

Department of Anthropology,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Summer Internship 2015

Name: Chan Wai Po

Institution: Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum

First of all, I would like to thank the department of Anthropology for giving me such a rewarding opportunity of working in Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum as an intern. Before I describe what I have done and learned there, I would like to briefly say a few words about why I applied for an internship placement in a museum.



Despite being an Anthropology student I had been a total stranger to Archaeology for over a year until I picked an Archaeology course in my year 2's first semester. Since then, I have been mesmerized by those sophisticated Archaeological theories and I desire to know further how archaeological knowledge is practiced in workplace, especially museums. I suppose it is not wrong to say that I applied for an internship placement mainly because of Archaeology.

Contrary to my expectation, the work in Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum has little to do with Archaeology. Having a bit of disappointment at first, I, however, insist that the experience is still rewarding because I was able to apply some of my knowledge. To my surprise, the knowledge I applied during the internship was those learned in Field Methods class rather than Archaeology class. In the following paragraphs I am going to go through some of the tasks I confronted and how they are related to field methods.

Basically there are two main tasks assigned by my supervisor. The first one is to write a proposal exploring the feasibility of opening an alternative entrance of the Museum and turning part of the museum into public area. In the proposal we are also required to survey the visitors to the Museum, study the historical value of the Museum (Kam Tong Hall, which was Ho Kam Tong's mansion) and draw floor plans. I, with another two interns from the department of History of CUHK, began by designing questionnaires. In this case, field methods really come in handy. For example, what questions are needed to study the pattern of visitors, how to avoid misleading or embarrassing the interviewees, how to design probing questions, etc. We also paid attention to

when and where to conduct interviews so as to collect less biased data by having larger sample size. We ended up spending a week interviewing visitors in the Museum as well as residents and pedestrians on streets (who are also the potential visitors).

Apart from asking the visitors' (or insiders') opinion, we also tried to "be" the visitors ourselves. To put it "anthropologically", we conducted participant observation in order to have a sense of what visitors actually feel like if another entrance were to be opened and some floors became public area. We discovered problems we did not expect. For instance, the travelling route in the Museum would become much more complicated, noise problems might arise, wheelchair users might find it difficult to enter.....so on and so forth. In addition, we put ourselves in the Museum staff's shoes and examined whether the new arrangement would increase the management cost and the demand on manpower. The above considerations helped us decide where to place reception, ticket office and staff when drawing the new floor plans.

Another task is to invite scholars to give lectures on topics designed by the Museum for public education. Our supervisor asked us to come up with a series of new lecture topics on the theme of modern Chinese history for the coming months. We started off by searching for scholars who are familiar with modern Chinese history. We categorized them by their fields, such as the modern history of women, of thoughts, of military, of folklore and so on. To ensure that the scholars invited are familiar with our topics, we were suggested that scholars who have given talks or written books on similar topics should be preferably selected. The selecting process somehow resembles how we chose the interviewees in our fieldwork method project.

I suppose it would be an exaggeration to say that this one-month internship equips me with a lot of skills. However, I do appreciate this opportunity which enables me to catch a glimpse of how a Hong Kong museum works (e.g. how a museum orients itself based on its advantage, how to educate and appeal the public, what to consider in the management of a museum etc.), which might be helpful when I later study museology. Last but not least, I want to thank the department and the Museum again for giving me such a fulfilling experience during the summer holiday.

