

Chinese Restaurants in Accra, Ghana: Representing Chinese Culture in a Globalized African Metropolis

Camille Luong

Abstract

Today, Ghana's capital city of Accra is globalizing at a rapid pace. Accra is a popular destination for international and business travelers, as well as migrants from across the world. This research paper zooms in on one of the most prominent non-African ethnic groups in Accra: the Chinese diaspora. Although there is literature on Chinese cuisine overseas, cultural exchange through food, and globalization in Accra, there is a research gap regarding how these phenomena intersect in Accra. To address this gap, this paper examines two displays at the forefront of Chinese restaurants: signs and menus. How do Chinese restaurant owners choose to represent Chinese culture in a globalizing Accra?

This paper argues that these Chinese restaurants are actively engaging in transnationalism, linking together their country of origin with their country of resettlement. This process of transnationalism is discussed using three different lenses: Chinese language as maintenance of Chinese culture, multiculturalism and fusion in menus, and standardized symbolism of Chinese culture. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that Ghanaian Chinese restaurants utilize signs and menus to maintain Chinese culture as well as adapt to fit into a globalizing Accra. In understanding this case study, we can better understand diasporic representations of culture, processes of transnationalism, and modern globalizing cities.

Introduction

Accra, the capital of Ghana, is a city full of curious urban phenomena: the commercialization of Oxford Street, the informal economy of Makola Market, the public

transportation system of *tro tro*¹⁴⁸ vans, etc. In addition, Accra is also home to a lively food scene — on a walk down a busy street, one can find dozens of traditional Ghanaian restaurants, food stalls, and eateries. In addition to these Ghanaian options is also a wide variety of Chinese restaurants.

Though Chinese restaurants may seem like an anomaly in the context of Accra, a quick look at history can explain their presence. Chinese people, mostly from Hong Kong, first came to Ghana in the 1950s primarily to work in the tobacco industry.¹⁴⁹ In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping's *gaige kaifang* (改革开放, "Reforming and Opening-Up") policy opened China to global markets. This led to more Chinese from mainland China coming to Ghana.¹⁵⁰ Chinese restaurants started popping up, serving both fellow Chinese immigrants and non-Chinese Ghanaians.¹⁵¹ By 2020, the Chinese population in Ghana had grown to 30,000-50,000 people, constituting one of the largest non-African ethnic groups in the country.¹⁵²

Increasing globalization is also apparent in Accra. In 2013, the *New York Times* listed Accra as the fourth most desirable destination out of forty-six locations. The article notes that

¹⁴⁸ Tro tro are privately-owned minibus share taxis that travel fixed routes throughout Accra.

¹⁴⁹ Ho, Conal Guan-Yow. "Emerging Chinese Communities in Africa – The Centre for Chinese Studies." 2008. <http://www0.sun.ac.za/ccs/?p=1439>.

¹⁵⁰ Ho, "Emerging Chinese Communities in Africa."

¹⁵¹ New China TV, dir. 2022. GLOBALink | Chinese Cuisine Gaining Popularity in Ghana.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=8_ZiCmfm3SY.

¹⁵² "Ghana: Beijing's Global Media Influence 2022

Country Report." 2022. Freedom House.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/ghana/beijings-global-media-influence/2022>.

Accra has welcomed business travelers and tourists for years. This is no surprise, given that Ghana has Africa's fastest-growing economy and is one of its safest countries.¹⁵³

Prominent African urban studies scholar Ato Quayson studies Oxford Street as a bustling commercial district and primary example of globalization in Accra. In his research, he focuses on the importance of billboards and signs on Oxford Street and argues that their design, imagery, and messaging point to the "cosmopolitan character of the street itself."¹⁵⁴ Oxford Street's cosmopolitan character can also be seen in its increasingly diverse and globalized food culture. The street hosts a wide variety of options, including Lebanese chocolateries, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Italian pizzerias, and more. This cosmopolitan character appeals not only to native Ghanaian populations, but also immigrants and international travelers. A globalized market reflects the desires of a globalizing city and population.

Although there is literature on Chinese cuisine overseas, cultural exchange through food, and globalization in Accra, there is a research gap as to how these phenomena intersect in Ghana's capital. To address this gap, this paper examines two displays at the forefront of Chinese restaurants: signs and menus. How do Chinese restaurant owners choose to represent Chinese culture in a globalizing Accra? To answer these questions, this paper examines the signs and menus of four Chinese restaurants with a considerable number of local Ghanaian customers as well as international travelers. These Chinese restaurants are actively engaging in transnationalism, linking together their country of origin with their country of resettlement. In

discussing this process of transnationalism, this paper uses three different lenses. First, the inclusion of Chinese language and characters are used as a way to represent Chinese culture, creating a unique Chinese space in Accra for locals, immigrants, and international travelers to connect with. Second, multicultural and fusion menus represent reworking of ingredients and adaptations to the local food culture. Finally, the use of standardized imagery of Chinese culture and cuisine increases accessibility for Accra residents. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that Ghanaian Chinese restaurants utilize signs and menus to maintain Chinese culture as well as adapt to a globalizing Accra.

Perspectives on migration, food, and transnationalism

Chinese cuisine overseas: reinvention and representation

Before looking at modern Chinese restaurants in Accra, it is important to first understand the history of Chinese cuisine overseas. In the book *The Globalization of Chinese Food*, David Wu and Sidney Cheung examine the history and evolution of Chinese food outside of China. Chinese restaurants have emerged across the globe as early as the late 1800s, as new waves of Chinese emigrants from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian countries relocated to North America, Australia, and Europe.¹⁵⁵ Wu and Cheung argue that because most Chinese restaurant owners are self-taught cooks rather than professional chefs, "Chinese cuisine overseas demonstrated re-creation, invention and representation of cooking, especially in restaurants."¹⁵⁶

Scholars Eugene Anderson and Haiming Liu point specifically to the adaptation of ingredients and flavor profiles as Chinese food is adapted to and fused with local taste

¹⁵³ Leigh, Karen. "Accra, Ghana," New York Times, January 11, 2013, available at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/01/10/travel/2013-places-to-go.html?_r=0

¹⁵⁴ Quayson, Ato. "Introduction: Urban Theory and Performative Streetscapes", Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism (Duke: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 1-36.

¹⁵⁵ Wu, David YH, and Sidney CH Cheung. "Improvising Chinese Cuisine Overseas." In *The Globalization of Chinese Food*, pp. 56. Routledge, 2014.

<https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a57067b1-f878-4a99-9b6e-6918901657d4/content?page=79>.

¹⁵⁶ Wu and Cheung, "Improvising Chinese Cuisine Overseas."

palates. One prominent example of this adaptation can be seen in American Chinese cuisine. *Tsap sei* (雜碎, “miscellaneous leftovers”), a dish with meat, eggs, and vegetables, can be traced back to Toisan, the origin of many early Chinese immigrants to America.¹⁵⁷ When chop suey houses became popular in the U.S., chefs maintained the “miscellaneous leftovers” profile found in Toisan while changing the ingredients, flavor, and method of preparation in order to fit the American palate.¹⁵⁸ As the Chinese diaspora adapts Chinese foods and menu items, Chinese cuisine is recreated and reimagined based on local contexts.

Transnationalism: local and global exchanges

Scholarly literature also explores the impact of migration on local and global exchanges, specifically using the framework of transnationalism. Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton argue that we should understand immigrants as “transmigrants” engaging in “transnationalism” as they migrate to new countries. Transnationalism is the process by which “immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement.”¹⁵⁹ For transmigrants, this often involves the creative reinterpretation of cultural practices.¹⁶⁰ Michael Kearney, an anthropology scholar, builds on this by noting that when transnational migrants move to new countries, they create transnational

“hyperspaces” that have global qualities, rather than being strictly tied to the country of origin or country of resettlement.¹⁶¹ These hyperspaces can take the form of airports, restaurants, and production sites where cultural flow occurs between locals, transmigrants, and visitors. As people migrate to new places, they create spaces that both represent the global and assimilate to the local.

Food diaspora is a prominent example of this local and global exchange. In the anthology *Food Consumption in Global Perspective*, Kowalczyk, Andrzej, and Derek point out that immigration plays a direct role in the diversification of cuisine. Due to migration and cosmopolitanism, foreign foods and local foods often interact with each other, making their way into each others’ menus and leading to a rise in popularity for “ethnic cuisines.”¹⁶²

Globalization in Accra

Transnationalism and diverse eating cultures can be seen in globalizing Accra. In his book *Globalizing City: The Urban and Economic Transformation of Accra, Ghana*, Richard Grant analyzes the effects of globalization in Accra, explaining the ways that international, transnational, and local forces shape the urban landscape of the city. Drawing on ten years of interviews and extensive fieldwork, Grant argues that Accra is being transformed in place-specific ways as transnationalist spaces emerge.¹⁶³ Ato Quayson builds on this by focusing on signs, billboards, and inscriptions

¹⁵⁷ Anderson, Eugene, N. "Guangzhou (Canton) Cuisine", in *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, ed. Solomon H. Katz (New York: Scribner, 2003), http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/eBooks?ste=22&ocNum=CX3403499999&q=idaho_s_woodrms.

¹⁵⁸ Liu, Haiming. 2015. *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food in the United States*. Asian American Studies Today. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

¹⁵⁹ Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton. 1992. “Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645 (January): 1–24.

¹⁶⁰ Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, “Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration.”

¹⁶¹ Kearney, M. 1995. “The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1): 547–65. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.002555>.

¹⁶² White, Merry I. 2017. “Klein, Jakob A. & Anne Murcott (Eds). *Food Consumption in Global Perspective: Essays in the Anthropology of Food in Honour of Jack Goody*. 230 Pp., Illus., Bibliogr. London: Palgrave, 2014. £68.00 (Cloth).” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23 (3): 630–31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12661>.

¹⁶³ Grant, Richard. 2009. *Globalizing City: The Urban and Economic Transformation of Accra, Ghana*. Vol. First edition. Space, Place, and Society. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.

on Oxford Street, Accra, writing that they are “translations of globalized signifiers onto the local cultural scene.”¹⁶⁴

The transnationalist signs that Quayson points out, as well as the transnationalist spaces that Grant describes, can be most prominently seen on Oxford Street. A quick scan of the bustling street will reveal not only cosmopolitan billboard signs and tro-tro inscriptions, but also the restaurant signs of Lebanese, American, Italian, Indian, and Chinese eateries. As diverse and transnational companies and restaurants pop up throughout Accra, their signage can showcase how they represent global ideas in a local context.

The next section will focus on signs and menus of Chinese restaurants in Ghana in order to understand the longstanding evolution of Chinese cuisine in the context of Accra’s cosmopolitan food culture. Ultimately, analyzing marketing methods as shown by signs and menus will give us key insight into what Chinese restaurant owners choose to put at the forefront in representing Chinese cuisine and culture, as well as how they adapt to the local context.

Analysis of Chinese restaurant signs and menus

Pearl Chinese, Tip Top, and Rice Xpress are all located on or near Oxford Street, a street in the most bustling commercial and cosmopolitan district of Accra.¹⁶⁵ Tang Garden Restaurant is located inside of Tang Palace Hotel, a luxury hotel which hosts a series of international travelers. All of these restaurants are important in this research because they host a diverse range of customers: Chinese Ghanaians, non-Chinese Ghanaians, and international travelers. This diverse customer base drives transnational motivations by Chinese restaurant owners, and the desire to

represent Chinese cultures and fit into a globalized Accra in their signs and menus.

The exhibit analysis will discuss this process of transnationalism using three different lenses: Chinese language as maintenance of Chinese culture, multiculturalism and fusion in menus, and standardized symbolism of Chinese culture.

Chinese language as maintenance of Chinese culture

In studying the marketing strategies of these Chinese restaurants, this section first identifies the way they use language in their signs and menus. Language is key in understanding cultural representations, as it ties together a community of people and set of customs.¹⁶⁶ By including Chinese language on signs, restaurant owners generate and maintain an atmosphere of Chinese culture.

Jennifer Leeman and Gabriella Modan have developed frameworks to analyze the use of Chinese language in signs, particularly as seen in Chinatown. They argue that the use of Chinese language signs is multipurpose: “for Chinese readers, the signs provide important information about the establishment [...], and for those who don’t read Chinese, the signs add an air of ethnic authenticity.”¹⁶⁷

This phenomenon can be examined in the posters displayed in Rice Xpress. Rice Xpress is a small Chinese fast food restaurant on Oxford Street, where you walk into a square room with tables, chairs, and a counter to order food. On the walls, there are a series of posters with statements about eating and food, with Chinese and English translations. One poster has the Chinese message, “*chi de shi xiang yige dipingxian shang meiyou renhe xianzhi?*” (吃的是像一个地平线上, 没有任何限制) and then right below it, the English translation,

¹⁶⁴ Quayson, Ato. “Introduction: Urban Theory and Performative Streetscapes”, Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism (Duke: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 1-36.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Jiang, Wenying. 2000. “The Relationship between Culture and Language.” *ELT Journal* 54 (4): 328–34. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/54.4.328>.

¹⁶⁷ Leeman, Jennifer, and Gabriella Modan. 2009. “Commodified Language in Chinatown: A Contextualized Approach to Linguistic Landscape1.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 13 (3): 332–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2009.00409.x>.

“EATING IS LIKE A HORIZON, THERE’S NO LIMIT.” Another one says “*tonghua bu hui zhu fan*” (通话不会煮饭), and beneath it “TALK DOESN’T COOK RICE.” As shown in Figure 1, a sign says “*wanzheng de dupi zhenqian suoyou*” (完整的肚皮征服所有) and beneath it “A FULL BELLY CONQUERS ALL,” and next to it is a poster that says “*nanzi yi kuai zi ai e*” (男子一筷子捱饿), or “MAN WITH ONE CHOPSTICK GO HUNGRY.”



Figure 1. Rice Xpress signs with statements about eating, with both English and Chinese translations. (Source: Camille Luong)

It is essential to point out that these statements are not idioms found in Chinese or English. Rather, they are generalized statements about the importance of eating and food, presented in both English and Chinese. Here, Rice Xpress owners could have easily just displayed English-language posters about the importance of eating and food. However, they intentionally put both English and Chinese in order to appeal to Chinese readers, as well as non-Chinese readers. The presence of Chinese translations, despite the fact that the majority of Ghanaians do not read or speak Chinese, generates an atmosphere of Chinese culture. This serves to maintain a sense of Chinese culture, while also connecting to residents and presenting a unique transnational culinary experience.

We can also see the presence of both English and Chinese on Tip Top Chinese’s

restaurant sign. On a large billboard outside, it says “TIP TOP CHINESE RESTAURANT,” then “*dingguagu zhongguo canguan*” (顶呱呱中国餐馆), which translates to “tip-top Chinese restaurant” or “first-rate Chinese restaurant.” Here, it is important to note that the Chinese text is much smaller than the English text, nearly unreadable from far away. Due to the insignificant size of the Chinese translation, it is clear that the purpose of its inclusion is not to communicate with Chinese readers, but to maintain a sense of Chinese authenticity and culture. Tip Top Chinese Restaurant is not only Chinese because it says so in English, but it is also Chinese because it literally includes Chinese language.



Figure 2. Tip Top Chinese restaurant sign. (Source: Tip Top Chinese Restaurant Facebook page)

Multiculturalism and fusion in menus

Next, it is important to examine the menu options presented in these Chinese restaurants. Food can offer insight into the adaptation of ingredients and dishes, and showcase how migrants integrate elements of their country of origin’s cuisine with their country of settlement. According to the hybridization theory, cultural forms become separated from existing practices, but rather than completely disappearing they simply recombine with new forms.¹⁶⁸ Thus, hybridization, fusion, and multiculturalism in menu options are a valuable avenue in

¹⁶⁸ Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. 2013. “Globalization as Hybridization.” In *Sociology of Globalization*. Routledge.

understanding the processes of transnationalism, especially as seen in this case study.

A good example of this is Pearl Chinese Restaurant, which has made considerable changes to its menu over time. When it opened in 2020, the restaurant was just Pearl Chinese Restaurant. However, by 2021, the restaurant began also offering Indian and Lebanese food, as shown by the change in signage in Figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3. Original Pearl Chinese Restaurant sign when it opened in 2020. (Source: Pearl Chinese Restaurant Facebook page)



		Ghc
16.	Spear-ribs in brawn chili sauce 红烧排骨	60.00
17.	Spear-ribs in sweet and sour sauce 糖醋排骨	60.00
L FROG LEGS 田鸡		
		Ghc
01.	Fried frog legs in spiced salts 椒盐田鸡	40.00
02.	Frog legs in brawn chili sauce 酱爆田鸡	40.00
03.	Frog legs in black bean sauce 豉汁田鸡	40.00
04.	Frog legs in curry sauce 咖喱田鸡	40.00
	Frog legs with cashew nut sauce 腰果田鸡	40.00
H VEGETABLES 蔬菜类		
		Ghc
01.	Lettuce in oyster sauce 蚝油生菜	40.00
02.	Fried bean-curd in veg. Sauce 家常豆腐	45.00
03.	Cauliflower with black mushroom 香菇菜花	50.00
04.	Mixed vegetable sauce 素什锦	40.00
05.	Vegetables in hot plate curry sauce 铁板素什锦	40.00
06.	Chinese cabbage with mushroom 香菇菜心	60.00
07.	Potatoes thread in chili sauce 酸辣土豆丝	40.00
08.	Green beans in black bean sauce 豉汁豆角	40.00
09.	Scrambled eggs with onion sauce 洋葱炒蛋	55.00
10.	Bean-curd in spiced chili sauce 麻辣豆腐	40.00
11.	Scrambled eggs with tomato sauce 番茄炒蛋	55.00
12.	Bean-curd in black bean sauce 豉汁豆腐	40.00
13.	Fried bean curd in carry sauce 咖喱豆腐	40.00
14.	Bean sprouts in chili sauce 炒豆芽	40.00

Figure 4. Added sign in 2021, with new text: “PEARL CHINESE RESTAURANT + INDIAN & LEBANESE FOOD.” (Source: Camille Luong)

In the change of these signs, we can see the adaptation to the local food culture of Accra, where Indian and Lebanese cuisine offerings are also incredibly popular. It is clear then, that Pearl Chinese not only seeks to present Chinese cuisine, but also provides more multicultural and diverse food choices. The shift to a more multicultural cuisine can also be observed in their menus. In Figure 5, we can see many traditional Chinese dishes like *baoyou shengcai* (蚝油生菜, “lettuce in oyster sauce”) and *fanqie chao dan* (番茄炒蛋, “scrambled eggs with tomato sauce”). In Figure 6 however, there

is a clear shift. The text says “Available At PEARL CHINESE RESTAURANT” and beside it are three images of Indian food with the text “Pani Puri,” “Paneer Kathi Roll,” and “Chicken Kathi Roll.” In these signs and menus, the owners of Pearl Chinese Restaurant made intentional choices to include and advertise not only Chinese offerings, but also non-Chinese offerings.

L FROG LEGS 田鸡		Ghc
01. Fried frog legs in spiced salts	椒盐田鸡	40.00
02. Frog legs in brawn chili sauce	酱爆田鸡	40.00
03. Frog legs in black bean sauce	豉汁田鸡	40.00
04. Frog legs in curry sauce	咖喱田鸡	40.00
Frog legs with cashew nut sauce	腰果田鸡	40.00
H VEGETABLES 蔬菜类		Ghc
01. Lettuce in oyster sauce	蚝油生菜	40.00
02. Fried bean-curd in veg. Sauce	家常豆腐	45.00
03. Cauliflower with black mushroom	香菇菜花	50.00
04. Mixed vegetable sauce	素什锦	40.00
05. Vegetables in hot plate curry sauce	铁板素什锦	40.00
06. Chinese cabbage with mushroom	香菇菜心	60.00
07. Potatoes thread in chili sauce	酸辣土豆丝	40.00
08. Green beans in black bean sauce	豉汁豆角	40.00
09. Scrambled eggs with onion sauce	洋葱炒蛋	55.00
10. Bean-curd in spiced chili sauce	麻婆豆腐	40.00
11. Scrambled eggs with tomato sauce	番茄炒蛋	55.00
12. Bean-curd in black bean sauce	豉汁豆腐	40.00
13. Fried bean curd in carry sauce	咖喱豆腐	40.00
14. Bean sprouts in chili sauce	炒豆芽	40.00

Figure 5. 2020 Pearl Chinese Restaurant menu. (Source: Pearl Chinese Restaurant Facebook page)

Available At
PEARL CHINESE RESTAURANT

Pani Puri
Paneer Kathi Roll
Chicken Kathi Roll

CONTACT INFORMATION
0302770278 / 0593248282
Location: 200m Opposit Osu Total Filling Station, Opposite Awo Plaza & adjacent Hotel Apartment | Email: pearlchineserestaurant@yahoo.com

PEARL CHINESE RESTAURANT
Pearl Indian Corner

Figure 6. 2021 Pearl Chinese Restaurant advertisement, focusing on Indian food offerings. (Source: Pearl Chinese Restaurant Facebook page)

When examining Tang Garden Restaurant’s menu, we can see a similar phenomenon, with both non-Chinese offerings and Chinese fusion with other cuisines. In Figure 7, we can see the *chongcao hua dun lao ya tang* (虫草花炖老鸭汤, “Chinese dish duck soup with cordyceps flower”), as well as the Chinese dish fish maw soup now offered in *tai shi yudu geng* (泰式鱼肚羹, “Thai style”).

虫草花炖老鸭汤 (位)	48/ per person
050005 DUCK SOUP WITH CORDYCEPS FLOWER	
泰式鱼肚羹 (位)	28/ per person
050006 FISH MAW SOUP “THAI STYLE	

Figure 7. Portion of Tang Garden Restaurant menu. (Source: Tang Garden Restaurant TripAdvisor page)

Overall, the multicultural and fusion options in the menus of these Chinese restaurants showcases an active effort to not only present Chinese cuisine offerings, but also adapt to the taste palates of their customers in a globalizing city. These menus are not

mono-cultural, but reflect the food diversity and cosmopolitanism of Accra.

Standardized symbolism of Chinese culture

Finally, it is key to look at the standard symbols of Chinese culture present on these menus and signs. David Wu noted that Chinese restaurants utilize their presentation and advertising to emphasize an image of Chinese culture.¹⁶⁹ The use of standardized symbols point to a desire to not only maintain Chinese culture, but also connect with Accra residents and their existing understandings of Chinese culture.

In the sign outside of Tip Top Chinese (see Figure 2), there is a picture of four different Chinese dishes: dumplings, noodles, Chinese broccoli, and a type of meat. The choice to include iconic Chinese dishes on the sign points to a recognizable image of cuisine, one that is identifiable by Accra residents. However, when examining the symbols on the Rice Xpress logo, we see a more complicated situation arise. In the center of the logo, there is a man with a conical hat, slanted eyes, and a mustache. Here, rather than just using canonical food options as symbols, they are using stereotypical caricatures of Chinese people.



Figure 8. Picture of Rice Xpress restaurant interior. The Rice Xpress logo can be seen on the left wall. (Source: Rice Xpress Facebook page)



Figure 9 (right). Rice Xpress logo close-up. (Source: Rice Xpress Facebook page)

¹⁶⁹ Wu, David YH, and Sidney CH Cheung. "Improvising Chinese Cuisine Overseas." In *The Globalization of Chinese Food*, pp. 56. Routledge, 2014. <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a57067b1-f878-4a99-9b6e-6918901657d4/content#page=79>.

Chinese caricatures like the one observed in this logo have a long history, particularly of being used in racist and problematic ways. A prime example of this would be when the U.S. government instituted the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, explicitly prohibiting immigration from the country of

China.¹⁷⁰ In the following 1870 newspaper cartoon, the cartoonist has depicted Chinese people with conical hats and slanted eyes in an effort to otherize them and emphasize their status as foreigners in the US.

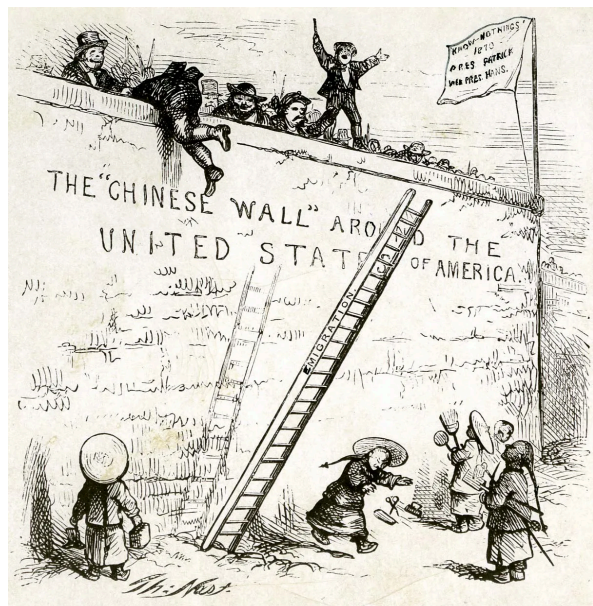


Figure 10. “Throwing Down the Ladder by Which They Rose.” (Source: Thomas Nast, Harper’s Weekly, July 23, 1870)

It is important to acknowledge the history and usage of these Chinese caricatures. However, Michelle Abate argues that while we can and should recognize the racist history of these caricatures, we should also acknowledge that they can be used to communicate a certain visual grammar.¹⁷¹ For Rice Xpress owners, rather than using this imagery for the purpose of alienating and ostracizing Chinese people, they are demonstrating a particular visual grammar and drawing on standardized imagery

¹⁷⁰ “Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).” 2021. National Archives. September 8, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act>.

¹⁷¹ Abate, Michelle Ann. “The Yellow Kid and The Yellow Peril: RF Outcault’s Comics Series, Asian Caricature, and Chinese Exclusion.” <https://imagetextjournal.com/the-yellow-kid-and-the-yellow-peril-r-f-outcaults-comics-series-asian-caricature-and-chinese-exclusion/>.

of Chinese people, one that is recognizable by Accra residents.

Thus, Accra’s Chinese restaurants include a wide variety of symbols of Chinese culture. Some restaurants choose to standardize the symbolism to a few iconic foods, and other restaurants draw on stereotypical visual depictions of Chinese people. In both instances, an effort is being made to present an idea of Chinese culture that is familiar and recognizable to Ghanaians. Subsequently, they are able to connect with Accra residents and adapt to the food scene of Accra.

Conclusion

This paper seeks to address the research gap between Chinese cuisine overseas, transnationalism, and globalization in Accra. Using three separate lenses, this paper produces three conclusions. First, restaurant owners of Chinese restaurants in Accra include Chinese language and characters to create a unique, transnational space in Accra, for Chinese locals, immigrants, and international travelers to connect with. Second, the presence of multiculturalism and hybridization showcased reworking of ingredients and adaptations to the local food culture. Finally, the standardization of symbols of Chinese culture exhibited an active effort to connect with local Accra residents and adapt to the food scene of Accra.

Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that Ghanaian Chinese restaurants utilize signs and menus to maintain Chinese culture as well as adapt to fit into a globalizing Accra. This case study highlights the Chinese diaspora, and how these individuals choose to represent their culture as well as engage in processes of transnationalism. Additionally, this study identifies Accra as a prime example of a burgeoning globalizing city in the world. As Chinese cuisine evolves based on Accra’s local context, so do conceptions of Chinese culture and the fabric of Accra itself. Moving forward, scholars can continue the conversation and future research through ethnography work with restaurant owners and customers.

This case study shows the power of transnationalism in a world where cities are rapidly globalizing and people are constantly moving. Rather than understanding migrants as actors uprooted from their homeland and painfully trying to assimilate, we can start to understand them as culturally creative, constantly engaging in reinvention in order to

maintain their country of origin's practices while also adapting to their new country of resettlement. In doing so, we see that members of diaspora not only represent their own cultures, but also create unique spaces that positively contribute to the cosmopolitanism and character of a city.