Okakura in his book, *The Book of Tea* (Okakura 1989). Whipped tea was abandoned in the middle of Ming dynasty (1368B.C.-1644B.C.) but is still used in the Japanese tea ceremony, Matcha (Editorial Board 2010). In the Ming dynasty, frying tea leaves took the place of steaming them and this became the dominant technique in tea processing. Meanwhile, steeped tea replaced whipped tea and thereafter became the popular way of making tea (Editorial Board 2010).

From the mid-Ming Dynasty, new varieties of teas appeared. Dark tea, Oolong

tea, and black tea were created one after another due to the development of tea processing techniques (Wu 2005, 81-92). Nowadays, tea is cultivated throughout southern China and every area has its representative varieties, such as Longjing tea of Zhejiang, Bi Luo Chun tea of Jiangsu, Bohea tea of Fujian, and Keemun black tea of Anhui. Based on the degree of fermentation, modern Chinese teas are divided into six varieties—green, white, yellow, Oolong, black, and dark. From green tea to dark tea, the degree of fermentation differs. Green tea is not fermented, while dark tea is fully fermented (Li and Bian 2010). Scented tea that has the fragrance of flowers, like jasmine, rose, or magnolia is a special Chinese tea. To produce scented tea, one must store green tea, Oolong tea, or black tea with flowers for a period of time. The dried flowers are removed after the tea leaves have absorbed their floral scent. So, scented tea is still green tea or Oolong tea or black tea, but with the scent of flowers.

In the history of Chinese tea, the work, *the Ch'a-Ching*, or *The Classic of Tea*, holds a pivotal place. This is the first monograph written on tea and was authored by Yü Lu, the Tea Sage, in the Tang dynasty. Based on historical knowledge of tea accumulated in previous dynasties, as well as Yü Lu's personal experiences, this book gives a detailed and comprehensive introduction to tea. It considers many aspects including tea varieties, tea picking, tea processing, tea utensils, water selection, tea drinking, tea history, and famous teas. This book was highly rated by tea scholars of later generations and became one of the must-read books for anyone studying Chinese tea.

Although tea had been grown for more than one thousand years before the Tang dynasty, it was Yü Lu who first described precisely how tea was cultivated. For example, he wrote, “in planting and transplanting tea, the same techniques apply as



for the melon, but the tea may not be picked until the plant's third year" (Lu 1974, 60). Later another writer in the late Tang dynasty, E Han (韩鄂), included tea cultivation methods in his book *Outline of the Four Seasons*. He instructed, "tea is planted in the middle of February under a tree or in a shadow. Dig a hole which is three feet long and one foot deep. Six or seven seeds per hole, and cover it with one-inch thick soil... Water it with rice water if drought" (Wu 2005, 31). This method of tea planting was preserved throughout the later dynasties.

In addition to documenting the knowledge and techniques of tea cultivation and production, another important contribution of *The Classic of Tea* is that it laid a foundation for the Chinese tea ceremony or the Tao of Tea. The tea ceremony is a performance of the art of tea brewing and tea drinking which follows specific etiquette and rules. While tea was served as a common drink in daily life, the tea ceremony represented some people's dedication to the connoisseurship of tea drinking. As Yü Lu indicates in *The Classic of Tea*, to achieve the highest quality tea drinking experiences, the elite pursued how to best cultivate good tea leaves and how to match different teas with proper utensils. They also determined what kind of water had the best taste and what temperature the water had to be heated to for different teas (Lu 1974).

Based on its thousand-year history, the modern Chinese tea ceremony has established a set of tea-making criteria. Generally speaking, tea leaves picked in the spring are thought to be of better quality than those picked in the summer and autumn and teas grown on high mountains are considered higher quality than those cultivated on the lower ground (Li and Bian 2010). As for the utensils, glass is thought to be suited to green tea, Yixing clay teapots match Oolong tea and black tea, and iron

teapots make the best dark tea (Yeh 2017; Editorial Board 2010). In the early history of Chinese tea, even the colours of teacups mattered to connoisseurs who believed the cup's colour influenced the colour of tea. Since teas drunk in different dynasties had different colours, the admired colour of teacups varied. In the Tang dynasty people preferred light green teacups, in the Song dynasty black teacups were popular, and in the early Ming dynasty white tea sets prevailed. After the mid-Ming dynasty, brewing tea in porcelain teapots or Yixing clay teapots became a fashion (Wu 2005, 131-133).

To brew good tea, the water is crucial. In the modern Chinese tea ceremony, often soft water is considered the best choice for tea making. From unfermented green tea to fully fermented black tea, the temperature of water increases from 70 degrees to 100 degrees. To brew green tea and yellow tea, water at 70 degrees to 80 degrees is optimum; for Oolong tea and white tea the water should be between 80 degrees and 90 degrees; and high-temperature water of over 90 degrees is ideal for red tea and dark tea.

For the connoisseur, tea is their interest and passion. They do not “drink” tea, but rather they “taste” it. As Juenong Wu indicates in his book, “one of the reasons for people to drink tea is to taste the inner fragrance of tea” (Wu 2005, 87). Throughout history the “inner fragrance” of tea is what has been particularly emphasized by people who have a passion for tea (Wu 2005).

The Chinese tea ceremony can also be considered as a spiritual pursuit that has a close connection to Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. These three doctrines constitute the basis of Chinese traditional morality and philosophy. The harmoniousness advocated by Confucianism, the respect for and compliance with nature of humanity in the theory of Taoism, and the peaceful mind sought by

Buddhism, are all reflected in the Chinese tea ceremony (Gu 2007). Lastly, the Chinese tea ceremony is intricately linked to literature and art. It is embodied in poems and drawings depicting tea and tea ceremonies, the design of tea utensils, and the interior furnishings of tea houses.

The tea ceremony is an important expression of Chinese tea culture but there are others, including Chinese people's belief in the health functions of tea. This belief can be traced back to legends explaining the origins of Chinese tea. The most popular legend of how tea was found and first used in China goes back to Shen Nung (神农). Long, long ago, in prehistoric times, the god of the sun, Shen Nung, was born. He was one of the three great mythical emperors honoured as Emperor Yan. Shen Nung had the head and horns of a bull and the body of a human; he had a transparent body except for his head and limbs. He mastered farming at three years of age and gave his people the gift of agriculture, for which he earned the title of Divine Husbandman (神农). Shen Nung was said to have tested thousands of plants and developed many herbal remedies that were the origin of traditional Chinese medicine. After he tried toxic plants, his organs would become black and then he knew that they were harmful to humans. At one time, poisonous insects and animals escaped from Mount Kunlun (昆仑山) and disseminated diseases and pestilence over the world. In order to save his people from suffering, Shen Nung started his journey to collect medicinal plants. One day, he fainted after trying a toxic plant but fortunately a drop from the tree next to him dripped into his mouth and saved his life. That tree was a tea tree and Shen Nung had discovered the anti-toxicant function of tea (Gu 2007, 147-155). This legend presents tea as originally being used as a medicine rather than as a leisure drink. Due to his discovery of tea, Shen Nung was honoured as the god of tea.

In China Shen Nung is not the only god of tea and tea's health benefits are not highlighted only in this legend. People in different areas believe in different tea gods. While Lizhen Wu (吴理真) is the tea god in Chengdu, people in Banna and Pu'er believe in Liang Zhuge (诸葛亮), and in Jiangsu and Zhejiang it is Yü Lu. In legendary accounts Lizhen Wu cured his mother and villagers with tea and Liang Zhuge saved his army (Zhou and Li 2014). These narratives emphasize the medicinal effects of tea.

As these examples indicate, the health functions of tea have been long and widely accepted by Chinese people. In ancient China, some even believed that tea was a panacea and thought that tea drinking would lead to longevity. In *The Classic of Tea*, Yü Lu introduces six medicinal benefits of tea:

If one is generally moderate but is feeling hot or warm, given to melancholia, suffering from aching of the brain, smarting of the eyes, troubled in the four limbs or afflicted in the hundred joints, he may take tea four or five times. Its liquor is like the sweetest dew of Heaven (Lu 1974, 60).

In addition to the publication of individual reflections on tea based on personal experience, some traditional Chinese medicine books analyzed tea. In contrast to the subjective accounts of writers' feelings towards tea, these books attempted to analyze tea from a more professional standpoint. They explored tea from the pharmacology of traditional Chinese medicine and tried to clarify its advantages and disadvantages. For example, a famous herbology monograph, *The Compendium of Materia Medica*, written by Shizhen Li during the sixteenth century, offered the following advice:

Tea is bitter and has a cold nature...which is the best to clear internal heat...The young with a strong body and healthy stomach usually have high internal heat, so tea is good for them...For people who are asthenic and deficient in blood, drinking tea long will lead to the accumulation of coldness inside and weakness...which is the harm of tea... (Li 1596, n.pag.).

This description emphasizes the cold nature of tea and the characteristics of people for

whom tea is applicable from the lens of “cold-hot” theory of traditional Chinese medicine (for more information about how Chinese people in the past thought about the medicinal effects of tea, please see Wu 2005).

Belief in the health functions of tea was embraced by more than the Chinese; the idea was also popular in the western world from the time tea was introduced to Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Dutch and British doctors appreciated the medicinal efficacy of tea and published many studies on how tea could treat various diseases. For instance, a Dutch physician by the name of Johannes van Helmont argued that tea could work “against loss of body fluids”, while another physician, Dr. Nikolas Dirx, insisted that tea could preserve people from “gravel and gallstones, headaches, colds, ophthalmia, catarrh, asthma, sluggishness of the stomach and intestinal troubles...” (Macfarlane 2003, 67-68). Dutch medical doctor Cornelis Bontekoe believed that his gallstones were cured by the “copious use” he made of the Chinese drink [green tea of Bohea] and the British doctor Thomas Short reported that tea was a remedy for “diseases of the head, thickness of the blood, diseases of the eye, ulcers, gout, the stone...” (Macfarlane 2003, 67-68). The reliability of these arguments remains to be verified but the statements reflect the fact that doctors and demographers noticed a drop in the mortality rate as tea became increasingly popular (Rose 2011).

Modern medicine has confirmed the positive impacts of tea on humans, although contemporary claims are not as exaggerated as in the past. According to scientists, more than 450 kinds of organic compounds and fifteen inorganic minerals and nutrients have been found in tea. Most of these elements benefit human bodies, among which alkaloids (e.g. caffeine, tea alkali, and theobromine), tea tannin, and vitamins

(including Vitamin A, B1, B6, B12, C, H and K) are the main beneficial substances (Wu 2005, 42-48). Today researchers continue to claim that tea is helpful in satisfying one's thirst, cooling one's internal heat in summer, preventing scurvy, and treating diabetes and high blood pressure (Wu 2005, 46). They promote tea's health benefits which, as can be seen from consulting a range of sources, can vary from one kind of tea to another. Each tea has its own efficacy and taste. For example, green tea is refreshing and is good for inflammation. Black tea is mild and helps digestion and white tea is good for eyes and hypertension (Wang and Yu 2015, 252, 1564, 2372).

#### Tea over the World

Chinese tea was a popular drink throughout China, and with increased economic and cultural communication between with other countries it started its journey of globalization. The first destinations were the neighbouring countries of China: Korea<sup>9</sup> and Japan. Due to the close geographical relationship of Korea to China, Korea was influenced by Chinese tea culture earlier than Japan. During the Tang dynasty (618 A.D.-907 A.D.), Korea was a tributary of China, and tea was taken back to Korea in a tributary trade. In *The History of the Three Kingdoms of Korea*, Busik Kim writes that during Korea's Goryeo period (912 A.D.-1392 A.D.):

The envoy Dalian Jin (金大廉) brought back tea seeds from Tang China in 828 A.D., and the emperor buried the seeds in Jirisan mountain, which symbolizes the popularity of tea in Korea since Queen Seondeok's time when tea first reached in Korea (Kim).

If it was trade that enabled Korea to have its own tea plantations, then religion was the reason why tea culture flourished. As in China, Korean Buddhist monks took up tea as a drink helpful to their meditative practice, or Zazen. Tea not only helped

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<sup>9</sup> Korea, in this paper, refers to the ancient countries in the Korean Peninsula.

them to keep awake during their study and meditation but also offered them a peaceful mind. For example, the biography of a famous Korean monk Jin-gam-daesa<sup>10</sup> (755 A.D.- 850 A.D.), engraved on a stone slab in a Ssanggyesa temple in South Korea, describes how he followed the Chinese tea drinking fashion and made tea with firewood, a stone bowl, and a millstone (Gu 2007). It was tea's promotion by some famous Zen<sup>11</sup> temples in Korea that resulted in the fashion of tea drinking spreading from Buddhist temples to the entire society.

Although later than Korea, Japan adopted tea from China in the Tang dynasty. At that time, the Japanese government dispatched groups to China to learn about Chinese culture. It was then that Chinese tea culture spread to Japan and Japanese people learnt the skills of tea making and tea drinking. Though the Japanese government abolished this practice of sending official envoys at the end of the Tang dynasty, civil exchanges between China and Japan have never stopped, especially in terms of religion. Later, Japanese people obtained tea seeds from China and started their tea planting. By the fifteenth century, and after eight hundred years of development, Japan cultivated their own tea culture, named Teaism, that drew on a combination of tea and Zen. In his work, *The Book of Tea*, Kakuzo Okakura gives a detailed description of this history:

Japan, which followed closely on the footsteps of Chinese civilization, has known the tea in all its stages. As early as the year 729 we read of the Emperor Shomu giving tea to one hundred monks at his place in Nara. The leaves were probably imported by our ambassadors to T'ang<sup>12</sup> court and prepared in the way then in fashion. In 801 the monk Saicho brought back some seeds and planted them in Yeisan. Many tea gardens are heard of in the succeeding centuries, as well as the delight of the aristocracy and priesthood in the beverage. The Sung<sup>13</sup> tea reached us in 1191 with the return of Yeisai-zenji, who went there to study the

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<sup>10</sup> The Chinese name of Jin-gam-daesa is master Zhenjian (真鉴国师).

<sup>11</sup> Zen is a school of Buddhism which originated in China during the Tang dynasty. It was influenced by Taoism and shared the philosophy of Taoism. Zen emphasizes rigorous self-control, meditation-practice and insight into Buddha-nature. Meditation practice and interaction with an accomplished teacher are the basic ways of learning.

<sup>12</sup> T'ang is the way that Japanese refer to Tang dynasty (唐朝) of China.

<sup>13</sup> Sung is the way that the Japanese refer to the Song dynasty (宋朝) of China.

southern Zen school. The southern Zen spread with marvellous rapidity and with it the tea ritual and the tea ideal of the Sung<sup>14</sup>. By the fifteenth century, under the patronage of the Shogun, Ashikaga-Voshinasa, the tea ceremony is fully constituted and made into an independent and secular performance. Since then teaism is fully established in Japan (Okakura 1989, 29-30).

However, there is also speculation that tea was probably introduced into Korea and Japan as early as the Han dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.) through trade, the spread of Buddhism, and official inter-country visits (Gu 2007, 3760-3768).

While tea was taken back to Korea and Japan by their envoys to China during the Tang dynasty, the Tea-Horse Road (茶马古道) allowed for the spread of tea from south western China to Tibet, South Asia, the Middle East, and even East Africa. The Tea-Horse Road is an ancient passageway that supported the tea-horse trade as the main commercial activity between China and other countries. This road is centred on the Yunnan-Tibet-Szechuan Triangle area and extends to middle China, India, and Southeast Asia. Among these places, Tibet was the largest tea consumer. In 641 Princess Wencheng from Tang, China married the king of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo, and introduced tea drinking to the Tibetan people (Chen 1992). Tea soon became a necessity in Tibet and the Tea-Horse Road was constructed to enable Tibetan people and the Tang Chinese to exchange tea and horses. This trade road flourished for around one thousand years until it withered in the late eighteenth century (Jia 1994). At the time when tea trade was the most active in southwest China, the Silk Road in the north also began to export Chinese green tea to Russia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean (Saberri 2010, 57). In an Arabian book, *Ancient Accounts of India and China by Two Mohammedan Travellers*, written in 851 B.C., the author describes Chinese tea:

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<sup>14</sup> “The tea ideal of Sung” generally refers to the whipped tea that was introduced in the last section.



The emperor<sup>15</sup> also reserves to himself the Revenues which arise from the Salt, Mines, and from a certain Herb which they drink with hot Water, and of which great Quantities are sold in all the Cities, to the amount of great Sums. They call it Sah<sup>16</sup>, and it is a Shrub more bushy than the Pomegranate-tree, and of a more taking Smell, but it has a kind of Bitterness with it. Their way is to boil Water, which they pour upon this Leaf, and this Drink cures all sorts of Diseases (Sulayman al-Tajir 1733, 25).

Even though it is uncertain whether or not the author had ever been to China, or if his writing was based on second hand accounts, his words are evidence that a conception of tea, regarded as “Sah,” had reached the Arabian area in the ninth century. By at least the fifteenth century, tea was called “cha” in Farsi and from the fourteenth century to the early seventeenth century, tea was continuously transported via the Silk Road to the west (Huang 1993).

However, it was the Age of Discovery in the sixteenth century and the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century that popularized tea in Europe. Scholars generally agree that tea shipments first arrived in Amsterdam in 1610, in France in the 1630s, and in England in the 1650s or 1660s as part of the dowry of Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza (Macfarlane 2003; Rose 2011). Holland and the United Kingdom with its East India Company, played an essential role in the importation of tea to Europe. In 1637, soon after the Dutch East India Company first formally transported Chinese green tea to Europe in 1610, Britain entered the tea business. After that time, the British East India Company’s tea sales dominated the British domestic market, colonial America, and other European countries (Gu 2007).

### From Tea to Chinese Tea

As the discussion above indicates, China has had a colourful tea culture for more

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<sup>15</sup> This emperor refers to the Chinese emperor.

<sup>16</sup> Sah is the transliteration of tea in Chinese.

than 1000 years. Sarah Rose writes that the relationship between China and tea before 1940s was that “the empire of China had a near complete monopoly on tea, as it was the only country to grow, pick, process, cook, and in all other ways manufacture, wholesale, and export the liquid jade” (Rose 2011, 11). Until the mid-nineteenth century, both China and other countries acknowledged the dominant position of China in the tea trade.

As mentioned above, the Silk Road and the Tea-Horse Road flourished for centuries. Actually, tea was more of a political good than an economic commodity on the two roads. The Chinese government would stop the tea trade to punish countries that annoyed China or use tea to reward them for obedience. During the Song dynasty, of the 7,500,000 kilograms of tea sold to Tibet, one third was used to reward the tribal leaders in the border area (Jia 1994). In 1728, China and Russia signed the Treaty of Kyakhta. Kyakhta, then, became the official market between these two countries. Kyakhta means “a place with tea” in Russian. Under this treaty, Sino-Russian trade was shut down three times (1762-1768, 1778-1780, and 1785-1792) by the Chinese government because Russia harboured Chinese criminals and robbed Chinese people (Zhou and Tai 2012, 561). The closures lasted for fifteen years, during which time tea export was forbidden. Therefore, Russia had to pay three to four times the price to buy Chinese tea via other countries (Zhou and Tai 2012). This diplomacy lasted centuries until the last empire of Qing China (1636 B.C.-1912 B.C.). In the late Qing dynasty, Chinese people generally believed that tea was a necessity to the west, and China was the only tea producer. China knew her advantage and knew how to use it. As an officer of Qing said: “If China stops the tea trade with the west, they will suffer a lot” (Zhou and Tai 2012, 276).

Tea, as an exotic, luxury commodity from China, was not only a favourite of the British upper classes to signify civility, it also became closely associated with the very notion of China. As Macfarlane describes:

It was appropriate also that an exotic Chinese drink, tea, should be the catalyst for places which helped to channel the growing obsession with ‘things Oriental’ that spread through British and other parts of the West at this time. Drinking a Chinese beverage in Chinese ceramics was naturally linked to admiring Chinese things, new designs, lacquer, silks and Chinese gardens (Macfarlane 2003, 81).

At this time, China stood for tea all over the world and tea was key to its identity.

As stated earlier, with improved maps, ship construction, navigation skills, and direct voyage routes, tea cargoes from China began to frequent Europe in the early eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, tea had become the most popular drink throughout Britain. It has been calculated that by the late eighteenth century British labourers “were spending ten per cent of their food budgets on tea and sugar, as compared to twelve per cent on meat and only two and a half per cent on beer. Tea with bread and cheese formed the heart of the diet” (Macfarlane 2003, 179). While the British consumed lots of tea, they also spread tea over the wider British Empire. Tea then became a staple of British life and Britain was synonymous with tea. At the same time, China, who had been in complete control of the drink that dominated the world’s taste for centuries, did not realize that its cultural identification with tea was shared by another country.

When the British Empire ran into difficulty securing the silver they paid for their tea, they sought a solution to their financial problems through the sale of opium to China and paid for tea with the silver profits from opium (Rose 2011). When opium trade was resisted by China, the British Empire began to explore ways of producing its own tea.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1848, Robert Fortune was offered a position as a tea hunter to return to China in the employ of the East India Company. His mission was to obtain plants and seeds of the best variety of teas to support the tea cultivation in the North West Province of India. Though full of twists and turns, Fortune accomplished his work. In 1849, Da Hong Pao, a famous black tea, was successfully transported to India. In 1851, eight Chinese tea experts left for India with Fortune. Rose notes, “Within twenty years of Fortune’s theft of Chinese trade secrets, the tea trade shifted away from China to British dominions” (Rose 2011, 294). Thereafter, British ships full of India tea sailed across the world. In 1973 India and Sri Lanka dominated both tea production and exports while the United Kingdom was the largest single market of tea (Singh et al. 1977). China lost both its monopoly over tea and its reputation as the world’s largest tea producer. China may still be considered the birthplace of tea, but it is no longer the only place that comes to mind when tea is mentioned. People all over the world have developed their own teas and tea no longer connotes only the country of China.

#### Tea Drinking in Contemporary China

Although China no longer equates with tea on the international stage, the amount of tea production and consumption in contemporary China is still considerable. According to a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations in 2015, China remained the largest tea producing and consuming country in the world between 2006 and 2013, followed by India (Chang 2015). In 2013, China produced 1.9 million tonnes of tea, accounting for more than 38 percent of the world’s total. At the same time, 16.1 million tonnes of tea were consumed in China which represents

over 33 percent of the world's tea consumption (Chang 2015, 3-5). These figures attest to the indispensable position of tea in Chinese people's lives.

In addition to the Chinese tea ceremony and belief in the health benefits of tea, two important features of contemporary Chinese tea drinking discussed above, Chinese tea also shapes people's daily lives in other aspects. For example, tea houses are prominent fixtures. Among the great number of Chinese tea houses, Szechuan tea houses are the most famous. As one of the birthplaces of Chinese tea, Szechuan province is also the birthplace of the Chinese tea house. Chengdu, the capital of Szechuan, accommodates the largest number of tea houses with over 10,000 within the region of 12,132 km<sup>2</sup> (Yan 2017). Such a large number of tea houses confirms the saying circulating in Chengdu "few sunny days over your head, many tea houses in your eyes."<sup>17</sup> In Szechuan, tea drinking is associated with a secular life; it represents the laid-back lifestyle of the ordinary public. Di Wang shares his observations of tea houses in Chengdu:

...if there are no tea houses, there are no lives. Therefore, tea houses are an epitome of the society of Chengdu by combining commercial space with daily space...People in Nanjing only go to tea houses in the morning, while Chengdu residents stay a whole day in tea houses...People always go to tea houses after their meals in restaurants. This is a pattern of life almost for everyone in Chengdu. They would eat fast but drink tea slowly for three or four hours (Wang 2006, 59-60).

No matter rich or poor, people can always find a place in a tea house and enjoy their time with a cup of tea. Tea is a necessary part of their lives and becomes an identity of which people are proud. My friend Qian Ma comes from Chengdu. When we talked about tea drinking in her hometown, she said:

It is no exaggeration to say that within a hundred steps, there must be a tea house. In Szechuan, if you want to chat with friends, go to tea houses; if you want to

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<sup>17</sup> Chengdu is in the Szechuan basin and rainy days are common in this area.

play cards or mah-jong, go to tea houses; if you want to talk business, go to tea houses; if you want to date, go to tea houses. Whatever you can think of, we Szechuan people would do it in tea houses... There is a joke [to] describe our tea drinking—when people ask “Where are Szechuan people?,” someone will answer, “Half in hot pots!” Then, “Where is the other half?” “Well, in tea houses” ... You can’t say you are a Szechuan person if you don’t drink tea (Ma 2016).

For people in Szechuan, tea has become an inseparable part of their lives. The tea house is another home where they relax and socialize. One could almost say that tea is flowing in their veins.

Szechuan people are not the only group with a reputation of being loyal tea drinkers. The people of Guangdong province (formerly referred to in the West as Canton) and Hong Kong share a similar culture that greatly values tea drinking. In these places, people greet each other with “Have you drunk tea?” rather than “How are you?” (Zhang 2017). Tea houses are almost everywhere in these regions as well. Kong Fu Tea, which is popular in parts of Guangdong and most of Fujian, is the foundation of the modern Chinese tea ceremony. “Kong Fu” refers to a request for time and skills and Kong Fu tea requires great effort in tea production and tea brewing. There is a saying circulating in Fujian province, “one would have no food for three days rather than no tea for one day.” This describes the Fujian people’s addiction to tea in an exaggerated way. More generally, tea drinking is so popular throughout China that it could be considered a national activity.

In addition to tea houses, people also drink tea on important occasions. For example, during a wedding, the newly married couple serves tea to their parents on both sides. I attended my cousin’s wedding a few years ago in my home, Anhui, and witnessed how this ceremony went. My cousin’s parents-in-law sat side by side. In front of them were two red cushions. My cousin and her husband knelt on the

cushions, and then each took a red teacup from a person at their side when they were ready. They bowed their heads and handed the tea to their parents with both hands, while saying “Father, Mother, please have some tea.” The parents took a sip of the tea and gave the couple red envelopes which contained some cash. This same ceremony was organized a second time at my cousin’s home during which they served tea to my cousin’s parents. By drinking the tea served by the new couple, the parents show their acceptance of the groom or bride as a member of their family and show their support and blessing for the marriage. Meanwhile, the new couple takes advantage of this occasion of serving tea to formally call their partner’s parents “Father” and “Mother” for the first time. In addition, tea is endowed with the meaning of loyalty in wedding ceremonies. This is because in earlier times tea trees had a great chance of dying once they were transplanted (Wu 2005, 31). Serving and drinking tea at weddings functions as a ritual to connect individuals with individuals and to connect families with families. Through the ritual of tea drinking, one is recognized by a community and, therefore, gains a collective identity in a group. Though few people now know why tea is chosen for weddings, the tradition of tea drinking in these ceremonies is still commonly practiced in modern China.

Tea shapes Chinese people’s daily lives by playing an essential role in their everyday patterns of life as well as at ritual events. It helps express their self-identify and can be a means of gaining recognition in a community. Nowadays, tea is an item many Chinese people bring with them when they move to a foreign country. In the next chapter, I explore how Chinese people drink tea in St John’s.

### Chapter Three: Drinking Tea in the Third Way

As discussed in the last chapter, it has been thousands of years since Chinese people drank their first drop of tea and throughout that long history they have consumed the beverage for both health and social reasons. On the international stage, China earned a reputation as the world's eminent tea producer until it lost control over the monopoly when the British stole tea seeds and India emerged as a major producer. For many Chinese citizens today, tea is a necessity that shapes their daily lives. For them, tea is not a simple beverage transformed from plants, but a healthy drink that expresses their worldview. However, meanings shift again when they leave home and drink tea in another cultural context.

In North America, foodways has long been seen as a useful vehicle to examine the relationship of ethnic groups to the larger society. Early researchers emphasized the conservative nature of ethnic food habits and worried that ethnic character was in decline. More recently, folklorists and others have stressed the heterogeneous quality of ethnic groups. Theories of cultural acculturation, cultural assimilation, and multiculturalism run through this work (for example, see: Masuoka 1945; Spiro 1955; Gregory 1971; Jerome 1974; Fine 1995; Lu and Fine 1995; Li 2014).

In exploring Chinese tea drinking in St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, none of these theories or approaches fully explains the complexities of Chinese people's tea drinking behaviour. This chapter, thus, tries to analyze Chinese individuals' tea drinking in St John's from the lens of the food system. As Judith Goode et al. point out, "a systematic study of food systems promises to help us



understand not only what people eat, but why” (Goode et al. 1984, 66). In this research, I use “food system” to refer to a food map which people use to classify food according to specific rules. In a food system, every food belongs to a particular category according to its characteristics. By looking at Chinese tea within the larger structure of the Chinese food system, we will have a better understanding of what kinds of tea Chinese people drink after they immigrate to St John’s, how they view Chinese tea in the Western context, as well as why, and how they negotiate different tea cultures.

#### The Chinese Community in St John’s

Early Chinese immigrants arrived in Canada before 1867, the year of Confederation (Library and Archives Canada, 2017). The first arrivals were attracted by the gold rush in British Columbia. After the gold rush ended around 1870, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway from 1880 to 1995 employed a great number of Chinese workers (Library and Archives Canada, 2017; Huang and Wu 2001). Afterwards, some stayed to engage in other jobs, like coal mining, salmon canning, and operating grocery shops, but across Canada, washing laundry or working in restaurants were the two most common jobs for Chinese workers (Library and Archives Canada, 2017; Li, Ding and Jia 2013). By 1901, Chinese immigrants were living in every province of Canada, including Newfoundland and Labrador which did not join Confederation until 1949 (Library and Archives Canada, 2017).

In Newfoundland, 1895 is the earliest date when one can say for certain that Chinese immigrants were living here. Because there is no official published record of the first arrival of Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland, we must rely on oral history.

According to Mu Li, there are two versions that have been passed down. In one account, Fong Choy and Szeto Hing are said to be the first Chinese people to arrive in Newfoundland. They came in mid-August of 1895 and opened the “Sing Lee and Co. Chinese Laundry” the same year. Others believe that Mr. Lim Kin predated Choy and Hing. It is thought that Kin possibly immigrated to St John’s several years prior to 1895. Because he lost his immigration documents in the fire of 1892 and got a new one re-issued around one year later, they misrepresented the year of his arrival (Li 2014, 47).

For early Chinese immigrants, running laundries was their main way to earn a living, because “laundry work required little capital, and could be performed despite a lack of familiarity with Western languages and financial systems” (Hoe 2003, 1). Soon after Fong Choy and Szeto Hing opened the first Chinese laundry in St John’s, the second one (the Kam Lung Laundry) started business on October 23, 1895. It was followed by a third (the Kim Lee Laundry) that opened in 1904 (Li 2014, 49). By 1913, the number of Chinese laundries in the city increased to eight and “in the 1930s to 1940s, there were twenty-odd Chinese laundries that employed more than two hundred Chinese workers” in St John’s (Li 2014, 52).

Restaurants were the second largest employer of early Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland and several had Chinese owners. King Café was the first Chinese-owned restaurant opened in 1918 or 1919 by Charlie Fong (Fong Moo Sic); Dominion Café became the second in 1922 whose owner was Au Kim Lee, the first naturalized Chinese in Newfoundland (Li 2014, 166). The following two decades witnessed over twenty Chinese-owned restaurants (Li 2014, 166). By the 1970s, this number increased to seventy (Yu 1986).

In addition to laundries and restaurants, some early Chinese operated dry goods, silk, tea, and lacquers businesses (Li 2014, 52). For example, Kim Lee and Lee Lee ran a grocery store known as the Kim Lee and Lee Lee Oriental Store, and Sam Hing was a silk merchant (Li 2014, 52). Some other Chinese were hired in the iron ore industry on Bell Island or in the fisheries (Chang 1981, 6-7). Despite these successes, however, small businessmen only accounted for a small group. Most early workers were employed in physically demanding jobs in places such as laundries.

Like other Chinese in North America, the early Chinese immigrants to Newfoundland came to this new world through a system of chain migration and were closely linked by kinship and/or region. The majority were from Sanyi (三邑) or Siyi (四邑) in the Pearl River Delta of southern China. Sanyi includes the three counties of Nanhai, Fanyu, and Shunde, while Siyi is comprised of four counties: Taishan, Xinhui, Kaiping, and Enping (Li et al. 2013, 7). To flee domestic political and economic crises resulting from foreign invasions and civil wars which took place in China from the 1830s to 1940s, and to seek out a better livelihood, some Chinese immigrated in Newfoundland. After they gained an economic foothold in the local economy, they then sponsored their relatives or fellow countrymen to immigrate and join them (Hoe 2003; Li 2014). As a result, prior to the 1950s, Au (區) and Hong (熊) were the largest groups of surnames in St John's (Hoe 2003, 12).

However, life here was not as easy as early Chinese immigrants hoped. What greeted these laundrymen were at least eleven or twelve hours of work per day with low income, and most of their work was done by hand (Hoe 2003, 11). Ping Seto, who came to work as a laundryman in St John's in 1931, usually got up at 6:00 a.m., and worked until 2:00 a.m. the following morning. He recalled, "You got to wash, to

starch, to dry, to damp, to iron and to wrap the laundry. Sometimes I had supper at four o'clock in the next morning. I wash my laundry with tears" (Hoe 2003, 35).

Life can always get worse, however, and discrimination and racism against Chinese immigrants grew by the early years of the twentieth century when locals feared the new arrivals were taking their job opportunities (Li 2010). When city newspapers characterized Chinese immigrants as morally corrupt and weak, they helped shape their "otherness" and stir public hostility toward these men (Connors 2014). From 1897 to 1912, the newspaper, *The Evening Herald*, reported many attacks on Chinese immigrants and their laundries by local residents (Hoe 2003, 62; Li 2014, 54-57; Li 2016a, 52-53). In April 1906, "The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons" was passed to discourage further immigration. In keeping with similar legislation passed in Canada in 1885, this act charged every Chinese immigrant a head tax of \$300, as well as imposed other restrictions. Due to this act, Ping Seto was forced to work in his uncle's laundry for four years without a salary in order to repay his \$300 head tax (Hoe 2003, 35). Chang writes that by 1906 "the newspapers estimated, there had been roughly 120 or 130 Chinese in the city [St John's]" (Chang 1981, 6), but this number declined to approximately seventy in 1922 (Yu 1986, 20). The head tax meant that Chinese labourers who were unable to raise the necessary funds to immigrate had lost their opportunity to enter Newfoundland (Hoe 2003; Li 2014).

Another hardship early Chinese immigrants endured was the absence of their families. Due to the high cost of the journey from China to Newfoundland as well as the enforced head tax and other immigration restrictions, Chinese immigrants were not able to sponsor their wives and children to reunite with them in this new country;

most of them, thus, led a “married bachelor” life here (Hoe 2003, 42). Au Kim Lee’s wife (who was unnamed in the sources) was the first and only Chinese woman living in Newfoundland before 1949 (Yu 1986, 21). The head tax stayed in effect until Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation in 1949. Canada had repealed the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 in 1947, allowing Chinese immigrants to reunite with their families (Hoe 2003, 46) and in the 1950s St John’s first saw the arrival of Chinese family members (Li 2014, 63).

From 1950 to the early 1960s, the Chinese population in Newfoundland, especially in and around St John’s area, experienced a boom owing to family reunions and newborn children (Li 2014, 68). The Chinese workers here were finally able to live with their families and the community was no longer comprised of only bachelors and “married bachelors.” At this time the Chinese community was relatively homogeneous. Most immigrants in the 1950s, like the earlier settlers before them, came from the same areas of Guangdong province and shared a similar dialect and culture.

In 1967, Canada introduced a points-based immigration system and abandoned the earlier practice of accepting newcomers based on their race and country of origin. This new policy welcomed skilled and educated immigrants, and, thus, more Chinese professionals, especially physicians, came to Newfoundland. A survey conducted in 1978 records sixty-seven professionals, including twenty-five in health care among the Chinese population (Chinese Association of Newfoundland 1978). Additionally, Memorial University of Newfoundland opened up to international students in the mid-1960s, which attracted an influx of Chinese students (Li 2014, 74). Some of them chose to stay here after graduation. Early Chinese students were mainly from Hong

Kong and Taiwan, but by the late 1970s students from mainland China started to arrive on the island for higher education and they constituted the majority of Chinese students for over two decades (Li 2014, 70-80). The professionals and students changed the composition of the Chinese community in Newfoundland from a homogenous group, comprised largely of uneducated labourers who shared a similar birthplace, to a group with diverse socioeconomic conditions and places of origin.

The influx of Chinese immigrants and Chinese students greatly increased the size of the Chinese population in Newfoundland. The number of Chinese residents “continued to increase from 160 in 1942 to 580 in 1971; to 780 in 1975; to 835 in 1978; and to 850 in 1981”, and to almost 1000 in 1985 (Yu 1986, 23). In 1976, as the Chinese community grew larger and more varied in terms of its members’ origins, the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador was established with the aim of promoting Chinese culture and building the Chinese community. In 2006, the number of Chinese residents in Newfoundland had reached 1,325, with 985 of them living in St John’s (Li 2014, 2). By 2016, the Chinese population in the province had increased to 2,325, with 1,870 in the capital city. At over 19.6 percent, Chinese residents represented the largest non-indigenous visible minority in Newfoundland and were contributing to the social and economic fabric of the province in significant ways.

### Chinese Tea in St John’s

There is little remaining evidence either of tea drinking habits of early members of the Chinese community or of the tea trade. In researching tea history in St John’s after 1895, only a few records mention the tea business. For example, editions of the *City Directory*, *Business Directory*, *Telephone Directory* and *Notable Events* of St

John's or Newfoundland from 1894 to 2003 contain ads for tea. However, only one out of eighteen mentions of tea sales or importation found in directories or government documents from this period specifies Chinese tea. The ad from 1900 for John Cowan reads: "John Cowan. Keep on hand a large stock of Teas—imported directly from China, by way of Grand Pacific. Output orders receive personal attention. The produce of the country disposed of, and sales and remittances promptly given" (M. A. Devine and O'Mara 1900, 66). The other ads for tea businesses that contain no direct reference to Chinese tea are listed in the appendix as Table 2.

The first known Chinese tea merchant in St John's was Wing Shing & Co. (荣盛茶庄), in operation in 1913 at 7 New Gower Street (Wong 1913, 1385). The reference is tantalizing given that this was the only reported Chinese tea shop in 1913 across the territory of today's Canada. Although Chinese tea was probably available in some grocery shops, Wing Shing & Co. stands alone among hundreds of laundries, restaurants, and grocery shops run by Chinese immigrants (Wong 1913, 1354-1385). In more recent times, Britannia Teas, a shop devoted exclusively to the sale of tea, operated at 199 Water Street from 2007 to 2013. Its owner was Kelly L. Jones, a Newfoundlander who calls herself "tea nerd" (Jones 2018). She included Chinese teas, like Oolong tea, in the approximately sixty to seventy-five varieties of teas she sold from all over the world (Jones 2018).

Today, Chinese teas are sold in St John's at the Formosa Tea House and in four Chinese grocery shops: Just Goody Mart, Crossroad Mini Mart, Magic Wok Grocery, and Oriental Snow Mini Mart. The Formosa Tea House sells a dozen high-quality Chinese teas produced in Taiwan, such as Oriental Beauty tea, High Mountain tea, and red Oolong tea; they also serve their teas in Chinese style tea sets (see Figure 1 and 2).

The teas sold in Chinese grocery shops only represent a small part of these businesses' inventories since the shops focus on a wide variety of Chinese food and condiments. Although tea is not always available at the Just Goody Mart and the Crossroad Mini Mart, both stock the same type of green tea with a Chinese logo (See Figure 3). Interestingly, this brand of green tea is sold in tea bags which is not a popular way to drink tea in China. The Oriental Snow Mini Mart has Pu'er tea and Tie Guan Yin tea that are packaged in a traditional way in iron cans (See Figure 4) and currently the Magic Wok Grocery supplies the most tea varieties among the grocery shops, including Oolong tea, Jasmine tea, green tea, herbal tea and green tea powder (See Figure 5).

In addition, Chinese teas are available at David's Tea, a Canadian specialty tea store chain, as well as in chain supermarkets, like Sobeys and Dominion. David's Tea has over two hundred kinds of teas for sale in its retail outlet in St John's and offers more than three hundred varieties online. Most of their teas are made from teas blended with various flowers, fruits, and spices. They also have straight teas, including Bai Hao Yin Zhen, organic Mao Jian jade, butterfly jasmine, and Guangzhou milk Oolong which are typical Chinese teas (See Figure 7). According to sales staff in the St. John's David's Tea store, over 60 percent of their teas are produced and blended in China, and then exclusively sold by David's Tea in North America. In addition to North American brands of tea, Sobeys and Dominion sometime sell a tea named "Uncle Lee's Tea" (See Figure 6). This tea has a picture of a giant panda or the slogan, "Legends of China," on its package that capitalizes on its Chinese origins.

Chinese teas are also available in some Chinese restaurants, such as the New



Moon, China House, Peaceful Loft, Magic Wok Eatery and Jin Dragon. Although all of these restaurants offer a limited range of popular Chinese teas, including Jasmine, Longjing, Oolong, Po-yea, and Tie Guan Yin, only the Magic Wok Eatery specifies their teas on the menu (see Figure 8). Two of these establishments feature tea in their own special way; the Peaceful Loft serves free Tie Guan Yin tea to their patrons before their meals, while the teapots at the New Moon were bought in China and have a distinctive Chinese style (see Figure 9).

It would be interesting to explore the preferences of Chinese customers in the Chinese restaurants in St. John's in depth, but anecdotal evidence suggests that they seldom order Chinese teas. A waitress at the Magic Wok Eatery told me that only foreigners (by which she meant people who are not Chinese) ordered Chinese teas because they were curious and wanted to try them. This observation was supported by my own experience. During my three months of working as a waitress at the China House, I never served tea to Chinese customers. The people who ordered Chinese teas, as the waitress of the Magic Wok Eatery said, were not Chinese. The reasons for this are unclear but perhaps Chinese tea drinkers do not want to pay more for their meals due to the fact that an order of tea is free in restaurants in China. On the other hand, maybe the teas supplied in restaurants do not suit their tastes.

Some restaurants owners have teas that are not available to the general public but shared with only their close friends. For example, the first time I visited the China House for a meal after I stopped my part-time job with them, the male owner poured me a cup of Pu'er tea from his teapot and told me, "This tea is really good. It has been stored for over thirty years." For Chinese people, Pu'er tea is better the older it is. With an age of over thirty years, this Pu'er tea would be very expensive and of limited

supply. Another time when I had dinner with some friends at the New Moon, we had orange Pu'er tea which I had never heard of before. Four days later, I visited the New Moon again. When I tried to order orange Pu'er, I was told this tea had sold out. When I asked my friend Jin Chen if the tea was a private stock, he answered, "We always have that tea at the New Moon, but basically every time we went there with Mr. Wang who is the owner's friend" (Chen 2019). The mystery was solved. It was no wonder I had orange Pu'er at the New Moon with my friends because Mr. Wang was with us.

Based on all of this, it is safe to say that Chinese teas do not have a big presence in St John's, past or present. A limited number of varieties are sold in a limited number of shops. Although David's Tea carries some Chinese teas, most of them are blended varieties which cater to the tastes of the larger community. Many of my interviewees did not even know where they could buy Chinese teas in St John's, particularly the ones they like. In general, Chinese restaurants do not pay attention to the promotion of Chinese tea; most do not list a selection of teas on their menus and the best teas are often kept for private enjoyment and are not available to the average customer. The Formosa Tea House and the New Moon, where teas are served in distinctively styled Chinese teapots, are the only places where people can get a taste of Chinese tea culture.



Figure 1: Tea in the Formosa Tea House



Figure 2: Serving Tea in the Formosa Tea House



Figure 3: Tea in the Just Goody Mart and the Crossroad Mini Mart



Figure 4: Tea in the Oriental Snow Mini Mart



Figure 5: Tea in the Magic Wok Grocery



Figure 6: Uncle Lee's Tea



Figure 7: Teas Produced in China and Sold at David's Tea



Figure 8: Menu of the Magic Wok Eatery



Figure 9: Teapots of the New Moon Restaurant

### Drinking Tea in the Third Way

As noted earlier, my interviewees are all first-generation Chinese immigrants or Chinese international students. Zoe Wu moved to Canada in 1991 from Taiwan. She was the former owner of the Crossroad Mini Mart and now she is running the Loong Wah restaurant. Zoe learned how to make tea with full tea sets when she was nineteen years old and living in Taiwan. At that time, she often went to the mountains with her friends to drink tea and had fun making tea with them (Wu 2017). Leah Wu, Zoe's older sister, works with Zoe at the restaurant. Yi Wang, Jing Xia, Huizhong Liu, and Zhengyi Sun are all Chinese international students at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Yi came to Canada in 2014 for her undergraduate program in

Linguistics. She got her tea drinking habit from her parents and started to drink tea in her adolescence. As Yi recalled, she used to drink tea about twenty days a month (Wang 2017). Jing majors in Ethnomusicology and became a PhD candidate in 2018. She did not often drink tea when she was in China, but she frequently went to tea houses. Sometimes she visited them to meet her friends, and as a musician, she often played the Guzheng, a traditional Chinese instrument, there. (Xia 2017). Tea drinking was more of a social activity for her. Huizhong started his Masters program in Computer Science in 2016. He became a tea drinker at ten years of age under the influence of his family, especially his father. But it was during his days as an undergraduate student that tea became a necessary part of his life and he began to make tea for himself (Liu 2017). Zhengyi also came to Canada in 2016 and graduated from his Masters program of Computer Engineering in August 2018. Zhengyi's father is a heavy tea drinker who prefers strong tea but Zhengyi himself does not like the taste of Chinese tea.

In my early fieldwork exploring Chinese tea culture in St John's, I encountered a phenomenon described in other studies of immigrants' food habits. Some of my interviewees, like Zoe, Leah, Yi, and Huizhong, are true Chinese tea lovers who have been in the habit of drinking tea for many years and continued it after they came to Canada. Zoe and Leah grew up with the fragrance of their parents' jasmine tea. They recalled, "ever since we can remember, we always had tea at home, and our first impression about tea is jasmine tea" (Wu 2017; Wu 2017a). Their father always bought jasmine tea at the same tea shop in Taiwan. Leah said, "You won't like other jasmine tea if you try that shop's jasmine tea...I love its fragrance. When Mom visits me I always ask her to bring me a big bag of jasmine tea [from Taiwan]" (Wu 2017a).

Yi and Huizhong both brought their favourite tea with them when they first came to St John's. Yi likes a kind of green tea produced in her hometown (although she cannot remember the brand name) while Huizhong prefers Tie Guan Yin. They rely on their return trips to China to replenish their supplies. Yi said, "basically I go back to China once a year. I don't have any other things like cosmetics to bring, but I will surely take two or three cans of tea which I can drink for almost one year" (Wang 2017).

Among my interviewees, these individuals are the most dedicated Chinese tea drinkers. Their habits support what researchers have long noticed: immigrants can be very persistent in their food habits after they move to a new country and often try to keep their traditional foods as close to the original as possible (See Li 2014; Masuoka 1945; Spiro 1955; Wu and Cheung 2002). Based on the data in the literature surveyed in his paper regarding New Haven Italians, Minneapolis Jews, and Californian Japanese, Melford E. Spiro points out that the food patterns of ethnic groups often seem to be the most resistant to change (Spiro 1955, 1249). While they may be quick to change other aspects of their lives in order to adapt to a new cultural and economic environment, they often maintain a more conservative attitude towards foodways. He characterizes this process by adopting the term "onion-peel" to describe how "the layers which are formed first are the ones to be peeled last" (Spiro 1955, 1249). For the most serious tea drinkers I interviewed, this was the case. They made an effort to source favourite varieties and brands of tea from home in order to preserve familiar tastes and tea drinking experiences.

Unlike the tea lovers just mentioned, other people I interviewed showed flexibility around their tea drinking habits. For example, Jing drinks tea only occasionally no matter if she is in China or in St John's. She does not see tea as a

“must-have” in her life which she needs to drink every day. When she first travelled to Canada, Jing had no teas in her suitcase but at the time of our interview she had a dozen blended teas that she bought from David’s Tea or Sobeys (see Figure 10, 11, and 12). She said, “The tea I drink here is totally different from what I drink at home” (Xia 2017). Jing likes the flavour of teas from David’s Tea and has experimented drinking them with sugar and milk. She said, “There was a time I drank triple-triple<sup>18</sup> every day. It tastes good. I liked it for a while” (Xia 2017). Other interviewees, like Zhengyi Sun, seldom drank tea growing up even though tea drinking was common in their families. Although Zhengyi’s father is a true Chinese tea lover, he refused to drink it when he was younger because of its bitter taste and inconvenience. He said, “I tried [to drink tea]. When I was in high school, I got some tea from my roommate and made tea for myself. I gave up after three or four times trying, because tea was bitter, and it was troublesome to make tea” (Sun 2017). After he came to Canada, Zhengyi ordered tea at Tim Horton’s. He likes the flavour of their double-double<sup>19</sup> tea. “It tastes good,” he said (Sun 2017). To a certain extent, Jing and Zhengyi have acculturated to the local style of drinking tea with their addition of sugar and milk. Their experiences are in line with other researchers’ observations that members of ethnic groups will sometimes exchange their own foodways for local ones. As Jitsuichi Masuoka concludes at the end of his research about the food habits of the Japanese in Hawaii, “in view of the trend as noted in the foregoing discussion, that with the passing of the Issei,<sup>20</sup> much of the Japanese foods will pass out of the picture” (Masuoka 1945, 765). This situation supports the assimilation theory that emphasizes

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<sup>18</sup> “Triple-triple” is a shorthand for adding three sugar and three milk to one’s coffee or tea. It is most often used in reference to order at Tim Horton’s.

<sup>19</sup> Double-double refers to adding two milk and two sugar to one’s coffee or tea, usually at Tim Horton’s.

<sup>20</sup> Issei is the Japanese term for first-generation Japanese immigrant.

an inevitable and irreversible process by which diverse ethnic groups integrate into their host societies by deserting their old culture and in favour of the new one (see Zhou 1997; Richard and Nee 1997; Kraus-Friedberg 2008).



*Figure 10: Jing Xia's Tea Cabinet*      *Figure 11: Jing Xia's Teas from David's Tea*



*Figure 12: Jing Xia Making Pu'er Tea*

However, further probing suggests that the tea drinking habits of Chinese people in St John's cannot be fully explained by either the conservative or assimilation



theory. As my investigation deepened, I found that my interviewees' tea drinking cannot be simply described as "changed" or "unchanged." Rather, it became clear that they choose a "third way"<sup>21</sup> (Oldenburg 1989). At the same time they maintain their traditional ways of tea drinking, they accept the tea of the new culture but classify it in another category in their food system. They call North American tea "yin liao" (饮料). Literally, the word "yin liao" means "beverage" but it has the connotation of being a sweet beverage, such as juice, a soft drink, or bubble milk tea. The designation completely distinguishes the sweetened and flavoured teas my interviewees enjoy in Newfoundland from the Chinese tea they grew up with. The moment my interviewees used the term "yin liao" I finally understood my own reaction to local tea. I experienced it as a pleasant drink but it wasn't tea.

Though Yi Wang is loyal to her Chinese tea and continues to drink it, she has also tried the teas in local stores. She recalled, "The first month I came here, I went to David's Tea at Avalon Mall to buy tea. I can't remember its name, but, anyway, it's something that blends with flower and tea" (Wang 2017). Yi continued:

[The tea I bought in David's Tea] tastes good. I will use an infuser, a kind of big infuser. Their [tea] is fragmented which is unlike our tea that is big full leaves. After I steep the tea for a while, I will filtrate the tea and add some honey. It's similar to how people here drink tea (Wang 2017).

She then described her feelings about David's Tea: "It tastes good, but for me, it is more like 'yin liao' than tea. It is a kind of 'yin liao' without sweetness. It smells good, but it is not the fragrance of tea with which I am familiar. Anyway, it's different, but tastes good" (Wang 2017). When she was asked how she viewed drinking tea with sugar or milk, she commented, "If I add sugar or milk, I feel I change it [tea] into

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<sup>21</sup> Here I am extending Ray Oldenburg's notion of "third place." Oldenburg argues that in modern day societies people primarily spend their time isolated in home and work places. He suggests that third places, such as main streets, coffee houses, pubs, and post offices, offer alternative, neutral public spaces for individuals to connect with others in the community (Oldenburg 1989).

another thing. In that way, I am not drinking its original flavour” (Wang 2017).

Huizhong Liu echoed:

I think it [tea with sugar or milk] belongs to “yin liao.” I feel...for me “yin liao” ... it must be sweet, taste good, that is to say you feel it has a good taste when this word comes into your mind. But tea...For people who never drink “yin liao,” their first impression about it is sweet, good taste, but for people who never drink tea, they probably don’t feel good when they take the first sip. It may taste bitter or strange. So...um... it might take a long time before people could have a pleasant feeling from tea. This feeling is not only from the taste but also from their body. “Yin liao” just gives you a good feeling in terms of taste (Liu 2017).

Less avid tea drinkers share a similar opinion. Although Zhengyi does not drink tea, he commented:

Chinese tea would not be milk tea or something like that. Technically, milk tea is not tea. [If] it adds many other things, it couldn’t count as a simple tea...Tea is just tea without any other things. The fragrance of tea itself makes sense...The tea with sugar or milk is “yin liao”. [It is] no different from Coca-Cola or Sprite (Sun 2017).

Finally, Jing noted, “I usually don’t [add sugar or milk], because I think it’s strange. But I like triple-triple tea very much. It tastes so good. I used to drink it every day” (Xia 2017). She added, “Maybe I shouldn’t say that, but I always think that that tea [made with a tea bag] is fake tea...it’s not pure... I don’t know why, but I think tea should be bitter” (Xia 2017). Jing described her tea drinking experiences in St John’s with more ambivalence than the others I interviewed, but even she separates local tea from “real” tea.

Although interviewees drink varying amounts of tea, they all share a common idea of what tea should taste like. They describe it as “original flavour,” “bitter,” “pure,” and “simple.” That is to say, they maintained a consistent view of “what tea is” after they moved abroad and distinguish Chinese tea drinking from the local tea drinking according to their criteria of tea and “yin liao.” When they want to make “real” tea, interviewees described following the practice they grew up with: they put

some tea leaves in their teacup and then pour in some boiling water. They refill their teacups several times until the tea leaves no longer have any taste. Neither do they add sugar or milk. Not only are Chinese teas brewed and consumed in this traditional way, but tea made from tea bags bought locally can be made in this way as well. Jing told me later in our conversation that she had a box of Tetley tea bags at home and she drank tea made from them without sugar or milk (Xia 2018). Thus, the tea drinking of Chinese people in St John's cannot be categorized as either completely conservative or proof of their tendency to assimilate into the mainstream society. Instead, Chinese residents choose a third way to negotiate the differences between cultures. They absorb local tea culture into their own food culture, or in other words, as Claude Fischler points out, they integrate local tea drinking into Chinese culture and "this culture orders the world in a way that is specific to them" (Fischler 1988, 281).

#### Chinese Tea Drinking in the Food System

By contrasting tea with "yin liao," we look at Chinese immigrants' tea drinking habits from the analytic lens of the food system. In their article, "A Framework for the Analysis of Continuity and Change in Shared Sociocultural Rules for Food Use: The Italian-American Pattern," Judith Goode et al. state that, "ethnic food systems are not simply conservative and tenacious, nor are they disappearing over time. Eating patterns are socially mediated, transmitted, and reinforced" (Goode et al. 1984, 69). They warn that if researchers do not pay attention to the shared food systems of ethnic groups, including the meal cycle, they "will miss the essential organization of the entire group patterned system because the locus of the structure is a spatio-temporal cycle of meal formats rather than food items and recipes" (Goode et al. 1984, 84).

Food categories are an entry point to the analysis of the larger organization of a food system and through exploring the different classifications of “tea” and “yin liao” in Chinese people’s food system, the reasons they define local tea as “yin liao” are unveiled.

The interviews I conducted reveal that Chinese people in St John’s rely on two main criteria to distinguish Chinese tea from local tea. The first one is that Chinese people view Chinese tea as pure while “yin liao” can have many additives. This aspect emerges clearly in the interviews referenced above. When Yi mentioned the tea she bought from David’s Tea, she hesitated and tried hard to find a word to describe it. Finally she characterized it as “something that blends with flower and tea” (Wang 2017). Her difficulty in describing a tea blend indicates that it does not exactly match her definition of tea, and, therefore, is in an ambiguous position. After a moment’s thought, she used the phrase, “a kind of ‘yin liao’ without sweetness” to allocate it a position in her food system. Compared with the vague position of blend tea, tea with sugar or milk was clearly categorized as “yin liao” by many of the Chinese people I interviewed. Yi said, “If I add sugar or milk, I feel I change it [tea] into another thing [yin liao]” (Wang 2017). As Zhengyi said, “Milk tea is not tea... The tea with sugar or milk is “yin liao”. [It is] no different from Coca-Cola or Sprite” (Sun 2017). Jing echoed, “...I think Chinese people like pure tea. It’s very strange to add milk. It feels like drinking ‘yin liao’” (Xia 2017).

By adding sugar, milk, or spices, the taste and smell of the tea are changed from the original flavour of tea leaves. Additionally, sweetness is most closely linked to “yin liao.” As Huizhong pointed out above, people’s first impression of “yin liao” is sweet and a good taste, whereas tea is bitter or strange (Liu 2017). Yi also

distinguished tea from “yin liao” in terms of sweetness, “...They [yin liao] are industrial products...I think tea is more original and natural. I don’t feel I am drinking ‘yin liao’ when I am drinking tea. For me, ‘yin liao’ has sugar...” (Wang 2017). The Chinese students and immigrants I interviewed feel that tea has the original flavour of plants and tastes bitter. It is people who must adapt to tea. But “yin liao,” which has a sweet taste, pleases people first. Therefore, the presence of sugar, milk, and spices separates “yin liao” from real Chinese tea and differentiates local tea drinking from Chinese tea drinking.

The “original” or “natural” taste of tea that some of my interviewees highlighted reflects Chinese beliefs in the health benefits of tea described in the last chapter. This is the second difference to emerge between tea and “yin liao.” During the interviews, “healthy” was a word which was used frequently. My interviewees all agree that tea is a healthy drink. Their view reflects the fact that Chinese people often associate “original” and “natural” items with good health and many reported at least occasionally drinking tea as a medicine to relieve sickness.

When Yi Wang talked about her initial reasons for drinking tea, she said, “My mother doesn’t encourage me to drink soft drinks or carbonated drinks. And I don’t like water, because it doesn’t have any flavour [laughs]” (Wang 2017). After eliminating soft drinks and water, tea became the best option for Yi. She did not explain why her mother does not encourage soft drinks but when she talked about tea with sugar or milk, she said, “it tastes like the milk bubble tea sold beside my senior high school. That tea has lots of sugar and creamer. I think that is not healthy” (Wang 2017). She continued:

For me, when we talk about ‘yin liao’ in China, its connotation reminds me of juice, carbonated drinks, or something like that. They are all industrial products.

But tea is an original drink, [because] it doesn't have so much processing, though from the tree leaves to the packaged tea it is processed...well, anyway, I think tea is more original and natural (Wang 2017).

From her perspective, sugar, cream, or other industrial additives have the potential to harm to one's body. In contrast, tea is healthy because it is simple and made of natural tea leaves rather than various additives. Huizhong's opinion is similar to Yi's. He said, "I don't add [sugar or milk]. For health concerns, I add neither of them. Because, for me, tea is healthy. If you put sugar or milk in it, it will become unhealthy. I would rather drink coffee or other drinks instead of drinking [tea] in that way" (Liu 2017).

As a healthy drink, tea also means medicine for some people. Although Jing does not drink tea daily, she uses it to keep healthy when she thinks her body is not in good condition. She commented:

As you see, I have many teas. I think I am a person who pays attention to maintaining good health (养生). I think tea is good for my body. For example, if I get a cold sore, I will drink some chrysanthemum tea. If I have poor digestion, I want some tea with a sour taste. Pu'er is good for digestion. I don't think I must drink tea every day, but I drink tea frequently... Chinese people are concerned with maintaining good health a lot. When I was in China, I had a barbecue often. We had various barbecued fish which has lots of oil. [So] I drank tea to clean up my intestine (Xia 2017).

Yi's mother also takes tea as a treatment. She recalled, "My mother also drinks tea, especially when she was tested for hypertension in 2011. It's said that dark tea is good for her health, so she drinks dark tea everyday..." (Wang 2017).

As can be seen, Chinese people pay attention to the health benefits of tea and drink different teas for different health conditions. On the other hand, they view "yin liao" as unhealthy. From their perspective, what they eat or drink is closely related to their health and specific foods can relieve a specific illness. In other words, medicine and food are synonymous. As Fischler states, "any culinary system is attached to, or part of, a world view, a cosmology" (Fischler 1988, 281) and Chinese people's

different attitudes to tea and “yin liao” are closely related to their worldview about health and life. For Chinese residents, drinking Chinese tea is intrinsically different from drinking local tea with sugar and/or milk and the two beverages occupy different categories in their food system.

To gain a better understanding of the place of Chinese tea in the Chinese food system, it is helpful to briefly compare it with the position of tea in the Western food system. In St John’s, drinking tea with sugar and/or milk is popular in the larger community and for many residents tea is regarded as a normal part of any meal. For example, Kelly Jones started to drink tea when she was around five years old growing up with her grandmother. During her childhood, all her family members drank tea with sugar and/or milk and she used to have tea five times a day. It was present at each of her three meals and also served with desserts (Jones 2018).

This way of tea drinking dates back centuries to when tea was first imported to Europe. In the late eighteenth century, after it acted as a symbol of high rank for nobility in Europe who could afford it, tea gradually became more available. Then it was seen as a source of calories and a vital part of a new dietary regime of the working classes. As Macfarlane indicates in his book, *Green Golden*, when tea first arrived in Europe in the seventeenth century, “milk was probably not added at this stage” and tea was treated as “a kind of warmed-up beer” served from a barrel (Macfarlane 2003, 66). The attraction of tea increased when it was “drunk with milk and sugar” (Macfarlane 2003, 75). Macfarlane explains:

By the later eighteenth century labourers were spending ten per cent of their food budgets on tea and sugar, as compared to twelve per cent on meat and only two and a half per cent on beer. Tea with bread and cheese formed the heart of the diet. The white bread provided twice as many calories per penny as meat or sugar, so that the bread-and-tea diet was a rational choice for restricted incomes (Macfarlane 2003, 179).

As can be seen, what increased the popularity of tea in the West was its mixture with sugar and milk, which provided the working classes with energy at a low cost. A cup of tea with sugar, with or without bread, could constitute a worker's meal and provide fuel for a day of hard work. A friend of Macfarlane's told him that in the 1960s an aluminum worker in Birmingham had nearly nine pints of tea a day, "the stronger the better, always with milk and sugar" (Macfarlane 2003, 178). Sidney W. Mintz also points out in his book, *Sweetness and Power*, that tea became popular after it was mixed with sugar because sugar provides energy for workers and tea is a good solvent for sugar (Mintz 1985, 116-179). He argues:

That the sweetened tea was hot, stimulating, and calorie-rich; that hard work for wages under difficult conditions typified the circumstances under which tea came to be drunk; that tea had the power to make a cold meal seem like a hot one—these seem equally important points (Mintz 1985, 182).

Therefore, in the Western food system tea occupies a central place and is viewed as part of a meal. Its function is to provide people with energy. Though people now may no longer expect or rely on the calories from tea, drinking tea with sugar and/or milk continues and is still popular.

In contrast, Chinese people never considered tea as a source of energy. This is reflected in when they drink tea. My interviewees indicated that they seldom consume tea with meals, but usually after or between meals. Yi told me she usually makes herself tea after breakfast if she stays at home the whole day, and drinks tea only in the evening on school days because warm water is unavailable on campus. Jing and Huizhong both like to drink tea when they are studying because this is the time when they are alone. Tea can relax them and help decrease the boredom of their studying (Xia 2017; Liu 2017). In her analysis of the foodways of Chinese immigrant families in St John's, Jianxiang Liu also observes that "traditional Chinese tea drinking after a



meal is practiced by all families” (Liu 1991, 166). From the perspective of my interviewees, tea enriches their lives rather than dominates their diets.

## Conclusion

Chinese people immigrated to St John’s as early as 1895 and experienced various hardships before they were fully accepted in this new world. Despite the fact that in 1913, St John’s had its first, and perhaps the only Chinese tea shop in today’s Canada, few records documenting Chinese tea exist. It is safe to say that the local supply of Chinese teas was limited and there were few opportunities to consume Chinese tea in the public. In earlier generations, as is true today, many Chinese residents relied on their own or relatives’ international travels between China and Canada to replenish their supply of Chinese teas.

Chinese residents engage in tea drinking as a largely private activity. They take it as a common, everyday part of their life and do not show or hide it on purpose. Therefore, without the social pressure from outside, they obey their heart and negotiate different tea cultures by keeping up their traditional Chinese tea drinking habits at the same time they accept local tea drinking into the “yin liao” category of their food system. This way of negotiating foodways is different from the explanations offered from the conservative or assimilation theories. Further exploration of Chinese tea drinking in terms of the larger food system shows the different positions of Chinese tea and local tea in Chinese people’s diet structure. Chinese people define tea as pure and expect health benefits from tea at the same time the popular local tea drinking custom of adding sugar or milk to orange pekoe tea conforms to “yin liao,” which emphasizes the sweet and tasty. What lies behind the different positions of

Chinese tea and local tea within the Chinese food system is Chinese people's worldview about health and life. Food, in this case tea, is medicine. Local tea drinking, however, grows out of from the tradition of using tea as a calorie source. To sum up, Chinese residents in St John's still drink within their culture.

After analyzing how and why Chinese people drink tea in St John's, how Chinese tea interacts with Chinese identity is the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter Four:

### Tea as a Boundary and a Bridge in Ethnic Identity Construction

For many Chinese people, tea is an important part of their daily lives, even though they move and settle down in another place far away from their hometown. Ban Seng Hoe described how in the past “on Sundays, [Chinese] laundrymen might go to Chinatown for a cup of tea with their compatriots,” suggesting how tea may have played an important role in the lives of early Chinese immigrants and bound them together in Canada (Hoe 2003, 44). As indicated in the last chapter, for members of the contemporary Chinese community in St. John’s, tea drinking is a largely private activity. For most of the Chinese people I interviewed, drinking Chinese tea generally happens at home due to the unavailability of brewed Chinese tea for sale in shops, the inconvenience of getting boiling water to brew Chinese tea outside the home, and for other social reasons. But, this is not to say Chinese tea has always no public face. In exploring the public enjoyment, or “performance” of Chinese tea, identity issues are unveiled.

As indicated in Chapter One, researchers have examined the foodways of regional groups, as well as groups who share common factors, such as gender and age, in order to learn more about underlying identities. Scholars have also used food as a medium to examine how ethnicities are expressed, negotiated, reinforced, or created in the processes of immigration to a new society (e.g., Gutierrez 1984; Kaplan 1984; Li 2002; Li 2014; Lockwood and Lockwood 1991; Lu and Fine 1995; Moore 1984). The construction and expression of identity is the theme of this chapter. Here I explore how tea helps to shape Chinese identity in the multicultural context of St John’s.

## Tea as a Boundary in Socializing

As observers have noted, for first-generation of immigrants, foodways seem particularly resistant to change (see Humphrey 1945; Masuika 1945; Li 2014). Donna R. Gabaccia suggests in her book, *We Are What We Eat*,

Psychologists tell us that food and language are the cultural traits humans learn first, and the ones that they change with the greatest reluctance. Humans cannot easily lose their accents when they learn new languages after the age of twelve; similarly, the food they ate as children forever defines familiarity and comfort (Gabaccia 1998, 6).

Susan Kalčik also writes that “it has been suggested that this is because the earliest-formed layers of culture, such as foodways, are the last to erode” (Kalčik 1984, 39). Therefore, food or foodways is so deeply ingrained in people’s lives that it is frequently used to define ethnic group identity and seen as a divider to separate the in-group from out-group. As Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney points out in her book, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*, “food tells not only how people live but also how they think of themselves in relation to others. A people’s cuisine, or a particular food, often marks the boundary between the collective self and the other” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1994, 3).

However, the construction of ethnic identity through food does not simply come from the characteristics of the food itself or people’s food choice. Rather, it is formed during the interaction of different cultures. In distinguishing in-group from out-group, the ethnic identity of food is not always visible and fixed. Rather, it becomes obvious and finds expression when an ethnic group encounters another. For example, in inspecting the history of the bagel, Gabaccia suggests that the bagel “became firmly identified as ‘Jewish’ only as Jewish bakers began selling them to their multi-ethnic urban neighbors” (Gabaccia 2000, 6). In an examination of “Japaneseness,” Ohnuki-

Tierney analyzes how the Japanese redefine their identities by using their rice as a “metaphor of self” in encounters with Chinese long-grain rice, the meat of Westerners, and the foreign short-grain rice (Ohnuki-Tierney 1994). In other words, food often reflects how identity is a social process that takes shape through the interaction of different groups.

For most of my interviewees in St John’s, tea is such a common drink in their lives that they do not think that there is anything special about it that could be narrated. Certainly, they do not have the idea that they consciously express their identity through tea. One of my friends is a loyal tea-drinker but she refused my request for an interview with a brief response: “I drink tea only for refreshment.” She felt that was all there was to it. I was sure there were insights that could be learned from her experiences, but she, herself, believed that tea has no deeper meaning than as refreshment.

I, of course, see deeper significance. When many of my interviewees leave their home and communicate with other people, tea becomes a drink that distinguishes them from others and continuously reminds them of who they are and where they are from. From what kind of tea they choose, to how they make and drink tea, and how they feel about it, Chinese tea functions as a boundary when Chinese people socialize.

As mentioned earlier, Yi Wang is a devoted tea drinker, who drank tea almost every day for around nine years in China before she came to Canada. Yi returns to China every year and takes back her favorite teas to Canada. During Yi’s initial days in St John’s, she often attended meetings at a church to make friends. She said,

They sometimes shared their pizza with me. I felt they were very nice. So, in a meeting I attended, I went with my Pu’er tea. This tea was taken here from my hometown in August 2014, well, which was my first time to fly abroad. I made tea for them and introduced that the tea was good for health, such and such. They

were polite. They drank it but they didn't like it from their bottom heart. I could feel that (Wang 2017).

Yi also gave her Chinese teas to other local people as gifts when she first came here. She said, "I truly wanted to share what I thought good with others, but I would never do this again" (Wang 2017). She continued, "my Canadian roommate advised me not to use Chinese tea as a gift because, as she said, they don't know how good my tea is and they don't drink it" (Wang 2017). By sharing Chinese teas with others, Yi intended to connect with the local community and to integrate into the host society. After she received negative, or at least ambivalent, responses to her Chinese teas, she realized the differences between her tea culture and that of others. She recognized the difficulties of using Chinese tea as a stepping stone to build a real connection and relationship with members of another culture.

Later, Yi sometimes met her friends at Tim Horton's. She usually ordered tea, orange pekoe or mint. She commented, "We didn't go for tea, but just try to find a place for chatting." Yi explained, "and I tried the tea I didn't drink at home" (Wang 2017). When we talked about her experiences at Tim Horton's, she talked with a worried look, "it's very convenient to use tea bags. You can make tea easily and then throw it away. Tea is valued in China, [but] here..." (Wang 2017). She did not continue, but I understood her feelings in her unfinished words. Tea bags are popular in St John's. You can tell this from the amount of tea bags available in fast food restaurants like Tim Horton's and at the main places where teas are sold, such as chain supermarkets like Sobeys and Dominion, and Costco. But Chinese people usually drink loose teas and brew the leaves several times before disposing of them. As a result, Yi thinks poorly of making a cup of tea with a tea bag and then discarding it at will. Tea should be valued and taken pride in (Wang 2017). Zoe Wu, the owner of

Loong Wah Restaurant, feels similarly to Yi. She said, “If I [want to] drink Chinese tea, I will boil some water especially. Treat my tea well, and respect it” (Wu 2017). Yi continued, “We are different. Tea here seems like fast food which is convenient, fast and standard...It’s very industrial. But [Chinese] tea, I feel, is more original and natural” (Wang 2017). Different teas, like Tetley or Pu’er tea, as well as the difference between tea bags or loose tea create different tastes and trigger different emotions, feelings, and attitudes from the view of Chinese people. For Yi, such differences both strengthen her appreciation of tea and deepen her sense of identity as Chinese in this multicultural society.

Unlike tea bags that determine the amount of tea per cup, Chinese loose tea requires consumers to decide how many tea leaves they want to use. In addition, Chinese people usually make tea according to their experience rather than depending on spoons or minutes to measure. Emma Hu comes from Taiwan. She married a Caucasian Canadian and immigrated to Canada ten years ago. She described giving tea as a gift to her parents-in-law:

I presented tea to my husband’s parents. They asked me, “How long should the tea be soaked after the water is boiling? How many minutes? How many spoons [of] tea?” I don’t have a specific spoon to measure [tea]. Just around, estimate...I don’t know how long. I go by the colour [of tea]. So it’s very hard to explain for them [laughs] (Hu 2018).

After decades of years living in Canada, Zoe Wu has a deep understanding of the differences between tea making in the West and in the East. She said:

Westerners enrich teas and they use fancy and dedicated tea utensils...for Chinese tea, only people who have the expertise can make good tea. [Because] it relates to if you know how to use the utensils, if you are professional to manage the tea... We care about the temperature of the water, 90 degrees or 100 degrees. We care about how long the tea leaves soaked in the water before the tea can be drunk. We care about if the first infusion can be drunk. [Chinese] tea, for sure, can stand for our culture (Wu 2017).

As Zoe suggests, when making a cup of tea Chinese people pay attention to several aspects. In addition to the amount of tea leaves, they consider the temperature of the water, the time required to soak the tea leaves, and even the type of utensils. All of these are based on their experience or knowledge and function as a boundary to divide “us” from “them.” Jinjun Tong came to St John’s from China in 2010. She is a PhD student at MUN in the Mathematics department. She has been drinking tea for a dozen years, since she was an undergraduate student in China. For her, tea drinking is part of her life and is her hobby. She said, “I enjoy the moment I pour my tea out of the teapot at the right time. It gives me a sense of achievement” (Tong 2017). Jinjun told me, “Once, one of my local friends praised me when he saw me making tea with a clay teapot because he thought my tea must be from China” (Tong 2017). Jinjun Tong was struck by her friend’s reaction to her teapot (See Figure 13) and her tea because that is the way she makes tea daily and she takes it for granted. She said, “that is like, in my growing up with my grandma, she boiled tea every single day, every single kettle. It is just my life” (Tong 2017). Her friend’s reaction towards her teapot was a signal to Jinjun of the fine reputation of Chinese tea and encouraged her to see Chinese tea as a symbol of China. As she said, “Tea is one of the two things that can stand for China. The other one is china” (Tong 2017). As Brown and Mussell point out, “shared knowledge becomes a strong element of regional cohesion and identity, separating the locals from the visitors” (Brown and Mussell 1984, 9). When people encounter another culture, even the ordinary knowledge of how to make a cup of tea can become a strong element of identity to divide “us” from “others” and inspire people’s recognition of their own culture. Emma, Zoe, and Jinjun all recognized their ethnic identity from their tea-making knowledge. For Jinjun, her friend’s response to her tea



solidified this as well. Chinese ethnicity, thus, is highlighted by making Chinese tea in front of another culture.



*Figure 13: Jinjun Tong's Tea Pot*

As has already been discussed in the last chapter, drinking tea with sugar or/and milk is popular in St John's. If you order "double-double" at the chain restaurant Tim Horton's, the cashier instantly understands that you want a tea or coffee with two sugar and two milk. If you do not request a specific type of tea, they will give you orange pekoe. Lily Li is a Chinese student in the Masters program in Environmental Engineering at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She came to Canada in 2016. Lily's family are all tea drinkers and she cultivated her tea drinking habit during her elementary school years. Lily sometimes orders double-double tea at Tim Horton's. She adds sugar and milk in her tea because she does not like its original flavour. If she drinks her Chinese tea at home, she does not add sugar or milk, because "its original

flavour is good enough” (Li 2017). She said, “Eastern teas try to highlight the quality of the tea itself by [using] tea utensils and [controlling] the temperature of the water. Western culture seeks to blend tea by adding milk or sugar. For the East, tea is a symbol of health, while the West asks for the pleasure from food by adding sugar and milk” (Li 2017). Of the blended teas for sale at David’s Tea, Lily said, “David’s Tea is creative. I really appreciate it, but I won’t buy, because I can’t accept that strong flavour” (Li 2017). Lily’s sense of identity came through in her knowledge of the differences of tea drinking between the East and the West that represent different cultures and create an invisible line dividing her from others. When she organizes parties with her friends at home, she only makes tea for her Chinese friends and prepares other drinks like juice for people with different culture backgrounds.

For my interviewees who are regular tea drinkers, the original flavour of the tea leaves is always their preference. They do not like to drink tea with anything added, such as milk, sugar, or spices. The original fragrance of tea is what they want from tea drinking. But for people who do not drink Chinese tea, the original flavour of Chinese tea is bitter. In 2017 I visited a friend at her home. She comes from Asia but is not Chinese. She showed me her tea basket that had a dozen different teas. I picked up a Japanese tea. She then offered me a friendly reminder that the tea is bitter. I was surprised and curious. “Why do Japanese people like bitter tea?” I wondered. With that question in my mind, I insisted on trying the Japanese tea. After the tea was ready, I took a sip. It was just green tea with no bitter flavour; it tasted just like other green teas I drank in China. But soon I understood what she meant by “bitter.” It is the flavour Chinese people call “returned sweetness” (回甘). It is fascinating that people can have different taste experiences from the same tea and use opposite words—bitter

and sweet—to describe it. This experience impressed me a lot. It showed the power of culture, more precisely tea culture in that context, to define a person’s identity and to separate one individual from another. One must cultivate her/his taste before she/he can appreciate the fragrance and flavour of Chinese tea. In contrast, teas with sugar, milk, or/and spices are more attractive to beginning tea drinkers. Frederick B. Dane and R.S. McIndoe point out, “the great aim of blending is to combine quality, pungency, strength and flavour, so as to please the greatest number of your customers, and at the smallest possible outlay” (Dane and McIndoe 1881, 72). It is not the issue which tea is better or right; they are just different. Tea, therefore, can function as a marker to reveal one’s identity in the face of a different culture.

#### Tea as a Bridge

In China in the eighth century A.D., tea master Yü Lu recorded the knowledge and skills of tea drinking in his book, *Tea Classic of Tea*. Lu also laid the foundation for the ceremonial preparation and presentation of tea, known as the Chinese tea ceremony or the Tao of Tea. During the following several centuries, the Chinese tea ceremony underwent many changes and eventually developed into today’s tea ceremony which is most commonly the Kung Fu tea ceremony or the Gongfu ceremony.

In St John’s, Newfoundland, the Formosa Tea House is a place where people can experience a Chinese tea ceremony. As mentioned earlier, this Taiwan style Chinese restaurant is located at 117 Long’s Hill in the downtown of St John’s (See Figure 14). The owners are Chien-Ming Yeh and Kuei-Fen Kuo who immigrated to Canada from Taiwan in 1995. They lived in Toronto for a few years before moving to Prince

Edward Island in 1999. There they opened the Formosa Tea House in 2001 at 186 Prince Street, Charlottetown. This vegetarian restaurant was the first, and once the only, tea house in Prince Edward Island. After ten years operation, Chien-Ming and Kuei-Fen moved to St John's in 2011 and reopened their tea house at 15 Le Marchant Road. The name "Formosa Tea House" is still in use. In October 2017 they relocated their tea house down the street to its present location.



*Figure 14: Formosa Tea House at 117 Long's Hill, St John's*

Chien-Ming Yeh became a tea enthusiast during his years as an undergraduate student. To earn a living after he immigrated to Canada, he transformed his knowledge about tea into his business, namely the Formosa Tea House. To pursue success in his tea business, he spent lots of time studying and processing tea. He once infused eighteen cups of different types of Oolong tea to compare their colours, transparency, and taste under different conditions. His efforts have made him a tea expert. Chien-Ming is very hospitable and warm-hearted. At times he organizes free tea ceremonies

at his tea house to share his tea and tea knowledge with others. His gatherings are made up of two parts; the first is an introduction to Chinese tea with a specific theme and the second is the tea ceremony. When there is such a gathering, the Formosa Tea House becomes a place for Chinese tea lovers to congregate and socialize. As seen above, tea can operate as a boundary that activates the recognition and appreciation of ethnic cultural differences. However, it can also instil a sense of pride and belonging in Chinese people that leads to the creation of cultural cohesion and bonds individuals together.

I attended one tea ceremony on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 at the Formosa Tea House. This gathering started at 1:00 p.m. and lasted for two hours. Beforehand, the owners posted an announcement on their Facebook page for the Formosa Tea House and texted their friends who may be interested in attending. There were eight people at this tea ceremony apart from the owners and me. Andy Kuo, Ruby Tang, and Emma Hu are all from Taiwan, the same birthplace as the owners. Andy got his bachelor's degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland and then started his career in St John's. He started drinking tea during his childhood under the influence of his grandmother. He also acted as translator during the tea ceremony because he is fluent in both Chinese and English. Ruby is a newcomer to St John's with a working-holiday visa. When she attended this tea ceremony, she had been here for just two months. Emma Hu and her Caucasian husband both like Chinese tea. They met each other in Taiwan when they were English teachers in the same school. Now they are raising their five-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, in St John's. Emma's husband and children also took part in this tea ceremony. Joan Hawn is a Caucasian Canadian who was at this tea gathering. She is a Newfoundlander who often purchases teas at the Formosa Tea House. Yi

Wang and I were the last participants.

The theme of this gathering was “Introduction to Teapots and Tea Sets.” Chien-Ming and Kuei-Fen prepared snacks, such as cookies, dried seaweed, and green tea, for the guests to enjoy during the presentation of information. During the tea ceremony, two different kinds of teas were provided for tasting.

The general atmosphere of the Formosa Tea House is natural and peaceful; in a sense it mirrors what Chinese tea tastes like (See Figure 15). The dark green tables and brown rattan chairs, along with the matching light yellow wall, combine to make people feel like they are in a natural environment. Chien-Ming Yeh said that the design of the Formosa Tea House is based on the three primary colours of tea which are green, yellow, and red. He purposely decorated the space with green plants, painted the walls a light yellow, and made dark green furniture. The dark green, in Chien-Ming’s perspective, has the colour of black walnut that is similar to black tea. The interior decoration, as well as the Chinese music in the background, tries to present both the theme of tea and the ethnic origin of this restaurant. Chien-Ming said that he named his restaurant “Formosa,” an earlier informal name for Taiwan, to commemorate his homeland (Yeh 2017).

If we have a close look at the restaurant, by the front entrance there stands a counter which functions like a folding screen separating the gate from the dining area. A jade cabbage, a wooden sculpture of Maitreya Buddha, and some green plants are arranged on the counter. Wooden sculptures and green plants are traditional Chinese decorations, while the jade cabbage is always welcomed in Chinese commercial places because it is a symbol of good fortune (because the pronunciation of “cabbage” has the partial tone of “fortune” in Chinese). The top of the cabinet on the right side is

covered with colourful vacation photos and on the bottom is a shelf filled with various Chinese souvenirs, such as jade rings and bracelets. On the left-hand side is a bar facing the street where three people can dine. Light shines into the space through the floor-to-ceiling windows. Passing the counter, one enters the restaurant. Six square tables are placed by the right side of the wall. The tables that seat two are put together to make three groups of tables that seat four guests each. Three shelves are installed on the wall, staggered up and down, to display the owners' collection of various sculptures and rare stones. These are replicas of the kind of traditional objects one might expect to see in the collection of a Chinese antique lover. Several decorative paintings are hung under the shelf. A portrait of Confucius and a couplet are hung on the wall facing the entrance. Confucius, who lived two thousand years ago, is the most famous educator of ancient China. On the left-hand side is an approximately one-meter-high checkout counter that is also used by the owners to make tea and milk bubble tea. A shelf is installed on the wall behind the counter which is filled with a variety of Chinese clay teapots. These range in price from tens to hundreds of dollars. On the left side of the counter, a square table is placed close to the floor-to-ceiling window where two people can dine. Next to the square table is a pillar from which is hanging many crystal balls. A two-meter-high shelf holds various Chinese teas, including Red Oolong, Oriental beauty, high mountain, and Pu'er, as well as some tea sets and wooden sculptures. In my conversation with Emma Hu, she expressed her feeling that the Formosa Tea House is not the same as a tea house in Taiwan but that it has an Asia or Taiwan style. She commented, "It feels familiar," Emma continued, "they use what they can get here to make it similar to Taiwan" (Hu 2018).



*Figure15: Inside of the Formosa Tea House*

Chien-Ming was the key organizer and tea master for the event. He was the speaker in the information section and performed the tea ceremony. Kuei-Fen assisted him in showing a PowerPoint in the first part and then setting up for the tea ceremony. Chien-Ming wore a dark blue Tang Suit which is traditional Chinese dress. At the beginning of the tea ceremony, he had a kettle and a water container on his left-hand side and in front of him was a tea tray with a black clay teapot, a big glass serving cup (茶海), and some china cups. He first cleaned all the teacups with boiling water and then distributed one to every guest. This first step cannot be missed even if the containers are clean because it not only cleans and refreshes the utensils but also reassures guests of their cleanness. Each of guests had two cups standing on a tiny wooden coaster; one was a pudgy teacup used for tasting the tea and the other one was a slim wenxiang cup (闻香杯) used for smelling the tea. Chien-Ming then poured boiling water into and on the teapot to clean and warm it before draining the water into the big serving cup. After the preparation of utensils, he used a special bamboo spoon to put some Pu'er tea into the teapot and added some hot water. He followed this by pouring the water from the big serving cup over the teapot. Pouring hot water on the teapot warms it. This is done to keep the teapot warm because having the correct temperature of a teapot is essential for brewing good tea. Chien-Ming



informed the group that a frequently used clay teapot has a lustre from being often washed by tea (Tea Ceremony 2018). A bright teapot, therefore, shows the expertise of a tea lover. While waiting for the tea, he filled the kettle and left it to boil. Then he poured out the tea from the teapot into the serving cup and passed the serving cup to the guests. Through the glass serving cup, people could clearly see the colour and the clarity of the tea. “This is the standard colour of this tea,” Chien-Ming explained. He said, “You can tell the brightness of the tea through the sunlight.” When he brewed high mountain tea, he explained that the standard colour of high mountain tea is the same as wine. Every guest held the serving cup for a while and watched the colour of the tea. They then shared the tea, each drinking from their own teacup. When the first infusion was finished and the boiling water had been cooled for a while, the second round began. Chien-Ming did not use boiling water to make tea, because, as he told us, the temperature of water decides the taste of tea. How long the water should be cooled is part of the knowledge of the expert conducting the tea ceremony. After brewing the Pu’er tea a few times, Chien-Ming changed from the black teapot to a red clay teapot and brewed the high mountain tea. The process was the same.

During the tea ceremony, people communicated their stories about tea and their life. The familiar taste of the tea often connected them to their past and to their family in their homeland. When Chien-Ming talked about the authentic taste of tea, he insisted that the taste must be consistent. If the tea does not have the same taste as when he drank it before, he does not like it. He used Lugu Oolong, a tea grown in the rural township of Lugu (located in the middle of Taiwan), as an example. He quickly went to the checkout counter and made a cup of Lugu Oolong tea and passed it to his guests. He said: “You can smell it. This is the standard smell of Lugu Oolong tea.

Other places' Oolong tea doesn't have this smell...For decades, the smell hasn't changed...Even the tea maker's son can't make tea like this" (Tea Ceremony 2018). His story and tea attracted Emma's little girl. She followed Chien-Ming from the checkout counter to the tea table and watched the serving cup with curiosity. The cup was passed from one guest to another and finally came to her. She lowered her head to smell the tea for a while and then raised her head with a big smile. Andy asked her if the tea had a fragrance. She smelled it again and nodded her head. Her mother came to her at this moment, took the serving cup, and asked her: "Is it like Grandma's tea? Does it have the smell of Grandma?" The little girl nodded her head again and smelled the tea from her mother's hand. Andy said: "It really has the smell of Mama's tea."



*Figure 16: Tea Ceremony on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 at the Formosa Tea House*

As David E. Sutton argues, food can be “an object or place for memory practice

in certain societies” (Sutton 2001, 11). Tea can merge the present with the past. From the fragrance of the tea at the tea ceremony, the Chinese people there smelled the past and the old land belonging to them and their families. Clair et al.’s observation about the power of “authentic culinary experiences” rings here as well. Clair et al. write that the “nostalgic lure of the distant and desired” came out with “a sense of belonging and attempting to create aspects of ‘home’ through ‘authentic’ culinary experiences” (Clair et al. 2016, n. pag.).

For Chien-Ming, the smell and taste of teas have very specific connotations. He does not believe that most young people can make Oolong tea that smells like Lugu Oolong tea and that no other places have tea like it. For him, the flavour always marks time and place and his memory is sparked whenever he smells a particular tea. He told me that when he drinks tea, he has the map of Taiwan in his mind; he can tell the mountain and river of Taiwan from the tea in his hand (Yeh 2017). But for Emma, tea is also a way she introduces her daughter to the culture of her birthplace. It helps her connect her children to her family in Taiwan and to pass on the memory of her homeland. She hopes her children can experience Chinese culture through the tea ceremony. She said,

In Canada, I am the only one speaks Chinese with my children. I hope from the tea ceremony they can contact with more people from my homeland, Taiwan, or people who speak the same language as them. I hope they can know the use and beauty of the Chinese [language]...Actually, their mother tongue is Chinese. It changed to English because the environment [changed]... The first word they spoke was Chinese (Hu 2018).

When Emma said that her children’s mother tongue was Chinese, I could see the pride on her face. Tea not only connects Emma to her past and her original culture but also bestows her with the hope of passing on Chinese culture to her children. Even though the little girl cannot drink tea at her age, she can recognize its fragrance and the

familiar smell reminds her of her grandmother. The fragrance of Chinese tea intertwined with family reunions could well be a memory for her for the rest of her life. For Emma, her love of Chinese tea and her recognition of the value of Chinese culture came together in the tea ceremony.

The tea ceremony not only connects Chinese people with both their past and their homeland, and deepens their knowledge of aspects of Chinese culture, it also bonds individuals together and creates a Chinese community. As a relative newcomer to St John's, Ruby found that the tea ceremony gave her an opportunity to communicate with new friends who have the same culture. She said, "I just came here a few weeks ago. I knew there was a tea ceremony from my friend, and the organizer is Taiwanese as I am. So, I joined the tea party. Well, I like tea, and I want to know more [Chinese] people" (Tang 2018). Andy's family immigrated to Belize from Taiwan when he was little. He learned about the tea drinking from his family. After he came to St John's, he started to attend Chien-Ming's tea ceremonies regularly. He continues to go even though he has graduated and is employed now. He likes to drink Chien-Ming's tea and works as a translator for him. They have become a family. Andy calls Chien-Ming "uncle," and Chien Ming introduces Andy as "nephew" although they don't have a relationship in blood.

As Ohnuki-Tierney points out,

The power of food as a symbol of self-identity derives from the particular nature of the symbolic process involved. An important food as a metaphor of a social group involves two interlocking dimensions. First, each member of the social group consumes the food, which becomes part of his or her body. The important food becomes embodied in each individual. It operates as a metonym by being part of the self. Second, the food is consumed by individual members of the social group who eat the food together. Communal consumption of the food leads to rice as a metaphor of we—his or her social group and, often, the people as a whole (Ohnuki-Tierney 1994, 129-130).

At the tea ceremony, Chinese tea achieved its second goal which was to construct the collective identity of “we” by having people drink tea together. During the tea ceremony, the familiar fragrance of Chinese tea and the environment evoked emotional and cultural recollections among the Chinese people present. Tea, like a bridge, connected them to their past and to their homeland. People experienced or re-experienced their common culture and passed this culture on to the next generation through the creation of a lasting memory. The cultural cohesion constructed by sharing the tea bonds Chinese individuals together.

## Conclusion

The cliché, “You are what you eat” holds truth in part because we are all born in a culture that decides what we eat and cultivates our taste to food before we can choose for ourselves. But one’s sense of identity often only really becomes noticeable when we encounter another culture. We learn who we are from other people—from their attitudes and responses to our culture, and from the differences between our culture and other people’s. A sense of identity becomes obvious on the periphery of the ethnic group. Differences in cultures sometimes guide members of an ethnic group to self reflect. Who are they? How do they differ from others? What is their specialty? Such explorations often deepen their sense of pride and belonging to their culture and help them to articulate their cultural and ethnic identity. Cultural cohesion is created thereafter. Under the name of ethnic identity, Chinese tea bonds individuals together. Even though they are thousands of miles away from the homeland, and even if they cannot get together with their family, tea transports them across time and space to connect them with their past, their homeland and their family. At the tea ceremony,

when the past became present, collective memory was evoked, recreated and passed on.

## Chapter Five:

### Conclusions

During my research on Chinese tea in St John's what impressed me most was its invisibility in the daily lives of Chinese people. On almost all occasions, Chinese tea acts like a silent companion. On the study desk, at the work place, or during a party, Chinese tea is always present in the background. But it remains largely invisible. Tea is too common to attract a second glance. When I interviewed people about their experiences drinking tea, their first reaction was often one of confusion: "What can I say about tea?" or "I am not a tea expert!" These responses were what I frequently encountered in my fieldwork. People did not realize that they have stories or feelings about tea that they can narrate. In contrast to Chinese restaurants that have a distinctive public face, Chinese tea is easily neglected by both members of the Chinese community and their neighbours. However, once one is attuned to the presence of tea, it is also hard to ignore in the lives of many Chinese people. It accompanies them day and night before and after they move to Canada and represents a significant connection to their homeland in an alien environment. This thesis, therefore, has aimed to reveal the special position of Chinese tea in the lives of Chinese residents of St John's and to explore its interconnections to their cultural identity.

Chapter One began with a statement of how my interest in Chinese tea drinking in St John's was triggered by my personal experiences of drinking Chinese tea and of growing up in a tea drinking culture, my curiosity about local tea drinking in St John's, and my experience of being a minority group member in Canada for the first

time in my life. These factors guided me to limit the scope of my study to Chinese tea, the Chinese community, and the City of St John's. Previous studies on Chinese tea mainly explore it from a historical perspective and that leaves space for this research to examine Chinese tea from a folkloric approach. In addition, among the extensive studies on the Chinese diaspora in North America in general, and in Newfoundland in particular, Chinese tea has not been explored. Existing academic works probe Chinese ethnicity by employing various Chinese cultural performances, especially Chinese foodways, as entry points. They generally argue that Chinese identity is negotiated during Chinese immigrants' interaction with the larger community, and that the Chinese tend to have a "new identity" or a "third place" (Oldenburg 1989) which fulfills their desire to preserve their traditional culture while meeting the external expectations. This research, therefore, has tried to fill a gap in academic studies of the Chinese diaspora in North America by focusing on Chinese tea. In doing this, I also build on a growing recognition of the importance of drink as part of foodways. To develop this study, I conducted interviews with Chinese residents of St John's, including Chinese immigrants and Chinese international students, as well as one Caucasian Newfoundlander who operated a tea shop. Their opinions, and my participant-observation in tea ceremonies organized at the Formosa Tea House, lay the foundation of this study.

As introduced in Chapter Two, Chinese people's long history of tea drinking extends back at least three thousand years. Tea spread across ancient China around the third century B.C.E. and ever since there has been a continuous evolution in tea production, tea making, and tea drinking. With the improvement of tea processing techniques, steamed tea cakes took the place of fresh and sun-dried tea. Later this was



replaced by frying tea. Correspondently, boiled tea was replaced by whipped tea until steeped tea became the mainstream way of preparing tea. Meanwhile, the varieties of Chinese tea were expanded from only green tea to six different teas based on the degree of fermentation. Among all facets of Chinese tea culture, the tea ceremony and the health benefits of tea are perhaps the most influential. The tea ceremony represents an elite dedication to the connoisseurship of tea. From tea leaf picking to tea making and drinking, leaders of tea ceremonies concentrate on creating high quality tea drinking experiences and the cultivation of a spiritual connection. As for the health benefits of tea, legends and historic publications both record its long time use as a medicine. This tradition of valuing the health benefits of tea runs through history and continues to the present. Modern scientific research confirms the existence of abundant beneficial substances in tea such as alkaloids, tea tannin and vitamins. Thus, tea is a part of Chinese people's lives in multiple ways and has been interwoven with Chinese civilization for thousands of years.

With globalization, tea's popularity spread beyond China to neighbouring Korea and Japan and then to South Asia, the Middle East, and finally to Europe. Tea expanded its footprint across Eurasia by land and water. Although the tea trade benefited both China and her trading partners, it was also manipulated by imperial Chinese governments as a political chip in international diplomacy, since China had a near complete monopoly on tea. It was barely possible for the world to forget about China when the tea they drink came from there. However, in the 1850s when the British Empire started to rely on tea plantations in India for its supply of tea, China lost its pre-eminent place as the world's producer of tea. Tea was no longer synonymous with China, nor did "tea" exclusively mean Chinese tea. But, for

individual Chinese citizens, tea is still the drink that shapes their daily lives and is part of ceremonies and rites of passage.

Chapter Three began with the history of the Chinese community and the presence of Chinese tea in St John's, Newfoundland. Chinese immigrants arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador at the end of the nineteenth century, brought here through a system of chain migration. These immigrants, who were mainly workers in laundries or restaurants, who shared a similar language, birthplace, and culture, as well as socioeconomic status, constituted a homogeneous Chinese community. Life was not easy for them. While they gradually found their niche in this new world, they endured various hardships including hard work, discrimination, and loneliness. From the 1950s, the Chinese population in Newfoundland increased due to family reunions, new babies, and a points-based immigration system. The new immigration system evaluated all potential immigrants according to their skills and education. As a result, more Chinese professionals and students were attracted to Newfoundland and Labrador. The current Chinese community, therefore, is characterized by diversity—Chinese immigrants and students who come from different places of origin as well as a wide range of linguistic, educational, and occupational backgrounds.

Although the Chinese have been living in Newfoundland for more than one hundred years, few records document any presence of Chinese tea. Wing Shing & Co., operating in the early twentieth century, is the only known Chinese tea merchant in the past. In more recent times, Chinese teas are supplied in Chinese grocery shops, Chinese restaurants, and David's Tea as well as some Canadian supermarkets. The selection of teas is limited, however, and does not generally attract Chinese tea drinkers. Additionally, there are few opportunities for any public expressions of

Chinese tea culture since most Chinese restaurants do not promote their teas on menus. By serving Chinese tea in Chinese style teapots, the Formosa Tea House and the New Moon restaurant are among the few restaurants in the city that put any emphasis on Chinese tea culture.

In exploring how Chinese residents in St John's negotiate different tea cultures, I found that they accept the tea in their new home at the same time they keep to their traditional way of drinking Chinese tea. They classify Newfoundland tea as a sweet beverage and consider it something other than tea in their own food system. They call it "yin liao" (饮料). This way of negotiation differs from conservativeness or assimilation theory advanced in some previous research on ethnic foodways. While additives like spices, milk, or sugar improve tea's sweetness or tastiness, the drink in Chinese people's eyes loses its characteristic purity, and furthermore, loses its health benefits. These are the two aspects that my Chinese interviewees care most about. By analyzing Chinese and western teas in the context of the larger food system of my Chinese interviewees, their distinct positions are revealed. While my Chinese interviewees see Chinese tea as a healthy leisure drink, they view the local habit of drinking tea with sugar and/or milk as unhealthy and rooted in the historic use of tea as a source of calories. Therefore, I argue that Chinese residents of St John's integrate into the host society by absorbing local tea drinking practices into their food system at the same time they still maintain their own tea culture.

The fourth chapter focuses on the identity construction of Chinese residents in St John's. As first-generation immigrants or international students, all my interviewees came to Canada as adults and thus already had formed deep bonds to their homeland and formulated notions of their Chinese ethnicity. When they encountered new

cultural practices in Newfoundland, expressed specifically in the form of tea in this thesis, they realized that the larger community shares neither their beloved Chinese teas, their feelings about Chinese teas, nor their knowledge of Chinese tea making. The surprising responses Chinese people got from their friends toward their teas urged some of them to reflect on their ethnicity. Tea can function as a boundary that separates “them” from “us”, and I argue that it sometimes expresses how Chinese people operate in two cultural worlds. It provides an example of how the ethnic identity of one group is revealed and constructed during their interactions with another cultural group.

The sense of belonging to a culture or an ethnicity creates cultural cohesion. The tea ceremonies held at the Formosa Tea House where people can experience Chinese tea ceremonies and enjoy a similar atmosphere to traditional Chinese tea houses, provide opportunities for Chinese people to gather and to bond. During the tea ceremonies, people exchange stories and knowledge of tea. More importantly, they drink teas brewed in the same teapot and they share collective memories of Chinese tea. In St John’s, Newfoundland, a place far away from their homeland, a traditional drink—tea—is shared in a traditional way that connects the Chinese people with their past and family beyond time and space. It creates and reinforces a collective identity of “us.” I would argue that common Chinese tea culture and memories function as a bridge to bond individuals together.

China lost her monopoly over tea production by the 1800s but knowing about, consuming, and appreciating Chinese tea continues to be a tangible marker of what Mu Li describes as “Chineseness” in St. John’s (Li 2014). It is part of what makes Chinese people Chinese when living in a new culture. By connecting Chinese people

with their identity and ethnic culture, Chinese tea occupies an essential position in their lives in St John's. Though silent and invisible most time, Chinese tea matters.

This study opens up directions for future exploration. It was restricted to two segments of the Chinese community—immigrants and international students—and it would be fascinating to compare their responses to those of second and third generation Chinese Newfoundlanders. What are the tea drinking habits of Chinese descendants and how do they reflect their attitudes towards both Chinese and Newfoundland cultures? Neither did this study consider longitudinal factors. Future studies might compare Chinese tea drinking today with that of several decades ago. It would be very meaningful to have a more comprehensive understanding of the past and present of an ethnic group.

This thesis hoped to fill a gap in the study of the Chinese diaspora and ethnic foodways in North America. Through an examination of Chinese tea drinking among members of the Chinese community in St John's, Newfoundland, it explored a very specific aspect of ethnic foodways by locating tea drinking in the context of a broader ethnic culinary culture and food system and exploring its interconnections with ethnic identity and collective memory. I hope this research on tea has contributed in a small way to a better intercultural understanding between the Chinese community and the larger society of Newfoundland as well as to a better intergenerational understanding within the Chinese community. It is my wish that this folklore study on tea will go back to the folks who shared their experiences with me and benefit both their community and the larger one.

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Appendix

Name	Business	Location	Sauce
Cranford Victor	Tea packer Harvey & Co	bds 184 Duckworth	McAlpine 1913, City Directory, City of St John's 'C'
Chislett Herbert W	emp Great Union Tea Co	bds 94 George W	
Goss Samuel	Tea packer Harvey & Co	bds 119 Gower	
House	FG & Co (Wholesale Tea Merchants, Brokers, etc.)	Columbus Bldg, Duckworth	
Levitz Simon	Peddler and tea merchant	h 108 Gower	
N/A	Red Rose Tea (Meehan & agents)	138 Water	
Roberts Job H	Tea and comm merchant	McBride's Hill, h24 Victoria	
Sellars Joseph	Wholesale tea	161 Water, h 12 Maxse	
Wilansky I	Retail tea merchant	360 Water, h 170 New Gower	
N/A	Wentzell's Limited, Halifax NS (Importers, Wholesale Grocers and Tea Merchants)	St John's	
N/A	Butterfly Tea Rooms	Bell Island	Bell Island Telephone Directory 1949
N/A	Vim Tea Company	St John's	St John's Telephone Directory 1909
N/A	DeForest, Limited, H.W. (Wholesale Teas)	St John's	
N/A	Macnab & Company, T. (Tea importers)	St John's	
Henry Blair	P.C. O'Driscoll (wholesale agent for "nectar tea" etc.	St John's	Devine, M. A. and J. O'Mara 1900: 58, 90, 105
N/A	Colin Campbell, Limited (grocers and tea merchant)	St John's	
N/A	Wholesale and Retail dry goods, teas, etc.	243 Water Street	

*Table 2: Records of Tea Businesses in St John's*