



# A Cowherd in Paradise: From China to Canada

*May Q. Wong*

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In 2006, the Prime Minister apologized to the Chinese people for the legislated discrimination created by Canada's head tax laws in the first half of the twentieth century, acknowledging the far-reaching and long-term consequences it has had on their families. *A Cowherd in Paradise* is the story of one such family.

The book chronicles the remarkable lives of Wong Guey Dang (1902–1983) and Jiang Tew Thloo (1911–2002). Ah Dang was born into an impoverished family and sold as a child. In 1921, his adoptive father paid a five-hundred-dollar head tax to send Ah Dang to Canada. Eight years later, driven to create a family of his own, Ah Dang returned to China, where he chose Ah Thloo as his bride from a matchmaker's photo.

As a child, Ah Thloo worked as a cowherd and from the age of six was responsible for her family's fortune—their water buffalo. Ah Thloo not only became a wife and mother, but also grew to be a courageous defender against invaders and a champion of the weak.

Married for over half a century, the couple was forced to live apart for twenty-five years because of Canada's exclusionary immigration laws. In Canada, Ah Dang became a successful Montreal restaurateur; while in China, Ah Thloo struggled to survive through natural disasters, wars, and revolutions. *A Cowherd in Paradise* is the moving tale of one couple's search for love, family, and forgiveness.

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