ANSWERING THE CALL FOR REFORM:
THE TORONTO AND MONTREAL CHINESE MISSIONS 1894-1925

by

Jeffrey P. Plante
University of Guelph, 1997

Thesis

Submitted to the Department of History
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Wilfrid Laurier University

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

Only a small number of historians have chosen to focus specifically on the arrival of the Chinese in Canada. Many, however, have studied the turn-of-the-century social reform movement in this country, noting that the Chinese figured prominently in the discourse of social and moral reform. Fears that immigration and urbanization contributed directly to society's moral degeneration led many social reformers, politicians, labour leaders, and evangelists to identify the Chinese as a menace to Canada's social, religious, and political heritage, which was fundamentally Anglo-Celtic and Protestant. This is consistent with what Edward W. Said has defined as Orientalism — a style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West -- which has been used for centuries to define European superiority over the Orient. Through social, political, economic and literary accounts of the Orient, the Western world has envisioned itself in a position of cultural hegemony over the East.[1] Orientalism was largely a racist construction in which race, religion, education, and culture in the Western world were viewed as "superior" to those of the Eastern world which was, in fact, an advanced civilization.

Consequently, nation-building in Canada depended on the preservation of those "superior" Anglo-Celtic traditions, as embodied in the nation's dominant class. While the Chinese were similar to other immigrant groups, in that they were of a different religion and language from most Canadians, they were seen to be a particular problem, since they were of a visibly different race and, it was believed, less likely to assimilate. Responding quickly to the "Chinese problem," the evangelical churches, particularly the Presbyterians and Methodists, established a number of educational, residential, and social institutions across Canada that were intended to instruct these new immigrants in the English

---

[1] Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York, 1978), 1-7.

language, and at the same time, familiarize them with "Christian" values and morals. In doing so, reformers hoped not only to contain what they believed to be a direct threat to Canada's identity and social unity, but also to regulate and control this menace in the interest of the nation's future.

In Central Canada, specifically Toronto and Montreal, missionaries were unsuccessful in their attempts to convert and then assimilate a sizable portion of either city's Chinese population. Continuous immigration between the 1880s and 1920s often left the missionaries struggling to provide an adequate number of instructors and volunteers in their missions. In addition, efforts to convert and assimilate the Chinese were often undermined by other local efforts to limit the impact of Chinese immigration. For example, J.C. Thomson, the secretary of the Chinese Mission in Montreal, admitted that there were a number of institutions working against efforts to assimilate the Chinese in Montreal. In 1896, he confessed that the city council, the judicial system, Chinatown, and the Canadian Pacific Railway had contributed to making his work in Montreal more taxing and trying than even the most routine work in China.[2] Missionaries were clearly dismayed at the lack of support and cooperation given them by local authorities. Despite sharing a similar interest in assimilating the Chinese, the latter actually hindered the progress of Christianity within the community through discriminatory taxes and by-laws that undermined efforts to create a Christian Chinese community in Montreal and Toronto.

Although many missionaries believed that their work had made some progress among the Chinese, as many learned to speak English, became Christians, and adopted western ways, the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions nonetheless remained woefully inadequate for the task of integrating the Chinese into Canada's dominant

---

[2] United Church Archives Toronto, Presbyterian Church of Canada, Board of Foreign Missions, Correspondence re Toronto and Montreal Chinese Mission, 1894-1925. J.C. Thomson to R.P. Mackay, June 13 1896, Accession No. 79.189C, Box 1, File 24. [Hereafter referred to by author, date, box and file number].

culture. In the aftermath of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, the missions ceased to be an effective means of evangelizing the Chinese. On the eve of church unification in 1925, Rev. S.S. Osterhout, one of the most prominent Methodist missionaries among the Chinese in Canada, noted what was becoming increasingly obvious to even the most optimistic of missionaries. He suggested that eloquent English sermons in Canadian churches, indiscriminate teaching by irresponsible Sunday School teachers, and no more than one or two per cent of the Chinese population actually attending either schools or churches, did not "provide for the building up of a strong striking force in the Chinese community or offer a means of aggressive evangelism among the Chinese."[3]

Osterhout's comments touched upon the concerns of his fellow workers, many of whom felt that evangelical work would be best served by Chinese organizations, including Chinese churches under the direction of Chinese ministers. As they had in Vancouver and Victoria, the Chinese gradually formed their own distinct congregations that were beyond the control of social reformers and missionaries. Having succumbed to a number of obstacles, some of which were beyond the control of the missionaries, the Chinese churches would go on to define their own place in Canadian society. This study will argue that, between 1894 and 1925, the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions were, in their own terms, unsuccessful in attempts to convert and assimilate the large number of Chinese immigrants believed to pose a moral threat to society and the process of nation-building. In terms of this study, these dates are important as they represent the period between the establishment of the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions in 1894, and the unification of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist Churches as the United Church of Canada in 1925. The formation of the United Church presents a logical termination date for this study for two reasons: first, unification meant that the missions were no longer under the jurisdiction of the various denominational churches; second, and most

---

[3] UCAT, S.S.Osterhout, September 1, 1925. Box 6, File 180.

important, the new United Church included not just existing denominational congregations, but many new churches, as well as several Chinese congregations that gradually replaced the missions.

Despite the wealth of primary material, surprisingly little has been written about the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions. Furthermore, much of the existing historiography focuses specifically upon British Columbia. This is, of course, due to the large number of Chinese who settled in the province, and the fact that British Columbia was the site of widespread anti-Oriental agitation. Nonetheless, many of these sources have some relevance to this study in that they allow for comparative analysis and provide methodological direction. For example, W. Peter Ward's study of British Columbia's response to Asian immigration argues that "Sinophobia" occurred not just at the level of popular thought, but that racist attitudes were also reflected in British Columbia's public policy.[4] As this paper will demonstrate, this was equally true for other provinces in Canada, including Ontario and Quebec.

Most important, from the perspective of this study, Ward's argument is based upon the notion of race as a social construction. Kay Anderson's study of Vancouver's Chinatown suggests the extent to which "Chinatown" itself was a social construction, conceived in a series of racially-defined images, many of which Canadians believed to be inherent in all Chinese.[5] This, she argues, led to widely held assumptions that the Chinese were unsanitary, immoral, and prone to vice. Madge Pon discusses how race shaped the dominant culture's attitude towards the Chinese, but also how gender, specifically images of Chinese males as oversexed, cunning and lecherous, contributed to the fears of many Canadians concerned about racial degeneration, immigration, and moral reform.[6] These

---

[4] For more on British Columbia and attitudes towards the Chinese, please see W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal, 1978).

[5] Kay Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), 82-105.

[6] See Madge Pon, "Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Chinese Masculinity in

representations of the Chinese were also part of the popular consciousness in Montreal and Toronto, where they were reflected in the views of missionaries and social reformers of all kinds.

The majority of studies on the Chinese in Canada concentrate not so much on how racist definitions were constructed, but on how they came to be so dominant in our nation's religious, social, and political discourses. Jin Tan and Patricia E. Roy have explored how economic and moral considerations, both with widespread appeal, influenced the decision to restrict Chinese immigration and implement stringent laws concerning their employment.[7] More recently, Peter S. Li, Donald Avery, and John Boyko have all demonstrated how fear of the Chinese resulted in institutional racism, particularly in the form of anti-Oriental legislation that restricted immigration.[8] While these studies focus primarily upon events that occurred in British Columbia, they are useful in demonstrating how the state, called upon by anxious citizens, attempted to regulate both the behaviour of the Chinese and the size of their community. These discussions of institutionalized forms of racism place developments in Montreal and Toronto, where anti-Oriental legislation and racist attitudes were also quite common, in their proper historical context.

No attempt to situate the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions in their sociohistorical setting would be complete without attention to the larger context of the Social Gospel movement. This movement emphasized the Protestant churches' responsibility for more than just the spiritual welfare of the individual: simple gospel truths

---

Jack Canuck" in Gender and History in Canada, edited by Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld. (Toronto, 1996) 88-100.

7 Jin Tan and Patricia E. Roy, The Chinese in Canada (Toronto, 1985), 11-13.

8 See Peter S. Li, The Chinese in Canada (Toronto, 1988); Donald H. Avery, Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994 (Toronto, 1995); and John Boyko, Last Steps to Freedom: The Evolution of Canadian Racism (Winnipeg, 1995).

were to be applied to the whole institutional character of contemporary society. There is a large number of sources detailing the relationship between evangelism and sociology that provide considerable background for any study of religion and missionary work in late 19th century Canada.[9] There is also a considerable literature detailing the accomplishments of various individual missionaries and organizations inspired by the Social Gospel's message. Many of these sources focus on the Victorian mission impulse, emphasizing the positive contributions of Presbyterians and Methodists to mission work in Asia and Canada. The motivations of the missionaries were similar, as were the racial constructions, whether applied overseas or in Canada. While works by Ruth Compton Brouwer, Rosemary Gagan, and Margaret Prang demonstrate the importance of the Social Gospel in providing direction to missionary work, it is important to recognize that there were significant differences between the objectives of overseas missions and domestic missions.[10] While missions in China and Japan were primarily concerned with converting individuals, domestic missions focused on assimilation as their principal goal. Therefore this paper is not overly concerned with overseas missions, instead focusing on other aspects of the Social Gospel movement that influenced the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions, specifically the development of eugenics and moral reform.

---

[9] For information on the Social Gospel see Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928 (Toronto, 1971); Neil Semple, The Lord's Dominion: The History of Methodism in Canada (Montreal and Kingston, 1996); John Webster Grant, A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto, 1988); and Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, A Full Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940 (Montreal, 1996).

[10] For more on overseas missions see Margaret Prang, "A Heart at Leisure with Itself": Caroline MacDonald of Japan (Vancouver, 1995); Ruth Compton Brouwer, New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914 (Toronto, 1990); Rosemary Ruth Gagan, A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925 (Montreal and Kingston, 1992).

Angus McLaren's work on eugenics in Canada is important to this study as he outlines how biological and social concerns increased the pressure to restrict the immigration of "defective aliens". He demonstrates that Canadians viewed the reproduction of the unfit *in* Canada, and the immigration of the unfit *to* Canada, as obvious threats to the nation's racial heritage.[11] Mariana Valverde's study of moral reform identifies how concerns about vice, race, sexuality, and immigration became synonymous with efforts to reform society in general. Valverde emphasizes how moral reform was the result of a complex set of cultural constructs, including the notion that "the race" was in immediate danger of "degeneration".[12] The discussion of racist rhetoric is important to this study; a large number of the reformers' discussions about the Chinese point to this relationship between Chinese immigrants, their culture, and the vice and demoralization that reformers believed to be seriously undermining Canadian society.

While much of the historiography is limited to the ways in which moral reform, popular attitudes towards immigration, and institutional racism influenced the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions, there are a number of works that provide a rare glimpse of the interaction between evangelical missionaries and Chinese immigrants. These texts help to contextualize this paper's argument, and also assist in interpreting the missions' efforts. In an article on Oriental immigration and Canada's Protestant clergy, W. Peter Ward argues that missionaries were faced with a troubling contradiction as they struggled with the notions of evangelical humanitarianism and ethnocentric nationalism. On one hand, the issue of the "Oriental's" moral welfare, spiritual health, and social well-being appealed to the missionary's charitable and evangelical instincts. On the other, the "Oriental" was seen as a threat to national customs and traditions, arousing the missionary's concern for

---

11 Angus McLaren, Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945 (Toronto, 1990), 46.

12 Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada (Toronto, 1991), 108.

Canada's social, religious, and political heritage.[13] This position is supported by Dora Nipp in her study of Toronto's Chinese community. Adding to Ward's argument, she contends that this ambivalence did not detract from the positive influence of church work on the socio-political development of the Chinese community.[14]

The studies in Edgar Wickberg's compilation, From China to Canada, similarly suggest that, while many missionaries believed that the Chinese were assimilable, their true objective was defensive: they wanted to prevent the Chinese from having an adverse effect upon Canadian culture. The missionaries were ambivalent, since they were sympathetic to the plight of the Chinese in the face of discriminatory legislation and popular attitudes. At the same time, they wanted to limit immigration and actively oppose many aspects of Chinese culture.[15] In contrast, Tan and Roy make a distinction between missionaries and the evangelical churches in general. They argue that, while the missionaries developed a "good" rapport with their Chinese congregations, Chinese and "white" lay members of the same congregation rarely came in contact. Furthermore, they argue that many self-proclaimed Christians were among the most active in calling for strict regulations.[16]

These various interpretations of missionary work provide a range of views that are useful in assessing the nature and intent of such work in Montreal and Toronto. The existing literature appears divided between historians who dispute whether the main objective of mission work was to "Christianize" or "Canadianize" the Chinese. As stated before, this paper argues that the primary concern of missionaries in Montreal and

---

13 W. Peter Ward, "The Oriental Immigrant and Canada's Protestant Clergy, 1858-1925," in BC Studies No. 22, Summer 1974., 40.

14 Dora Nipp, "The Chinese in Toronto," in Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945, edited by Robert F. Harney, (Toronto, 1985), 154.

15 Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg, and William E. Willmott, From China to Canada: A History of Chinese Communities in Canada, edited by Edgar Wickberg, (Toronto, 1982), 124.

16 Tan and Roy, 12.

Toronto was to regulate and control the Chinese in the latter sense. Fearful that these newcomers threatened the nation's social, religious, and political heritage, missionaries viewed assimilation rather than conversion as their primary objective. Furthermore, there is little evidence that missionaries were in any way troubled by the contradiction that several historians suggest existed between the principles of evangelical humanitarianism and ethnocentric nationalism. While undoubtedly some missionaries were genuinely concerned about the spiritual welfare of the Chinese, the majority were primarily concerned with ensuring that they "fit in" with the dominant culture. It is important to note that many of the missionaries' goals may not have been attainable even under the most favourable conditions. They nonetheless approached their task with the belief that they could successfully alter the religious, social, and cultural makeup of the Chinese. The missions had some impact on the sociopolitical development of Chinese communities in Montreal and Toronto, but they were unsuccessful in meeting the objectives that they had set for themselves: they were unable to assimilate a sizable portion of either city's Chinese population.

Historians seeking information on Chinese mission work must depend extensively upon the material collected in the United Church Archives. Material on the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions consists of the correspondence between the missionaries, most notably Thomas Humphries, J.C. Thomson, and John MacMillan, and their immediate superior within the Board of Foreign Missions, Rev. R.P. Mackay. These sources consist mainly of reports, observations, budget requests, lectures and sermons, and statistical information on the Chinese community. In addition, there is some correspondence from Chinese missionaries, including Ng Mon Hing, D.T. Lo, and Rev. C.H. Lum. It is important to note, however, that correspondence between the missionaries consists only of incoming reports; for whatever unknown reason, the Board of Foreign Missions did not retain Mackay's responses to these requests and reports. A second source available to historians is the vast number of texts on missionary work, immigration, and the Chinese

written by missionaries and social reformers. This includes a number of works from missionaries involved with the Chinese in British Columbia, including G.E. Hartwell, J.C. Speer, and the first moderator of the United Church of Canada, Rev. S.S. Osterhout. These sources are supported by a wide variety of published, contemporary studies of immigration, including those by W.G. Smith and J.S. Woodsworth.[17]

There are a number of problems with this existing primary material. The correspondence between missionaries provides considerable information on the day-to-day management of the missions. However, efforts to present the missions in a positive manner to the Board of Foreign Missions mean that there is little detailed information on the problems facing the missionaries, or on their relative lack of success in meeting their objectives. Respecting the studies of immigration and missionary work, it is difficult to discern what proportion of these reformers' claims are actually verifiable and what proportion are social constructions based on racial prejudice. Overall, the bias presented in these works is particularly useful when considering racist attitudes and assumptions; it makes it far more difficult, however, to assess whether missionaries managed to achieve their goals. For example, these sources do not reveal the extent to which the missions influenced the Chinese communities, as a whole, nor do they indicate to what level reformers and missionaries were involved in regulating the behaviour of the Chinese. Furthermore, these sources are limited in that they present only one perspective on the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions. There are unfortunately no sources detailing the response of the Chinese towards the missionaries.

---

[17] While Woodsworth was quite critical of Canada's immigration policy, he had little to say about the arrival of the Chinese. Instead he quotes extensively from another missionary, J.C. Speer, on the subject of China and Chinatowns. For more information on Woodsworth and immigration, see J.S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates, 2nd edition. (Toronto, 1972); and Allan G. Mills, Fool For Christ: The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto, 1991).

This summary overview of the various historical texts dealing with the Chinese in Canada demonstrates, above all, that little work has been done on an important group of immigrants in Canadian history. Perhaps even more surprising, given the intensity of the Social Gospel movement in Victorian Canada, no comprehensive study has ever been conducted of the various Methodist and Presbyterian missions among immigrants residing in Canada's principal cities. This study is intended to shed some light on the evolution of the complex relationships between race, immigration, moral reform, vice, and religion, as revealed through an analysis of the ideas and activities of the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions in their formative years between 1894 and 1925. The study will focus on a number of important themes, including how the Chinese were viewed as a "problem" by the dominant culture, the establishment of the missions, the forms of instruction and education that the Chinese received, the problems and difficulties confronting the missionaries, and the overall success of the missions.

II. The Chinese: A Biological, Social, and Cultural "Problem"

Between 1904 and 1914, nearly two and a half million immigrants entered Canada, more than at any time since Confederation. The Chinese, confronted with famine, poverty, and the Taiping Rebellion in China, actually preceded this influx. They began to arrive in Victoria and Vancouver as indentured labourers and miners in the 1850s. Between 1881 and 1884, nearly 17,000 Chinese arrived in British Columbia, where they had been imported by Andrew Onderdonk, a contractor, to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway.[18] This wave of newcomers brought about a relative decline in the native born population, leading many Canadians to conclude that Canada's Anglo-Celtic heritage was in grave danger. The arrival of Oriental immigrants, particularly the large number of transient male Chinese labourers, heightened concerns among Canadians who believed that immigration, among other factors, also contributed to social degeneration and seriously jeopardized the process of nation-building. By 1922, reflecting on the problem of Oriental immigration to Canada, W.G. Smith, one of the nation's earliest students of immigration, noted that:

> ...The Oriental is doing something to us here and now, namely, presenting a very difficult problem to young Canadians who are zealous of building a nation solid in foundation and symmetrical and beautiful in structure. Suppose it be decided to leave them out of the edifice. Even granted policy of future exclusion, there is no likelihood of the Oriental dying out, or of migrating elsewhere, and by increase from natural birth rate, will be as acute in the future as in the present, in the sense that thousands of Orientals, especially of the Chinese and Japanese races, will be living in our midst, excluded from our national life, yet potent factors in our industrial life.[19]

---

[18] Li, 16-19.

[19] W.G. Smith, Building the Nation: The Churches' Relation to the Immigrant (Toronto, 1922), 137.

Smith recognized that, even if restrictions were placed on immigration, measures were needed to ensure that the Chinese already in Canada were quickly integrated into the nation's dominant culture.

Besides immigration, a second, related factor, the rise of the city, was also believed to threaten society's moral order. Forced to live in segregated areas, where they were all the more visible, the Chinese were also blamed for an endless number of problems associated with urban development and industrialization. Commenting on Vancouver's Chinatown, Osterhout wrote:

> ...Even when the better thinking and better living Chinese petition the local and federal authorities for better enforcement of law in regard to gambling, slavery, bigamy and polygamy, their prayers are ignored and the Orientalizing process continues... We seem to forget that there is such a thing as a social unity, although vice and disease practice it three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Disease germs, propagated in the insanitary conditions of congested, segregated areas, are quickly carried, some in one way some in another, to the best homes and families in the best residential districts. Just now it may mean nothing to you that five to ten per cent. of the Chinese population are addicted to opium smoking, but it may be a matter of great concern if an opium vendor for profit places some deadly narcotic in the hands of your nearest kin, and in your family circle and you discover, all too late, that one of your number would sell body and soul to obtain the drug...[20]

Segregated communities, including Chinatowns, were believed by many missionaries to be immune to the law, thereby contributing to vice, disease, and eventually the corruption and degeneration of what many believed to be the best elements of society. The image of large numbers of Chinese men, living in segregated communities and participating in illicit activities, while ignorant of Christian morals and values, prompted the nation's evangelical churches to establish a program that would introduce them to both Protestant Christianity and related concepts of Canadian citizenship.

---

[20] S.S.Osterhout, Orientals in Canada (Toronto, 1916), 13-14.

While the Presbyterian and Methodist missions that were established in China were primarily intended to evangelize the Chinese, the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions had an even more difficult task, as they were called upon to assimilate the Chinese. Christian instruction was but one of several objectives that necessitated the large number of English classes, Sunday schools, prayer meetings, and social activities directed towards the Chinese in western Canada, as well as throughout Ontario and Quebec. The moral reform preoccupation of many Canadians towards the end of the nineteenth century also heightened concerns regarding the perceived relationship between immigration, vice, and the increasing trend towards urban living. The Chinese, like many other immigrant groups, including Jews, Italians, Japanese, and Ukrainians, were viewed as a contributing factor to this so-called "problem".[21] However, it is important to note that Asian immigrants were considered the least desirable of all immigrant groups. Many Canadians believed that Anglo-Celtics were racially superior to all other groups and therefore immigrants were accepted according to how closely they approached this ideal. Among all immigrants, British and Americans were considered most desirable by reformers and politicans, followed by northern and western Europeans, then central and eastern Europeans, and lastly Orientals and Blacks.[22]

In order to establish a moral nation, one which might be equated with God's kingdom on earth, evangelical reformers believed that Canada should remain a white, Anglo-Celtic, Protestant country. Hence, it was important to assimilate all new immigrants, to convert non-Christians to the "true" faith, and to bestow upon Aboriginal Canadians the benefits of Protestant civilization.[23] To end the moral degeneration in the cities and among the nation's youth, social reformers and religious leaders advocated a

---

21 For more on the "problem" of immigration and the classification of race, please see Donald Avery, "Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada 1896-1932 (Toronto, 1979).

22 McLaren, 47.

23 Semple, 348.

series of reforms that dealt specifically with social issues. Across Canada, the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, combining theology with social work, introduced a number of settlement houses, which were modeled after the efforts of American and British reformers. They also promoted such organizations as the YMCA and the All People's Churches, the latter modeled after J.S. Woodsworth's All People's Mission in Winnipeg.

Additionally, reformers sought the support of the law to assist them in their efforts to stop any further moral decline. In the case of Canada's Chinese population, religious leaders called for restrictions on immigration, increased police surveillance, and criminal prosecution to the fullest extent. Many believed that, in order to protect the nation's social, religious, and political heritage, it was necessary to integrate the Chinese fully into Canada's dominant Anglo-Celtic culture. Yet many missionaries and religious leaders felt that this was a near impossible task, believing that it would be extremely difficult to assimilate the Chinese, due to their contrasting social and cultural values.

Just what was it that many Canadians feared about the Chinese? Many believed that they had a natural inclination towards vice, namely, gambling, drugs, and, to a lesser extent, prostitution. In 1905, the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, commenting on their work among the Chinese in Toronto, wrote:

> While a measure of success has attended the effort put forth by certain of our churches, the majority live according to the "light" of China--toiling hard in the daytime, the night given over to gambling, opium-smoking and kindred vices; even the baneful influence of the Joss-house is not lacking. As in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, indeed in all large cities of North America, the problem of controlling and speedily evangelizing this element now confronts Toronto.[24]

From the start, the Woman's Missionary Society recognized that missions among the Chinese were as much about controlling and regulating the behaviour of the Chinese as they were about converting them to Christianity.

---

[24] UCAT, The Missionary Outlook Vol. XXIV, No. 11, November 1905, 253.

Others were much more sympathetic towards the Chinese, recognizing that the problem was in fact a matter of cultural differences. Rev. J.C.Speer, a Methodist missionary working in Vancouver, felt that the Chinese simply did not realize that gambling was frowned upon in Canada:

> When the Chinese come to our shores they naturally follow the ways of evil which were common in their own land, unless their are forces at work here which will deter them. The Chinaman in China is an inveterate gambler, and the same man in Canada follows the habit of all his life without any thought that he is doing wrong. We have heard often the loud cry against these people for their fearful tendency to gamble, but it might occur to us that the Chinese have never really been awakened to the wickedness of this practice. From childhood they have practiced this ruinous habit in its simpler and more complex forms, and having never been shown that it is wrong to take another's money without giving real value for it they are as dark on this as upon a thousand other matters of right and wrong in this new world.[25]

According to Speer, the Chinese were not so much naturally wicked as they were ignorant of Western ways.

While many reformers were quick to remind their readers that not all Chinese were involved in illicit activities, they were not as willing to dismiss the damaging effects of vice on society. In a letter to a member of the Ontario legislature in 1913, Rev. R.P.Mackay, superintendent of the Chinese Mission, had recognized the growing impact of gambling and opium dens on Toronto's inhabitants. He noted that they were "demoralizing the life of the city and not affecting the Chinese alone but inevitably corrupting a wider and wider circle of victims."[26] In a series of articles published in Maclean's Magazine in 1920, Emily F. Murphy, then a family court magistrate from Alberta, reported that opium led directly to insanity, crime, racial deterioration, and social wastage. According to the report, an even more alarming fact was that, when questioned, Vancouver's Chinese admitted that as much opium was sold to whites, and not just men and boys, but women and girls as

---

[25] J.C. Speer, The Story of China in Canada (Toronto, 1906), 40-41.
[26] UCAT, R.P. Mackay to W.J. Hanna, M.P.P., February 9 1913, Box 2, File 78.

well.[27] This admission was much more than just an effort to control the Chinese community, it was also a carefully orchestrated attempt to regulate the moral behaviour of women.

Murphy agreed with Speer's view that education was an important element in reducing crime among the Chinese. In a later study on opium use in Canada, published in 1922, Murphy argued that:

> As far as we know, nothing of an educative campaign has been tried among the trafficking Chinese except what is taught them through the rougher methods of the courts. Their education might be an experiment worth trying. Perhaps, if we explained, through interpreters, what our ideals are and how we expect them in our accepting our hospitality to maintain these ideals, it might help. We might also tell them that if they are to remain here, we insist on their observing our laws, and on their being clean alike in body and mind. We must tell them this again and again till they get the ideal--or till they get out.[28]

Although they appear to suggest patience and understanding, Murphy's comments indicate that, in reality, there was little tolerance or flexibility among social reformers towards immigrants who were unwilling or unable to "fit in". Influenced by paternalistic views, evangelical missionaries, politicians, and reformers believed that education allowed them to keep a watchful eye over these immigrants, and at the same time, provided them with an opportunity to instill Christian values and morals in the Chinese.

Reformers believed that, in cities such as Toronto and Montreal, living conditions and the presence of foreign sections, including Chinatowns, contributed directly to immorality. In a letter published in Osterhout's work on Orientals, Rev. G.E. Hartwell argued that the Chinese segregated districts were synonymous with immorality:

---

[27] Emily F. Murphy, "The Grave Drug Menace," in Maclean's Magazine Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, February 15, 1920. For more information on Emily Murphy, see Christine Mander, Emily Murphy: Rebel (Toronto, 1985).

[28] Emily F. Murphy, The Black Candle (Toronto, 1922), 108-109.

> The carcass to attract the foul birds of Western vices, the dumping-ground of those evils which the white man wishes to remove from his own door. Around what centre did the lower grades of saloons, pool-rooms, theatres and red-light districts circle? Chinatown. When men and women were 'down and out'-- where did they seek shelter? Chinatown. The picture is too dark to dwell upon. It is the darkest page in the history of immigration. If sinning against a fellow man brings punishment, the sin of permitting the Chinese to enter Canada and then sarcastically driving him into the quagmire of a modern Chinatown must be punished.[29]

Hartwell was quick to associate the Chinese with dark images of degeneration and immorality, going so far as to depict the Chinese as a fallen, immoral race destined for lives of sin. These images and metaphors were important in constructing the dominant society's view of the Chinese throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Social Survey Commission's report on Toronto, published in 1915, suggested that the influx of foreigners, especially Jews, Chinese, and Italians, posed a serious threat to "Canadian" communities. The commission argued that immigrant areas of the city played an important role in promoting the "social evil":

> The opportunities for the establishment of a "white slave" system are nowhere so favorable as in the foreign sections of a great city, where the inhabitants are comparatively isolated by their ignorance of English, and where the newest comers, especially, are easily victimized, on account of their lack of knowledge of the laws and customs of a new and strange country. It has been pointed out that it is under such conditions that the only cases were found which savored at all of "white slavery".[30]

Yet Chinatown itself was a paradox. Despite the fact that reformers repeatedly attacked its presence in their cities, like all Canadians, they were largely responsible for its existence. If the Chinese were deemed unassimilable, it was because "Canadians" did not want them in their midst - except in strictly -defined, carefully - contained communities.

---

29 G.E. Hartwell, Undated 1912, in Osterhout, 29.

30 Report of the Social Survey Commission of Toronto (Toronto, 1915), 14-15; 42.

Anti-immigration laws contributed significantly to the rise of Chinatowns across the nation. The Chinese Immigration Act of 1903, which raised the head tax to five hundred dollars, meant that many Chinese could not afford to bring their families with them to Canada. As a result, those Chinese who under other circumstances might have settled in smaller communities with their families, were forced to seek companionship with others who spoke their language, and they therefore migrated towards the cities. In her work on Vancouver, Kay Anderson suggests that Chinatown was the result of a number of push and pull factors: while cultural traditions bound the Chinese to a localized community, whites nonetheless sought to construct a separate, segregated Chinese district.[31] Furthermore, the physical separation that existed between the Chinese and other Canadians is believed to have helped perpetuate racism in Vancouver, since whites were insulated from the consequences of anti-Chinese racism.[32] Many commentators suggested that Chinese men hid their corruption, vice, and sexual hunger for white women behind a facade or partition in their laundries and restaurants. This, in turn, has symbolic significance, suggesting that there existed an insurmountable distance between the "white" and "yellow" races. Furthermore, the notion that it was the Chinese, rather than the dominant society, that constructed these "partitions" or "barriers", contributed to the belief that the Chinese were devious and opposed to assimilation.[33] What was true for Vancouver's Chinatown was no doubt equally true for Montreal and Toronto. While many reformers, politicians, and missionaries feared Chinatown's impact on society, its existence was largely their responsibility, since they had no desire to share their

---

31 Anderson, 30.

32 Timothy J. Stanley, "Schooling, White Supremacy, and the Formation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia," in BC Studies No. 107, Autumn, 1995, 7-8.

33 Madge Pon, "Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Masculinity in Jack Canuck" in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. Gender and History in Canada (Toronto, 1996), 88-89.

neighbourhoods, schools, and shops with the Chinese and in fact preferred to keep them "contained".

Efforts to limit Chinese immigration led to the development of Chinatowns. The high cost of bringing families to Canada also led to the association of Chinese men with vice, as it encouraged the Chinese to import women as prostitutes and concubines.[34] The Methodists believed that family was the key to creating a new moral order, since family life was the core of social organization, the cornerstone of civilization, and the foundation of national life. It was believed among many Methodists that newcomers did not appreciate the crucial value of the family, and did not share their view about the proper nature and function of family life.[35] Eugenics was an additional factor, since many reformers believed that immigrants encumbering Canada with massive social problems were in fact lowering the fertility rate of Anglo-Saxons who were forced to restrict their own families if they were to pay taxes to support immigrants.[36] Hence, missionaries believed that it was disastrous for such large numbers of Chinese men to live together without either women or children. Like loggers and miners, the Chinese lived in a "dangerous and degrading environment".[37] Despite their repeated warnings, missionaries had little proof that any Chinese in either Toronto or Montreal were involved in "white slavery". In Toronto, for example, no charges of sexual assault were ever laid against the Chinese in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.[38]

While the large numbers of single men in Chinatown were perceived as a potential danger to society, missionaries were much more concerned that Chinatown jeopardized the nation's cultural destiny. Throughout Canada, a pluralistic society, marked by cultural

---

34 Valverde, 86-87.
35 Semple, 341.
36 McLaren, 55.
37 J.C. Speer in Woodsworth, 145.
38 Carolyn Strange, Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City 1880-1930 (Toronto, 1995), 155.

diversity and substantial social divisions, was considered unacceptable to nativists, many of whom believed that immigrants deliberately resisted change, and therefore thwarted efforts to create a homogenous society.[39] To many reformers and missionaries, urban life allowed immigrants to retain their native habits and avoid society's accepted norms. Rev. Osterhout, among others, believed that:

> In rural and in smaller isolated groups the immigrant more readily conforms to accepted customs. He learns the English language and is assimilated culturally, if not racially, with very little difficulty. Not so in the cities, where, as I have already intimated, he imports a bit of his native land with most of the habits, good and bad, of the Orient. This, together with the laxity or indifference of Canadians regarding conditions in these Orientalized districts, constitutes a major problem.

According to Osterhout, the problem was that no effort was being made to explain the dominant culture's values and morals to the Chinese. As a result, in the wake of the moral reform movement, areas such as Chinatowns were being left behind. This was, of course, based largely on the notion of their own cultural superiority. Other groups, once aware of the dominant culture's values, would quickly see the error of their ways. Osterhout wrote:

> Can a city or town have one district where Western civilization is abrogated, a section where the laws of the land are suspended, a community exempt from the rules and regulations that govern the body politic, and the civic authorities and the citizens thereof not be intensely influenced in their whole attitude toward right and wrong, purity and impurity, law and lawlessness? In the attempts to clean up Western cities, the Chinese districts are too often left out of consideration...[40]

Reformers gradually recognized that it was not enough to restrict Chinese immigration; a comprehensive plan for evangelizing Chinese would be required in order to assimilate them. If they could not be removed, they had to be regulated – contained or controlled.

---

[39] Ward, White Canada Forever, 20-22.
[40] S.S.Osterhout, Orientals in Canada, 28-32.

While nativism undeniably played an important role in the construction of a Chinese "problem" that threatened the Canadian "race" it is important to recognize that race was not solely a biological concept. It was also related to concepts of parliamentary rule, sexual morality, and Protestant middle-class respectability. Without these connotations there would have been little point in converting ethnic groups such as the Chinese.[41] Although some reformers called for legislation insisting upon certain "Canadian" standards of living, and others called for immigration regulations specifying a knowledge of English, the majority believed that a Christian education was the key to successfully integrating the Chinese.

One of the most important functions of the Social Gospel movement was to establish a connection between reform efforts and the nation's religious faith.[42] Hence, what better way to introduce the Chinese to Canada than to promote Christian values and morals, a key element of national citizenship? In some ways the missionaries were obliged to evangelize the Chinese, despite the fact that evangelization at times conflicted with their efforts to regulate and control these recent immigrants. No missionary could deny that there was a troubling contradiction between Christianity's humanitarian principles and the ethnocentric nationalism so often displayed by moral reformers. Missionaries viewed the Chinese as children of God in need of support and protection, yet saw Chinese culture as a threat to Christian beliefs and hegemony.[43] In the end, however, missionaries recognized that it was far more productive to approach the Chinese sympathetically, and to offer them Christian charity. A Congregationalist, W.G. Smith, justified evangelizing the Chinese in the following manner:

> The religion of the great organized bodies of this Dominion is Christian, and these must bear some definite relation to the non-Christian bodies within the land. That

---

41 Valverde, 107.
42 Allen, 3.
43 Boyko, 25.

> attitude cannot be one of indifference, for then it ceases to be Christian. Since the Christian believes that he has something far better than the religion, say, of the Asiatic to offer, it would be a repudiation of neighborliness and a violation of his own faith, if he did not present his gift for the acceptance of the Oriental, feeling assured that, in presenting it, he himself would not be impoverished but both would be enriched. The Christian religion does not lose but gains by what it imparts.[44]

A proper Christian education was viewed as the key moralizing force in the lives of new immigrants. Missionaries believed that, without such guidance, non-Christians were likely to continue in their erroneous ways, even if they received some sort of secular education. Using an anecdote he had heard while visiting Montreal in 1904, the secretary for Toronto's Chinese mission demonstrated this point:

> There is no better way of helping foreign missions than by teaching the foreigners who are in our midst. I hope the aim of every teacher will be to teach Christ, and may I remind you of the folly of education that has not Christ in it. When I was in Montreal last year I heard Bishop Bond tell of a chief who was brought from Australia to London to get educated and go back to uplift his people. He got educated but not a Christian education and went back only to become the Captain of a band of cannibals. Therefore I say instill into the minds of these men the principles of the sermon on the mount and the great fact that without Christ there is no salvation.[45]

While the image of the Chinese as hopelessly degenerate preoccupied many missionaries and reformers, a second image led directly to efforts to evangelize the Chinese. The notion of the Chinese as a race of idolatrous, superstitious, ignorant heathens was an equally powerful force in awakening the missionary consciousness, since it gave them hope that the Chinese might be "saved".

Missionaries repeatedly reminded their superiors and the public that the Chinese continued to live in "heathen darkness." In their efforts to convert the Chinese to

---

[44] Smith, 158.

[45] UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report for 1905, February 18 1905, Box 2, File 71.

Christianity, missionaries sought to undermine Chinese religious beliefs and practices. For example, a Methodist publication, The Missionary Outlook, conducted an interview with a Chinese Christian on the subject of joss-houses in 1905. The article reported that the Chinese prayed to stone and wooden images, and lived in constant fear of both their gods and priests — the latter group, it was said, managed to survive by pretending to cure the sick.[46] While attempts to undermine the credibility of Chinese religious practices are understandable given the missionaries' desire to evangelize the Chinese, attacks upon Chinese institutions such as joss-houses or theaters could be dangerous for missionaries. Since the joss-house was the centre of cultural, social, and economic activities in Chinatown, efforts to close it may have been seen as direct attempts to undermine the community's collective security, and may have even forced some newcomers into Chinatown's less respectable boarding-houses and gambling dens.

In another apparent contradiction, many missionaries believed that, although the Chinese were ignorant in matters of Christian religion and western culture, their arrival in Canada was a heaven-sent opportunity to transform the world. Rev. Speer suggested that the personal contact of the "devout Christian teacher with the dark-minded heathen" was one of the strongest factors in missionary work. He wrote:

> For the most part the teachers are those whose hearts have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and they see that in the presence of these godless people the foreign mission field has brought to our very doors. Many who could not go to the foreign mission field see that the work has been brought within reach, and that "the fields are white unto harvest." In the foreign cities of China there is little or no need, and therefore no desire, to learn the English language, but here it becomes the golden key to unlock the fast closed doors of the heathen mind.[47]

---

[46] UCAT, The Missionary Outlook Vol. XXIV, No. 11. November 1905, 254.
[47] J.C. Speer, 66.

As Speer suggests, such education was intended to awaken both the hearts and minds of the Chinese students. In an article on educational techniques, J.C. Thomson, missionary-at-large for Montreal, emphasized his students' ignorance and sinfulness, while reminding his readers of their reverential disposition, moral intuition, and "Oriental susceptibility". He also stressed the fact that these students, once Christian, might return to China, where, it was hoped, they would spread the Gospel. While criticizing their faults, he at the same time praised their virtues, especially their cultural respect for learning:

> Learning without religion is vain. 'The tree of knowledge is not the tree of life," but Christianity is the key of all true learning... Indeed, the very moral intuition imparted by the study of Confucius and other sages has been prepratory to sanctified morals or Christianity; and there is a childish aptitude in their simplicity of mind to religious impressions and Oriental receptivity of bible story. As with other children bible instruction may be given in various forms suited to their comprehension; so it is with the Chinese adult pupil. Our pupils do not come thirsting for the water of life, have little or no knowledge of it indeed, and love sin with the least conviction of its sinfulness... Let us not decrease our native scholar's reverential disposition, so important in inculcating worshipful feeling and respect for authority... One cannot know his Saviour till he knows his guilt. There is in the Chinese the least sense of sin and the Holy Spirit alone can bring conviction and reveal a Saviour, since all divine truth is spiritually, not intellectually discerned... Ever remember in a special way those untold millions in 'regions beyond,' from whom our scholars come as 'messengers of the nation,' and to whom they are sure to return.[48]

Despite the apparent conflict that existed between the interests of evangelical humanitarianism and ethnocentric nationalism, Thomson's message, and that of other reformers, is clear. Religion, particularly instruction in Christian morals and values, was the most efficient way to convert the Chinese, thereby removing them from their so-called heathen darkness and ignorance. It was also an effective means of instilling values of Canadian citizenship and puting an end to the perceived moral threat that the Chinese posed to society. Furthermore, by introducing Christianity to the Chinese in Canada,

---

[48] UCAT, J.C. Thomson, November 14, 1898. Unknown Newspaper, Box 1, File 27.

missionaries hoped to gain some influence in what was viewed as the most important missionary field, that of China.

III. Christianity, Schooling, and the Creation of the Missions

While efforts to evangelize the Chinese in British Columbia were underway as early as the 1860s, the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions were not established until 1894. Toronto's missionaries (under the direction of the Presbyterian Church), first reported on the existence of a Chinatown, situated on the west side along Queen Street West, in 1900. The missionaries indicated that the Chinese required both prayer services and police supervision. At that time, it was reported that there were nearly 200 Chinese attending the various Sunday schools throughout the city.[49] Over the next few years, missionaries spent considerable time attempting to arrive at some definite conclusions concerning the number of Chinese in the city. In December 1901, Thomas Humphries, secretary of the Toronto Chinese Mission between 1894 and 1915, concluded that there were 126 laundries and restaurants, and 286 men, of whom 173, or nearly 60 percent, were attending the schools.[50]

As early as 1894, Humphries had suggested to his superiors that the missionaries should set about visiting the Chinese in their shops. He noted that some care should be taken, since the Chinese, industrious and hardworking, did not like to be interrupted in their work.[51] Besides talking individually with the men, exhorting them to attend the various schools, and distributing religious tracts, the missionaries also conducted a census of the Chinese in 1901. Yet, at the mission's annual meeting two years later, the secretary reported that there were serious inconsistencies in the number of men estimated to be living in the city. He wrote:

> There have been many statements made as to the number of Chinese in Toronto. I think many of these have been exaggerated, and while the Chinese population has increased since our last annual meeting I think I am safe in saying that there are no more than 900 Chinese in the city. There are quite a number of transient

---

[49] UCAT, Thomas Humphries to R.P. Mackay, July 25, 1900. Box 1, File 33.
[50] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, December 9, 1901. Box 1, File 34.
[51] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, May 5, 1894. Box 1, File 32.

> men but they can scarcely be included in the estimate. I have with me tonight a full list of the laundries in the city, and the total in 226, in addition to these there are about a dozen stores and restaurants, if you allow three for each place the total will be a little over 700, but I have allowed for a larger number.[52]

Between August and October 1903, another census was conducted, but this too remained somewhat inconclusive. Humphries reported that it had taken him three months to visit all the laundries whereas before it had previously taken just two months to conduct the survey. He noted, "the number of laundries has increased from 125 (when I first took a census of them) to 196 and the number of men in the city must be nearly 600..."[53]

It seems clear from their reports to the Board of Foreign Missions that missionaries in Toronto were overly preoccupied with the number of Chinese living in the city. One explanation for this is that it gave the missionaries a sense of how many workers and volunteers were required, as well as the number of classes to be held. Most important, however, was the fact that repeated visiting of the Chinese in their homes and businesses was an effective means of monitoring their behaviour. Many of the fears and concerns surrounding Chinese immigration in Canada were stimulated by an exaggerated perception of the number of immigrants.[54] This certainly appears to have been the situation in Toronto, where, despite having a smaller number of Chinese than British Columbia had, there were constant expressions of anxiety about the growing number of immigrants. In surveying the Chinese community, missionaries were attempting to identify their spiritual needs, while keeping a close watch on what they believed was a potentially dangerous and expanding foreign element.

In Montreal, no attempt was made to discover the actual number of Chinese immigrants residing in the city. This may be partially explained by the fact that Montreal

---

[52] UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report, February 18, 1903. Box 2, File 71.

[53] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, October 6, 1903. Box 1, File 36.

[54] Tan and Roy, 10.

served as the transfer point for many distant countries including Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico, and the United States. As a result, a sizable percentage of the city's Chinese population were transient labourers, many of whom had little intention of remaining there for any length of time. Missionaries would have been required to make substantial adjustments in their surveying methods in order to keep track of the fluctuations in the population.

Despite having no definite knowledge of the number of Chinese in the city, Montreal's missionaries began outlining their proposals for the mission in an address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1894. In their petition, they insisted that Canada's Chinese population was constantly increasing and that no effort was being put forth for their evangelization. Stating that they had a responsibility and an obligation to "assist" these immigrants, the missionaries also contended that it was inadvisable to have such a large heathen population within Canada's borders, citing a recent example of a Chinese funeral involving "heathenish ceremonies" in Montreal. But they also argued that it was their Christian duty to present the Gospel to the Chinese, and that such work would be extremely beneficial to local congregations, foreign missions, and mission work in China. [55]

Above all else, the Montreal Chinese Mission aimed to protect the Chinese from the dangerous influences of Chinatown, particularly situations that involved gambling, opium smoking, and prostitution. Montreal's Chinatown was located in the city's Dufferin district, along Lagauchetiere Street, a rundown residential area consisting of numerous warehouses, light industries, and lodging houses. The large number of male factory workers residing in the area resulted in the establishment of laundries and restaurants, which were provided by Chinese immigrants.[56] Living conditions in Dufferin district were

---

[55] UCAT, Petitioners to the Venerable, General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, May 18, 1894. Box 1, File 22.

[56] David Chuen Yan Lai, "Chinatowns": Towns Within Cities in Canada (Vancouver, 1988), 100-101.

of secular reformers as well as missionaries and church officials. In the early 1920s, Robert Percy, a sociology student a McGill University, conducted a study of the district. He noted that the area was marked by racial tensions, and that there was considerable noise, dirt, stimulation, vice, and despair.[57]

In their efforts to remove Chinese students from the immoral and unsanitary influences of Montreal's Chinatown, missionaries repeatedly confronted those whom they held responsible for the crime and vice in the district, including Song Kee, a powerful gambler. One year after the mission was established in 1894, the Presbyterians under Thomson's direction, and with the support of the Canadian Pacific Railway, established an anti-Chinatown Christian boarding house.[58] The district is believed to have already contained several rescue missions in the 1890s, presumably intended to counteract the widespread prostitution in the area.[59] The missionaries viewed gambling, opium smoking, and prostitution as vices that derived from a lack of alternative activities for the Chinese in their non-working hours. To prevent young men from participating in these activities, they often provided residential accommodations outside of Chinatown.[60]

In Montreal, accommodations for the Chinese developed out of an incident involving a gambling raid in June 1896. After seven Chinese were caught in a gambling house at the time of a raid, Thomson was asked by the presiding judge to explain their guilt to them. While Thomson had gladly assisted them in securing funds to pay their fines, as he believed that they had learned their lesson from this experience, he remained wary of Chinatown's negative "influences":

---

57 Robert Percy, "Dufferin District," 8-9., cited in Marlene Shore, The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, The Chicago School, and the Origins of Social Research in Canada (Toronto, 1987), 141-142.

58 UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, November 9, 1895. Box 1, File 23.

59 Percy, 89-93, cited in Shore, 141-143.

60 Con *et al*, 96.

> I had an argument afterwards with the keepers in Chinatown but have no fear of holding my own there and mean to go there this afternoon. I think Chinatown pretty well conquered, though it would have been easier had it been begun before Song Kee was so deeply entrenched. But as to him we gained a further advantage over him this week also, in that the C.P.R. promise to prevent any further "sheep stealing" on his part. Being left out, he has been in concur with others, specially the C.P.R. middlemen, trying and succeeding at this. We expect our Christian boarding house now well patronized to be crowded next Monday or Tuesday by new arrivals... Our Night School, I may add, is doing finely as to teachers and scholars in our convenient and pleasant quarters, and just about where I have all along been wanting them when the time should come, in good locality outside of Chinatown, but on the street they go by from C.P.R. to China quarters.[61]

Hence the missionaries envisioned themselves in an epic struggle against the immoral and degenerate influences of Montreal's Chinatown. Both the Montreal Chinese Mission and Song Kee, who also owned a boarding house, were in direct competition for those Chinese arriving on the railways. Through boarding houses, surveys, schools, and visitations the Presbyterians hoped to intercept the Chinese who, in heading towards Chinatown, were destined for a life of crime and vice.

While boarding houses were among the most effective methods of removing the Chinese from the negative influences of Chinatown, the most popular method was the use of English classes and Sunday Schools. In 1900, there were five Sunday Schools serving the Chinese in Toronto, including one at the Y.M.C.A. The largest of these was Cooke's School, located on the east side. Along with the East Church on Oak Street, it provided easy access to the 28 laundries in the vicinity. Under the direction of several teachers, including Wong Foo, a Chinese Christian, Cooke's Church acquired some early success, receiving six Chinese into its church.[62]

Initial reports in Toronto were extremely encouraging. One must, however, be wary of the missionaries' reports of success since many were seeking to gain support for

---

[61] UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, June 13, 1896. Box 1, File 24.
[62] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, July 25, 1900. Box 1, File 33.

their endeavors among the Chinese, and therefore it was common practice to focus on positive results. Noting that the Chinese were receptive to Christian teaching, Humphries praised the contributions of the Chinese Christians, who did much to spread the faith among the non-Christians:

> I had with me one of the Christian Chinamen and he has helped me very much. There are one or two others I will ask to help me some time later and in this way will accomplish two objects. viz The developing of these men along Christian lines, and helping me to do what I could not do so well without them, and if you will permit me to state. I think our efforts are bringing about results already. As in West Church School a week ago last Sabbath they had 12 men. Yesterday they had 30 (more scholars than teachers). I have visited Cooke's Church School and Oak St. School and found them doing faithful work with nearly enough teachers for the number of men attending.[63]

Besides regular classes, the missionaries continued to visit the Chinese in their homes. Each month, Rev. Humphries reported on his work to his superiors in the Foreign Missions, as he did in January 1902:

> Since I have presented my last report I have made 100 calls on Chinamen, have given to them 74 Gospel tracts and 8 new Testaments and had the privilege of presenting the claims of Christ to many of these men, with others I could only urge their continued attendance at school. Several who were not attending I have persuaded to come, with a result that there is an increase in attendance in nearly all the schools... I have distributed about 150 Christmas letters written in Chinese pointing out the reason why we keep Xmas day and what it means to us. Thus my time sowing the seed, sometimes watering, at other times exhorting and encouraging and helping and praying that He who alone can give the increase may be pleased to bless our feeble efforts and ere long to bring many of these to trust in Jesus.[64]

Although unable to speak Chinese, Humphries reported that he was cordially welcomed in every laundry that he visited. He claimed that the city's most recent immigrants, many of

---

[63] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, November 11, 1901. Box 1, File 34.
[64] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, January 31, 1902. Box 1, File 35.

whom looked upon him with suspicion, also welcomed him after learning that he was a Ya Su man, a Jesus man.[65] In addition to this work, Ng Mon Hing, a Chinese missionary employed by the Presbyterians routinely visited the Chinese in their homes, in the hospital, and in prison. Besides conducting bible classes, and prayer meetings, he raised funds among the Chinese to assist the famine-stricken in China.[66]

In March 1902, three new classes were added in Presbyterian churches throughout Toronto. Several of these were not particularly successful in the beginning. The Parkdale Presbyterian Church, despite having an abundant number of teachers and volunteers, had few students to instruct. At Knox Church, the reverse was true, as there was a large number of Chinese attending but not enough teachers to instruct them. During the month, the missionaries divided their time between visiting the new schools and addressing young Christians in Westminster and Cooke's Church on the need of bringing the Gospel to the Chinese. Humphries had confessed earlier that he could hardly encourage the Chinese to attend the schools, as he could not be certain that there would be enough teachers present; however, he hoped that the establishment of several new schools would relieve this problem.[67]

The exact number of schools operating in Montreal is unknown prior to 1904. However, it can be reasonably concluded that the Montreal Mission was considerably larger than its Toronto counterpart. Although the Protestant denominations formed a minority in Quebec, there were no less than 20 schools in operation by that date. In 1894, the Montreal Presbytery took over the work from the American Presbyterian Church. Because they were at first slow and stationary in their work, they received little cooperation from them.[68] The following year, Rev. F.M. Dewey, president of the

---

[65] UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report, February 18, 1903. Box 2, File 71.

[66] UCAT, Ng Mon Hing to Mackay, October 1, 1906. Box 2, File 71.

[67] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, April 4, 1902. Box 1, File 35.

[68] UCAT, Dewey to Mackay, September 27, 1894. Box 1, File 22.

Montreal mission, reported that the work was going splendidly, so much so that on one Sabbath evening there had been 101 Chinese in attendance at Knox School.[69] By far the largest school in Montreal, Knox Church was commended for its work among the Chinese in 1910. In an address to the congregation, Rev. Thomson stated:

> Many not counted by hundreds have come and gone to wide world points with fragrant memories of "Knoxee Tuk Shing Koon" (read Bible School), convinced more, as we may readily believe all have been, of the truth of Christianity by your Christian sympathy and interest, at once the redeeming feature of Chinese life abroad-than by your brief though faithful teaching. And the fame of the Knox in Chinese work reaches beyond Canadian Church circles also. Also upwards of 100 have joined you, blessed in themselves and a blessing to others, as we often find; a number uniting elsewhere also. Over 150 have joined the Christian endeavor society, formerly meeting here till our Mission found. Here was organized the Montreal Chinese Mission, Rev. Dr. Fleck presiding, of which you are the heart, the Christian impulses of which reach far beyond Montreal and vicinity, across Canada to the Macao Mission...[70]

Thomson was not exaggerating when he stressed the importance of teachers in the Chinese Missions. The success of the missions was largely dependent upon their instructors, the majority of whom were part-time volunteers. Therefore it was essential for missionaries like Thomson and Humphries to appeal to the idealism of the congregations of the various churches. In 1895, Thomson spoke in all of Montreal's Presbyterian Churches on the need to assist the Chinese, while Mrs. Thomson spoke separately to the women on several occasions.[71]

Yet in both Montreal and Toronto, they were not always successful. During the summer months it was difficult to attract volunteers, especially during holiday season. In

---

[69] UCAT, Dewey to Mackay, April 26, 1895. Box 1, File 22.

[70] UCAT, Address to the Knox Chinese Sunday School January 18, 1910. Box 2, File 65.

[71] UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, November 9, 1895. Box 1, File 23.

July 1902, for example, it was reported that work in Toronto had slowed down considerably:

> The work is still being done, although progress seems slow, and it still requires faith, patience, and perseverance to carry it on, and I think it may be said of nearly all the teachers and workers in the different schools under our supervision that they possess these very desirable qualifications... The holidays may effect some of the schools in making it hard to get teachers but I think with one exception that it is the intention of all the schools to continue during the summer.[72]

In Montreal there were other reasons for keeping the missions open during the summer months and in the evenings, although most other schools were closed at these times. Not only was this a means of advancing the students more rapidly, it was also an effective way of keeping them from "evil surroundings".[73]

It was not simply a lack of teachers during the summer that created problems for the missionaries, for the Church was ultimately unable to keep pace with the increase in the number of Chinese who had come to Montreal. In 1903, missionaries in Toronto noted that, unless they kept up with the work, they were in danger of losing all that they had gained, for despite the interest shown in the work by both teachers and students, there was a shortage of teachers due to the large increase in students.[74] Although there had been a sizable increase in the number of schools in Toronto, rising to a total of 17 by 1912, Chinese mission work was in an even more precarious state and in danger of immediate collapse. The secretary reported that:

> The close of another season of work leaves us facing an enlarging field. The influx of Chinese has been steady, and their total number now exceeds 1,700. Of these, we have gathered about 400 in our classes, which though a fair increase over previous years, is not really an advance. Proportionally, we stand where we were a year ago, and there are more untaught men than before. In

---

[72] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, July 2, 1902. Box 1, File 35.
[73] UCAT, Montreal Chinese Mission, Undated, 1897. Box 1, File 25.
[74] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, October 6, 1903. Box 1, File 36.

> Toronto as abroad, the heathen are increasing faster than the means of evangelization. Yet the signs are hopeful and encouraging - they are even promising, if we will but seriously regard the beckoning opportunities, and gird up our loins for a determined advance. The men are coming to us from every part, asking for teaching; they are willing to sit with three or four others, to get even a fragment of attention during the class session.[75]

Although the missionaries had previously stressed the importance of providing each student with his own instructor, the missions were forced to abandon this practice, since a more economical method of conducting classes was required in order to reach the Chinese who were attending the classes. Even though individual teaching produced the best results, the increase in attendance made it necessary to group the men into classes of two to four.[76]

Just how were these students instructed? While there are few available sources providing insight into how the classes operated, we know something of the missionaries' teaching techniques. Although the missionaries did not deliberately seek to teach only the men, the gender imbalance within the community meant that the classes were predominantly male. Rev. Speer offered this view of how the classes were to be conducted:

> The method of work is simplicity itself, for nothing of an elaborate kind could be successful. A comfortable room which will accommodate without crowding, a few tables, a blackboard, with maps of China, and our country, and one of the Holy Land constitute almost the entire plant. The work which has been done in these schools has been, generally speaking, the teaching of the English alphabet, followed by the Chinese-English primer. After the pupil can read the simplest words, hymns and simple Scripture lessons are given, and in this way the willing student at last becomes acquainted not only with our tongue, written and spoken, but with the Gospel in our hymns and in the Bible itself.[77]

---

[75] UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report for 1911/12, March 1912, Box 2, File 77.

[76] ibid.

[77] Speer, 64.

While Speer hints at the relationship that existed between teaching English and the Christian religion, Thomson's discussion of teaching in a Montreal newspaper suggests that there were fundamental differences between instructors and students. Reminding the newspaper's readers that learning a new language was difficult for new immigrants, given their age and circumstances, he argued that:

> The time that can be utilized for teaching the Chinese the English language -- that broad way to universal knowledge -- is necessarily brief. The desire of the Chinese is to learn English, that they may transact business and learn the news. The missionary teacher's desire is that the Chinese shall be able to read the bible and religious literature, and accept their teaching...

Thomson added that difficulties in teaching could be easily overcome using pictures and objects in which the leading idea was a word-sign.[78] While he explained how one might convey in a few minutes what might take an hour to describe, he did not address how the conflicting interests of teachers and students could be overcome.

In Toronto, no effort was made to evangelize the women, in contrast to the common view that mission work among the Chinese always placed great emphasis on activities for women and children.[79] In 1912, the mission reported that no advance had yet been made among the women. Although the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society had furnished funds for a worker among the women, a suitable candidate could not be found. The secretary noted that:

> There are nearly 30 Chinese women in our city, and from 70 to 80 children, while two women, with six children, the families of local Chinese, are now on their way from Canton -- More will, undoubtedly, come later. The majority of children attend the Public Schools and a good many the Church classes as well. But the women are practically unreached, save for an occasional visitation of an elderly lady connected with the Baptist Church, who has no knowledge of the Chinese language. The field is small and difficult, but we cannot leave these

---

[78] UCAT, Thomson, Unknown Newspaper, November 14, 1898. Box 1, File 27.
[79] Con *et al*, 172.

women, living at our very doors, in ignorance of the Gospel.[80]

While the gender of the students may not have been a factor in the lack of English classes for women, considering that there were so few Chinese women in Toronto at the time, the fact that a female instructor was deemed necessary suggests that gender may have hindered the development of these classes.

In Montreal, there were seven women receiving regular instruction from Mrs. Thomson and several others, as early as 1897. One of these women was the wife of Song Kee, the gambler and prominent boardinghouse keeper. According to the missionaries, she too sought baptism, yet she hesitated, fearing opposition from her husband, who it was said worshipped idols.[81] No doubt this proved to be another source of conflict between the missionaries and Song Kee in Chinatown. Mary Higill, who was responsible for teaching the children's class in Montreal, attempted to set up a Sunday class for women in 1923. However, she soon discovered that the women were unwilling to attend, since many were hindered by family responsibilities. Those who were willing to attend went to the regular church service where, it was felt, they already received a "splendid message".[82]

The missionaries also made an effort to evangelize other groups of Chinese, especially the transient migrants. The Christian boarding house was intended for both fixed residents and transients. In 1898, Thomson reported that he had a series of interesting talks with the Chinese waiting between the trains, to whom he presented a number of religious tracts and songs for use on the way. He paid special attention to the Chinese Christians among the group, urging them to speak both privately and publicly

---

80 UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report for 1911/12, March 1912, Box 2, File 77.

81 UCAT, Montreal Chinese Mission, undated, 1897. Box 1, File 25.

82 UCAT, Mary Higill to Mackay, December 10, 1923. Box 5, File 156.

with the others on the long overland and ocean journey, and to sing aloud the Gospel hymns as they had the railway car to themselves.[83]

The missionaries did not always believe that officials at the Canadian Pacific Railway were doing all they could for the Chinese on their long journey eastward. Many believed that the railway's officials ought to do more than look at them "commercially".[84] In 1908, in response to the Presbyterian Church's inquiries concerning Chinese migrants, the General Passenger Agent assured the missionaries that he was anxious to assist the Chinese as they waited in bond detention to depart for New York, Cuba, and Mexico:

> So far as their treatment is concerned while in transit across Canada, they are well looked after. We have the assurance of the Chinese themselves that they are made as comfortable as possible and that they are pleased with the service that is given to them. We give them cars for their own use and they are never so placed as to be short of room. In fact we take care that there is no overcrowding and each many has plenty of room to make down his bed at night and with the clothes he provides he is more comfortable than in places where the men live.[85]

Satisfied that the C.P.R. was doing what it could for the Chinese, Rev. Mackay felt that this communication was most advantageous for the missions, since it created a favourable impression of their work in the minds of the Chinese.[86]

In Toronto, missionaries were also satisfied that their intervention on behalf of the Chinese was beneficial to the missions. In this case, the missionaries managed successfully to petition the authorities to remove a racist picture show from New York that many Chinese believed stereotyped them and helped to encourage prejudice against them. In addition, the missionaries raised funds to send a small child with leprosy back to China

---

[83] UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, Undated, 1898. Box 1, File 27.
[84] UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, July 30, 1897. Box 1, File 23.
[85] UCAT, William Stitt to Mackay, August 21, 1908. Box 2, File 63.
[86] UCAT, Mackay to Stitt, September 10, 1908. Box 2, File 63.

where he could receive treatment.[87] Here too, they believed that such acts contributed to the success of their work.

In establishing English classes and Sunday Schools throughout Montreal and Toronto the missionaries believed that they were moderately successful. While continuing to visit the Chinese in their homes and at work, missionaries attempted to create an understanding of the dominant culture's values and beliefs among these newcomers. Despite different interests between teachers and students, the missionaries attempted to provide the Chinese with a basic knowledge of English that could be nurtured and developed into a complex understanding of the Christian faith. While the missionaries made an effort to reach Montreal and Toronto's Chinese labouring population, transient migrants, and eventually, women and children, not all their efforts can be considered as successful as the evangelical churches had hoped.

---

[87] UCAT, Mackay to Rev. George Bryce, April 11, 1912. Box 2, File 77.

IV. The Trials and Tribulations of Missionary Work

Organizational problems were perhaps the most significant factor in the decision to gradually withdraw from missionary work and replace the missions, first with the Chinese Christian Young Men's Institute, and then the Chinese United Church. There were, however, a number of other factors involved. Besides a shortage of teachers and volunteers, the missions also faced serious challenges from Chinatown, particularly the influence of gambling dens and boardinghouses. Many of the owners and customers of Chinatown's less-reputable institutions made a deliberate effort to thwart the missionaries' efforts to convert and assimilate the Chinese. At the other end of the spectrum, the policies of local and federal authorities, as well as opposition to the Chinese from labour groups and other members of the host society, impeded the missionaries' work.

The troublesome presence of Chinatowns in both Toronto and Montreal had an unsettling effect on the missionaries' work. As indicated, reformers believed that Chinatown was a demoralizing part of urban life, and that its presence counteracted the good work that the missions were doing. In Toronto, missionaries were disturbed by the visible signs of gambling and opium smoking in the Chinese quarter of the city. Noting that there were serious influences operating against the mission, the superintendent of the Chinese Missions expressed his frustration at the increasing boldness of gamblers who did not fear the law. Speaking of one notorious gambling and opium den in February 1913, he wrote:

> It is evident that Jim Lee and his associates feel themselves securely entrenched inasmuch as they openly announce on their premises the words "International Club, open Fan-Tan gambling day and night"... It is said that these men not only act but speak defiantly, feeling themselves secure under the advocacy of some of the ablest lawyers in the city. And even if an occasional fine should come, the profits of their traffic is such as to make an ordinary fine of no account. The difficulty of establishing a case in the Courts is well known, even when there is moral certainty as to the offence. Is it not due to the claims of

> religion and humanity and to the future of our city and Dominion that this should be dealt with so decisively as to compel respect to British law? Surely no financial, professional or other considerations should postpone necessary immediate action for such reform.[88]

Two months later, Lem Kay, a Chinese missionary, wrote that Lee had been arrested. While he confidently reported that "the false power had vanished away," he confessed that he feared the work might be affected: there was a backlash against the missionaries, as many Chinese believed they were responsible for Lee's arrest.[89] In Montreal there was a similar backlash against the missionaries. As previously indicated, the Montreal Chinese Mission was adamantly opposed to the influence of Song Kee and his boarding house in Chinatown. Efforts were made to prosecute him in the city's courts.[90] When local authorities prosecuted the Chinese for not paying the local water tax, the missionaries were also blamed, as many believed that it was they who had initiated the proceedings against them.

The mission's president, Rev. Dewey, noted that the Chinese had circulated a petition calling for Thomson's resignation, believing that he was responsible:

> Since then there has been a great deal of trouble among them. The City is pressing the payment of a heavy license, scores of men have been in court, some in jail in connection with the matter. Enemies of our work have made some believe Dr. Thomson was to blame in this imposition. More letters and petitions have been circulated and a long article appeared in the Herald newspaper of last week reflecting upon Dr. Thomson and the work. The schools suffered in consequence. I consulted members of our committee and our conclusion was to let the matter alone and trust in God to indicate his own cause... I took upon myself the responsibility of telling our teacher of the the day school, that one pupil who had taken a leading part in the work should not be allowed to do so and that he should not attend the morning school... The Herald of last Friday stated that the men were on strike and

---

88 UCAT, Mackay to Hanna, February 9, 1913. Box 2, File 78.
89 UCAT, Lem Kay to Mackay, April 9, 1913. Box 2, File 78.
90 UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, December 31, 1895.Box 1, File 23.

would not go to the Sunday Schools.[91]

While these incidents were largely the result of misunderstanding between the two groups, the missionaries had to be extra cautious to ensure that their efforts to rid their cities of vice were not seen by the Chinese for what they really were: deliberate attempts to regulate and control the Chinese. Undeniably, the confidence of the Chinese in the missions was diminishing in the face of these obvious attempts.

The missionaries could not see that there were fundamental cultural differences between their views and those of the Chinese regarding the extent to which gambling and opium threatened the stability of the community. The behaviour of other Christians, no doubt, did little to ease their suspicion of the missionaries. The missionaries did not deny that there were serious inconsistencies between their message of moral reform and the behaviour of other Christians living in Canada. Rev. Speer admitted that it was difficult to convince the Chinese to embrace Christianity when there appeared to be a double standard. According to Speer, other so-called Christians gambled and received no punishment at all:

> He sees that so-called Christians (for all who are not heathen are Christian to him) are as found of dice, cards, horse-ring and the wheel of fortune as he, and he is bewildered when the missionary expostulates with him on the ground of moral wrong; and the climax is reached when the policemen raid his house, drag a dozen or more to the magistrate, who collects a large sum of money for the violation of the laws of this Christian land. The simple Chinaman cannot see that all this may exist and still the teaching of the missionary be right.[92]

Hence, "Canadians" had as great a responsibility in this matter as the Chinese, if not a greater one, to reform their ways and lead exemplary Christian lives.

---

[91] UCAT, Dewey to Mackay, September 14, 1897. Box 1, File 25.
[92] Speer, 41.

From the missionaries' point of view, the growing suspicions of the Chinese were especially unfair because they had spent considerable time assisting the Chinese in their fight against unfair taxes and bylaws. The belief that the Chinese lived in unsanitary conditions had resulted in efforts to tax laundries in Vancouver as early as the 1880s; but this was declared illegal forcing the city to implement a by-law specifying boundaries beyond which laundries could not exist.[93] In 1878, Victoria's city council managed to introduce a tax requiring all Chinese over twelve years of age to pay ten dollars every three months.[94] In Montreal and Toronto, no taxes or by-laws were ever successfully introduced by local authorities, in part due to the efforts of the missionaries. In Toronto, it was reported that the Chinese were extremely grateful that the Christian people of the city had supported them when a proposed tax on laundries was introduced. Rev. Humphries reported that the whole agitation had done more good than harm, as it had brought the Chinese more friends and, it was said, more work.[95] In 1895, Thomson had advised several Chinese who had returned to Montreal after serving a prison sentence in Rutland, Vermont. On being ordered to once again pay a head tax, he had informed them that they were not required to pay it. Fearful of being refused entrance and having to return to jail in America, they paid two hundred dollars each.[96]

The following year, the Montreal City Council introduced a water tax of two hundred dollars, and directed the police to try to compel payment from the Chinese. In an attempt to mediate the situation, the missionaries approached the council asking that the tax be reduced to twenty-five dollars. This offer was readily accepted; however, Thomson reported, "The Chinese were all reluctant to pay and be blamed by all the rest, so my doing it for them relieved them of the *onus probandi*."[97] Despite their efforts to be sympathetic

---

93 Anderson, 83.
94 Boyko, 27.
95 UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, August 1, 1902. Box 1, File 35.
96 UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, September 11, 1895. Box 1, File 23.
97 UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, June 13, 1896. Box 1, File 24.

and supportive of the Chinese, many of them continued to believe that the missionaries were responsible for their troubles.

In Montreal, the faith the Chinese placed in their Christian teaching was further undermined by the continued abuse they suffered at the hands of the city's white population. In at least one incident, a school at Taylor Church was forced shut by the Montreal Presbytery on account of the violent abuse of its students.[98] Unlike Toronto, where there were no reports of assaults on the Chinese, there were a number of incidents in Montreal. In 1895, Thomson angrily wrote to Mackay of an incident involving a case of assault upon a Chinese while at work in his laundry. He reported that, although the courts had found in favour of the Chinese, a judge of ill repute had dealt with the offender leniently since he was a French boy of "good family."[99]

There was a series of attacks on Chinese laundries throughout the city in January 1898. The missionaries reported that the police did little to assist the proprietors in apprehending their assailants. Instead, they were told to enforce the law themselves:

> Within the past ten days there have been a number of cases of mistreatment and that of the most respectable law abiding element scattered over the city in laundries. These, our scholars, get little or no sympathy in certain localities, and it would seem that police protection is not very effective- after repeated abuse the Chinese are told to go and buy a warrant and catch the offenders. One last week doing so to his cost, as he was caught by two men and released on bail in the sum of $100. Two others were injured one requiring a scalp wound to be stitched up at the hospital. Window breaking is not new, but now that doors are apt to be left open, a good many are annoyed by filth being thrown over the table of laundered linen. Some of the Chinese aware of Westmount's effective protection would like to be fashionable like their paleface friends and move thither.[100]

---

[98] UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, September 11, 1897. Box 1, File 25.
[99] UCAT, Thomson to Mackay, July 30, 1895. Box 1, File 23.
[100] UCAT, Chinese Work, January 28, 1898. Box 1, File 27.

This seems to indicate that class may have also been a factor in the treatment of Montreal's Chinese, since many believed that if they left working-class neighborhoods such as Dufferin District and moved to fashionable, up-scale areas such as Westmount, they would be free from persecution. Regardless, there is little wonder that the Chinese were often confused and disappointed by the missionaries' teachings. How could they accept the notion of Christian justice, charity, and sympathy, when these concepts were so often contradicted by the Christians around them? Such violence conflicted with the very nature of Christianity and its stress on moral values. While efforts were made to convince the Chinese that a man was not a Christian simply because he believed that the Bible was true, this gap between idealized Christianity and the actual behaviour of Christians was the most serious obstacle to missionary work in Canada.[101]

What was the cause of such abuse of the Chinese in Montreal? Obviously the inherent belief that the Chinese were a race of degenerates, involved in gambling, prostitution, and other vices, was a contributing factor. The notion that the Chinese somehow threatened the nation's social, religious, and racial heritage also played a significant role in these attacks. To French Canadians concerned over the future of their religion, language, and cultural heritage, the arrival of new immigrants, and the evangelical work of the province's Anglo-Protestant minority among these newcomers, represented a double threat to their interests. Many French-Canadian nationalists, including Henri Bourassa and Olivar Asselin, feared that the arrival of these immigrants would upset the delicate balance between English and French, reduce standards of health and morality, and threaten Canadian jobs.[102]

Whether one was French or English, it was this last economic factor that was primarily responsible for the mistreatment of the Chinese. Since the 1880s, labour

---

101 Speer, 53-54.

102 Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec (Toronto, 1983), 171-172.

organizations in both Toronto and Montreal had joined others throughout the country in protesting the increased presence of the Chinese. For example, in 1884 the Knights of Labour orchestrated a demonstration against Chinese labour in Hamilton, which they believed lowered wages for all classes of Canadian labour. As the estimated 1,500 to 5,000 demonstrators marched through the city's streets, many workers threw mud at the Chinese laundries they passed.[103] Commenting on the impact of the Chinese on labour in 1911, Rev. Osterhout wrote:

> This phase of the Oriental problem is the cause of the greater portion of the unrest and agitation at the present time. It is at the same time a testimony to the vitality, thrift and industry of these races who are able thus to enter into serious competition with the white race. Interest in the economic aspect is intensified from the consciousness that in this competition in industry the Asiatic people are gradually winning the upper hand and crowding the Canadian out of business and industry which formerly was all his own.[104]

Osterhout identifies another apparent contradiction, for how could Canadians be seriously threatened by Chinese competition if the Chinese were supposedly inferior? However, race does not appear to be the principal issue in this instance: no longer do the Chinese threaten just the nation's racial heritage -- they also jeopardize the economic security of the working class. For many Canadians at the end of the nineteenth, and beginning of the twentieth centuries, economics even more than race influenced attitudes towards Chinese labour.

The Methodist Missionary Society's report for 1907-8 stated that many Canadians felt that the economic impact of the Chinese had reached a critical juncture:

> The presence of large numbers of Asiatics in some of the provinces of the

---

[103] Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914 (Montreal, 1979), 178-179.

[104] Osterhout, 11.

> Dominion has become, from the political and economic points of view, a serious problem. The forces of organized labor see in these Oriental strangers what looks like a dangerous competing element, and if they are permitted to come in large numbers many workmen believe the result will be that wages for both skilled and unskilled labor will rule at much lower figures than if white men only were in control of the situation.[105]

While the presence of several thousand Chinese scattered throughout Quebec and Ontario could hardly have had much impact on the labour market, skilled and unskilled workers, living and working in districts surrounding Chinatown, felt threatened by the Chinese and saw them as responsible for their destitution and unemployment, especially in years of serious recession.

In reality, many Chinese in Canada were themselves unemployed. In Victoria, the Chinese sent a number of letters and telegrams to officials in Canton, calling upon them to temporarily limit emigration. In a telegram to the civil magistrate of Kwangtung Province in April 1914, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association reminded those at home of the problems facing them in Canada, including the decline of commerce and industry, and oppression by Westerners. Arguing that earning a livelihood was becoming increasingly difficult, they warned other Chinese that "they will plunge into a sea of sorrow when they arrive here."[106] Since the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Great War were also characterized by economic recession, conditions were similar in Montreal and Toronto. Strict laws governing the employment of whites in Chinese businesses severely limited the effectiveness of Chinese laundries and restaurants in several provinces, including Ontario. Rather than having an advantage over other Canadians, as many labour groups believed, Chinese workers were clearly disadvantaged because of their race.

---

105 Woodsworth, 247.

106 Chuen-Yan Lai, "Chinese Attempts to Discourage Emigration to Canada: Some Findings from the Chinese Archives in Victoria," BC Studies No. 18, Summer 1973, 45-47.

Among retailers in Quebec, British Columbia, and Newfoundland, fear of competition led many to associate Chinese businesses with 'unethical' and 'demoralizing' practices.[107] Popular not only among retailers and labourers, these ideas were also taught in Sunday Schools to children. In a lesson on the Japanese and Chinese in British Columbia, intended for distribution across Canada in Methodist periodicals, children listened to a constructed dialogue between their teacher and the school superintendent on why Canadians objected to the Chinese entering Canada. They were taught that the Chinese came to Canada with the intention of returning to China as soon as they had a little money, that they sent most of their money home, and that some believed they were a menace to the labour market.[108] They were not taught whether this was a correct assessment, or simply based on prejudice.

Missionaries continued to report that students walking to and from school were subjected to taunts, ridicule, and other forms of abuse. In the winter of 1907, the Chinese were still being assaulted, in this case with snowballs, one having been struck on the head and knocked down. Several others who were violently attacked finally managed to have their offenders fined. Yet while the violence against the Chinese was said to have been greatly reduced, older problems began to reappear:

> For the most part the abuse in the streets has passed away, though they are imposed on in certain directions. However they are their own worst enemies in Chinatown, and against this they appeal to us; and while growing evils there act in a measure against growing attendance; yet just at present during the winter season fewer are found in the city and this, with a lack of teaching force, and even the approach of Christmas, when hard times suggest absence rather than failure to show their ingratitude.[109]

---

[107] David Monod, Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939 (Toronto, 1996), 91-95.

[108] UCAT, The Missionary Bulletin, Vol. VII, No. 3, June 1911, 566.

[109] UCAT, Montreal Chinese Mission, Undated, 1907. Box 1, File 25.

Whether the absence of the Chinese in the schools was a conscious attempt to avoid the missionaries and their teaching or whether it was the combination of Christmas season and fewer men in the city, matters very little. The fact remains that there were a number of factors, throughout the history of the Chinese Missions, that contributed to low attendance, and ultimately, the failure of the missions to evangelize a sizable portion of the Chinese population.

The lack of instructors, the so-called negative influences of Chinatown, the abuse of students, and the interference of civic authorities gradually reduced the influence of the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions. A new interdenominational institution soon began to replace the numerous Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist schools as the chief instrument in evangelizing the Chinese. Established by Christian Chinese in 1910, The Toronto Chinese Christian Association was intended to give the Chinese a more thorough understanding of Christianity, instructing them in their native language. It was also intended to provide them with a "healthier" sense of community, in contrast to the gambling dens and boardinghouses of Chinatown. In 1913, the Toronto Chinese Mission's secretary reported that the association's work was steadily developing, so much so that there were calls for an extension of prayer services on Sunday evenings. In addition, missionary work was extended to include Hamilton, Brantford, Guelph, and Galt.[110]

While evangelization was most important, the association was also intended to serve as an alternative to Chinatown, providing a number of social activities for both men and women. Besides regular Bible classes, instruction in English, sewing classes, and a reading room, members of the association were also invited to participate in a number of banquets and socials throughout the year, including those celebrating New Year's, Easter,

---

[110] UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report for 1911/12, March 1912, Box 2, File 77.

and Christmas.[111] In 1919, the association set about drafting a new constitution in anticipation of changing its name to the Toronto Chinese Young Men's Institute. Again, the organization placed an equal emphasis on both spiritual and social life, declaring that:

> The objects shall be to unite Chinese Christians in the district; to promote christian fellowship and worship; to train men for Christian service and leadership; to develop the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social life of its members and to provide a social centre for the Chinese community under Christian auspices... Promoting various activities in Christian service, such as, the holding of prayer meetings, fellowship meetings, evangelistic and open-air services and personal work throughout the Chinese community, including work among women and children wherever necessary... The Social Committee shall have charge of all social functions, physical culture work, gymnasium, field sports, the care and visitation of the sick, the entertainment of the members generally and the promotion of a spirit of good fellowship in the community.[112]

In promoting a wide range of social activities, the institution was attempting to provide another option for the Chinese other than the gambling and opium smoking that was believed to be so pervasive in Chinatown. Besides uniting the Chinese under one interdenominational institution, the Young Men's Christian Institute was intended to create a sense of solidarity among the Chinese Christians, fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness that the denominational churches had difficulty achieving.

The Presbyterians and Methodists did not resent the success of the institute. Instead, many missionaries supported this new development, believing that it was in their best interests, as it would properly instruct the Chinese in matters of the Christian faith. John MacMillan, Humphries' successor as secretary of the Toronto mission, contended that an interdenominational institution would actual aid the spread of Christianity:

---

111 UCAT, Toronto Chinese Christian Association Annual Report for 1916, 6.

112 UCAT, Constitution of the Young Men's Christian Institution, Undated, 1919. Box 4, File 136.

> The number of Chinese Christians in any community are restricted in numbers, and are divided among various bodies of Christians. In order to have fellowship therefore, the converts must be able to meet together, upon a common evangelical basis, and in a common meeting place. The ordinary worship of the Churches does not furnish the necessary spiritual food to the average Chinese, because of his lack of understanding of our language and customs.[113]

By recognizing the advantages of organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Institute, MacMillan was, in fact, admitting that the Chinese Missions had failed in their objective. In acknowledging that the Chinese did not fully understand the English language or western customs, the missionaries confirmed that they had not managed to assimilate the Chinese as they had set out to do. Yet supporting the Y.M.C.I rather than allowing several institutions to develop allowed the missions an opportunity to have some say in the institute's affairs. MacMillan argued that, while the missionaries should be sympathetic, they must nonetheless keep a firm hand upon the Chinese:

> The growing independence of the men is natural and needs to be very sympathetically handled. My own aim has been from the first to keep them in line and in close touch with the Church, and to this end the first Chinese Christian Association -- the one in Toronto -- was organized. The Y.M.C.A proper is not in the closest union with the Church, and sometimes of late I suspect its evangelical spirit... We must be concerned above all with the evangelization of the men. Anything that is not in that direction must be under control. The nationalistic-tendencies of the Chinese men are very strong, and any organization of Chinese will almost certainly drift into political or national lines, unless a very tactful hand is upon it.[114]

Above all else, MacMillan feared that organizations such as the Y.M.C.A, whose evangelical spirit was viewed as questionable by many missionaries, would gain control of the Chinese work in Toronto. Furthermore, in endorsing the Y.M.C.I, the missionaries would be preventing the Chinese Christians from forming a number of different

---

[113] UCAT, John A. MacMillan to Mackay, March 12, 1919. Box 4, File 135.
[114] UCAT, MacMillan to Mackay, September 10, 1918. Box 3, File 111.

institutions, which they could then play off against one another.[115] However, as this quotation suggests, it may not have been a fear of the Y.M.C.A's evangelical spirit but rather a concern about disruptive politics and Chinese nationalism -- a threat to nation-building.

Despite its initial success, the Y.M.C.I suffered an enormous setback in 1923, when the federal government passed what was known as Bill 45, the Chinese Immigration Act. While the act abolished the head tax, it restricted immigration to members of the diplomatic corps, persons of Chinese descent who were born in Canada, and merchants, whose entry would promote trade between the two nations.[116] Missionaries attending the Kingston Chinese Convention in November strongly condemned the act, hinting that it was a death-blow to Chinese work in Canada. Reformers argued that it prevented many Chinese who were respectful of Canadian law from bringing their families into Canada. Most important, it meant that Christian-Chinese teachers, who were largely responsible for the success of the Chinese work in Canada, could not possibly, with any sense of self-respect, accept an invitation to work in Canada.[117]

Just as the lack of teachers and volunteers led to the downfall of the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions, the strict immigration laws had a sharp impact on the Young Men's Christian Institute. As efforts to evangelize the Chinese slowly collapsed, the decision was made to establish a Chinese Church in 1925. Reflecting back on the decision to establish the Chinese Church of Christ, Rev. C.H. Lum noted:

> In recent years the Sunday Schools where Chinese have attended have either been falling in attendance or have been obliged to forego the classes. It was evidently shown that this was caused by the strict enforcement of the present

---

115 UCAT, MacMillan to Rev. A.E.Armstrong, Board of Foreign Missions, Spetember 13, 1919. Box 4, File 135.

116 Debates of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada (Ottawa, 1923), 1125.

117 UCAT, Kingston Conference Resolution Re Bill 45, November 11, 1919. Box 5, File 161.

> Dominion immigration laws which excludes new Chinese immigrants. This has made the evangelistic work among the Chinese so difficult. As the number of Chinese in this country is gradually decreasing, simultaneously the Chinese Christians are getting fewer and scarcer. When we Christians were brought face to face with these alarming conditions, we hastened to unite ourselves and organize a new church, so as to demonstrate our spirit of unity and co-operation and at the same time to help those non-Christians to clear their misunderstandings of Christianity and to introduce Christ to them that they may know Him and accept Him as the only Saviour of the World.[118]

Without new immigrants entering the country there was little need for missions and institutes that were purely evangelical in nature. The need now was for a Church that was responsive to the needs of its small, isolated congregation. It was no longer simply enough to teach English and a provide a few simple lessons in Scripture.

In July 1925, Rev. D.T. Lo, who had come from the Hawaiian Islands in order to establish a Chinese Church in Toronto, argued that something needed to be done: the Y.M.C.I was making little effort to evangelize the Chinese, while the Sunday Schools had been greatly reduced in number. The latter reached a total number of just 70 Chinese throughout the city, since many of the older members of the schools had left, believing their knowledge of English to be sufficient.[119] This seems to indicate that the Chinese used the schools for their own purposes in order to learn English and did not necessarily accept the religious aspects of the teaching. Within a few short weeks, Rev. Lo was informed that the Chinese Church had been admitted into the union, and was now part of the United Church of Canada, along with many other Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches.

While the Chinese church represented a new era in the history of the Chinese in Toronto, its establishment can hardly be considered a measure of the continuing spread of Christianity. Other congregations developed in both Montreal and Toronto, but there

---

118 UCAT, Toronto Chinese Young Men's Christian Institute Annual Report, 1929, 26.
119 UCAT, D.T. Lo to Mr. Arnup, July 2, 1925. Box 6, File 180.

were relatively few new converts. The Toronto Church's Chinese Standfast Club, which was intended to gradually introduce non-Christians to the Gospel, had just 50 members in 1925, while the city's Chinese population was reported to be over 4,000.[120] The church's workers, however, still managed to conduct classes and services for their faithful congregation. Like other Chinese congregations, many of which continue to exist today, Rev. Lo's church would manage to do what its predecessors could not, eventually rising above the anti-Oriental legislation, abuse, lack of cooperation, and shortage of staff, to become an integral part of the United Church. The Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions had come to an abrupt and unsuccessful conclusion.

---

[120] UCAT, D.T. Lo to the United Church of Canada, July 26, 1925. Box 6, File 180.

V. Assessing the Chinese Missions: The Balance Sheet

While W. Peter Ward correctly suggests that Protestant missionaries enjoyed less success than they had originally anticipated, he argues that the greatest obstacle confronting the missions was indifference, if not opposition, to the message of the Gospel. Many Orientals, he contends, clung to the customs of their former lands, and were reluctant to embrace Christian ideals.[121] Yet in Montreal and Toronto, it was not entirely indifference that resulted in the missionaries' failure to meet the objectives that they had set for themselves, namely, converting the Chinese to Christianity and successfully integrating them into Canadian society. Rather, an endless series of organizational difficulties, including insufficient numbers of teachers and volunteers, restrictions excluding the Chinese from fully participating in Canadian life, the racist abuse of students and shopkeepers, and the opposition of Chinatown's "immoral" element, also impeded the missions' success. These problems led the evangelical churches to conclude that the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions did not provide a comprehensive program sufficient to instruct newcomers in the Protestant faith. At the same time, they disregarded the Chinese immigrants' own cultural attachments, assuming instead that mere ignorance prevented them from enforcing "superior" Canadian ways.

Nonetheless, many reformers, church officials, and missionaries believed that they had managed to obtain some measure of success through their efforts. Reporting on the status of the Chinese in Toronto in 1905, the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church confidently remarked that the Chinese were beginning to assimilate. An editorial in The Missionary Outlook stated:

> Ten years ago the appearance of a Chinese on the streets was the signal for a game of *Aunt Sally*. The small boy who hit him first and the greatest number of times was the hero of the hour. Not so today: his right to dwell on Canadian

---

121 W. Peter Ward, The Oriental Immigrant and Canada's Protestant Clergy, 40.

> soil is recognized, every town has its quota of his fellow countrymen, he comes and goes unmolested. If he be of the better class and a Christian, perchance he wears, as we have seen, a tweed suit, patent shoes, stand-up collar, and a sailor hat—the *tout ensemble* defying the world to say that he is not a well-bronzed Canadian.[122]

A similar optimistic picture of the Chinese, one which also did not take into account the lack of social, political, and legal rights for the Chinese, had been offered by Thomas Humphries in 1900. He noted that there were a number of redeeming features among Toronto's Chinese, as they were respectable, industrious, enterprising, and desirous of improvement, many having already been instructed in Presbyterian schools elsewhere. Toronto was unique, he had argued, since the Chinese element there was exceptionally progressive in that many wore Western clothing, employed Canadian help, or attended public schools, while one man had even married a Canadian.[123]

Ultimately, it is difficult to assess to what extent the missionaries were successful in their endeavors. No concrete data exists relating to the actual number of Chinese converts. While the number of confirmed or probationary Christians in the Chinese community is occasionally mentioned, it is difficult to compare this number to the total Chinese population in cities such as Toronto and Montreal. The missionaries themselves often admitted that they could not, with any confidence, provide an accurate estimate of the population; at times, despite conducting lengthy surveys of Chinatown, missionaries were left guessing as to the actual number of Chinese.

The problem of quantitative evidence is heightened by the very same problem that plagued the missions throughout their existence. The large influx of transient Chinese immigrants, beginning in the 1890s and ending the early 1920s, makes it even more difficult to pinpoint accurately either city's Chinese population at any given moment. Since the missionaries were caught off guard by the large increase in the number of

---

[122] UCAT, The Missionary Outlook Vol XXIV, No. 11, November 1905, 253.
[123] UCAT, Humphries to Mackay, July 25, 1900. Box 1, File 33.

Chinese who sought admittance in their schools and churches, it seems unlikely that they were able to arrive at an accurate assessment of their numbers. This problem was not unique to the Chinese, as there were difficulties in assessing Toronto's overall population during this time. Between 1901 and 1912, there were enormous discrepancies between censuses conducted by the police and the city assessor, so great that in 1911-12, the police accounted for fifty thousand more people in Toronto than did the assessor.[124] Missionaries claimed that there were over 4,000 Chinese living in Toronto in 1925; yet the census conducted in 1921, just two years prior to the government passing the Chinese Immigration Act, found only 2,035 Chinese in Toronto.[125] It seems highly unlikely that the city's Chinese population could have doubled at a time when no Chinese were being admitted into the country.

Even more troubling than the lack of available data on the number of Chinese converts is the fact that the so-called Chinese "problem" was largely a creation of worried Anglo-Celtic, Protestant, middle-class observers. In the nation's judicial, cultural, social, and political discourses, Canadians created an image of the Chinese as gamblers and habitual drug users who entrapped women, and contributed to the moral downfall of society. The urgency of converting the Chinese was based largely upon this image, and yet, as argued in this paper, the reality was likely something far different. In many ways, this constructed image of the Chinese is consistent with the ideology of Orientalism, since the image was a means of coming to terms with what was most feared and unknown. Canadians used this view of the Chinese to dominate, restructure, and control the immigrants.[126] A racially-based belief that the Chinese were inherently immoral and degenerate, as opposed to any real evidence that they actually were, encouraged reformers

---

124 Michael J. Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto -- 1900-1921 (Ottawa, 1979), 70.

125 UCAT, D. T. Lo to the United Church of Canada, July 2, 1925. Box 6, File 180; Sixth Census of Canada, 1921 Vol. II, (Ottawa: 1925), 458-460.

126 Said, 1-3.

and missionaries to focus on converting and assimilating the Chinese. In Montreal, missionaries believed that they were successful since, it was argued, many Chinese had reformed their ways:

> Idolatry cast aside, opium smoking outlawed, gambling antagonized, a 'very decent lot' says Chief Carpenter, as compared with other elements figuring in court circles, law abiding, Sabbath observing generally, all burials under Christian auspices, often marked by heathen displays elsewhere in Canada even. Their progress in western ways is also rapid, the queue and foot-binding tabooed, Canadian costume adopted, with large influence in China reforms, where ever friendly to the missionaries and often of large helpfulness to Christian activities.[127]

This assessment of mission work among the Chinese implies significant changes for which the missionaries were largely responsible. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that large-scale gambling, opium smoking, non-Christian burials, or foot-binding had ever existed in either Montreal or Toronto. While many missionaries and reformers were no doubt well aware that they had exaggerated claims of Chinese immorality in order to justify regulating their behaviour, they nonetheless continued to argue that they were taking preventive measures to ensure that the Chinese did not corrupt a wider and wider circle of Canadians.

To what extent had these so-called problems ever really existed in the first place? It seems that reformers feared that problems associated with Chinese immigration in British Columbia and the major urban centres of the United States would soon appear in Montreal and Toronto. Therefore, while widespread gambling, prostitution, and opium smoking never materialized, missionaries continued to imply that the social order was threatened by the presence of Chinatown. In 1898, Rev. J.C. Thomson reported that although the number of Chinese in Montreal's Chinatown was unfortunately increasing, various demoralizing influences were either on the decline or had yet to make an appearance. He wrote:

---

[127] UCAT, Address to Knox Chinese Sunday School, January 18, 1910. Box 2, File 65.

> We can report now, however, what we hope to continuously report namely the absence of either joss-houses or places of ill-fame. Upward of 50 idol temples so called, valued at as many thousands of dollars are found in the U.S. with several in Western Canada; While report of the last year estimated some 1500 Chinese women held in most degrading slavery in the various cities of the U.S. with several large Chinese companies and some 3000 people directly or indirectly connected with the infamous traffic. While this evil has reached Western Canada it has been prevented here... Nor since the opening of the work has there been a heathen funeral through our streets, quite a feature of other cities as lately in Pittsburgh.[128]

For the historian, the question remains: were these problems really "prevented" as Rev. Thomson claimed they were? Efforts to reform Montreal and Toronto's Chinatowns were based largely upon unsubstantiated evidence from other areas of Canada and the United States, rather than any real proof that the Chinese were involved in vice and other immoral activities. Despite the missionaries' claims, it is difficult to establish whether these threats ever really existed. It seems just as likely that the Chinese may have intentionally left many cultural practices behind, in order to adjust to life in an often harsh, hostile environment. The fact that the Chinese were eager to learn English, despite the proselytizing that accompanied the lessons, certainly seems to support this view.

In assessing the overall effectiveness of mission work among the Chinese in Montreal and Toronto, it is safe to conclude that many of the missionaries' aims were highly idealistic, impractical, and premised on the period's racist ideas and ideals regarding Christian salvation. Missionaries believed that Chinese Christians were to play an important role in evangelizing other Chinese in both Canada and China. The secretary of the Toronto Mission reported that a number of Chinese had been baptized and that they, in turn, were doing good work among their fellows:

---

[128] UCAT, Chinese Work, January 28, 1898. Box 1, File 27.

> Eight were received by Baptism in 1911, and three have already been baptised in the present year. A number are under special instruction, some of whom will be received before long. Good work has been done in the homeland by those who have returned to visit their friends. Letters are frequently received telling of the eagerness of Christian men to make known to relatives the good news they have heard... Here also the results have been very marked. The Chinese of today, who have come into contact with the class teaching, are different from those of a few years ago. Kindly treatment and free intercourse with our workers has lifted them. They are becoming manly, active helpers to their fellow-countrymen.[129]

Given the enormous importance of foreign mission work in China, it is not surprising that missionaries in Canada sought to enlist the support of immigrants returning to their homeland. While gaining the support of the Chinese in Montreal and Toronto was important to the missionaries, many believed that more fundamental changes were taking place in China — changes that required immediate action.

At the Kingston Chinese Workers Conference in 1923, the introductory address pointed to a new era for work amongst the Chinese in Canada, stating a number of reasons, including the awakening of the East, the need for international cooperation, and most importantly, the decadence of old religions as a basis for nation building. Finally, it was noted:

> The world has taken on a more rapid pace. We in the work should keep step. It is a relatively small step. It is a relatively small step, 40,000 Chinese in Canada, in comparison with 400,000,000 in China. It seems insignificant, but the 40,000 if converted would quickly change the face of China and the world.[130]

At times the connection between the Chinese immigrants and their homeland actually appears to have been more important to the missionaries than the work in Canada itself was. Yet appearances can be deceiving, since nothing could be further from the truth. In

---

[129] UCAT, Toronto Chinese Mission Secretary's Report for 1911/12, March 1912, Box 2, File 77.

[130] UCAT, Kingston Chinese Conference, November 22, 1923. Box 5, File 160.

a discussion of Toronto's Chinese community, Dora Nipp has suggested that many missionaries recognized that if they attempted to accelerate the acculturation process they ran the risk of alienating the Chinese. Rather than force converts to sever their ties to China, missionaries encouraged them to maintain contact through the church.[131] If this was the case, the emphasis on China was little more than an extension of the church's primary objective: firstly, to convert and assimilate a substantial segment of the Chinese population in Montreal and Toronto, and secondly, to reform the Chinese, whom many believed were immoral and prone to vice. As we have seen, the church's success in meeting these racially-defined goals was limited.

If, on the other hand, the missionaries had intended to make progress in China, a country with a vast non-Christian population, they would have required a large number of genuine converts across Canada, including Montreal and Toronto. Yet many missionaries indicated that the Christian instruction that the Chinese received was quite inadequate. Even Rev. S.S. Osterhout believed that Christianity among the Chinese was quite simplistic and superficial. Again, limited, indiscriminate teaching, often in a language that the Chinese could not understand, was viewed as insufficient for aggressive evangelism among these new immigrants. In contrast, Chinese missionaries suggested that non-Christian and Christian Chinese encountered great difficulties when confronted with intricate lessons in Scripture.[132] Whether Christian instruction was considered too difficult or too elementary to provide the Chinese with a satisfactory understanding of Christianity matters little. One only has to recall that the Chinese Missions had ceased to be the central focus of Chinese work in Montreal and Toronto, primarily because they had not been able to provide adequate spiritual instruction, to recognize how implausible the notion of success was.

---

131 Nipp, 154.

132 UCAT, D.T. Lo to Mr. Arnup, July 2, 1925. Box 6, File 180.

This study is an attempt to understand how evangelical religion came to terms with moral reform, ethnocentric nationalism, evangelical humanitarianism, and Chinese immigration. Presbyterian missionaries, with the support of their Methodist counterparts, sought to assimilate and convert the Chinese in order to protect Canada's growing nationalistic spirit, religious heritage, and moral purity. We have seen how many reformers and missionaries across Canada believed that the Chinese posed a direct threat to these concepts, which were believed to be essential to the well-being of an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant nation such as Canada. Yet the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions were unable to attain the ambitious goals they had set for themselves. In both cities, missionaries were unable to convert a sizable portion of the Chinese to Christianity. Although Sunday Schools, English classes, and prayer meetings were believed to be well attended, it is impossible for historians to discover just how many of these students became Christians, adopted Western cultural practices, or made a conscious effort to convert others in their homeland. Given the inability of the missions to supply an adequate number of instructors, the enormous increase in the number of Chinese, and the impact of both Chinatown and local civic authorities on the missionaries' efforts, it seems unlikely that this number was in anyway considerable.

Finally, there is little indication that missionaries in Montreal and Toronto managed successfully to rid their cities of what they saw as illicit and immoral activity. Missionaries were continually complaining to city officials, the police, and immigration authorities that "growing evils" in Chinatown were responsible for the decline in attendance, protests against Sunday Schools, and the backlash against missionaries. As this was largely an attempt to control and regulate the behaviour of the Chinese, much of the vice and corruption in Montreal and Toronto's Chinatowns was undoubtedly exaggerated -- the result of racial stereotyping, cultural differences, and unsubstantiated reports from Vancouver, Victoria, San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. Therefore it is difficult to assess how well missionaries managed to prevent vices such as prostitution,

gambling, and opium smoking from occurring. While it is likely that in some cases these activities were exaggerated and did not exist, where it did exist there is no evidence that it so widespread as to threaten a nation's social, religious, or political ways of life.

What, then, is the lasting legacy of the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions? The Chinese Young Men's Christian Institute, and ultimately the rise of separate Chinese churches, such as Toronto's Chinese Church of Christ, promoted a sense of community and Christian fellowship among the Chinese, who had for too long been excluded from Canada's dominant society, both secular and religious. Had the missions not failed there would have been little opportunity for the Chinese to form their own distinct congregations. Further, had the missions survived, it seems unlikely that the number of Chinese Christians would have grown. However the new organizations, through their efforts to create a sense of community and greater understanding of their faith, brought about renewed growth at a time when Chinese immigration to Canada was greatly restricted. Furthermore, while the missions remained a crucial organ of moral reform, it is important to recognize that not every thought or gesture on the part of the missionaries was racist, or intended to reform and control the Chinese. For those Chinese who could speak English, had converted to Christianity, or had come into contact with sympathetic missionaries such as J.C. Thomson or Thomas Humphries, their experience with the Montreal and Toronto Chinese Missions may have provided them with a welcomed break from the misery and anguish of being abused, feared, mocked, and excluded from participating in the nation's social and political life.

VI. Appendix

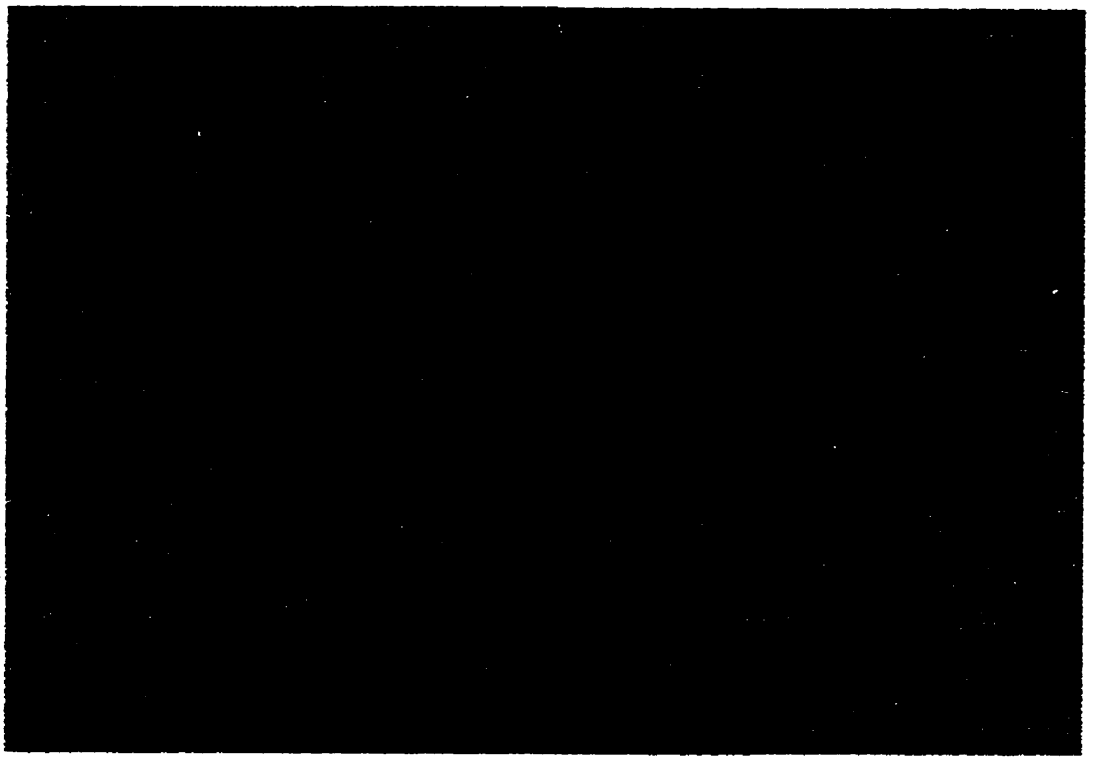


Figure 1. Montreal's Chinatown, 1921.
(Source: David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns:Towns Within Cities in Canada*, Vancouver, 1988)

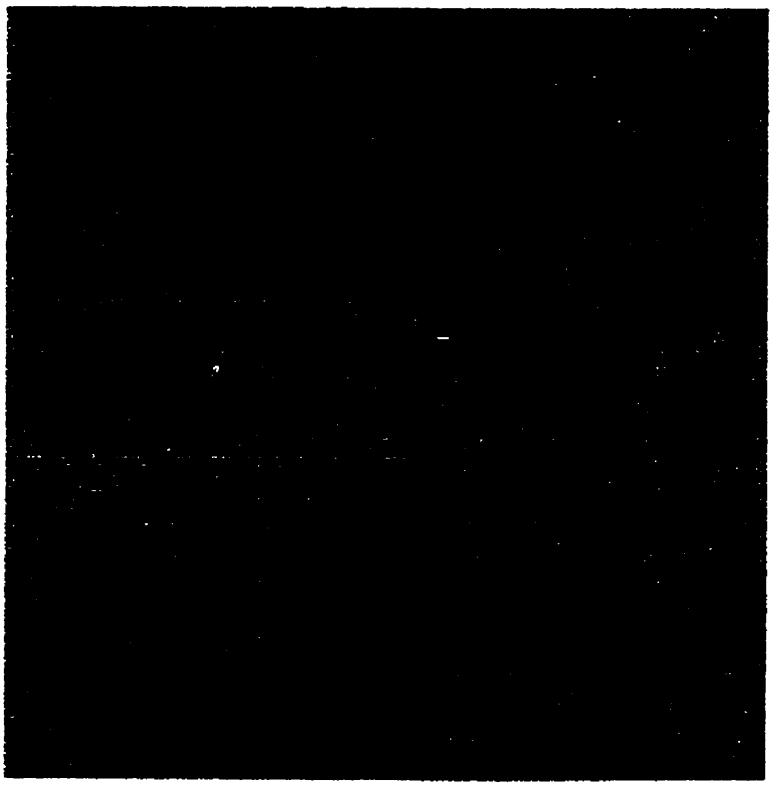


Figure 2. Toronto's Chinatown, 1910, 1923.
(Source: David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, Vancouver, 1988.

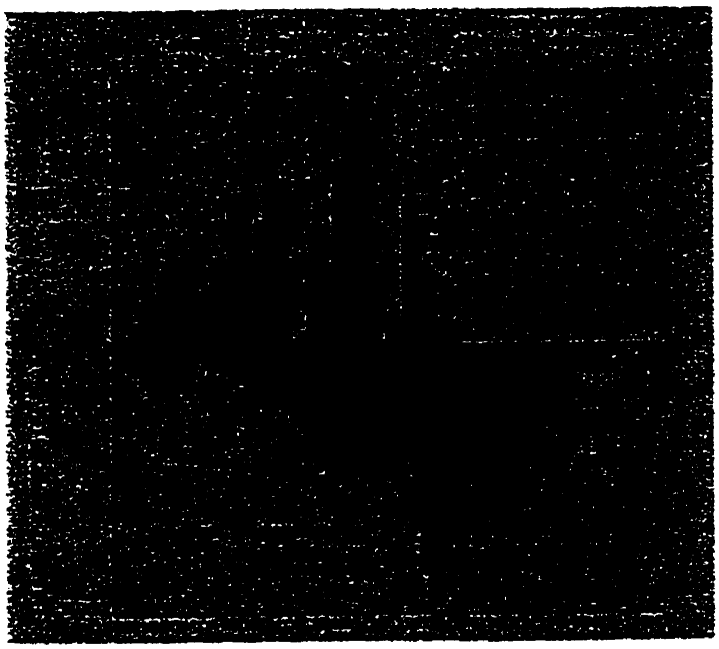


Figure 3. Annual Arrival and Departure of Chinese, 1886-1947
(Source: David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, Vancouver, 1988)

Period	Number of Chinese paying head tax	Number of Chinese exempted from head tax	Number of Chinese registered for leave	Total revenue ($)
1886–1894	12,197	264	11,152	624,679
1895–1904	32,457	430	11,791	2,374,400
1905–1914[a]	27,578	4,458	33,833	13,845,977
1915–1924	10,147	2,807	50,111	5,678,865
1925–1934	2	5	48,127	473,564
1935–1943	0	1	9,938	52,061
Total	82,381	7,965	164,952	23,069,546

Figure 4. Total Revenue From Head Tax and Registrations For Leave of Chinese Immigrants, 1886-1943
(Source: Peter Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, Toronto, 1988)

Figure 5. Geographical Shift of Chinese Population in Canada, 1901, 1941
(Source: David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, Vancouver, 1988)

Figure 6. Chinese Population Growth in Canada, 1881-1986.
(Source: David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, Vancouver, 1988)

VII. Bibliography

Archival Records

UCAT, Toronto Social Survey Commission, Report of the Social Survey Commission, Toronto, Presented to the City Council, October Fourth, 1915 Toronto: Publisher Unknown, 1915.

UCAT, Toronto Chinese Y.M.C.I. Annual Report for 1929 Toronto: Publisher Unknown, 1929.

UCAT, Toronto Chinese Christian Association Annual Report for 1916 Toronto: Publisher Unknown, 1916.

UCAT, The Missionary Bulletin Vol. VII, No. 3, June 1911.

UCAT, The Missionary Outlook Vol. XXIV, No 11, November 1905.

UCAT, Presbyterian Church of Canada, Board of Foreign Mi ssions, Correspondence Re Toronto and Montreal Chinese Mission, 1894-1925 Accession No. 79.189C, Boxes 1-5.

Published Primary Sources

Debates of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada, 1923 Ottawa: F.A.Acland, 1923.

Murphy, Emily F. The Black Candle: Canada's First Book on Drug Abuse Toronto: Coles Canadian Publishers, 1922.

———. "The Grave Drug Menace" in Maclean's Magazine Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, February 15, 1920.

Osterhout, Rev. S.S. Orientals in Canada Toronto: Board of Home Missions, Methodist Church, 1911.

Smith, W.G. Building the Nation: The Churches' Relation to the Immigrant Toronto: Canada Congregational Missionary Society, 1922.

Speer, Rev. J.C. The Story of China in Canada Toronto: Department of Missionary Literature of the Methodist Church, Canada, 1906.

Woodsworth, J.S. Strangers Within Our Gates [1909] 2nd edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.

Books

Allen, Richard. The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928 Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Anderson, Kay. Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980 Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991.

Andracki, Stanislaw. Immigration of Orientals into Canada with Special Reference to Chinese New York: Arno Press, 1978.

Avery, Donald H. "Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada 1896-1932 Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979.

———. Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant workers 1896-1994 Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995.

Bolaria, B. Singh, and Peter S. Li. Racial Oppression in Canada, 2nd edition Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988.

Boyko, John. Last Steps to Freedom: The Evolution of Canadian Racism Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer Publishing, 1995.

Brouwer, Ruth Compton. New Women For God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914 Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.

Burnet, Jean R. and Howard Palmer. "Coming Canadians": An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988.

Christie, Nancy and Michael Gauvreau, A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940 Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

Con, Harry, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg, and William E. Willmott, From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada, edited by Edgar Wickberg. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982.

Copp, J.T. The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Dickinson, John and Brian Young. A Short History of Quebec, 2nd edition. Toronto:

Copp Clark, 1993.

Gagan, Rosemary Ruth. A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925 Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.

Grant, John Webster. A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Canada Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

Lai, David Chuen Yan. "Chinatowns": Towns Within Cities in Canada Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988.

Li, Peter S. The Chinese in Canada Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Mander, Christine. Emily Murphy: Rebel Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1985.

McLaren, Angus. Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945 Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990.

Monod, David. Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939 Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Palmer, Bryan D. A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Captialism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914 Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979.

Piva, Michael J. The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto--1900-1921 Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979.

Prang, Margaret. "A Heart at Leisure With Itself": Caroline MacDonald of Japan Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Semple, Neil. The Lord's Dominion: The History of Methodism in Canada Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

Shore, Marlene. The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, the Chicago School, and the Origins of Social Research in Canada Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Strange, Carolyn. Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

Tan, Jin and Patricia E. Roy. The Chinese in Canada Toronto: Canadian Historical Association, 1985.

Thompson, Richard H. Toronto's Chinatown: The Changing Social Organization of an Ethnic Community New York: AMS Press Inc., 1989.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. The Dream of a Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1983.

Valverde, Mariana. The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991.

Ward, W. Peter. White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978.

Articles

Beaud, Jean-Pierre and Jean-Guy Prevost. "Immigration, Eugenics and Statistics: Measuring Racial Origins in Canada (1921-1941)" in Canadian Ethnic Studies Vol. XXVIII, No. 2. pp. 1-24.

Lai, Chuen-Yan. "Chinese Attempts to Discourage Emigration to Canada: Some Finding From the Chinese Archives in Victoria" in BC Studies No. 18, Summer 1973. pp. 33-49.

Nipp, Dora. "The Chinese in Canada" in Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945, edited by Robert F. Harney. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985. pp. 147-169.

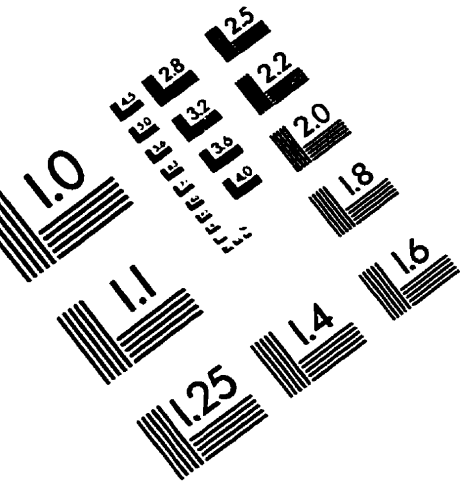
Pon, Madge. "Like a Chinese Puzzle: The Construction of Chinese Masculinity in *Jack Canuck*" in Gender and History in Canada, edited by Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld. Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996. pp. 88-100.

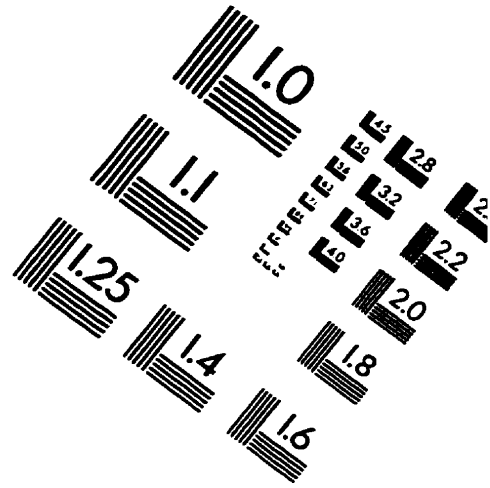
Stanley, Timothy J. "Schooling, White Supremacy, and the Formation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia" in BC Studies No. 107, Autumn 1995. pp. 3-29.

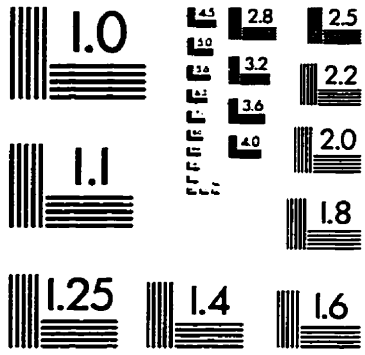
Ward, W. Peter. "The Oriental Immigrant and Canada's Protestant Clergy, 1858-1925" in BC Studies No. 22, Summer 1974. pp. 40-55.

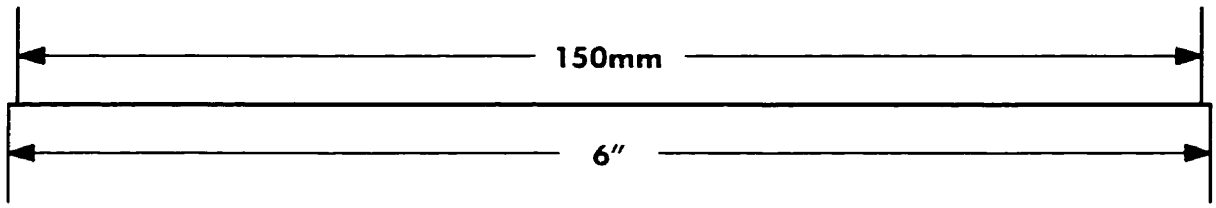
Willmott, W.E. "Approaches to the Study of the Chinese in British Columbia" in BC Studies No. 4, Spring 1970. pp. 38-51.

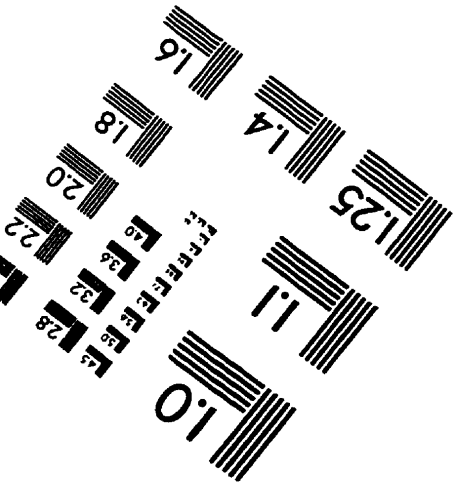
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

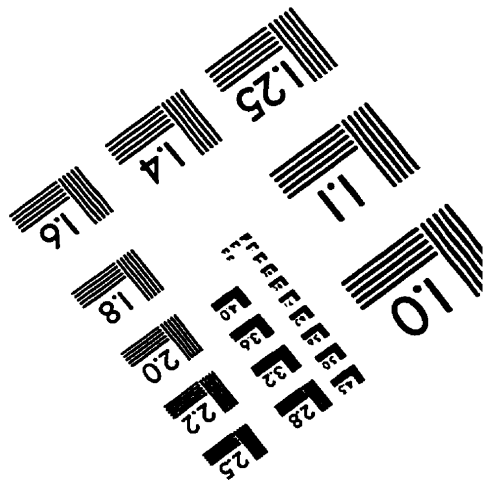












APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989