



THE CHINESE IN KAMLCOPS
THEIR PROCESS OF SEGREGATION TO INTEGRATION:
THE HISTORIC CHINESE CEMETERY

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PROJECT OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION

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In the initial years of their existence in British Columbia, the Chinese tended to remain segregated from the white majority in several different ways. Firstly, they worked for extremely low wages and performed many tasks which appear to have reduced them to mere slaves.¹ Secondly, they were strikingly ineffectual as a minority group against the prejudice and bigotry of the white population.² Thirdly, and most important, they continued to function in their daily lives as Chinese. Their preservation of many customs and traditions reflecting their adherence to the mother culture did much in the way of keeping them farther apart from the white community.

The prime concern of this essay is to look at the Chinese Cemetery not only as an historical site but also as historic evidence of the process of segregation to integration of the Chinese people in Kamloops. The fact that the Cemetery exists

indicates the retention of a particular Chinese custom which will also be discussed in this paper.

The old Chinese Cemetery which is located at what is presently a residential district of Kamloops, (along the old Hudson Bay Trail, next to Oishi Farms) provides numerous clues supporting the idea that the Chinese may have been segregated from the white community due to their adherence to their Mother culture. On the other hand, the decline in significance of the graveyard to the present Chinese population reflects the supposition that the process of integration into "Kamloops Society" has taken place. l.c.

A brief history of the Cemetery will be presented as well as information related to the graveyard's origin and intended functions. Other historically significant material such as a burial ceremony in the 1930's will attempt to reconstruct the sacred importance of the site as well as emphasize its decline in significance to society. Also, material gathered from the site, combined with observations, noting the sacred geography of the area, an examination of the graves, headstones and ceremonial pillars will be presented.

In many ways the graveyard serves to prove many theories put forth by other scholars regarding the facts behind the segregation of Chinese immigrants in British Columbia, and will therefore be

discussed later in this essay.

The conclusion of the essay will deal mainly with a discussion of the material presented as well as some very recent and significant observations linked to the old Chinese graveyard.

PART IIITHE EXISTENCE OF THE CEMETERY

The first impression one gets upon a close examination of the graveyard is its general rundown appearance. Unattended, overgrown with Sage, yet a number of graves which range in appearance from most elaborate to mere unmarked mounds, can be seen. Below the majority of graves, three large ritual monuments including one equipped with a chimney, stand out.

The original shape of the graveyard was roughly square, however, since it was expanded, its southernmost corner juts out. Here are found the most elaborate graves which have cemented surfaces.

Numerous unmarked as well as semi-marked graves containing headboards either rotten or fallen can also be seen. Upon closer inspection, old plastic flowers appear which could indicate further unmarked mounds whose headboards have long since weathered.

It may be quite difficult in distinguishing the definite rows of graves because they are facing True-North and not Magnetic North. The graveyard's original fence pointed True-North but upon reconstruction and modification, the present "fence" points to a Magnetic North.

There appears to be no definite plan of placement in the Cemetery. Poor, unmarked graves lie alongside very elaborate ones which have cemented surfaces; marble headstones and precise caligraphy. While others may be mere lumps on the ground with painted stone or wooden headstones. This fact, [?] illustrates that being rich or poor means nothing to the early Chinese in Kamloops. Most of the unmarked graves are found in the oldest, southernmost part of the site and gradually, as one moves up the hillside, newer ones can be found.

*Sentence
Fragment
Never put
a comma
between
Subj &
verb!*

The actual location of the cemetery is just as interesting as its history. There is no other location of its kind in all of the Kamloops area. "It is situated in such a way as to comply with the traditional laws of geomancy which were characteristic of Southern-Chinese burials."⁷ These characteristics are the laws of Feng Shui; the wind and the water. "Basically, these laws call for the proper placement of a deceased individual's body so that the spirit will be in a proper context with the opposite forces of nature (the Ying and the Yang) that surround it."⁸ In other words, these laws deal with sacred geography such as protective hills, nearby running water and the facing Northward of the graves. The Kamloops Chinese Cemetery runs

North on an uphill slant to the South and is protected at either end by small hills. The graves and alters face North and two ravines with creeks run parallel to the site. Whether the following statement has anything to do with the site is questionable, but it has been noticed that a continual wind blows through the graveyard from the east. Since the graveyard is positioned with particular reference to the old Chinese ways, we can see why other locations like this have not been found in the Kamloops area.

Generally speaking, three types of graves can be found in this Cemetery. The most recent graves have cemented surfaces, marble headstones, and can be considered as the most elaborate type of grave found at the site. The second types of graves are simple dirt mounds containing cement, brick or wooden headstones with painted or carved inscriptions. However, the most indistinguishable types of graves found at the site are small unmarked mounds. These were presumably marked at one time but have since lost their headstones.

The precise caligraphy on the headstones tell us another story. Some inscriptions are detailed and give considerable information about the deceased while others may only give the name and birth-place. Headstones in general, do contain the following information;

the deceased's name, where he came from in China, where he was born--died as well as a series of honourific titles. Collectively speaking then, the remaining headstones give us the following information about the nature of the Chinese buried in the Cemetery. The majority of those buried therein came to British Columbia from four districts in the Southern Chinese province of Kwang Tung, around Canton, and most were born before the turn of the century. The earliest marked graves are from ^{1927?} 1926, to the most recent, ^{1975?} 1968 and most of the burials in this graveyard took place between the years 1930 and 1960.

The significance of the Cemetery is that it is a historical reflection of the attitudes of the early Chinese in Kamloops. It is also significant in that it presents existing proof to the theories presented by many scholars that pertain to a total understanding of the Chinese in British Columbia. Theories pertaining to firstly, the origins of the Chinese who came to British Columbia and the role this played with regard to the attitudes of the Chinese toward the white population with their Christian values; and secondly, the extent to which these Chinese retained their cultural traditions thus segregating them from the white community. Although the graveyard does not contain information

to completely reconstruct Chinese lifestyle, its contents indicate ^{split} ~~infinitive~~ the most notable characteristics of the nature of the early ^{infinitive} Chinese population in Kamloops.

Many scholars studying [the] Chinese immigration look to these "cultural moves" (for example, geomancy tradition) as a vital part of life in Southern China and that these were brought and retained in British Columbia. This particular theory has ample evidence presented by the graveyard which can prove its truth. An article by W. Willmot in B.C. STUDIES states that in the initial years of their existence in British Columbia, the Chinese retained many of their cultural ties with China. He presents two examples, the fact that the Chinese sent their earnings home to support the home lineage and that they formed organizations such as the Freemasons to ensure that the bones of the dead would be sent home to the ancestral plots in China.⁹ Other scholars also demonstrate how the traditional beliefs of the Chinese caused them to segregate from the white community.

The Chinese Cemetery is historic proof of the Chinese retention of their inherited cultural ways and therefore supports the theories mentioned. This is particularly true with regard to the rituals in Chinese traditions that were associated with the dead.

An obvious example of the Chinese adherence to their mother country's customs can be seen in the very positioning of the graveyard itself. It has been stated earlier, that the very positioning of the graveyard was done according to the laws of Feng Shui which were practised in Southern China. More specifically, the inscriptions of the headstones are in agreement with this same general area of China; the two provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung. The graveyard also presents proof that many of the Chinese buried in earlier years were exhumed and returned to ancestral plots in China. The graveyard also presents further proof to the fact that the Chinese refused North American religion, namely Christianity, for their own religious ideals by the existence of the site itself. In fact, many of the theories which attempt to explain the nature of the immigrant Chinese in British Columbia can find proof in the Cemetery. The information given by this graveyard gives an insight towards the understanding of the social conditions which were present and which shaped Chinese life as they settled in Kamloops; and for that matter, in British Columbia during the early 1900's. With the knowledge of these past attitudes we can appreciate the pattern leading toward eventual integration of the Chinese community in with the white population

of Kamloops. Without the understanding of these past social attitudes and conditions, it is impossible to view the Chinese integration into Kamloops society in any detail.

PART IVTHE CHINESE TODAY IN KAMLOOPS

In the last three decades, discrimination against Chinese in Kamloops has decreased significantly. The process of integration has been completed and the Chinese appear to be functioning and working well with Kamloops society. [This case in] prejudice toward them has been brought about by several important reasons. One obvious reason was the freeing of immigration laws which allowed Chinese to enter Canada. But probably the most important factor which has helped to determine the present status of the Chinese in Kamloops has been the giving up of the old traditional Chinese ways. Their acceptance of Christianity also did much towards rapid integration of the Chinese into the white community.

Considering this, it is plain to see why the Chinese Cemetery is declining in its use and importance to the Chinese in Kamloops; indicated by the present condition of the site. It can be considered as tragic that a site once so important is now left to the forces of the elements, however, its decline in significance was to occur in order to allow for complete integration of the Chinese community.

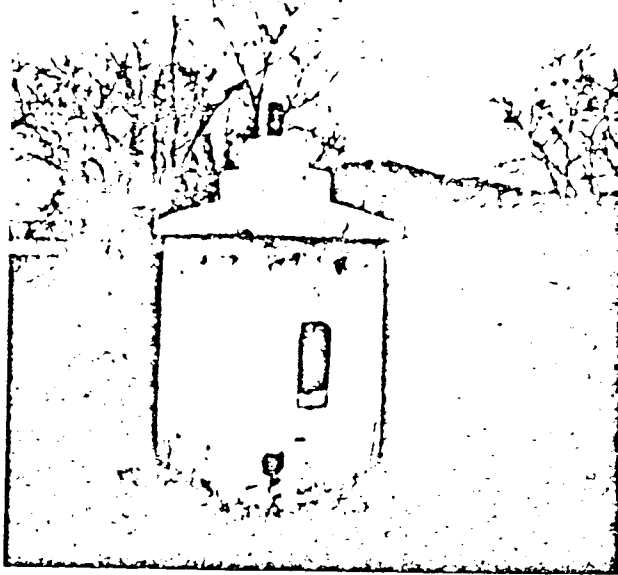
While conducting this study, I came upon a very interesting bit of material having to do with the annual worship at the tombs of the ancestors in the Chinese Cemetery. This particular festival is known as Ch'ing Ming and climaxes annually on the sixth of April. At this ceremony, living decendants and relatives of those deceased come to burn incense and offer food, to honour their ancestral graves. Flowers are arranged and any caretaking which needs to be done is performed at the ancestor's tomb.¹⁰ In fact, one should not be surprised to find the change in appearance of the Chinese Cemetery after the Ch'ing Ming festivities. Of course, the Cemetery would still be overgrown, but many gravestones would be straightened and cleaned, flowers would be planted beside several graves, incense would be burning and the ritual monuments would once again be used to sacrafice food offerings to the spirit.

This essay concentrated on the graveyard as being forgotten and no longer of any importance to the Chinese in Kamloops. Further, ~~suggestions~~^{allusions} have been made to [the fact that] Chinese have ^{ing} integrated so well into Western society that they have discarded many old traditions upon which the Cemetery is based. These conclusions are for the most part accurate, however, there are still those Chinese (their numbers are as yet unknown) in Kamloops

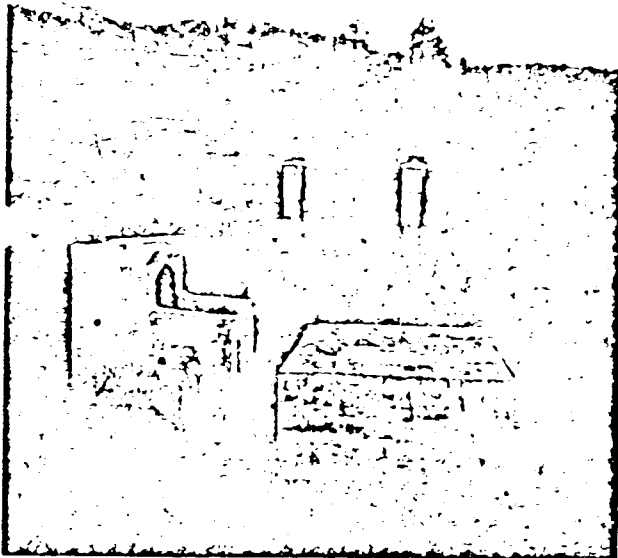
avoid!

who still adhere to the bonds and duties with and toward their ancestors who are buried in the Chinese Cemetery.

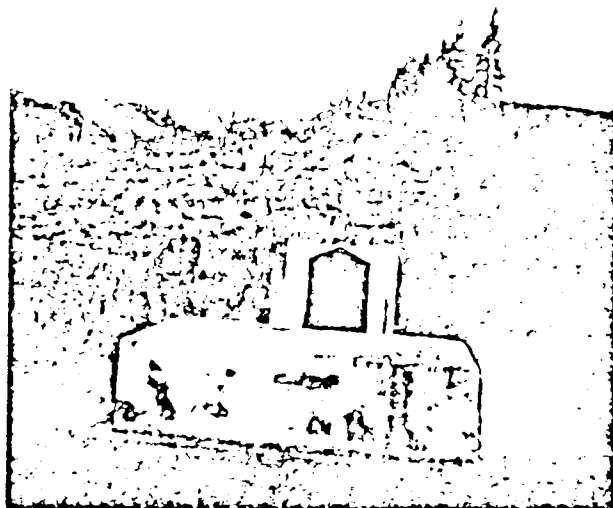
This essay has presented a history of the Chinese Cemetery, an account of its remaining contents and finally, the significance of its existence in terms of research has been illustrated. It is written with one specific view in mind; this being the fact that the Chinese Cemetery represents and is historic proof of a period of segregation for the Chinese in Kamloops which was brought about by prejudice, a domineering white class and the retention of Chinese cultural ways. At present, the Chinese in Kamloops have integrated well into Western society and are practically indistinguishable in terms of job opportunities as well as wealth.



(1)



(2)



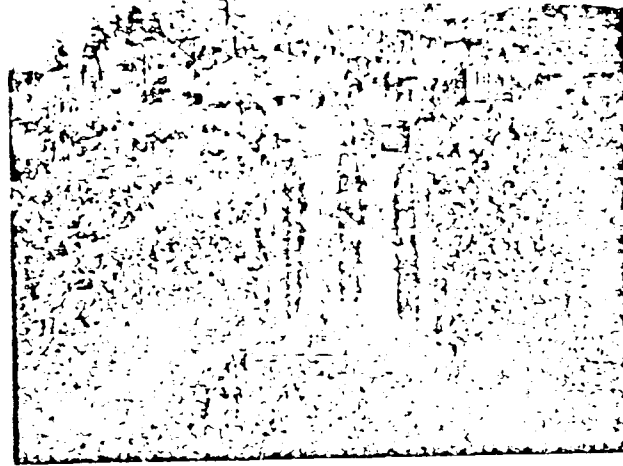
(3)

Three funeral alters found in the Chinese Cemetery.

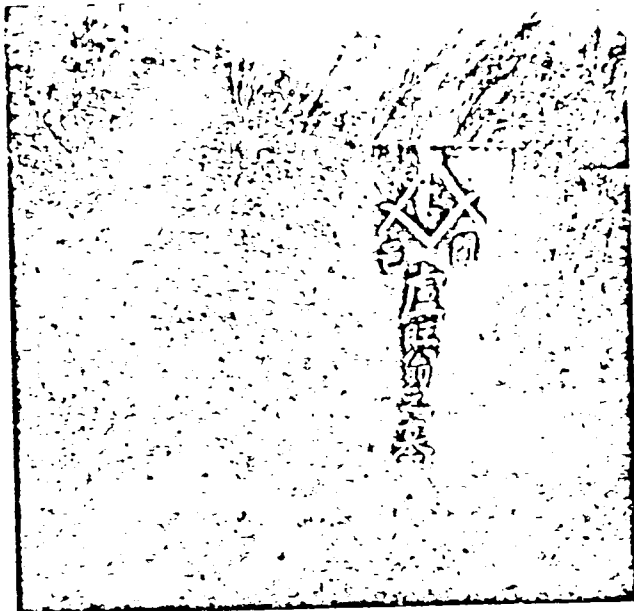
Plate #1 presents the largest of the ~~three~~ alters used for burnt offerings to the spirits and has a small chimney on top.

Plate #2 and #3 are taken at right angles to the remaining alters used primarily for the display of food.

note the two large stone posts in plate #2 which mark the entrance to the graveyard.



(4)



(5)



(6)

Three types of gravestones found in the Cemetery.

Plate #4 contains the most elaborate type of gravestone found at the site. Its appearance as well as the precise calligraphy indicate that the deceased was a wealthy man.

Plates #5 and 6 present some of the older graves found at the site bearing painted wooden headstones.

Note the symbol on top of the headstone in plate #5 indicating that the deceased was a member of the Chinese 3 Free Masons in Kamloops.

FOOTNOTES

1. For further reference see Pierre Berton, The Last Spike (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1971)

2. This particular topic is well discussed in an article by Chuen Yan Lai, "The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria: Its Origins and Functions," Volume No. 15, in B. C. Studies, ed. by M. Prang and W. Young (Vancouver: The Publications Center of U.B.C., 1970).

3. Editorial, Kamloops Sentinel, June 18, 1887, P. 4

4. Kamloops Sentinel, August 22, 1932, p. 1.

5. Ibid.

6. These may be found in the picture file at the Kamloops Museum.

7. Maurice Freedman, Chinese Lineage and Society, (New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1966) p. 126

8. Ibid.

9. W. Willmot, "Approaches to the study of the Chinese in British Columbia" in B. C. Studies, ed. by M. Prang and W. Young, Vol. No. 4, (Vancouver: The Publications Center of U.B.C., 1970)

10. Pictures of Ch'ing Ming ceremonies may be seen in Maurice Freeman, Chinese Lineage and Society (New York: Humanities Press, 1966), p. 146.

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March 13, 1923, p. 8.
March 5, 1942, p. 8.
February 2, 1971, p. 3.

Picture file at the Kamloops Museum, Catalogue Numbers
1046 - 1052 and Numbers 5022 - 5125.

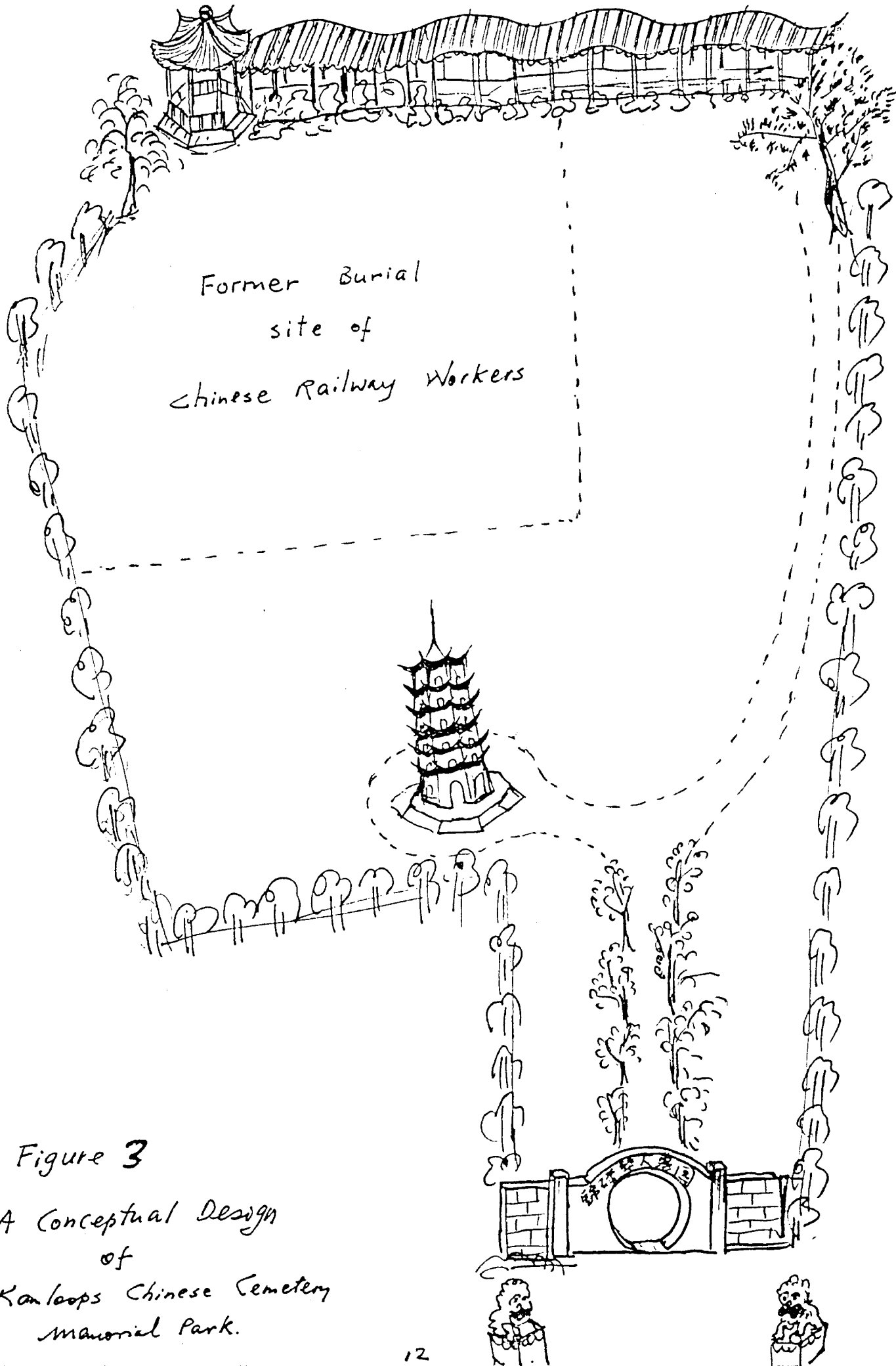


Figure 3
A Conceptual Design
of
Kanloops Chinese Cemetery
Memorial Park.