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Asia seen from within

FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of *The Hong Kong Anthropologist* contains articles written by anthropology students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong. Students at both of these universities produce important research reports on aspects of Hong Kong culture and society that are unable to find an outlet in normal academic journals. Because they carry invaluable information we have decided to use our Society's magazine as a vehicle for their reports. Half the articles are in Chinese and half in English which reflects, we believe, the bilingualism of Hong Kong. The editors always welcome contributions to the magazine from its readers (approximately 3000 words in Chinese or in English).

Over 1992-93 the Hong Kong Anthropological Society has continued to organize various activities for members and non-members alike. A high point was the Film Festival held in December. We hope to have another Film Festival in late 1993. In May 1993 a field trip was organized to Yim Tin Tsai in the New Territories, and trips further afield are planned for later in 1993. We also had lectures on Buddhism in Tibet by Dr R. Schwartz of Canada, on Emigration and Female Centred Households in Canada by Dr Josephine Smart, also an academic based in Canada, and the Barbara Ward Memorial Lecture was delivered by one of the world's leading comparative anthropologists, Jack Goody of Cambridge University.

Readers interested in the activities of the society or in joining can contact the Hon. Secretary, Anthropology Department, Chinese University of Hong Kong. The next issue of the magazine will be edited by Maria Tam, also of the Anthropology Department at the Chinese University.

- *Grant Evans & Maria Tam*

NAMING AND NICKNAMING IN CHINESE SOCIETY: Gender, Person and the Group

Cheng Sea Ling & Wong Man Yiu

Names in traditional Chinese societies are not only for identification, they are believed to have inherent transformative powers for the individual, the family, or even the lineage. Names are used to label a person in terms of status, personal characteristics and his/her relationship with the outside world. An individual may acquire a variety of names through different stages of life -- formal and informal, public and private. It has been observed that the more names one has, the more socialized a person is.

The prominence attached to names and the prevalence of nicknames have contributed to the construction of names into a system of symbols. A systematic study of the Chinese names thus becomes a gateway to a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Starting from Rubie Watson's study of Ha Tsuen in the New Territories in 1986, this study intends to take her explorations further by extending our attention to naming behaviour in metropolitan Hong Kong. Its aim is to gain better insights into the changing values of the individual, gender differences and group dynamics in a Chinese community which has long been exposed to Western culture as a British colony.

Method

Twenty undergraduates from a residential hall of a local university have been interviewed. Ten females and ten males, all are Cantonese-speaking Chinese aged between 19 and 23. They were individually interviewed with a prepared list of questions: their personal names and their origins, as well as their nicknames which they have been given throughout their life were listed out, possibly with explanations. Any personal reactions to these nicknames were also recorded. Some were asked to

talk about other nicknames, both public and private, which they know of.

Naming At Birth

In Ha Tsuen, the naming of an infant was often based on classical literary allusions. The name expressed a wish for the child's or family's future, or it may enshrine some simple event that took place at or near the time of the child's birth. It was common for people having names that record their time, season, etc. of birth. According to Rubie Watson's studies, in the People's Republic of China, people born during the Korean War provide some illustrative examples. Some children might be called "Resist the United States" (*fáan-méih*) or "Aid Korea" (*bòng-chiuh*). Moreover, a child's name may express the parents' desire for no more children, or daughters. A family with no son but daughters may name one of their daughters "don't come" (*meih-leih*), or "too many" (*A dò*), etc. Parents may also express their wish for a son by naming a newborn daughter "joined to brother" (*lihn-daih*).

Names in traditional Chinese society classify people into family, generation sets, and kin groups. Personal names carry expressions and meanings. They express the expectations of parents. Beyond these, it is believed that names have the power to change one's fortunes. In Chinese culture, each person has a different balance of the five elements, determined by the time of birth (*pa tzu*). It controls the fate of the person. Imbalance in the five elements will lead to bad luck. The radical of one of the characters of the person's name may contain one of the five elements so as to maintain such a balance. Thus, it is hoped, this will save the child from a bad fate, illness or even death.

Examples of the above naming practices are found not only in Ha Tsuen, but also in other areas of China and even urban Hong Kong Society. In our sample, the name of one girl is the same as a factory name because she lived next to it. There is also a girl whose name means "to call in a son" (wùhn-máhn 煖兒).

Despite the similarity found with the data from Ha Tsuen, most of the bases for naming a baby in urban Hong Kong are different from the rural village. Most of the names collected in our sample reflected parents' expectations. For example, it is most common for boys, in our sample, to have a name concerning their intellectual qualities, such as "eternal wisdom" (ji-háhnng 智恒), or "great wisdom" (houh-ji 浩智). It is also common for a boy's name to concern their future, eg. "a bright future and goal" (ji-míhng 志明), or "strengthening the country" (tung-kwok 棟國).

For girls, names generally involve their beauty, eg. "to have beauty both in the outlook and inside" (sau-waih 秀慧). Characters meaning "elegance" (ngáh雅), "purity" (jìng貞), or "elegant manner" (sau-yih 秀儀) were also found. Names concerning a girl's intellectual quality were also found, but less frequent when compared with boys', eg. "poetic soul" (si-lihng 詩靈), or "outstanding as a jade" (seuih-bik 翠碧). It is also interesting to note that one of the girls got the same name as a movie star whom her mother adored.

Generally, when comparing these names with the rural village, a trend towards individuality was found. Names in our sample were very often concerned with qualities of the children, eg. their beauty, intelligence or future life. For rural villagers, on the other hand, names were found to be more often concerned with the expectations of the family, sibling order, or even the country.

The strong preference for a son rather than daughter is less apparent in today's Hong Kong, as shown in the naming practices. Traditional values emphasizing the importance of boys have declined in urban Hong Kong. In a rural village, where farming was the main way of making a living for the whole family, labour is very important. The physical strength of a son is thus important for a rural family. Moreover, in traditional Chinese lineage, only sons can inherit the property of the lineage. Thus, it is very important to have a son so as to continue the family line. However, in urban Hong Kong, jobs are highly differentiated, women have no problems entering the wage labour market. Physical strength gives way to mental ability which the compulsory education system helps to train. Furthermore, strong family lineages seldom exist, and due to the promotion of family planning in the late 60's and 70's, preferences for

sons rather than daughters was reduced.

References to the balance of the five elements and pa tzu are not found among the naming practices of our subjects. The cosmological concepts of the Chinese which used to be hailed as the determining powers of one's fate have not been invoked by the parents of children born around the 70's. This is another indication of the changing beliefs of the Hong Kong Chinese.

The composition of names, however, is similar for the rural and urban areas. It is common in the two areas that names are of two characters, with one of the characters being shared among siblings. For one of our interviewees, one of the characters in his name is shared by the same generation in the whole lineage. This is common for rural areas, especially large lineages. The shared character seems to indicate group affiliation among siblings.

Milk Name

For their first and second years a child is usually called by a family nickname or milkname. "Being precious" (A-Bo or A-Buh, the sound made by baby) was commonly found. Names of animals were also common, eg. "doggy", "duckling" etc. It was believed that the lives of the babies would, like those of the animals called, thus easily overcome the first two years of their lives. In rural areas, a baby's life was very vulnerable to death. In urban Hong Kong, with hospitals and baby care centres, the names described above are seldom found. Instead, milk names mostly concern the lovable appearance of the child, eg. "like an apple" 果果. Milk names may also indicate the sibling order. It is common to have a milk name like "little brother" 細路 or "little sister" 阿妹, for the youngest children. Also the sound "B" is commonly added into the milk name. This may indicate the intrusion of a Western idea into Chinese culture, because "BB" is likely to be a Cantonese adaptation of "baby" from English. In traditional Chinese, to describe a baby, usually "So-hà" 蘇蝦, was used. "So" means "Smelly" while "ha" means shrimp. It is also supposed to describe the curling body of the baby.

Names Taken Throughout Life

Naming in Ha Tsuen is vastly different for men and women. While a man takes up various names through different stages of life, a woman becomes more and more "nameless" as she matures. For a man, besides the family nickname mentioned before, an education name was given when he began his schooling. It may be given by his teacher. The name is used during his schooling.

When a Ha Tsuen man marries, he is given or takes up a marriage name, or tzu. The marriage name is given in a ceremony called "sung tzu" (give "tzu"). The importance of the "tzu" is thus a cause for celebration. The marriage name may be given by others, or taken by the groom himself. In choosing the marriage name, the groom demonstrates his sophistication, learning, and goals. According to Rubie Watson, the possession of a marriage name is essential in Ha Tsuen, since it marks the attainment of male adulthood, and gives a man the right to participate in lineage and community rituals.

When a man reaches middle age or when he starts a business career, he usually takes a "hao", a courtesy name. A man chooses this name himself. The name is often used to show one's success in life, or reveals personal identity. Courtesy names are usually for public use since the personal name is considered to be too personal to reveal. Courtesy names are different from other names in that they mark the attainment of a new social and economic status.

Some Ha Tsuen people have posthumous names that they have given themselves or have been conferred upon them by others. This practice has declined in recent years.

The preceding discussion suggests that names mark stages in a man's social life. The possession of a birth name, school name, marriage name, courtesy name, and posthumous name shows that he passed through the major stages of social adulthood.

However, for women in Ha Tsuen, or other traditional Chinese areas, they do not have such array of names. When she gets married, the personal name ceases to be used. She is called by a kinship term in the family. Her husband calls her the "inner person" (nei jen). Her son called her mother. Her mother-in-law calls her daughter-in-law. The woman's status was reduced to her relations within the family.

The array of names of men and the namelessness of women are, it seems, absent nowadays. In the sample, all subjects have only one personal name in Chinese. To preserve the intimacy which this personal name carries, an English name is common among Hong Kong Chinese for addresses and references. This may also be explained as an effect of the rise of a bilingual society. The trend is the same for men and women.

Nicknames

Nicknames are common in Ha Tsuen and also prevail in the urban community, where school names and courtesy names are virtually nonexistent. Nicknames in contemporary Hong Kong society are known as "Fà Mihng" (literally "flower name" 花名). In Ha Tsuen, besides the family nickname (milk name), a man acquired a public nickname (wai hao). This nickname is widely used in the village. Usually, only the nickname is known among the villagers. Besides describing some physical qualities or personal qualities, nicknames can also protect or equalize unequal relationships. According to Rubie Watson, the richest and most powerful man in one New Territories village was nicknamed "little dog". This was a useful nickname, for a man whose career depended on being accepted by everyone in the community. The nickname serves to equalize the unequal relationship between this man and the poor.

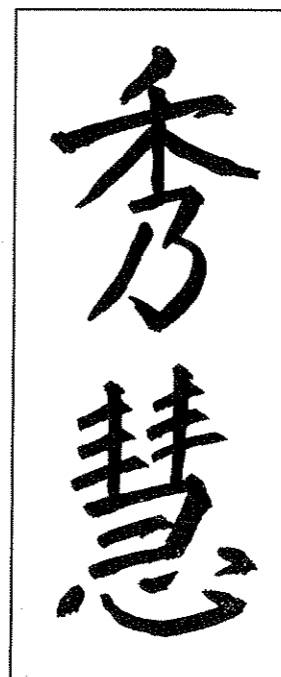
Each of our subjects usually had two to three nicknames by their twenties. All were acquired from their peers and schoolmates. As Watson has found, nicknames usually refer to idiosyncratic features -- physical characteristics, personality of the subject, or his or her behaviour on some special occasion. They may also be some word play on their personal names or references to contemporary culture. Also note that they usually indicated a sense of humour, and some may have sexual implications. Rather than equalizing unbalanced relationships, nicknames in our sample have the function of indicating the status of individuals in a group. For example, one of our subjects got the name of "big brother" which marks his leading role among peers.

Physical characteristics: "Sú fèi jeuhng" (Little Flying elephant/Dumbo 小飞象) for an overweight girl "fù lòuh" (Skeleton 骷髅) for a boy whose face was known to look like that of a skeleton.

Personality: "Lim Dog" (Lim 狗) in which "Dog" in Cantonese as an adjective means "nasty, cheapo", an impression of the subject's habit of telling dirty jokes. "Prince of Wan Tung Taai" (運通泰王爺, Wan Tung Taai was a famous Chinese dim Sum Restaurant and was one of the subject's favourite restaurant.

Mark of special occasion: "Yih Wùh" (二胡) -- a Chinese musical instrument which the subject was said to have imitated its bow in a drama competition.

Word play: "Sàn Yàhm" (呻吟) which literally means "moaning" for a subject with his name



as Sàh Lèuhn-yám (辛倫欽). "Chiu hàahm syù" (齣咸書) -- "chewing 'salty' (pornographic) books" for a subject's named Chiu Naahm-syu (趙南樞).

Reference to contemporary culture: "A chaan" (阿燦) which used to be the stereotyped uncultured Chinese immigrant in a TV series.

There are also nicknames intended to reduce the status of the person concerned. It was widely known among the subjects, as well as other members of the same residential hall, that their Warden had the nickname "bò lòh tòhng" (菠蘿糖), meaning "Pineapple Candy". It was a transliteration of the Warden's actual name. It is a common practice for the Chinese to give derogatory nicknames to those in authority over them. These nicknames are usually kept secret from the person concerned, as in the case of this residential hall.

Nicknames are the only names which one has a degree of control over, in contrast with personal names which are usually given by elders at birth. One may introduce a nickname created by himself/herself to his/her peers, eg. "the little B" or "Tama" (a Japanese cartoon). These nicknames have the implication of being "childlike" and "adorable" which is quite a contrast to their image of being impulsive. These names may serve to modify their public image and thus be more easily accepted by their peers.

Nicknaming is a game of give-and-take in which the recipient of a nickname can act in various ways to discard it. Yet it is not often practiced since nicknaming is very common within a peer group and such acts can be considered as asocial. Therefore, when a person did work to reject the nickname persistently, mutual respect within a community would usually lead others to yield to his/her demand.

There is a case of a subject who has been given a nickname which describes him as a feminine person. The subject rejected this name on the basis of his violated sense of masculinity and tried to get rid of the nickname. According to him, he never revealed this name to others, and told his close friends (those who created this name) never to call him by this. When introducing himself to new friends, he would only tell them of other nicknames, thereby trying to reinforce these other names. It was with such a variety of measures that the subject succeeded in discarding this "feminine" nickname within half a year.

It may be of interest here to refer to Mary Douglas' analysis of jokes. Most nicknames are meant to be humorous. Its humour may be seen to have derived from: 1) it is a kind of misnomer which the subject has to accept; 2) it is a challenge to the dominant structure by the fact that it invokes a forbidden language into everyday usage. Slang and taboo words are used with much freedom. The

generally accepted pattern of behaviour, the dominant form of social structure eg. values, hierarchy, is temporarily suspended and devalued. What is celebrated in turn is the relations within and the culture of the community. More thoughts will be given to this in the latter part of this study.

Gender Differences: An Analysis

Deep-rooted social values of the two different sexes determine the naming of babies in terms of the value attributed to and common beliefs concerning his or her future role.

Chinese society has been populated by girls with names that conform to the ideas of "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" -- the motto for women of propriety. In cases where one of the two characters of the name is assigned the group affiliation role i.e. repeated in all siblings' name, the other, the individualizing character is usually chosen from the "woman" radical: such as "Beauty" (méih 美), "Purity" (jìng 貞), "Petite" (Sìu 小). The classification is similar with men whose names revolve around the words "Grand" (Waih 偉), "Wisdom" (ji 智), "Pillar" (lèuhng 梁), all signifying important achievements. While women's names are concerned with female virtues and stereotyped roles, men's deal with future achievements, ambition and their contribution to family or even country. This phenomenon has been depicted in Watson's study and can be shown to persist.

Further, girls are known to have their names as a kind of vehicle for changing circumstances. In our study, the cases were "Stop girls from coming", or "call in the sons" (wùhn màhn 媛雯). Yet compared with Watson's studies, in which girls' names are found to be rarely written, and where names such as "too many" were used literally, such naming is much more subtle now. Only the sounds are taken while the words usually have other meanings.

Boys' names are rarely as goal-oriented as the girls and are made less instrumental use of. Their signification are concerned with such unspecific grandness as "Eternal Wisdom" (wíhng hàhng 永恒) or "Bright Ambition" (hòuh jí 浩智). Therefore, if boys' names can be interpreted as an expression of parents' wishes, much more individuality has been left for the boys, as the names give them direction and valuable resources -- wisdom, prominence, strength. They serve as means to greater ends. The case with girls, as shown, are not so, being either concerned with short-term goals or such virtues which can only be ends in themselves eg. beauty, purity.

The naming process also signifies the values attributed to the sexes. One of the girls has the name

"Red" (single character) because the factory across from her household has this word in its name. Another has her name because her mother was a fan of the TV star with the same name. No similar cases are found among the boys. The insignificance of individuation with girls can be seen in this "casual" way of naming.

So far, the analysis has conformed to much of Watson's study of 1977-78 in Ha Tsuen, having girls' names as linking them with stereotyped roles, being an instrument to change existing circumstances, oriented to short term goals, giving little room for individuation and self-expression. Boys' names on the other hand are an instrument of individuation, marking their uniqueness and heralding their future success on a scale as grand as the country. However, a trend of individualism can be seen in a few of the girls' names. One has the meaning of "Poetic Soul" (Si líhng 詩靈) which gives a literary sense to the girl, and the special combination of these two characters less commonly used in names is intended to give greater individuality to the girl. The education level of the parents is related to the degree of individuation of their children's names. In the example mentioned above, the girl has been named by her father who is a university graduate. Similar information with respect to other subjects is not available.

Gender differences in nicknaming give us another perspective on social values and sanctions on the two sexes. There are taboo words which are off-limits for girls but commonplace among boys' circles. There is a general tendency among boys to nickname others with the word "dog" (Gáu 狗) which means "cheap and nasty" or "cheapo", eg. "Szeto Dog" (司徒狗), "Lim Dog" (Lim 狗) [Szeto and Lim being the surnames]. "Chicken" (Gài 雞) is another colloquial suggesting some defect in the one being named. It also has the meaning of "prostitute". Thus, its use is limited to boys to achieve the expected effect without adverse feelings (eg. insulted feelings). Or the word meaning sordid (Yáhn 淫) is often used in boys' nicknames, especially those who have in their "Yáhn" (kindness 仁) which rhymes with it. The word "Chèun" (Spring 春) meaning something sexual, is common among boys' nicknames. Note that whether the boys are really "sordid" or "nasty" is quite another matter. These names are given to them and used publicly at will by the peers, not necessarily relating to their character or behaviour.

These are names, which have a sexual connotation or implication of obscenity, are not found among the girls' public nicknames, which usually are concerned only with their physical characteristics or some common wordplay. One may think that girls rarely display any behaviour which attracts such nicknames. Besides, it is normative behaviour to avoid giving names suggesting obscenity etc. for girls. These would contradict with the cultural values which expect unmarried girls to stay away from sex and due respect given to their expected "purity". Naming them with terms having any sexual suggestion would be considered as an insult, depending on the explicitness of the name. There are such names which the girls themselves know of eg. one of them has been nicknamed with the name of a porn star, and interestingly she does not reject it. However, one may interpret this simply as a wordplay since their names are both two-character and have the word "Red". - Besides, the rather indirect way of referring to sexuality of the girl is put up with for the sake of harmonious relationships in the community.

The more explicit nicknames are normally used in boys' circles. It is after much vigorous probing that the secret nicknames of girls created among boys are revealed. "Impotent I" and "Impotent II" are the names given to the two "ugliest" girls among the peer group. It has been a practice among this particular group (boys living on the same floor) for years. These names are never made known to the girls and are used only among this specific group. There is a paradox in this secret naming of girls. On one hand, the names have been created out of the common conception of women as the "sex object", on the other, they have been made secret out of respect for traditional ideas of premarital female purity.

Such secret naming with sexual implication has not been found in the girls' circle. This imbalance may be attributed to the cultural values of passivity and modesty for females which lead to differential treatment between girls and boys. The ideal sex roles are inculcated in girls from early childhood, there "is generally stricter control over girls with respect to overall behavior, but especially sexual conduct, ... expressive behaviour." Women are by upbringing not permitted and thus not disposed to indulging in sexual imagination and creativity.

Thus, it is true that women are now more disposed to this kind of slang, as they address their male counterparts in terms of nicknames made up of

some female-taboo words (eg. Chicken 雞); yet everything stops short at the boundary marked by sexual taboos. Sexuality remains the forbidden land for unmarried Chinese females, at least in a social context.

There are names which challenge gender roles. In the case where a boy surnamed Wong is given the nickname "Mrs Wong", he makes much effort to "negotiate" with others not to use it, as mentioned in the last part. It is a name labelling him with a femininity which no boy would be easy with. Masculinity should not be subjected to such playful challenges. Feminization is a kind of degradation. On the other hand, girls whose behaviour is boyish (a tomboy): dressing in a boyish way and behaving roughly, aggressively, breaking the norms of feminine modesty and passivity, are given the name "nàahn yàhn pòh" (Man-like woman 男人婆). This is also a challenge to the girls' expected gender role, yet few resort to defenses. Masculinization to a certain degree is thought to be positive by girls who consider the traditional image of women as too submissive, fragile and dependent. It would be reasonable to expect these female undergraduates to yearn for a stronger, more resourceful image than traditional values have subscribed them.

Unlike the females in Watson's studies, girls nowadays can take up the active role of naming themselves in the sphere of nicknames. There is a group of girls who have given themselves the title of a triad group, each having the name of a triad member. They regard themselves as a kind of fraternity, addressing each other with those names and behaving like "brothers" eg. calling each other in a rough way, imitating the stereotyped triad's behaviour. They have created collectively for themselves a sphere in which boyish, unfeminine behaviour is justified. They also enjoy such 'transgression' or 'transcendence' of their normative roles, venturing into those of the men. It is for them a liberation.

The absence of similar practices among the boys, ie. giving themselves some feminine names is not found. This may highlight the sexual inequality in normative behaviour, and women's latent desire to break through traditional suppression. Men as the "superior" group would not think to condescend to the "inferior" female sphere, giving up their treasured masculinity and social superiority.

The study has been limited to the naming and nicknaming of a particular peer group within a specific social environment. However, certain aspects can be used to evaluate the validity of Watson's village study in the city of contemporary Hong Kong. With rising literacy and education level, both girls and boys have written names. Yet traditional roles have

persisted and women are still tied to their roles in the domestic sphere, subordinate to men. However, a trend of individualism has been observed, especially with girls. Though the Tzu/Marriage name or Courtesy name of men is not found, nicknames have persisted, both public and private. Women are also admitted to this sphere of nicknaming, where they find channels for self-expression by nicknaming themselves. Transcendence of traditional roles is now possible in an indirect way. However, the masculine roles and liberty in the sexual sphere are reinforced in nicknaming. We can observe that social changes (rising education level, rise of feminism etc.) are facilitating women's struggle for greater equality and individuality. It is in no sense a deliberate and conscious movement of and for women. However, social values can be seen in the process of gradual changes. While naming may be seen, with regard to Watson's study, as demonstrating the changing values occurring in our parents' generation, nicknaming is that of those born around 1970.

The Small Group

The use of nicknames marks boundaries between different groups. The basic unit of nickname creation seems to be the primary group and nicknames could be seen as promoting in-group solidarity (Kehl 1971). It marks the line between campus and the outside community, a residential hall from the university, different floors in the residential hall, and different groups of boys and girls within the same hall.

What is intolerable or disgraceful to the larger society become acceptable on campus ("Szeto Dog" would amount to an insult if addressed to a common citizen). "Gài lóu" (Chicken Lad 雞佬) would have created hurt feelings among students outside this particular residential hall. These subtle sanctions in the use of nicknames draw out the boundaries between two different sets of values and norms.

Besides, group cohesion is strengthened by such shared secrets as "Impotent I & II" which only members of this floor could laugh over. The subculture of a group is reinforced and consolidated by creating and sharing nicknames which only the in-group members are familiar with or have access to. The bonds within a group allow the most degrading nickname to become endearing: "Victor the Chicken" is used only among the floor brothers of a subject named Victor. There are nicknames which a subject can accept from his primary group but feel uneasy with when an outsider uses them. Kehl (1971) has further noticed that nickname creation and uses mark gossip groups and networks.

The group can be expressed in the unhierarchised relationships which provide for the sharing of nicknames. The group's solidarity is reinforced by collective denigration of the dominant values, binding them into a cohesive network. According to John Barnes (1954), a network is formed by an undifferentiated field of friendship and acquaintance. Victor Turner made similar comments on community as a group of people in which roles are ambiguous and lacking in hierarchy. A community, or group, which shares the same nicknames is thus bound by good fellowship, warm contacts, and spontaneity.

The basic unit can thus be a college, a hall, a floor, or a sports team. The group of girls known to have named themselves with triad titles are members of a sports team. Their titles are constructed and perceived as an exclusive "organization" in which the team members share a special closeness and friendship. The intimacy arising from this and the formality done away with must to a certain extent explain the prevalence of nicknames.

One may have more than a dozen nicknames attached temporarily but only one or two persist and often tend to replace the real name. A person may be known by different nicknames within different groups. What determines the life and strength of a nickname within different groups? Only nicknames that fall into the dominant cultural domain of a group could be shared by all members. A nickname whose reference was too specific would only lead a transitory life. The more the nicknames involve such processes as reiterating a group ethic and upholding cultural ideals, the more appeal it has among the group. A person may thus be known with different nicknames within different groups.

The prevalence of nicknames must to a certain extent be attributed to the creators of nicknames. As mentioned, good nicknames require perceptive knowledge of a group's culture. Those who successfully label a person with a nickname acquires prestige (Kehl). They would be known as intelligent, creative and quick-minded. The better nickname-givers tend to be the "Big Brother" -- the more active and sociable -- of a group.

Conclusion

The study has been conducted in a very specific social environment i.e. a residential hall of

HKU. Yet the specificity has not imposed serious limitation on its value since, quoting from Kehl who conducted a similar study on Chinese nicknaming behaviour in an American university, "there is no question that, mutatis mutandis, the observations can be applied equally well to village, office and shop groups". If the size of the sample could be increased and gathered on a university basis rather than hall, its validity and interest would have been greater.

Lacking the background information on the ones who give the personal names to the subjects was a hindrance to getting a more complete picture of the process of nicknaming. Relationships between the one who names the subjects and the degree of gender difference and individuation in this respect are not known.

Besides, the study has been limited to a peer group, unlike Watson's study of an entire social environment (i.e. a village) involving all age groups. We lack a cross-sectional study which would allow a more in-depth analysis of the subcultural niche of the subjects. If the two could be combined in a full-scale study, the findings would have been much more fruitful.

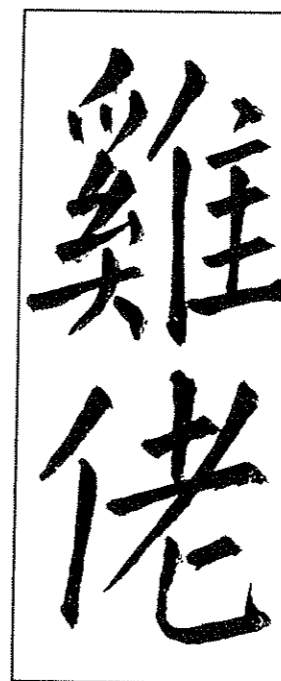
It would be of greater analytical value if the educational levels of parents and those who named the child had been included. This would contribute to the validation of the claim that the higher the education level, the greater the degree of individuation and the greater the equality between the sexes.

However, the prominence of names and the prevalence of nicknames in Chinese society have rightly brought to our attention the importance of names as symbols, and has not only provided an insightful view of Chinese cultural values

and practices, but also a dynamic understanding of their development through a comparison between traditional and modern Hong Kong.

Naming has become simpler and the array of formal names that used to be taken up at various stages of life (eg. Tzu) has been reduced to the basic personal name only. It may be explained by the fact that stages which used to be remarkable (education, marriage) in the old days are no longer so in modern Hong Kong where there is nine-year compulsory education and marriage has become a personal rather than family or lineage matter.

The trend of individuation in naming and the narrowing of the male-female gap has been a pleasant finding to the many who have chanted for liberty and equality. However, the situation is far from



satisfactory -- the analysis of both formal names and nicknames has shown that "woman" radicals still prevail and sexual taboos still apply for girls.

The multivalence of nicknames in Chinese societies is undeniable and is certainly a valuable resource for the study of Chinese cultural and social dynamics. Not only are nicknames effective labels of individuals but they also act as vehicles for intimacy and friendships. Besides, they are drawn out of the dominant structure but at the same time act as challenges to the prevailing culture.

Lastly, should English be included in the study the scope of attention could be widened for self-naming. Most people in urban Hong Kong have English names. Many of them are self-given, or at least the individual has greater control over the English names given by parents or teachers (from negotiation to total abandonment). This would be a valuable source for further study of the trend toward individualism in Hong Kong society.

Should this study have the opportunity to further develop and expand into a deeper and more complete and systematic analysis of naming and nicknaming behaviour in Hong Kong, or even part of it being drilled in depth, a much more coherent and insightful picture of the Hong Kong Chinese cultural pattern could be revealed.

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CHINESE EMIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN HONG KONG

Chan Wai Chan, Mandy

This project is about a group of Sze Yap male construction workers who emigrated from a village in South China to Hong Kong. Although these workers began emigrating to H.K. more than 30 years ago, this study demonstrates that they still maintain their principal cultural loyalty to their home village, Chung Mei (冲美) in Hoiping (開平). In this study, I found that as an insider of this cultural group (actually I am a daughter of one of these emigrant construction workers), there are difficulties involved in carrying out an anthropological study, and that these difficulties may be as frustrating as those experienced by anthropologists who are originally alien to the targeted culture.

In this project, the mechanism of emigration, the ethnic identity of the workers, their experience of construction work, and their ties to their home community will be examined, including their implications for the family structure, the status of women, and ritual activities.

The analysis shows some similarities to the observations in J.L. Watson's study of Chinese emigrant workers in London Emigration and the Chinese Lineage: The Mans in Hong Kong and London. Special emphasis has been paid to geographical, economical and political conditions in arriving at an understanding of the present pattern of social and cultural life of the Chung Mei emigrants. The emigrants' feelings of cultural inferiority or marginality vis-a-vis Hong Kong born Chinese is reflected in the relatively low level of interaction with members of the host society, especially for those male immigrants who come to Hong Kong on an individual basis. Besides, it was found that the goal of most of Chung Mei's emigrants in Hong Kong is to make as much money as possible instead of, in Watson's term, "urban assimilation". Most informants hope to retire

to their home village in comfort with their savings. I discovered that the emigrants enabled a re-assertion of many traditional values in the village. These observations conform with the conclusions of J.L. Watson's study.

However, due to the specific geographical, cultural and political climate in this region, there are observations which are inconsistent with the findings reported in earlier studies. Firstly, there is no transformation of the agrarian village into an industrial village, as in San Tin in J.L. Watson's study. Besides, in the case of Chung Mei, family emigration is not common for these construction workers. However, the clan families of the Chans in Chung Mei are financially less dependent on remittances from emigrants as compared with people in San Tin.

FOCUS OF STUDY

Most anthropological studies on overseas Chinese focus on the Chinese residents in South East Asian countries (e.g. Vietnam, Thailand, Lao, etc.) and in European countries (e.g. London). These studies pay attention to the process of assimilation of these overseas emigrants into the alien overseas society. However, there are relatively few studies examining the link between the home villages and the overseas community. One exception is the study by J.L. Watson mentioned above.

The present study extends and elaborates upon Watson's study on emigrant restaurant workers in London. In his study, a group of emigrant workers in London all have the same origin -- San Tin village in the New Territories in Hong Kong. Most of them worked as restaurant workers in London. In his study, the experience of the Man emigrants in London and

their impacts on the social, economic and cultural life on the emigrant village - San Tin - were examined.

In this project, the problem in hand is similar to Watson's study. I know a group of Chinese emigrants from China to Hong Kong. They all came from a small single-lineage village, Chung Mei in Hoiping, which is located near the area of Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province. They all worked as construction workers in Hong Kong. In this project, I attempt to examine the extent to which Watson's observations on San Tin's emigrants can be applied to this group of Chung Mei's emigrants.

The following questions will be addressed: Why did they first emigrate into Hong Kong from Chung Mei? Given the similarity in Chinese cultures, what is the experience of these Chinese emigrants in Hong Kong? Are they successfully integrated and assimilated into the host society in Hong Kong? How do historical, economic and political conditions in China and in Hong Kong influence the integration of Chinese emigrants into Hong Kong society? How do

the Chinese emigrants make sense of the socio-cultural similarity between them? Does their emigration lead to the urban transformation of the originally rural-based village? What is the impact of emigration on kinship and the family relations of the people in Chung Mei?

WHY DID I DECIDE TO CARRY OUT THE PRESENT STUDY?

In the Lunar New Year Holiday 1992, my parents planned to return to our home village, Chung Mei. I hadn't been back to my village during the Lunar New Year Holiday since I emigrated to Hong Kong when I was four. I have a feeling that I can gain something on this journey to my home village. Therefore, without thorough consideration of what should I do, I agreed to go with my parents and to 'search' for a topic of study.

When I arrived at my home village, Chung Mei, I was surprised to meet most of my relatives

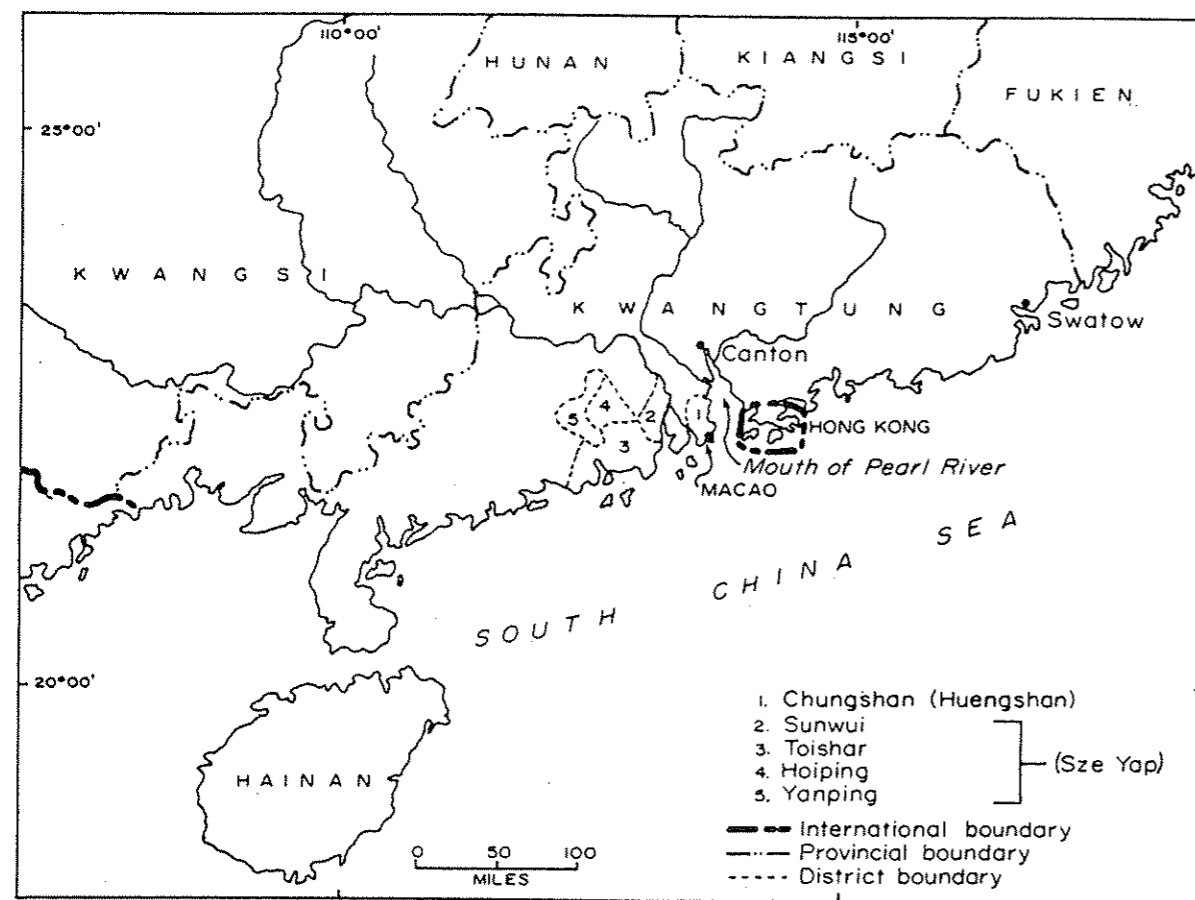


Figure 1. The emigrant districts in south China and Hoiping, where Chung Mei village is situated.

who lived in Hong Kong back in Chung Mei over this Lunar New Year. I began to take note of pieces of information I gathered when I was in my home villages. After a few days of 'anthropological' study of my village, I found that I could look at my village in another perspective. I recalled from my previous experience in the village that this place was nothing special, except a primitive village as commonly found in China. However, this time, I have a definite goal in my mind to carry out a project on my home village, and so I began to appreciate traditional life in China. I observed the ritual activities in my village, and looked for cues for my hypotheses. In the past, I usually went to my village with a walkman because the adults may begin talking about things which were strange or uninteresting for me. This time I tried to pay full attention to the content and the pattern of their speech. Therefore, I gathered scattered pieces of information and observations during my journey to home village. However, as my observations and information were gathered without a basic hypothesis I soon had the feeling that I was losing track of the main direction of my research, and I didn't know how to integrate the various pieces of information into an organized and systematic project.

Only after reading Watson's study on the emigrant restaurant workers in London, did I see that the emigrant construction workers from Chung Mei in Hong Kong have a similar experience to the Man emigrants from San Tin. Therefore, I attempted to extend and elaborate Watson's study to examine the link between the home village in Chung Mei and the community of these Sze Yap people in Hong Kong.

CHUNG MEI IN SZE YAP DISTRICTS: A LINEAGE OF EMIGRANTS

Chung Mei is one of the many single-lineage villages in Hoiping of the Sze Yap Districts in Guangdong Province of South China. The whole village has a population of approximately 200 people (including emigrants). According to my informants, every male in Chung Mei bears the surname 'Chan' and is a direct lineal descendant of a common founding ancestor. It is a common practice for the wife to be brought into the village of the husband. My informants told me that in the rural area of Hoiping, there are hundreds of single-lineage villages, each having their own surname. The nearest village to Chung Mei has the surname Wong, others have Li, Lau, etc.

In figure (1), the map shows the districts where my informants and I come from. We come from Hoiping, which is a county of the Sze Yap Districts (or Four Districts). Sze Yap District consists of Yanping, Toishan, Hoiping and Sunwai. These counties are all located in South China near the Pearl River Delta.

Due to its geographical location, most of the people in the rural area of Hoiping rely heavily on wet-rice cultivation and sometimes vegetables. They are largely self-sufficient farmers who grow rice for their own consumption. Some may also rear chickens, pigs, cows, etc. for their own consumption and for sale in the market town in Hoiping. According to my informants, more and more young people go out to the urban area in Hoiping for work because the younger generation feel that growing rice in the village is boring and it belongs to the older generation. The resultant impact is that most of the farming tasks are left to women. The farmers use natural fertilizers for growing rice. In addition to that, my informants in the village are also financially dependent on the remittances from their relatives or husbands in Hong Kong. We will discuss this more thoroughly in later sections.

According to Watson, there were hundreds of emigrant communities in South China before the Communist Revolution. Central Districts of Guangdong and Fukien Provinces were 2 major provinces with high rate of emigration¹. The Sze Yap Districts in South China is one of the emigrant districts and emigrants from these communities went mostly to the New World and to the Nan Yang².

With respect to the language pattern they speak Sze Yap dialect which is slightly different from other Districts, although one who originates from the area of the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong province would be called a Cantonese speaker or simply a Cantonese. As pointed out in the book, Sons of the Yellow Emperor:

"one could tell from a man's speech whether he is from a village in Samp Yap (Three District), the better-endowed counties around Canton, or from Sze Yap (Four District), the poorer and ruder area to the West of the Delta."³

The dialect is slightly different and people in Samp Yap Districts (see figure 2) may have problems in understanding the language in Sze Yap Districts. For

example, the word for 'to eat' in Cantonese is 'sihk'; while for Sze Yap people, it is pronounced 'hyat'. In other cases, the same pronunciation in Sze Yap dialect will be have different meaning in other dialects. For example, the word for 'chopsticks' in Sze Yap is 'fai di', which is the pronunciation for 'quicker' in Cantonese. Most of the informants who are construction workers in Hong Kong can speak Cantonese quite well. However, my mother still has a very strong accent when she speaks Cantonese.

REASONS FOR EMIGRATION TO HONG KONG:

Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong are either categorized as "legal immigrants" or "illegal immigrants". My informants all came to Hong Kong as "legal immigrants". Why and when did they first emigrate to Hong Kong? After interviewing my informants, I found that both the push factors and pull factors are in operation. In addition, their fate and experience are heavily influenced by political factors.

a. Historical background: causes and motivations of migration

Historical evidence suggests that Chinese migrated to the Guangdong Province (of which Hong Kong is physically a part) before the Tang Dynasty (620-907)⁴. In fact, Hong Kong has long been a shelter for refugees because of its harbor. Through the years and the dynasties that followed, many people from southern China fled tyrants or famines, rebellions or revolutions, to Hong Kong to seek safety and shelter. For example, during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), Hong Kong had a population of only 200,000⁵. Due to the tyrants and famines in Mainland China, this led to a great influx of people from Mainland China to Hong Kong to seek for a temporary shelter. This influx of people lasted until the end of Second World War. Statistical sources estimated that about 1,800,000 Chinese people moved to Hong Kong by the end of World War II⁶. One of my informants, Chan Hong, came to Hong Kong before World War II and I will discuss his experience in the following section.

Chan Hong is now 54 and he came to Hong Kong from Chung Mei in 1941 when he was 4. His parents and his family members were killed by the Japanese army during the war between China and the Japanese. He therefore came to Hong Kong with his

uncle's family, Chan Fai's family, in the early 1940s. Actually, Chan Hong's uncle, Fai, was already a construction worker in Hong Kong at that time. Well before the Japanese occupation of China, Fai had already been to Hong Kong for 10 years on his own to search for a better economic life. After the Japanese occupation, Chan Hong and Fai's family came to Hong Kong to join Fai. And Chan Hong was being looked after by his uncle in Hong Kong. However, due to the economic burden on Fai's family (Fai himself has 5 children), Chan Hong was forced to leave school after Primary 3. Lacking educational qualifications he was unable to work in other work settings. And so Fai helped Hong to find a job in the construction site. Therefore, Hong had the opportunity to work and follow one experienced construction worker (*si fu* 師父 in Cantonese) to learn the skills in the construction field when he was only in his early teens. He said that in the early 60's, he earned only \$250.00 per month.

As time passed, Fai started to gain the trust of the construction company in Hong Kong and saved a small amount of capital. Later, he became a sub-contractor of the construction site and Fai and he distributed the work among the construction workers. Together with the loose governmental policies towards migration at that time, Chinese immigrants came in and out of Hong Kong relatively easily. Therefore, many young male, single Chans from Chung Mei, came to Hong Kong and were able to find jobs in the construction sites through the arrangements made by Chan Fai.

In short, Chan Hong came to Hong Kong mainly because of his uncle - Chan Fai. On the other hand, many young male Chans of Chung Mei came to Hong Kong because of the desire for better economic life and joined the construction industry. In the process of emigration, kinship networks played an important role to accommodate many Chan emigrant.

According to Chan Hong, his first return trip to Chung Mei was in 1958, which was long after he had left Chung Mei. At that time, he was 19 and he went back to Chung Mei for ancestor worship. He went with two other emigrant single male construction workers from Chung Mei. This group of young male, single construction workers, by returning to Chung Mei, had another purpose -- to find a wife in the village. (At that time, there was a rumour that it was relatively easy to arrange for family emigration). Therefore, Chan Hong and one of the other young male Chan got married during this return trip. It is

worth noting that according to Chan Hong, his wife came from the same village with one of the older female non-emigrant in Chung Mei. Before Hong's marriage with his wife, he had only seen his wife once (i.e. their marriage has no component of romantic love).

Now Chan Hong's wife and their three children

have been in Hong Kong for 18 years. According to Mrs. Chan, her emigration is closely tied up with political factors. She mentioned that after she was married (she was only 17 and still studying at secondary 3 in Hoiping), she wished to emigrate to Hong Kong to join her husband. However, she had to wait for nearly 16 years before she finally was qualified to emigrate. She recalled that shortly after her marriage, a series of political reforms and transformations took place in China (e.g. the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution) made the political climate very unstable, the village people in Chung Mei had insufficient food to eat, and the application for emigration to Hong Kong become only a dream. Then, after the political situation in China stabilized, she applied again for emigration to Hong Kong in the early 1970s, and by that time, she had three children. Her application was finally successful, she and her children came to join Chan Hong in Hong Kong in 1974. From the above description of Mrs. Chan's experience, it can be seen that the emigration process is strongly influenced by political factors in China.

Male construction workers in Hong Kong: Harsh life, no holiday and high wages

In the construction industry, according to my informants, it is a common practice for the whole construction to be divided into several sub-contracts according to the principle of the division of labor. The sub-contractors (in Cantonese *Pun Tau*, literally

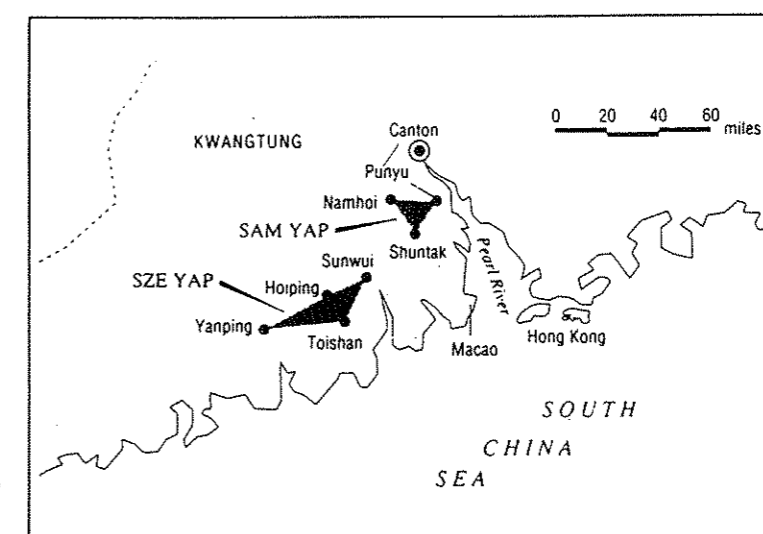


Figure 2. The counties of Sam Yap and Sze Yap districts.

meaning the head of the sub-contract) will make arrangements and distribute (*Pun*) the work to the construction workers. The sub-contractor is the one responsible for organizing and negotiating the contract, while the construction workers are responsible for carrying out the actual work involved on the

construction site (e.g. plastering, etc.). Chan Hong and Chan Fai are sub-contractors, while my other informants are construction workers.

It is worth noting that their present living conditions in Hong Kong are not luxurious at all. They have hard lives in Hong Kong. Most of the Chan emigrants come to Hong Kong by themselves, leaving their parents, their wives and their families in Chung Mei. After they came to Hong Kong, as I have said before, some of these immigrants may get work through Chan Fai. Fai also arranges accommodation for them. One of my informants lives in a flat which is around 500 sq. feet with eleven other Chung Mei male emigrants in Queen's Road East, Wanchai. (The tenant of this flat is Chan Fai). In this flat every male emigrant works as a construction worker and each emigrant occupies only a bed as their living place. They share a common dining room, toilet and kitchen. Their living conditions in Hong Kong are in direct contrast with their living conditions in Chung Mei, where their wives and their relatives reside. Most of the emigrants have large, comfortable, well-furnished 'sterling' houses in Chung Mei (as will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section).

Chan Hong has now inherited the business of Chan Fai, who died 10 years ago. Chan Hong now is a sub-constructor of the construction site. He is the richest among my informants. He told me that every year the 'Construction Industry Training Authority' sends him letters inviting him to recruit fresh graduates of construction trainees from the training center. However, he only recruits a few of them. It is

because he thinks that most of these trainees are money-minded, irresponsible, and lacking the patience and ability to face the harsh and dangerous tasks in the construction industry. On his construction site, it is interesting to find that most of the construction workers are old and in their 50s. How will the sub-contractor resolve the problem of the inevitable shortage of construction workers? They mainly recruit them from China. Chan Hong said that, "it is difficult to recruit construction workers in Hong Kong, as the work is unattractive to the younger population. It involves hard work, and it is dangerous to work in the construction site and there are not many holidays."

The difficulties involved in the recruitment of local workers provide a golden opportunity for the young males in Chung Mei to work in Hong Kong under the Scheme for Imported Workers from China. It not only provides a source of income for the young male, who are originally farmers in China. The sub-contractor also benefits from this scheme because it can lower the cost of production. Chan Hong told me that last year, he even received a contract to work in Chiu Hoi (朱海) in China to build a hotel there. In this construction project, most of the construction workers were recruited from China. He made arrangements for about ten of the non-emigrant Chans from Chung Mei to work in Chiu Hoi and paid them a wage according to the rates of construction workers in Hong Kong. This provided a source of income for the non-emigrant Chans, who can then improve their living standard in Chung Mei. It also showed that the traditional lineage relations facilitated the economic life of the non-emigrant Chans by providing work opportunities. In turn, Chan Hong can help his village people and can gain prestige within the social network of the lineage.

Due to the dangerous tasks involved on the construction site, the wages for construction work are relatively high compared with the workers' education attainment. Most of them have only primary education level. Their working hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and they earn at least \$11,100 per month, including over-time payment. For the ordinary white-collar worker, their over-time payment will be calculated proportionally with wage rate per hour. However, for the construction workers, according to my informants, over-time work of 2 hours allows them to earn a half-day payment (i.e. \$185.00) while if the over-time work is 4 hours, it will be counted as an extra working day. Therefore, they can earn a lot

per month.

The method of payment among this group of construction workers is also influenced by their origins in Chung Mei. The method of payment is largely individualized and is in cash. The relationship between the sub-contractor and the construction workers are built upon the mutual trust between the two parties. The plasterers can ask for advanced payment from the sub-contractor. Their payment method seldom rely on the services provided by the banking system in modern Hong Kong.

TEMPORARY WORKERS OR PERMANENT IMMIGRANTS?

One of my male informants who has his whole family in Hong Kong expressed to me his desire to go back to his village when he reached retirement age. He said:

"In Hong Kong, everything is expensive. At present, the monthly expenses of my family is terribly high. When I retire, I may soon exhaust all my savings. However, with the same amount of money, if I were in Chung Mei, I can hire servants to look after my house and to have a very luxurious life and yet can still have a lot of money left..."

When asked about whether he has given any thought to migration to other countries (as 1997 is approaching), he has the following response:

"Yes, I have given thought to it, I will migrate, but migrate back to China... Ha! Ha!"

It is a common response among these male construction workers. They have a harsh life style in Hong Kong. They work everyday without break (since there is no holiday for the construction industry, except for some of the important Chinese festivals, such as the Lunar New Year, Ching Ming Festival, Mid-Autumn Festivals, etc. even for the Christmas Holiday, they still have to work). They rarely go to the countryside to enjoy the natural environment since their family members are at Chung Mei. They rarely go to the cinema to see films because according to them, it is for the younger generation and most of the films can be seen later on television. However, most of these construction workers like gambling. Chan Hong complains that they gamble a lot, even in their work place. One informant points out that he prefers to work on the construction site because he meets other people and

can gamble. During the Festivals, they may just go to the 'Hong Kong and Kowloon Masons and Plasterers Union (Fei Pang)' (i.e. the organization for the construction workers) to play ma jong.

It is understandable that they hardly integrate to the host society or join the wider workforce because most of them are uneducated. There is a low level of interaction between the Chan emigrants and the other Hong Kong people. It is because in the workplace they meet only their relatives who come from the same village. And they are not particularly interested in making friends with local people. The exception is Chan Hong, who has his family and his business in Hong Kong. My other informants all have their families at Chung Mei.

Concerning community organization in Hong Kong, my informants told me that there is no registered organization of the Chung Mei people. One of the reasons is that most of the Chan emigrants are construction workers and they already have a construction organization "Hong Kong and Kowloon Masons and Plasterers Union (Fei Pang)" in Wanchai. In this organization all the members are construction workers. This organization also organizes social activities for the family members of the construction workers. For example, every year on 13 June of the Lunar year, the organization will give a banquet to celebrate the birth of *Lou Ban* (魯班), who was the founder of the construction industry. The festival is known as the *Si Fu Dan* (師父誕), which literally mean the birth of *Lou Ban*. I and my family have attended this banquet every year. And at it I meet most of my relatives.

Urban transformation: its impact on the lifestyle and kinship of Chung Mei

The remittance of money from relatives in Hong Kong and the increasing economic opportunities opened up in Chiu Hoi or Hong Kong for the younger male farmers in Chung Mei has increased the purchasing power of the village people. The changes in economic conditions have had a profound impact on the life-style and kinship of Chung Mei. For example, new 3 story houses have been built by Chan emigrants after they get rich in Hong Kong. These new houses replace the previously traditional, black single-storey village homes. Figure (3) shows the outlook of Chung Mei in 10 years ago, while figure (4) shows the situation of Chung Mei now. One can easily spell out the changes in the outlook of the

village. James Watson pointed out that the 'sterling' house in the emigrant community in San Tin, New Territories, were easily distinguished from the traditional, single-storey village houses⁷. The observation is also true for Chung Mei. Originally, Chung Mei consisted of dark brick buildings, single-storey blocks which were very old. In the past fifteen years nearly 60% of the original single-storey blocks have been rebuilt.

"the new houses are box-shaped, two-storey concrete structures with balconies and flat roofs; and their pastel colors set them apart from the surrounding dark brick buildings. Compared to the old housing units, the sterling houses are roomy, airy, and quite comfortable" (Watson, p.225)

In Chung Mei today these new 'sterling houses' provide a symbol of status and the prospects of the Chan emigrants. The replacement of the old housing units by the new houses reflects the fact that they have earned a great deal of money in Hong Kong. In fact, the cost of building such houses vary greatly according to the quality of building materials and the amenities added, but all are built at a cost which is incredibly cheaper than Hong Kong's high-rise, small flat. For example, one informant built a 3-storey house in Chung Mei with around 500 sq. feet on each storey in 1985. It costs him only around \$50,000.00 to build.

EMIGRANT TIES TO THE HOME COMMUNITY:

The Chan emigrants maintain close ties with their home village, no matter how long they have been away, and regardless of whether they emigrated as a family or not. In the past, it was quite difficult for the emigrants workers to come back to China due to poorly developed transport. According to Chan Hou, one of my informants, in 1950's it took three whole days for him to return back to Chung Mei. Besides, due to the relative inaccessibility of the village, the return trips involved changes in forms of transport, including land and sea transport. In the 1970's, the situation greatly improved and it took only one day by sea transport. He added that nowadays there are many routes by which he can return back to Chung Mei, and it is a matter of choice. The sea route directly links Hong Kong and San Fod (a terminal in Hoiping), organized by the "Guangdong Province H.K./Macau Navigation Company", is the

most popular route among the Chan emigrants because it is relatively cheap (about HK \$120.00 per ticket). In fact, the availability of frequent and inexpensive sea transport has strengthened the ties between emigrant workers and their villages.

In the following part, I take four main features suggested by Watson to show the Chan emigrants' ties to the home community in Chung Mei. They are: remittances; contribution drives; return trips and banquets. I take these four aspects as the focus of discussion because I can use them

to make a comparison between the Man emigrants in London and the Chan emigrants in Hong Kong. According to Watson, these four aspects are: "some of the most important manifestations of emigrant concern for the home community."⁸

A: Remittances

According to Watson, most of the families of the Mans in San Tin are heavily dependent on remittances from emigrants for the basic necessities of life. However, in the case of Chan non-emigrants in Chung Mei, although they receive a great deal of money from the male emigrants in Hong Kong, they are not totally dependant on remittances. Chung Mei is fundamentally an agricultural village, growing wet-rice with some vegetables. People also rear some pigs and chickens for private consumption and some of them are sold in the market town. They are largely self-sufficient in food. Even without the remittances of Hong Kong dollars from the emigrants, they can earn their living by farming. I should say that their income should be largely connected with the



Figure 3. Chung Mei ten years ago. Nearly all houses were single storey and the front land not reclaimed.

remittances of Hong Kong dollars, it is because without these remittances, the farmers could not afford to buy the modern machinery to help to increase the yield of their farming.

In short, the extra money allows them to have a comfortable life and to have many appliances at home. For example, now in the village, about 30% of the families in Chung Mei have television sets, and Chung Mei can receive all the television channels from Hong Kong. Therefore, the village people in Chung Mei can have up-to-date information on Hong Kong. However, according to one of the non-emigrants, some

sensitive programs are banned in Chung Mei.

The method of remittances among the Chans in Chung Mei are similar to the experiences of the Mans in San Tin. The Chan emigrants often send remittances to their family in cash. Due to the close lineage network in Hong Kong, whenever one Chan emigrant goes back to Chung Mei, it will soon spread among the Chan emigrants in Hong Kong. And the Chan emigrants prefer to go back to Chung Mei with fellow construction workers. If some of them are unable to go back to Chung Mei (due to work), they will ask fellow workers to take money to their relatives on their behalf.

B: Contribution Drives and Public Works:

Chan Hong told me that in recent years, the emigrant construction workers in Hong Kong have contributed to the construction of many public works in Chung Mei. So far, they have contributed to the construction of a new temple, a banquet hall, a new school in Hoiping, and the reclamation of the front land of Chung Mei. (See figure 5).

community even though they are children who live abroad.

C: Return Trips:

According to Watson, the traditional pattern of Chinese emigration was often characterized by a strong tendency toward deferred gratification when abroad. However, I find that such a tendency is not apparent in the

present study. My informants, although they do not spend much of their money for consumption, they spend much money on gambling. I can see little evidence of their anticipation of the long-planned trip home in their retirement. According to Chan Hong, advance payments are frequent among the Chan emigrant construction workers who gamble, and these are sometimes used for settling gambling debts.

Nowadays, this group of middle-aged male emigrants return to Chung Mei almost once a year.

Usually it is scheduled to coincide within the Chinese New Year. They will stay at Chung Mei after the celebration of the *Yeung Siu* () (i.e. 15th of the first month of the Year). At the ceremony of *Yeung Siu*, all the people of the Chan lineage in Chung Mei eat their dinner at the Banquet Hall. The dinner is financed by the male emigrants in Hong

According to Chan Hong the amount of money donated depends on the workers' income. Although these contributions are given on a voluntary basis, there exists strong social pressure to donate since the name and the amount of money donated will be posted at the date of the opening ceremony of these new constructions.

And the lineage people will know the amount contributed by each Chan emigrant. Chan Hong added that contributions also come from overseas e.g. the U.S., where some of the Chans have emigrated. As one can observe from the poster outside the Banquet Hall (See figure 6), there is a name list of the donors, and one can see that there are around more than 40 donors. The name list is divided into the Overseas Chans and the Chans in Hong Kong. My father also donated to this Banquet Hall. However, I find it interesting to observe that my two little brother's names were in the name list (obviously the money donated by my brothers are actually paid by my father). I also found the name of my nephew in the name list. I suspect that it is a way for the father of these children to acknowledge to the Chan lineage that their children are also the indispensable members of the



Figure 4. Chung Mei today, with its 3-storey sterling houses.



Figure 5. The reclaimed land of Chung Mei today.

Kong (even if they themselves are personally unable to return to Chung Mei that year, they donate the money beforehand via their fellow Chan emigrant). Every time a Chan emigrant returns to Chung Mei, they become the center of attention of the whole village,



Figure 6. The banquet celebrating the opening of the banquet hall. In the top left-hand corner is the list of donors.

partly because of their bringing of parcels to the other Chan non-emigrants, and partly because of their contribution to the banquets for the whole village. From this, we can see that the Chan emigrants in Hong Kong actually help to maintain the solidarity of the lineage through their participation in the traditional rituals, both in terms of their money and their actual participation.

According to Watson, the first return trip is usually delayed and the longest because "it takes several years of hard work before the emigrant is affluent enough to return in the accepted style" (1974, p.199). This observation is also true among the Chan emigrants in Chung Mei. In the case of Chan Hong, his return trip took place when he was 19, after he had a stable source of income and status in Hong Kong.

D: Banquets:

During the Lunar New Year Holiday my parents came back to Chung Mei with another purpose -- to perform the *k'ai teng* ceremony. The *k'ai teng* ceremony has been well elaborated by Watson. He writes:

"the *k'ai teng* ceremony...occurs during the Lunar New Year season ...it literally means 'to open lanterns', or 'to begin the light' (referring to the spirit of the new son), and

the ceremony involves hanging colorful paper-lanterns in the ancestral halls...the *k'ai teng* ceremony was once required of all males who wished to have their sons (or adopted heirs) accepted as legitimate members of the lineage. Besides the lanterns, the new fathers were expected

to provide a banquet for the elders. The *k'ai teng* banquet is still a very important part of the ritual cycle in San Tin...."⁹

In my village, the *k'ai teng* ceremony also involved the hanging of the colorful lanterns in the front door of the ancestral hall. The lanterns are lit on the 6th day of the first month of the Lunar New Year and remain alight until the 15th (*Yeung Siu*) of the first month of the Lunar New Year is over. Since my elder brother had a new son last year, therefore, my parents performed this *k'ai teng* ceremony for their grandson. "The most exciting prospect of the prolonged New Year season for the villagers is the continuous round of banquets thrown by returning emigrants" (Watson p.202-3)

"For the majority of the emigrants, therefore, the banquets have become a way of validating their status as active members of the community" (ibid. p.208) In Chung Mei, there are other categories of banquets, for example, a birthday banquet for my father celebrating his fiftieth birthday was carried out several years ago in Chung Mei. The other categories of banquets include: the celebration of the *Yeung Siu*; the banquet for the first return trip in Chung Mei, etc.

All these banquets are becoming more and more elaborate, especially after the Banquet Hall has been built. At present, a large kitchen has been added to the Banquet Hall. Please note, however, that there was no formal cooking place for the Banquet Hall

when it was first built. In the past, the cooks prepared the food in a temporary cooking place (See figure 7). The new kitchen was also financed by the Chan emigrants in Hong Kong. Now the Banquet Hall has its own set of tables, chairs, utensils, bowls and dishes (on the surface of the bowls and dishes, the word "Chung Mei" has been made so as to signify that they are the property of the lineage "Chung Mei").

However, I found it quite interesting that all the cooks for the Banquets are male! And the arrangement of the seats show a clear sexual segregation. All the senior males in Chung Mei and the returning male emigrants sit together, while all the females and children are classified as another separate group who sit together. (See figure 10, taken when the people in Chung Mei were having their banquet.) Again, the above description illustrates that the emigrants help to maintain the solidarity of the Chan lineage by their elaborate banquets. And the emigrants actually help to strengthen the traditional rituals of the lineage.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we can see that the impact of emigration on the social and cultural system and the ritual activities of the lineage is complex. On the one hand, emigration is a force for 'modernization' in peasant societies. Such as the change in clothing and hair styles, and the

introduction of modern consumer items. These observations are similar to Watson's comments on the social changes in San Tin. However, he also argued that:

"these modernization effects on peasant societies are also characteristics of many non-emigrant communities... Contrary to my earlier expectations, emigration was not a force for modernizing San Tin, but a means for re-asserting many traditional values. New sources of money and steady remittances have allowed the Mans to emulate some of the highest ideas of conservative peasant tradition and to preserve a way of life rapidly disappearing in other parts of

Hong Kong... the returned emigrants themselves generally do not act as change agents, and after their retirement, they often become the most enthusiastic proponents of traditional values." (pp.220-221)

In the present study, there is evidence which confirms Watson's observations on the preservation

and re-assertion of many traditional values and ritual activities. For example, their active participation in the *k'ai teng* ceremony; in their contributions to public works for the village, etc. These all have helped preserve traditional organization and maintained the solidarity of the Chan lineage.

On the other hand, the analysis shows that active participation and engagement in traditional ritual and community activities helps to maintain their status and prestige in the Chan lineage. It shows how the Chan emigrants can make sense of their inferior identity in Hong Kong, which has a mixture of the



Figure 7. The preparation of food by male cooks. Later donations from emigrants built a new kitchen.

conflicting Westernized and Chinese values. Most of these Chan emigrants, lacking the necessary educational attainment and status in Hong Kong, do not show a keen interest in integrating into Hong Kong society. It is reflected by their low level of interaction with the other members of the society from different social classes or different ethnic origins. Most of these Chan emigrants view the Chan lineage as their primary reference of personal identity.

1. James L. Watson, *Emigration and the Chinese Lineage*, 1975, P.83.
2. *ibid*, P.84
3. Lyn Pann, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, (1990) p.15
4. Fung Chi Chung, *The Struggle for Social Integration: The Chinese Refugee Adjustment to the Urban Setting*, (1983) p.1.
5. *ibid*. p.2.
6. *ibid* p.3.
7. Watson, p.224
8. *ibid* p.164.
9. *ibid*. p.148.

RENNIE'S MILL: A Hong Kong Myth

Yang Yeung, Diana

It certainly would not be easy finding Rennie's Mill in one of the many Tourist Association leaflets, despite its location in one of the major countryside "must-goes" for tourists in the Northeastern New Territories -- Sai Kung. Even maps leave the place out and make "Junk Bay" (or Tseung Kwan O) the general designation of the wider area which includes the steep cliff-faces Rennie's Mill has been occupying¹.

Despite this apparent conceptual absence, Rennie's Mill remains the embodiment of a rich historical heritage which is referred to once in a while in the written media. The catch phrase, "Nationalist Haven"², has, perhaps, survived to be the most easily remembered and "proven" by reality -- who would hesitate to coin the description in the sight of numerous Nationalist flags flying red, white and blue all over the October 11th local newspapers?! Every year journalists have risked resentment and even attacks from the anti-Communist Rennie's Mill residents to take that photograph on October 10th, the National Day of Taiwan.

What more would they want from a place famous for haunting stories of Rennie, the American merchant who killed himself after the flour mill he set up in Rennie's Mill went bankrupt (hence the place name, and in Chinese, "Tiu Keng Leng", meaning a mountain range of hanging, synonymous with the present meaning of a harmonious landscape), of outsiders passing accidentally through the village and getting killed, and still more?!

What should originally have been known as a refugee camp providing shelter for those escaping from the Chinese Civil War and the subsequent Communist takeover in 1949 was additionally dubbed by Dr Wong Yue-hai as "an oasis amidst the desert, a haven amidst barren landscape"³, which almost completes the picture of a place that is different, that is more safely witnessed than experienced.

The Experience

Anyone who is not satisfied with, or at least interested in, how international missions and the media come up with such a picture of Rennie's Mill may like to try out the hypothesis for themselves. First efforts might prove disappointing.

Take a ferry from Sai Wan Ho pier (five to ten minutes from the MTR station) and in a mere twenty-five minutes, and even less since the company modernized their "fleet", one is exposed to one of the most mythologised symbols one could think of for the people there.

Indeed, even before you board the ferry, which runs every half hour from roughly six in the morning till midnight, the pounding noise of aeroplanes taking off just across the harbour rushes into your ears. The immediate thought of when these Guomindang veterans can go home to spend the last years of their lives starts coming up and gets intensified, of course, when occasionally a China Airlines flight passes by.

The ferry starts and you see a mountain range across the other side of the harbour, Black Devil's Hill to be exact, gradually rising from the urban district of Kwun Tong. Yes, this is the mountain range the registered refugees crossed forty-two years ago, when they were asked to transfer from Mount Davis on the Hong Kong side to the present site of Rennie's Mill. What hardship! Are the roads still there? Perhaps there just weren't any?

The ferry leads on when a fortress-like construction comes into sight. From the graffiti-like white Chinese characters written on one of these stone structures facing the sea, one figures it is a filming location specially built by a film company, although its deserted state poses a difficult cognitive switch to the glamour of spotlights and muscular kung-fu stars. But wait, isn't Rennie's Mill itself subject to the same "dilemma" (or advantage)? The written press is interested in exactly what they assume to be a deserted and isolated place; certainly the film crew is no exception. What is the meaning of this "fame" and the cost of it? Perhaps the quietness and peace of the

community?

The scattering of deity shrines on the coastline may be the answer?! At least Rennie's Mill residents find order and security to cope with their life crises from religion. With that comfort in mind, you would probably find the new Junk Bay graveyard most disturbing. At the very mountain top, it reminds you of the aged population you will be facing in Rennie's Mill. Perhaps it is already time for the old people at Rennie's Mill? Do they pass away just like that after all these decades of hardship?

The pounding noise of steel being loaded and unloaded at the Shin Wing Steel Factory and the visual crudeness of metal monsters staring out at your ferry would easily turn that melancholy of death into hatred for modernization and industrialization. Remember you have assumed Rennie's Mill to be a quiet place where perhaps a few hundred Guomindang veterans spend the last years of their lives. So how could a steel factory with all its potential for noise pollution and environmental destruction lie immediately adjacent to the community?

It is with all these mixed feelings and preconceptions of Rennie's Mill that one finally has a chance to meet the place face-to-face. Rennie's Mill occupies the tiny valley and bay just round the headland from the factory. It stretches all the way up to the mountain top and sideways to the Ling Shek Hospital which is famous for lung-disease patients and a site where a bird's-eye view of the new public-housing estate development at Junk Bay can be caught.

So how has Rennie's Mill lived up to these expectations throughout the one and a half generations it has gone through?

Do such expectations contribute to a higher tendency for outsiders to look for differences between Rennie's Mill and their living environment than for similarities? What message will it carry and leave behind when it faces demolition in 1993?

The Guomindang Flag

The Guomindang flag stands out in its own right for discussion when one approaches Rennie's Mill. A person who arrives in a ferry can easily notice bright patches of red, white and blue floating against the green of the mountain and the brown of the huts.

Those who come by the bus which stops right outside the Ling Shek Hospital may notice, carefully avoiding the self-planted trees of residents living along the slanting path leading down, an even more distinct patch of red, white and blue on the mountain top separating Rennie's Mill from the sight of the other side of the harbour. It is a big

Guomindang flag pinned tightly on the grass to symbolically support the Chinese characters above it, reading "Long Live President Jiang" (蔣總統萬歲) referring to the founder of the Guomindang, Mr Jiang Jia-zhi (蔣介石).

And this is not all. Go deeper into the lanes where shops lie and the same flags, smaller in size, hang in chains like those on cruising ships. Come after sunset and the flags are still flying high, unlike the convention of national flags being raised in the morning and lowered at night.

And what does the red in the flag signify as against the enemy Communist "Red"? It was adopted in 1914 to signify the plight of war for the Chinese Nationalist Party⁴. The emblem of a "white sun in a blue sky" signifies the never dying spirit of the party (the sun) in the majestic plains of the motherland⁵. The flag as a whole was adopted in 1928 by the Nationalist Party to be the national flag of China and the symbol of Jiang Jia-zhi's struggle against Mao Zedong's forces.

No wonder any outsider remembers Rennie's Mill so easily as Guomindang territory -- Rennie's Mill is the concentration of flags that embody the historical heritage of the Nationalist struggle against the Communists.

The dominance of the Guomindang flag over the whole identification of Rennie's Mill is further highlighted in the Double-Tenth Festival, or the National Day of the founding of Nationalist China in Taiwan. Literally a flood of small flags is created by the students from the Ming Yuen (鳴遠), and Mo Tak Primary Schools (慕德) who marched all the way from the western edge of Rennie's Mill to the playground of the Rennie's Mill Middle School, waving the red, white and blue in their hands. The dramatic moment was the students' response to the speaker's order to wave the flags to his slogan, "Long Live the Three Principles of the People" (

). One who reads the photograph framing the action of the students in the October 11, 1991 *South China Morning Post* cannot help thinking that Guomindang ideology is very much alive at Rennie's Mill. But it misses the real situation where more indifference towards the ceremony was evident than enthusiasm.

"What is the point of all this, anyway?!", remarked an elderly lady who took only a glimpse of the ceremony through the wires separating the play ground from the walking path along the coastline, in a manner as if accusing them of intrusion into her quiet morning exercise. She left, leaving me an excuse to jump to the conclusion that the elaborate Double Tenth Festival is only top-down, and increasingly so due to the loss of the original Guomindang generation, than bottom-up. She only came in the 70s, introduced by a Buddhist nun who

promised to provide shelter for her in the Buddhist monastery on the mountain top. She has not been part of Rennie's Mill from the beginning, so she does not belong to the political and hence cultural heritage of the place. But is she the exception or the rule?

The Chat

If residents in Rennie's Mill would rather choose morning exercise than supporting their ideological leaders in a ceremony like the Double Tenth, but at the same time keep informed about the happenings of their ideological homeland, Taiwan, then they no doubt have to rely on the chat in the little park adjacent to the Rennie's Mill Middle School. Yes, this park and school, together with the present site of the mini-post office, fire station, two-storey Community Development Centre and clinic, comprise of what used to be the flour mill owned by an American merchant, named Rennie -- first called Tai Ping, or Big Plain, 太平 by residents -- he killed himself due to bankruptcy, leaving only haunting stories for the refugees who came later to inherit. If they had used haunted stories to frighten away possible Communist rivals or bandits years ago, they may now be using still strong anti-Communist attitudes, perpetuated in this same place, Tai Ping, to live up to their own past. It is less clear though whether it is for themselves or for spectators as myself that they live up to that adherence to the political stance.

"ATV news is better than TVB news. TVB is pro-China," as Ho remarked during my first contact with him. And despite my continuous attempts to prompt him into telling me about his daily life and relationships with other people in Rennie's Mill, he kept on going back to topics of current affairs. His emic view that "the more we talk about politics and current affairs, the more excited we get," perhaps subtly indicates that it is indeed **only** politics and current affairs, the outside, etc world, they can chat about every day, and find common ground doing so. With rightist Hong Kong newspapers as *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* (華僑報), *Hong Kong Times* (香港時報) and *Oriental Daily* (東方日報) as well as a few Taiwanese newspapers all available public reading room near the park, they can never run out of topics to chat about. Ho spends more than three hours reading them every day, he said. In fact one time while reading he was beginning to get into the mood of telling me about poems he writes during his leisure, when a friend of his came in and they started chatting about, yet again, the poor livelihood of peasants in Communist China, leaving me wondering about his poems.

His cynicism towards the Communists adds up to his stoic remark that "the refugee era has

passed; the Taiwanese government no longer subsidizes students from Rennie's Mill to study in tertiary institutes in Taiwan... the prime of Hong Kong will pass in five years," referring to the approaching 1997 Chinese takeover.

But to play fair, chatting in the park also surrounds other topics in the native homeland. Religion also comes up, though less as a topic of discussion than as a familiarizing technique for strangers like me.

Leisure

It may be somewhat misleading to term the section "Leisure" because for the people I meet in the area, activities that appear to us as a pastime may be to them as time-consuming as work is to us. But for the purpose of ordering our understanding of the place, I will still use the word for convenience.

Chatting about political affairs may be an exciting pastime for the old males -- in fact, the park is constantly occupied by thick-spectacled old men, who are usually neatly dressed in shirts, ties and jackets. Some even wear caps to shield themselves from the sun, including Ho. But for the female members and some other male members of the community, gambling games are the next most popular activity.

Along the main road where grocery shops, food stores and barber's are, there is almost one mah jong game in action every six or seven blocks. Rather than attentively waiting for customers as in many other places of Hong Kong, the shopkeepers leave the shop front unattended to play mah jong in their neighbour's. In fact mah jong has become a key for identifying friends in Rennie's Mill -- asking for the address of the same lady from a different woman, I got an answer like this, "Which Mrs Lee? Does she play mah jong? If not I do not know of her."

As against a lot of assumptions about community life, where people maintain universalistic relations and close mutual assistance, this woman's attitude reveals that Rennie's Mill's residents have small and enclosed social circles and form subgroups out of leisure activities (and religious activities, too, as we will see later).

If anyone is to attribute to Rennie's Mill an ethnic and community identity of its own, one must think twice faced by the evidence of Cantonese popular culture which is prominent in almost every flat in urban Hong Kong. Only a more even distribution of male and female in Rennie's Mill and a greater predominance females in the urban districts may mark it off.

If chatting and gambling still seem too individualistic, visits to the Hong Kong Park, Space

Museum and Buddhist monasteries may be further evidence of the close similarity in leisurely activities between residents at Rennie's Mill and ourselves, and their wide exposure to the "apolitical" culture (that is, less politically homogeneous culture in the wider Hong Kong context) in other parts of Hong Kong. Regular outings are organized by the Community Development Centre, and each time around fifty to sixty elderly people participate. Such a collective exposure to external relations outside their dwelling place of Rennie's Mill is an important key for challenging the idea that Rennie's Mill is a closed, isolated and even self-sufficient community.

Age

Although the number of old people above the age of 60 a large group, 1,244, of the 5,441 population in Rennie's Mill⁶, the total number of those aged between 30 to 40 also adds up to 1,405. This is the category Mr Chang falls into, though he did not want to be more specific.

Mr Chang arrived at Rennie's Mill in the 70's, introduced by a friend to buy a cottage for a few tens of thousands of dollars, due to its proximity to the Steel Factory where Chang used to work. Although he seldom joins the older people in their outings, he regularly plays badminton and table-tennis with his daughter's friend studying Form 1 and boarding at the Rennie's Mill Middle School. The lack of recreational facilities at Rennie's Mill except for two public basketball courts is clearly evident, despite being claimed by Mr Lo, the manager of the government Community Development Centre, as a "community" like Kwun Tong, Western etc. They go to the Sai Wan Ho Sports Centre of the Urban Council, a ten-minute walk from the ferry pier every Saturday morning for the exercise. When asked why Chang chose to play with the schoolboy, he said that adults schedules tend to be tight all the time, so it is easier to make an appointment with a teenager.

This specific case may be surprising, but the phenomenon of the old having a close relation with the young is by no means so, as old people in Rennie's Mill tend to take up the responsibility of looking after their grandchildren when their parents are at work. This is but a repetition of the urban working population in Hong Kong, where both parents may consider grandparents as a likely alternative to care for their children, as against other options like maids and nurseries.

Education

The twenty percent of the young people below the age of 20 may contribute even more to

challenging the idea of Rennie's Mill as a closed community.

All the three schools in Rennie's Mill are boarding schools -- Ming Yuen School, comprising of primary and secondary schools; Queen Maud Primary School (or Mo Tak) and Rennie's Mill Middle School. The majority of the students come from families living outside Rennie's Mill. An explanation by the social worker at the old people's home is that these students are from broken families and board at Rennie's Mill because no one takes care of them.

While I could not take hold of the curriculum and syllabus followed by the schools, I have been told by Father Ma of the Ming Yuen School that they are no different from other Hong Kong schools, only the Rennie's Mill Middle School teaches students the Three Principles of the People as compulsory.

Religion

When Soo Ming-wo noted some syncretic aspects of religion in Hong Kong society by looking at some similarities of concepts between Baptist Christianity and Chinese peasant religion, consisting of Buddhist and Taoist ideas, she has not looked at how in practice converts of any one of these religion cope with possible contradictions. Rennie's Mill may provide a suitable ground for looking into the idea.

Indeed, Rennie's Mill has been made known to the outside communities through publications by missionaries, some of whom were actually among the very first batch of refugees moving from China to Hong Kong, and then from Mount Davis to Rennie's Mill. That explains the large number of different religious associations in such a small area as Rennie's Mill, ranging from the Catholic to different factions of the Christian and folk religion, too.

Perhaps the most ironic syncretic combination of ideas of various religions is the visits to Buddhist monasteries for vegetarian feasts, organized by the Catholic converts gathering. Whether the ideas of each religion, as Soo Ming-wo has found out, are compatible with each other seem less important in this case than the clear social function the Church serves -- providing a gathering place and public forum for old people, both male and female, over sixty years of age to discuss problems concerning themselves and kill time. This can be especially important for elderly people who do not have a family and live alone. Perhaps this is a compensation for the female oldies who do not find a place in the park to discuss topics they too are interested in -- the 1997 issue, politics again, and their plight after demolition of Rennie's Mill. In fact during the one-hour meeting every week, they seldom say prayers or bring any bibles. They drink tea, have

snacks, and in the meeting when I was there, they were to confirm and collect fees for the visit to the Buddhist monastery for the vegetarian feast. It was quite a warm atmosphere, especially when you see shadows of young school boys bullying young girls and both taking pleasure in that!

Hints of non-acceptance of various religions are also present. Ho is a Christian and attends a church at Tsim Sha Tsui. It was during the Chinese New Year when I talked to him and when I asked whether he put any effort in decorating his home, he said his church discouraged them to celebrate festivals and claimed they were mere superstition. The Double Tenth Festival was included and Ho said he did not even care about what was happening during the New Year, although when I visited his home again during the period one day, he still gave me a red packet (or lucky money). Father Ma sees these "special days" as "some belonging to the Church and some to the Refugee Committee [the Double Tenth Festival, Sun Yat-sin's birthday and others], never in conflict," although with a slight hint of contempt, he said those "big guys" (大佬佬 colloquially meaning men with power) who spoke in the ceremonies and the photographs they took, were only to please the Taiwanese Nationalist government.

One may see Ho's behaviour as a cognitive switch from so-called "superstition" to complying with a simple "li" (禮 or courtesy) practice, or more cynically, perhaps, the pressure an individual faces when, from top down, there is a code of behaviour, and from bottom up, there is another gathered through long years of socialization.

It was also significant that the female owner of a Shanghai foodstall started off the conversation between us by asking me which religion I have and seemed quite surprised at my confession that I do not have any. She belonged to the Catholic Church of the Ming Yuen School, the same as Father Ma's, although she said she seldom went to the Sunday gatherings, just like most of her other fellow converts. As confirmed by Father Ma, of the 500 "friends of the church," only around 100 attend meetings regularly. Father Ma has to visit these converts in person, though he admits many do not like it. He hinted at the possible confusion of too many factions in a small place like Rennie's Mill that may be causing the converts' weariness.

The lack of devotion may also be due to, as Father Ma termed it, "historical reasons". The first generation of converts have been named "flour converts" (麵粉教友) not a nice name, as Father Ma sighs, although with a genuine understanding of how during the early days of the refugees, food and resources were so lacking that they had to join the churches for the food and relief materials. In fact they

may have joined more than one. They did not go to the churches any more after the government came in the 60's to offer jobs and subsidies. The children of this first batch of converts became converted by birth, too, although they may not even believe or know God.

We see, therefore, religion as providing order and security in times of suffering and chaos, although it is more the concrete material benefits rather than the "belief" of being saved one day that keep their lives going.

The creation of new meanings from different religious factions in Rennie's Mill is most vivid and comical in the case of Chang -- in order to avoid the door-to-door visits of other factions (other than Father Ma's who said they did not believe in this tactic of attracting converts), he puts up an effigy of Kwun Yin at the door of his house as a message that he already has a religion so as to keep others away. Does he believe in her? No, nor any other gods. One can't help wondering whether all the other "land god shrines" (土地) and the more popular "heaven god shrines" (天官賜福) at almost every door of shops and some houses serve the same purpose.

Ethnicity

Rennie's Mill is ethnically diverse. Spending one day there you will probably have met people from Hunan, Fujian, Zichuan and Shanghai. Of course there is still Father Ma who comes from the West⁷. Whether his seventeen years in mainly Cantonese Hong Kong dilute his other years of a different acculturation I do not intend to speculate on, although he really speaks perfect Cantonese (and so do a lot of missionaries we see on the streets in Hong Kong who might have been here for only a short time).

Hunan natives, according to Ho and confirmed by an incident of finding directions, form the largest group in the area -- "Is she Hunanese?" was the first question the lady who tried to help me locate a resident asked. Ho is himself a Hunanese who lets me have the flavour of his favourite home dish, beef with chilies, with vivid description. In fact, he visits his hometown every September and stays there for a month.

Chang is also keen on talking about his native hometown, Zhuangzhou (漳州) at Fujian and it almost felt improper for me, also a native of Fujian, though of the different town of Xiamen, not to speak Fujianese and Putonghua. He communicates to his 11 year old daughter in Fujianese. She attends a Cantonese school in Junk Bay and understands only spoken Fujianese and can't speak it.

Despite Chang's consciousness of his being Fujianese, he is actually equally conscious of his

skills in spoken Cantonese and Putonghua. While asking me a few times about whether his spoken Cantonese is bad (which in fact is very audible, with only a very slight accent), he assured me he could be the best Putonghua speaker in Rennie's Mill as a lot of others, he claimed, could only speak local dialects like Hunanese which he himself did not understand. He even accused sixty-six year old man whom he met at the tea house one morning of speaking a dialect he had not heard of and could not understand.

It is not difficult to see in Chang's case how to apply Barbara Ward's conscious model of Chineseness. Although only details about the language are available, it is still evident that Chang's immediate model is of his being Fujianese, rather than an even "closer" network of relations like those with his neighbours or fellow Rennie's Mill residents, regardless of their ethnic identity. His slight contempt for those who speak a dialect he does not know of and his particular keenness in learning that I am from the same province as he is constitute Ward's "observer's model" -- he sees other Chinese relatively inferior. His ideal type of Chineseness is based very much on good Putonghua, the official written language of the country.

If one finds his consciousness of speaking good Cantonese unaccounted for in Ward's three-tier model, it may be evidence of the increasing ethnic pressure he, as an individual like Ho, faces in a new ethnic majority of Cantonese. In fact, Supervisor Lo of the Community Development Centre admits that policies of the Social Welfare Department aim mainly at incorporating these native Mainland Chinese into the wider Hong Kong culture⁸. Among them are regular outings to popular holiday locations like the Space Museum and the Hong Kong Park. Listing the only old people's home in Rennie's Mill under the central distribution scheme of the Social Welfare Department also helps introduce external elements into a supposedly enclosed place. According to the social worker at the home, many of these old people are regular partners of mah jong games with Rennie's Mill residents. The boarding schools serve the same purpose, too, while students, like Chang's daughter, attending schools outside Rennie's Mill bring back new ideas from their diverse peers.

Administration

Putting this as the last section of investigation may seem strange, but it almost encompasses the most important idea-debunking of the myth of the whole paper.

When the Hong Kong government Resettlement Department (from 1973 onwards, turned into the present Housing Authority) came to Rennie's

Mill in 1961, eleven years after its setting up, they had intended to turn the area from its unadministered status to a government-managed Cottage Area with public utilities. After all, this is crown land, says Mr Yuen, supervisor of the Housing Department branch at Rennie's Mill. In 1964, this status was declared and supposedly the government would begin restricting land selling without passing through bureaucratic red tape. And there was supposed also to be tenancy control so as to keep stable the level of population in the area.

But despite the regular eighteen-monthly "room inspection" conducted by the Housing Department, there are still cases of tenancy change and land transfer that the Department may not know of, yet may not take action against. So besides organizing cleaning campaigns every year and repairing the street light facilities, the government does not seem to have tight control over the area.

While this can be explained by the idea that old Chinese people avoid "公屋" (or government officials) as much as possible, it seems more likely that residents there are used more to being represented by the Refugee Relief Committee, occupying a one-storey stone house near the park.

The Committee, headed by Sai Kung District Board member Mr Wong Kwok Yee, himself born in Rennie's Mill, was set up in 1950 and is closely affiliated with Taiwanese authorities. All financial and material subsidies from Taiwan are redistributed through the Committee to the residents. It had served as the central administration of the Rennie's Mill refugee settlement until the government came more than a decade later. More recently, the Committee had organized petitions to the government against demolition of the place. Regularly, though, it is the sole organizer of collective activities in Rennie's Mill, eg. the Double Tenth Celebration. Mr Wong is definitely more well-known to residents than Mr Yuen, who, though not to be treated as the central authority, is nevertheless the person to approach if more concessions from the government are to be sought.

Recent years marked, however, penetration of more outside political elements, intensified by the 1991 Legislative Council first direct elections. Torn campaign posters of then candidates Emily Lau and Wong Wang Fat can be vaguely seen on the stone walls of buildings near the pier. In fact, Mr Wong boasted of a more than ninety-percent voting rate in Rennie's Mill although he did not enlighten me on the number of residents who have registered as voters. The accessibility of the broadcasting media also increases the diversity of the political environment. Whether the uniform political ideology or the

practical advantage that the Committee brings is the incentive for residents' support is worth pondering upon.

Although I am not suggesting that there is a competition of leadership in Rennie's Mill, it is still important to note that what the Refugee Committee connotes are the common historical heritage of the residents in Rennie's Mill, their trust for insiders (Mr Wong is born in Rennie's Mill) as an incentive for solidarity, as well as a clear and uncompromising political stance. Whether these are still important for the aged and the emerging diverse population is doubtful, but these are important and distinctive symbols to enable outside observers to schematize Rennie's Mill in the wider social and political context.

Conclusion

"Rennie's Mill is a self-sufficient community. It is a closed and isolated social environment. It is an homogeneous community where people maintain primary and secondary relations universalistically. Rennie's Mill consists of people of a common historical past and political ideology."

These claims are definitely not totally refuted by my very general and superficial study of the area, though issues raised potentially challenge this myth. Indeed, improvement of transportation, inadequacy of social facilities within the area, rejuvenation of the population from the aged veterans to a new generation of youth, and the residential development of the government in Junk Bay to include Rennie's Mill, all serve to increase the transparency of the place and the grounding of Rennie's Mill in the wider Hong Kong context with more compatibility than conflict.

It is disappointing that while haunted tales and stories of violence against leftists became only history, Rennie's Mill remains to be only a "touristic" place which will eventually be non-existent anyway to ordinary people of Hong Kong. The father and daughter I met while leaving one day after a visit brought along their camera, and only stayed for half an hour. All the father said to me was, "I thought it was quite fun!" while the girl admired the GMD flag I gave her. (It was given to me by a Refugee Committee member before the Double Tenth and HE instructed me to hang it up somewhere eye-catching.)

Of course it has its uniqueness in its own right -- the people remain keen hosts and hostesses of conversation, although others ARE still media-shy despite long-time experience of being interviewed. But so are other places in Hong Kong or the world. I do not know what is the best attitude for approaching a place like this, but I am sure looking at it through the eyes of an outsider is no better than studying it like a rare species of a kind like academics

do, or like a place of mere sad suffering but with a poverty-stricken nobility as the missionaries do.

Everyone who can be accounted for in that paradigm will be disappointed -- the more external you assume yourself to be, the more difficult it is to talk to them; the rarer the species you assume, the more dismay you feel when you find studying Rennie's Mill is no intellectual breakthrough, perhaps never will be; the more you sympathize with the people there, the more unrealistic you find yourself being because suffering is already a thing of the long past.

But it is a good intellectual exercise to think about Rennie's Mill, especially in terms of how important symbolic mechanisms are in ordering a person's thought. While Gregory Guldin's idea of the ethnic neighbourhood and ethnic community cannot be directly applied to Rennie's Mill, it raises interesting questions as to the concept of ethnicity itself -- seemingly assumed to be a concrete, frozen concept and hence prerequisite for forming either neighbourhood or community, but in fact it varies according to potentially syncretic factors such as language, leisure activities, religion etc.

In terms of methodology, perhaps I should have tried to focus on a few aspects of the community rather than being obsessed with totality. Although I do not know how to break up aspects from the whole to concentrate on, I did find during the course of my study it might be more fruitful and revealing to focus on religion and administration. Further research might be done on these areas, provided adequate time.

While I do not think there are too many interesting facts of the place to find out more about, it might be fruitful to write a brief paper on the politics between the "ruling" parties of the area. I tend to believe this is where the dynamics lie.

Sources

The most detailed overall study of Rennie's Mill's history and social life is probably the one done by Dr Wong Yue-hai during 1959-1960 (Footnote 1).

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1. WONG, Yue-hai, *Hong Kong Rennie's Mill Refugee Camp Investigative Report (for the World Year of Refugees 1959-1960)*, Hong Kong Tertiary Institutes' Investigation of Social Problems.

2. May 17, 1992, *South China Sunday Morning Post*.

3. WONG, op cit.

4. INGLEFIELD, Eric. 1984. *Flags*, Arco Publishing.

5. This is an interpretation published in a camp book for an educational exchange camp organized by student associations in the Taiwan universities, although I failed to locate further references to make it more specific.

6. Hong Kong Housing Authority *Analysis of Age Structure*, September 25, 1991.

7. I have to use this very broad and vague term to identify Father Ma because I did not confirm his native country.

8. I take "Hong Kong culture" as largely meaning Cantonese due to the overwhelmingly proportion of native Cantonese living here, the use of the language as lingua franca, and its dominance in the popular media, as in pop songs, etc. But perhaps what real "Hong Kong" means is less important in their policies than merely breaking down whatever identities they might have brought into Rennie's Mill, be it an historical heritage, etc. What to construct after the destruction is totally another matter.

「玩外匯」——從經濟活動到社會維繫

江佩麗

引言

一般市民到銀行，只要跟職員接觸，完成交易後便會離去。在這過程中，跟其他顧客也毋須有任何接觸。故此到銀行去，可說是個人的事。

然而，在銀行大堂內經常可見一群人聚集在電視機前，並時有交談。他們年約五十歲，大多為女性，原來在「玩外匯」。

外匯，是外幣匯率之意思。在香港常見之外幣有英鎊、美元、日圓、西德馬克、澳幣、港幣等。外匯兌換，因透過外幣兌換，而投資外匯，是投資外幣。

近年香港之外幣買賣，很流行，因幣制自由，港幣與外幣兌換，只需到銀行，將外幣兌換成港幣，或將港幣兌換成外幣。外幣買賣，手續簡單，方便，且可隨時隨地進行。外幣買賣，多為家庭主婦，及退休人士，及一些專業人士。

其實，很多「外匯」的買賣，是為了「玩外匯」。外匯買賣，多為家庭主婦，及退休人士，及一些專業人士。外匯買賣，多為家庭主婦，及退休人士，及一些專業人士。外匯買賣，多為家庭主婦，及退休人士，及一些專業人士。

群體的建立

看外匯的一群人，以女性為多，年齡由三十至六十歲，多是家庭主婦。她們的工作就是照顧家人及從事家務勞動，包括買菜、燒飯等。她們每天到銀行來看外匯，並混得很熟。她們彼此有交談，約五、六十歲，雖有男及女，但大多為女性。她們的交談，多為外匯的行情、匯率、及外幣的兌換等。

這些婦女表示，她們是因到銀行看外匯而認識的。她們在銀行外匯櫃檯前，認識了很多人。她們在銀行外匯櫃檯前，認識了很多人。她們在銀行外匯櫃檯前，認識了很多人。

每個人參與群體時，必須符合其標準。每個成員來到銀行，都會問：「今日點？」（即今日外匯行情如何？）其他成員便會向她作簡單報告。在一個觀察中，一位四十多歲女性的兒子站著，她原是不認識那群體的人，但當你站了約十分鐘後，便問那群體：「你地點？」（即你們如何回答？）「匯情都如此。」這小群體，是很容易建立的。

群體內交談內容不止於外匯行情，更多的時間，婦女們在討論家庭、兒女和丈夫。某一天，張女士到外匯櫃檯，李女士到外匯櫃檯，張女士到外匯櫃檯，李女士到外匯櫃檯。

事。遇文介發去香成私
之事的還士到到的庭
圳廖「士婿女深回體家
深什有女女張到夫群見
說她陸張，來常丈。可
便問大給後後使離士。
士便在(之。便迫離士。
女員婿侶)了。生事婚離
張成女伴現先這離女張
「他的發陳決以跟情中
嗎？其她外)給解士卻同
陸了便子先女為張女表在
大好士妻陳一、後而多會
用上辦女(另)了最、大也
用已張」夫紹現。港員事

或與悲的吐苦水。或與
「買賣傾吐苦水。或與
相匯互。相匯互。相匯互
會是其。會是其。會是其
亦其都。亦其都。亦其都
成員尤。成員尤。成員尤
體成或。體成或。體成或
群體輸。群體輸。群體輸
分經輸。分經輸。分經輸
享輸或。享輸或。享輸或

時間與出席行為

內，在平不提紛日均內多漸峰
間裡，很多們全平間大數高
時日十時她，半人的段時，人
服週三去。後時兩著這的後全
之。一及小半至只們。資。半
匯間十達多時時的她去匯來時
外時至到個一二少但離外時四
提供性分。留十最，便看飯至
行代三聚般來中的四小自，午
銀具時人一而。少至半獨的午
在段九十，籃去最三約多班的午
有上午均一著紛人只短，是增



一群人聚集在提供外匯資料之電視機前。(江佩儷 1993)

或午平坐
時上數務
小在人服
二多，始
坐很務開
會，服由
們人午們
她些上她
，那有，去
人的只人離
十來六五才
二午週十務
達下。在服
平均。來持
，以也均至

何女些學這夫對事的談做為她去
員方一放，丈反家多交事至，場
的來飯要上，「接班給否完別人沒匯時市
體不午些均飯夫已數是悶，外同到
群半做一「煮丈為人來家市來後
問一問，「要，你，下完為敦少坐
情至時學歲因「有及買因倫不來
此二那女十來問說上上，三吸菜
就十為兒五有我她說來午更買
曾午因帶士沒是」問她再下故要
我中是要女間於？我，午且，午
以說女方時。來而因下而動下
以士婦。段吃你。原，。浮說。

在飲便來
，學右沒是
士返左故說
黃湊二他，她
人午十顧來，
供上到照天
料：坐午否
資說來下是
位她便，她
一，菜學問
另來買放我
上完帶。
在動午她
的活下跟
這觀察及訪問中，可見這群體
在動午她
的活下跟

來兒送的動。
有飯、行消
，做到銀消
家務：不是一
完是「外匯
是忙於外
她們忙於外
因為她們是
，因當她學來
。女上見

社會網絡

在這群體內，主要有兩類交流內容：

(一) 外匯消息

定選的，升後張價時析已大
才國她勝「前賣右在的給於
後英。黨位選要左多她又，
之逢跌守價大也時，們論，
事適下保「在少十為升她討
時，鎊或在說多在因上後法料。
析間英黨現且位通賣不，再
分期影響工故而位通賣不，再
會查影論，不跌掉「期便後會自
們調，不跌掉「期便後會自
她野穩，下賣論星，跌多把得
通。局不，下賣論星，跌多把得
買。政。局不，下賣論星，跌多把得
買。政。局不，下賣論星，跌多把得

消放則她升講幣
別人起否問再人外
別天，員說那把
受明賣一士跟起
時說該之女士一
多士應體陳女著
很女，群，陳跟
定陳升，陳跟
的如位跌？時人
的如位跌？時人
買。現能再下不
匯買。現能再下不
外匯買。現能再下不

能獲得很多非正式的外匯資料和
分析。

(二) 家務資料

多事情成以
。有籃價
。有籃價
。有籃價
。有籃價

市場她平日行著
市問日銀提
超他比出時
佳其，走來
百。價後回
在行特聽們
士銀「人她
女到：二
方帶說中後，
，油她其鐘
次食，」分
有。二價元。五
買了。五約十
油了。五約十

菜女替已看
買游士然在
士現女果直
游發游，一
見錢是回女
看價於後李
的，牛便十期
女士便宜分資
李女又士這外
，問好又在的
，又游。妥機
到買辦電
後士她經視

成員的討論也可以解決家中遇到的問題。

發是並女要兒方銀士她問到論個到
兒不知，說不孫。開女是我幾講使達
孫不論她士給的離張於。了相也，決
的，討。女藥癒便。了飲互，力解
士有人點方中痊後茶行癒「，力解
女沒加一叫煲藥之藥便痊：行壓的
方選，心故她中時兒說銀了質
問示後小，紹吃藥包小孫她在緩實
士表聽要到介是一四她，見舒到
女她士，染又兒要著煲，醫可單得
何，女染感。女士帶水後西「不題，問
，癒張傳校課的女時碗天了。問，問
一否痘逗從兒因向回用。是好問庭目
燒否說兒帶吃女行教回是茶家人互

討論

是丈夫剩消玩以自為做
多的間樂去小形一開
者們日娛行數來匯餘
「她在些銀坐字外有
匯，故一到裡一賣外
外多，要便行「買以
玩為學需們銀玩當作
「婦上故她在「是工
，主或，會用見或
中庭班裡是往者可職
究家上家於往訪，正
研以多在。被動，在
性。子自時匯」之樂，
和。下磨外上已娛

地雀要方們來，「打」玩否
他麻主資她要值。過。人
其打的投足何貶用，好懂，錢
到、」之滿為幣有，不神賺
可街匯賣可「港紙快又日係
，逛外買」：「港錢票過梗
間如玩匯們：著賺股，「
時例「外外她說拿匯買流：「
磨，要過玩問士，外而潮說：「
消動們透「我女值玩，跟士來
或活她望。張保「輸」女日
樂他。希錢的；匯：數：游日
娛其國是金目？外說多說：游日
要有公，取濟匯買士，士。何
方或因賺經外如女雀女玩則，

ASIA SEEN FROM WITHIN

Asia's Cultural Mosaic

Edited by Grant Evans (Prentice Hall, 436 pages)

Review by Wong Ming Yook

This hefty number is an anthropological introduction for students of Asia. What it does is to provide as wide a base as possible to examine and consider the word "Asian" by drawing on "mainstream anthropological themes" without, at the same time, losing sight of its goal by being overly comprehensive and therefore "encyclopaedic".

Written by many key people in the field, this edition boasts a wide range of anthropological questions and discussions dealing with

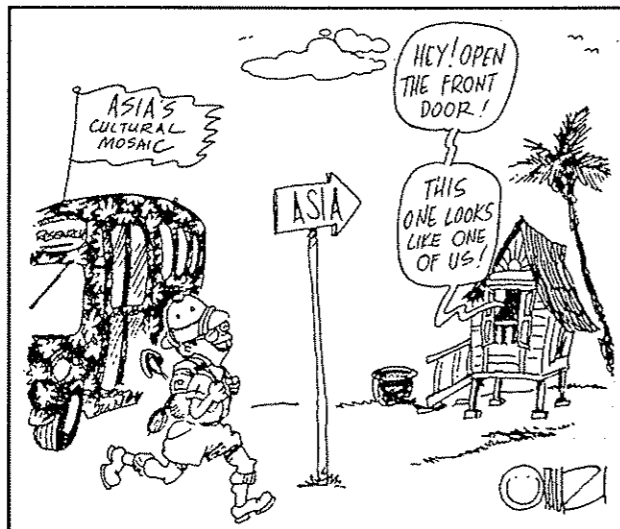
Asia from a postmodern perspective. As a textbook, it possesses a core text which is adequate for any course on Asia, although students will find supplementary reading on certain areas or topics for in-depth study helpful, if not needful.

As with any good, up-to-date textbook, this edition offers essays and analyses which are varied and informed. The nature of its design is such that the chapters consist of independent contributions by different writers in their specialised fields of anthropological research.

The book provides valuable glimpses into the study of anthropology without sounding too academic and fossilised. Its style is lively, but serious; it is an attempt which will appeal to the academic student as well as the interested layman.

The Introduction examines the definition of "Asia" to the sociologist and anthropologist, suggesting from the start that the purpose of the book is to allow a more objective and unhindered analysis and observation of "Asia" to emerge.

It discusses the old and by now hackneyed colonial view of Asia (what Edward Said called "Orientalism") and compares this with the more modern approach which undermines the ethnocentric approach to anthropology. Ethnocentrism is, of course, "the belief that the organisation and cultural practices and assumptions of one's own society are not only 'normal' but also the best".



The anthropological and sociological study of Asia has, as a natural historical outcome, been subject to such ethnocentric approaches (Western) in the past. Cultural relativism, now favoured in place of old colonial approaches, suggests that each culture and society possesses its own internal logic and integrity, and that any anthropological study made of such a society must consider observations and facts from the frames and social designs of the particular group or community of people, rather than from one's own culture and social practice.

What students and serious readers of anthropology will appreciate in this book is the attempt to read Asia from within, from its own perspective, without the intrusion of alien concepts and perceptions, as far as possible.

In keeping with the trend and direction of contemporary anthropological study, the postmodern

thrust of anthropological theory is very evident in the similar emphasis on the concept of the "nation" and "state" in the essays and chapters of the book. It is also a criticism which bears thinking about, as this book suggests that the concept of the "state" as Asia knows it is itself a colonial idea.

Nationalism "came to Asia through imperialist expansion, and colonial powers created nations where none existed beforehand". The post-Second World War native retaking of territory from colonial powers in Asia did not consider the "dissolving of colonial borders". Such artificial impositions have remained with the significance of the word "Asianness" and have created in Asians themselves a view akin to Western "Orientalism".

How this will ultimately affect the mosaic patterns of culture and politics in Asia is yet to be seen, but this region is indeed a region of constant growth, change and diversity which will keep anthropologists and sociologists happy for a long while.

That's just an example or two of what you will find in *Asia's Cultural Mosaic*. Frankly, I was quite intrigued by these observations offered on the concepts of "state" and "nation". The proliferation of the great geographical area, Asia, into little separate political units, seems mystifying in the face of fossil evidence of our sameness. If that is stretching things too far, then culturally, we are so influenced by ancient Indian and Chinese civilisations that even here, we seem too "same" to insist on the things which divide.

The chapter on ethnicity, titled 'The Ethnic Mosaic', clarifies this topic for us by showing us exactly how complex and difficult to define it is. One thing I have come to realise, after reading this book, is that word definitions are very much subject to cultural and political persuasiveness, and the identities change with chameleon-like ease, depending on the communal need for such change. The notion of ethnicity, in many modern Asian states, is entangled hopelessly with power relations and cultural supremacy. The ethnic conflict and violence in Sri Lanka is a study point brought out in this chapter.

There are other interesting chapters which deal with topics like kinship, gender, religion and caste, for instance. Apart from these "straight" topics which would be expected in a textbook on anthropology are also serious considerations on the future and direction of applied Anthropology.

The changing face of Asia necessitates

wider and broader anthropological models to accommodate the growing economies, for example, and the developing and evolving ideas of "nation". Gone are the simple days of an anthropologist's fieldwork, where he/she went in search of some primitive society and studied it. These days, urban development and mushrooming cities are part of the transforming face of Asia that challenges the contemporary anthropologist and his/her approach to the subject.

All in all, this book manages to show how absorbing the study of anthropology can be. Was it Pope who said 'the proper study of mankind is man?' Well, the involvement and intellectual vigour of these articles and contributions will convince you that the observation is true.

For once, I do take what the book's blurb says at face value; *Asia's Cultural Mosaic* is "lively, authoritative, seriously intellectual without being overly academic" and promises to be "a highly valued contribution to the anthropological literature".

(Reprinted from *New Straits Times*, Malaysia, 15/5/93)

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