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IN THE TANG MOUNTAINS WE HAVE A BIG HOUSE

 Michael Williams

The one hundred years between the mid nineteenth-century Californian and Australian gold rushes and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 saw the establishment and maintenance of extensive trans-Pacific links. These links developed between the native places or *qiaoxiang* 僑鄉 of tens of thousands of people originating in the Pearl River Delta of south China who travelled to various destinations including the Pacific ports of Sydney, San Francisco and Honolulu.¹ Support for, and the intention to return to, their places of origin, their *qiaoxiang*, was the basic motivating factor for people creating and maintaining these links in the years after 1849. The history of *qiaoxiang* links is, therefore, not only a history of movement outside the *qiaoxiang*, but also a history of efforts to survive, return to, retire in and improve the *qiaoxiang*. Most people aimed to use the wealth and resources they could obtain in the Pacific ports and other destinations to improve the lot not only of themselves and their families but also their clans and villages in the *qiaoxiang*. This was an aim that not all fulfilled, but this does not mean it did not exist. As one person, a Mrs Leong, who spent most of her life in the United States, put it, she and her family planned to return to Zhongshan 中山 county in Guangdong 廣東 province "because in the Tang Mountains we have a big house."² For many people of the Pearl River Delta living overseas, the "big house," in reality or dream, was located in their *qiaoxiang*.³

In the histories of the United States and Australia the role played by people from China is usually portrayed in terms that take no account of *qiaoxiang* connections. Chinese people have been seen as a threat to the civilisation of these nations, as victims of racism and as neglected pioneers struggling to be accepted as full citizens.⁴ The

¹ *Qiaoxiang* can be translated as "native land of one who is away" and refers to a person's home village, district or county, depending on which they choose to identify with as their place of origin. Recent research has begun to focus on the role that continuing links with the *Qiaoxiang* played in the lives and history of Chinese people in the United States, and similar research has also begun in Australia. In the United States this includes: Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of gold, dreaming of home: transnationalism and migration between the United States and South China, 1882–1943* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Adam McKeown, *Chinese migrant networks and cultural change—Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850–1943, a trans-Pacific community* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000). For Australia, see Janis Wilton, "Chinese voices, Australian lives," PhD diss., University of New England, 1996, and Michael Williams, "Sojourn in your native land," M.Lit. diss., University of New England, 1997. Pre-1849 links with Southeast Asia have a long history also, but this paper is concerned with those related to the Pacific ports.

² Judy Yung, "Angel Island oral history project, 1975–1990," Asian-American Studies Library, ARC 2000/62; Mrs Leong, interview 16 August 1980.

³ The main participants in this history were not usually speakers of the Chinese dialect that is now the official language of China and an attempt to render village names and local terms in the romanisation based on this dialect offers no special aid to understanding other than consistency, a consistency which would obscure dialect differences inherent in the history. No /OVER

/effort has therefore been made here to be consistent in the forms of romanisation; rather, the Chinese characters are included whenever these are known (often not for personal names in English-language records) and relevant variations listed in a Character Table (see the Appendix at the end of this article). The general preference has been to retain the original dialect usage where possible, Cantonese or Long Du dialect in most cases, and to use Mandarin-*pinyin* only for terms such as *Qiaoxiang* and *huaqiao* or where this was the original dialect.

⁴ For a review of the literature on the history of Chinese people in the United States and Australia, see Michael Williams, "Destination *Qiaoxiang*: Pacific ports and the Pearl River Delta, 1849 to 1949," PhD diss., University of Hong Kong, 2003. For the United States in particular, see Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: migration, contact, and exoticism in modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵ Examples of these include, *on remittances*: Feng Yuan, "Lüelun jiefangqian Guangdong-sheng huaqiao huikuan" [A brief discussion of Guangdong overseas Chinese remittances before liberation], *Qiaoshi xuebao* 1 (1989): 31–40; Dai Yifeng, "Jindai Fujian huaqiao huaren chu ru guo guimo ji qi fazhan bianhua" [Modern Fujian overseas Chinese in- and out-flows, scale and changes in development], *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu* 2 (1988): 339; Huang Chongyan, "Yanju huaqiaooshi shang de jidian yijian" [A few comments about researching overseas Chinese history], *Huaqiao lunwen shi* 1 (April 1982): 24–8; *on clan records*: Lin Jinzhi, "Cong zupu ziliao kan min yue renmin yiju haiwai de huodong ji qi dui jiaxiang de gongxian" [A look at clan records to see the overseas activities of Fujian and Guangdong people and their contribution to their hometowns], *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu* 1 (1991): 16–23; Zheng Shanyu, "Lüelun *Qiaoxiang* zupu zai huaqiao lishi yanjiu shang de ziliao jiazhi" [A brief discussion of the information value of the overseas Chinese community clan records in overseas Chinese historical research], *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu* 1 (1991): 31–4; *on publications*: Zheng Dehua and Wu Xingci, "Yipi youjiazhi de huaqiaooshi ziliao—Taishan jiefangqian chuban de zazhi, zukan pingjie" [A collection of valuable overseas Chinese history information—a review of pre-liberation Taishan magazines and clan publications], *Huaqiao lunwen shi* 1 (April 1982): 454–89.

dominant framework within which these images have been constructed is the nation-state, with a focus on the impact Chinese people had on the nation and the impact of the nation on Chinese people. Lack of Chinese-language sources, in addition to the dominance of nation-state concerns, have resulted in both a neglect of the perspective of Chinese people themselves and an inadequate appreciation of their places of origin, the *qiaoxiang*.

Within China, the role of the *qiaoxiang* has also been neglected, though for different reasons. Scant prominence is given in Chinese histories to the local, with the nation or at best the province receiving most attention from mainstream historians. Even in histories of the "Overseas Chinese" it is on the provincial level that most research has been conducted. The revival of interest in overseas connections in the late 1970s brought a revival in studies of the history of China's overseas links. However, the impact of these links on a provincial level was the focus of research, with an emphasis on the large-scale evaluation of material such as remittance records, clan genealogies, tomb inscriptions and county publications.⁵ This is despite the fact that the movements overseas before 1949, while overwhelmingly originating in the two provinces of Guangdong and Fujian 福建, were conducted on the basis of local connections of a village, district or county nature.⁶

This lack of focus at the local level, on the level at which the movement overseas was organised, has meant a limited appreciation of the impact of the links on both the *qiaoxiang* and on those living in the destinations such as Australia and the United States. This is as true for the histories of Chinese people in Australia and the United States as it is for the history of China itself. To attempt to improve our knowledge in this regard it is proposed here to examine a single *qiaoxiang*, that of Long Du 隆都, a district in Zhongshan county, Guangdong province, over several generations prior to 1949.⁷ The examination of a relatively small area will allow a picture to be developed of the impact of the links with their fellows overseas, a picture focused on the level at which these links were established and maintained.

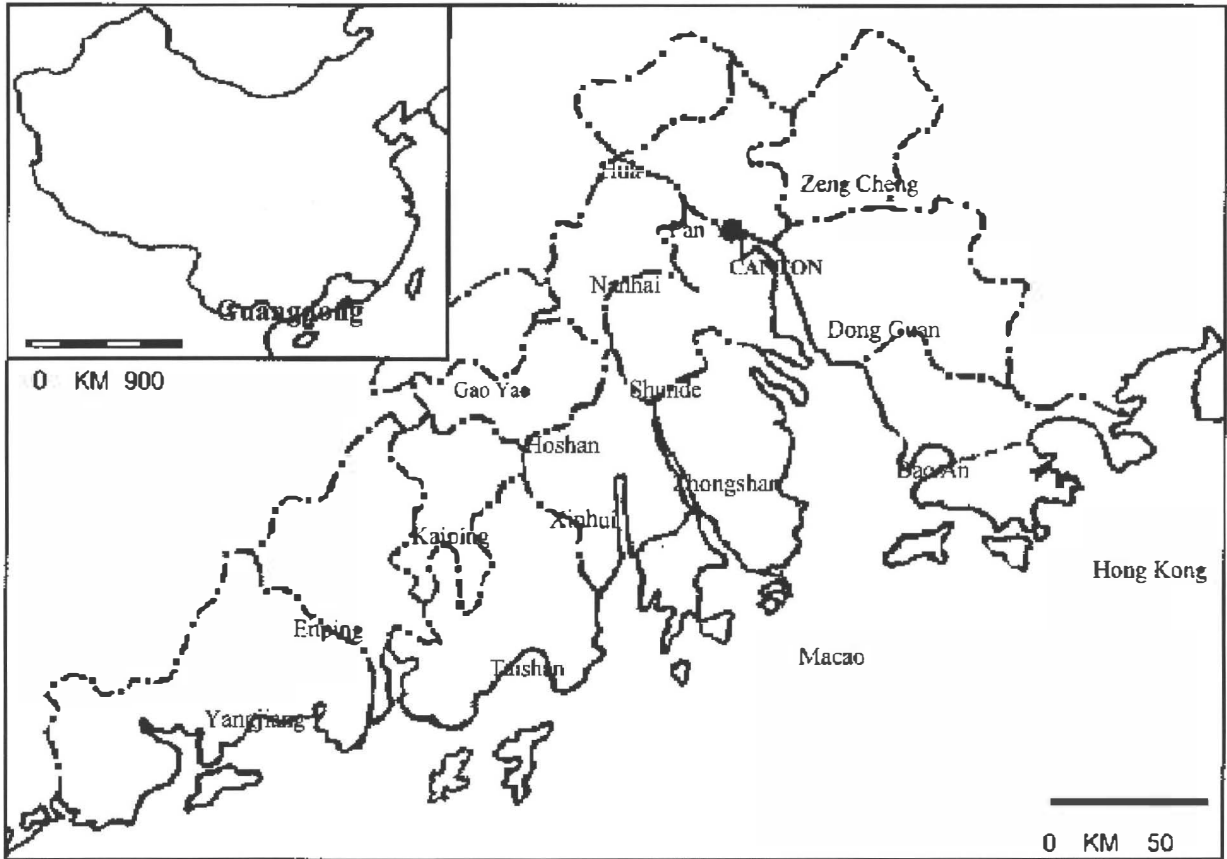
The main content of this paper will describe the impact of the overseas links on such aspects of the *qiaoxiang* as family life, houses, property, health,

⁶ The few county-level studies that have been made are of Taishan county 台山縣, Guangdong, and there being no studies of other *qiaoxiang* for comparison, Taishan has come by default to be seen as 'typical' or representative. For example, Zheng Dehua, "Shijiu shiji mo Taishan *Qiaoxiang* de xingcheng ji qi pouxi" [An analysis of the formation of overseas *Emigrant communities* in Taishan in the late nineteenth century], *Qiaoshi xuebao* 3 (1986): 33–9; and Huang Daoji and Liu Chongmin, "Taishanren shewai jiaowang yu chuyang suyuan" [The origin of Taishan people's overseas migration and their links], *Qiaoshi xuebao* 1 (1989): 7–8.

⁷ See Maps 1 and 2. Zhongshan county or *xian* 縣 was known as Xiangshan 香山 until 1925, and Long Du district has also undergone many name changes. To avoid confusion, 'Zhongshan' and 'Long Du' will be used here. For a complete list of the name changes for Long Du between 1152 and 1986, see Zhongshanshi Shaxizhen Renmin Zhengfu Bian, ed., *Shaxizhen zhi* [Shaxi town gazetteer] (Zhongshan shi: Huacheng Chubanshe, 1999), p.56.

Map 1

Zhongsan county and other Pearl River Delta counties, Guangdong province (map based on that in David Chuen-yan Lai, "An analysis of data on home journeys by Chinese immigrants in Canada, 1892-1915," The Professional Geographer 29.4 (1977): 362)

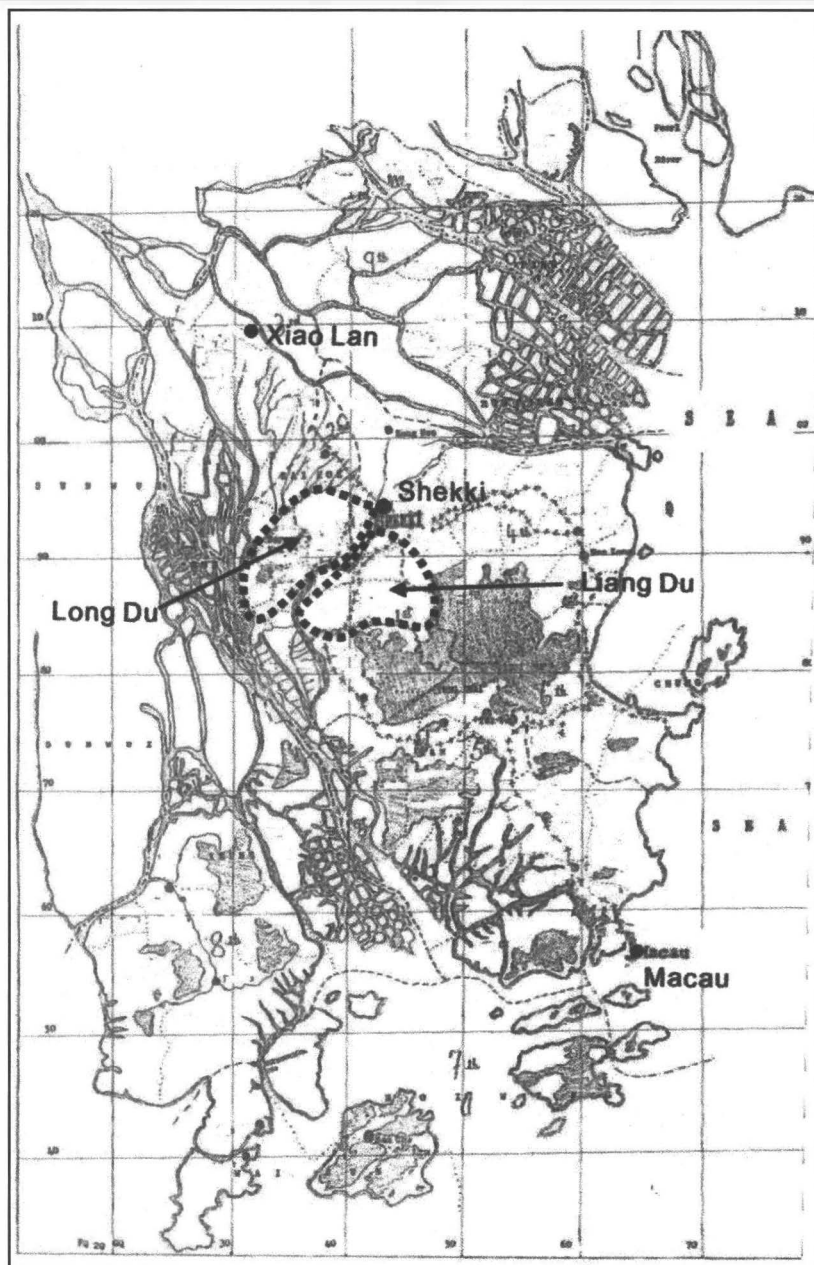


investment, politics and social stability. The basic argument is that an understanding of the *qiaoxiang* is a fundamental requirement for an adequate understanding of the history of the Chinese overseas. In the *qiaoxiang* we can find much that explains the motivations and actions of those who lived in the United States or Australia, among other places. The motivation for travelling in the first place and for staying in or leaving the destinations are, I will argue, to be found in the *qiaoxiang*. An acknowledgement of the *qiaoxiang* also promotes awareness that the history of Chinese people in places such as San Francisco or Sydney, including those who returned to their *qiaoxiang* as well as those who never left.

This account of a single *qiaoxiang* is not in itself sufficient to achieve a satisfactory understanding of the history of the movement of peoples from China. However, it is a first step in providing a corrective to studies that concentrate on the lives and careers of successful Chinese merchants in the Pacific

Map 2

Zhongsan county and Long Du district, United States Consulate General, Hong Kong, Index of Clan Names by Villages for Toi-shan, Sunwui, Hoiping, and Chungshan Districts (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General, 1965-68)



nations, on rags-to-riches accounts, or only on those who settled permanently in Australia, the United States and elsewhere. An understanding of ongoing links with the *qiaoxiang*, the donations that flowed to them, the rise in family prestige and the hopes of eventual retirement to the *qiaoxiang*, will provide insights into motivations other than those contained in nation-state-based histories in which people are portrayed either as victims of prejudice or as acting primarily out of a desire to become citizens of those nation-states.

Zhongsan County and Long Du District

Long Du is a district of about eighty villages located in the Pearl River Delta county of Zhongsan, its people speaking a non-Cantonese dialect.⁸ This is because the population of Zhongsan county, recorded in 1910 using the first reliable figures available, at over 800,000, was of diverse origins containing four main groups. These included the people of the county capital, Shekki (Shiqi 石岐), who were reported to be originally from Dongguan 東莞 county. The area around the city of Siu Lam (Xiaolan 小欖), at the northern edge of the county, was dominated by people who spoke the dialect of Shunde 順德, the county to the immediate north of Zhongsan. A third group, called the “western village type,” included the area of Long Du and was known for having numerous overseas connections. Finally, there were those around Doumen 斗門, whose people came mainly from neighbouring Xinhui 新會 county.⁹ In addition to these broad geographical divisions, a small scattered part of Zhongsan’s population were Hakka (*kejia* 客家).¹⁰ Macao, at the southern tip of Zhongsan, which had been under Portuguese administration for centuries, was a port of access to Hong Kong and, in the 1930s, had a population of around 12,000.

Long Du itself makes up about 15 per cent of Zhongsan county’s land area and at its northern end is only a few kilometers from the county capital of Shekki.¹¹ Long Du begins on the opposite side of the river from Shekki and stretches as far as a day’s walk to the south.¹² In 1910, the total population of Long Du was recorded as 27,992 households, or around 140,000 people, which was 17 per cent of Zhongsan’s population.¹³ Long Du consisted of about eighty villages at this time, varying in size from Chung Kok (Xiangjiao 象角) with 2,230 households (c.11,000 people) to Sun Ming Ting (Shenmingting 申明亭) with only 378 households (c.1,800 people).¹⁴

The northern plain of Zhongsan around Siu Lam was the most fertile area and where the bulk of Zhongsan county’s population lived. The central area of the county, which included Shekki and the Long Du district, was hilly, relatively infertile and, according to one geographer of Zhongsan, it was from such hilly districts that the surplus population left to go overseas.¹⁵ This distinction between the overseas Chinese of the hills and people of the more fertile *shatian* 沙田 is confirmed by Bung Chung Lee.¹⁶ According to Lee, the “non-emigrant villages” or “peasant villages ... occupy the low land” and their “villages are fairly well apart”; “emigrant villages on the other hand are closely located to one another on the foot of hills and in the valleys. The villages are so closely located near each other that sometimes it is hard for

/group unification and segmentation in the coastal area of Southern China,” PhD diss., University of Tokyo, 1987, pp.90–1, discusses the importance of dialect in unifying groups; p.95 mentions six Zhongsan dialects, and p.114, the Long Du dialect. See also Li Zhaoyong, “Longduhua Lanlangcunhua yuanshi Fuzhouhua” [The origins of the Long Du and Nam Long dialects in the Fuzhou dialect], *Zhongsan wenshi* 31 (1994): 229.

⁹ See Maps 1 and 2.

¹⁰ He Dazhang, “Zhongsan xian dili zhi xin renshi” [A new geographical perspective of Zhongsan county], *Guangdong Zhongsan buaqiao* 12 (July 1949): 28–9.

¹¹ See Map 2.

¹² See Map 3. Long Du was the official name of the district until the 1840s; it was also often referred to as Long Zhen 隆鎮. In the years after 1949 it was called No.2 District and its area is now divided into the two townships of Shaxi 沙溪 and Dachong 大涌. Throughout the villages today, however, the name Long Du is still recognised and used. See note 8.

¹³ *Xiangshanxian xiangtuzhi* [Xiangshan local gazetteer] (c.1910; reprint ed., Guangzhou: Zhongshanshi Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui Bangongshi, 1988), vol.1. While census figures at this time are suspect in China, comparisons with other data when possible seem to confirm the accuracy of these figures, for Long Du at least.

¹⁴ Ibid. Households rather than numbers of individuals are the usual figures given; however, where both are given, as for the total Zhongsan population, a ratio of 1:5 seems usual and this is used to estimate village populations by head. See *Zhongsan minguo yuebao* [Zhongsan Republican Daily], 1930, Special Issue, p.22, for a list of the eighty Long Du villages.

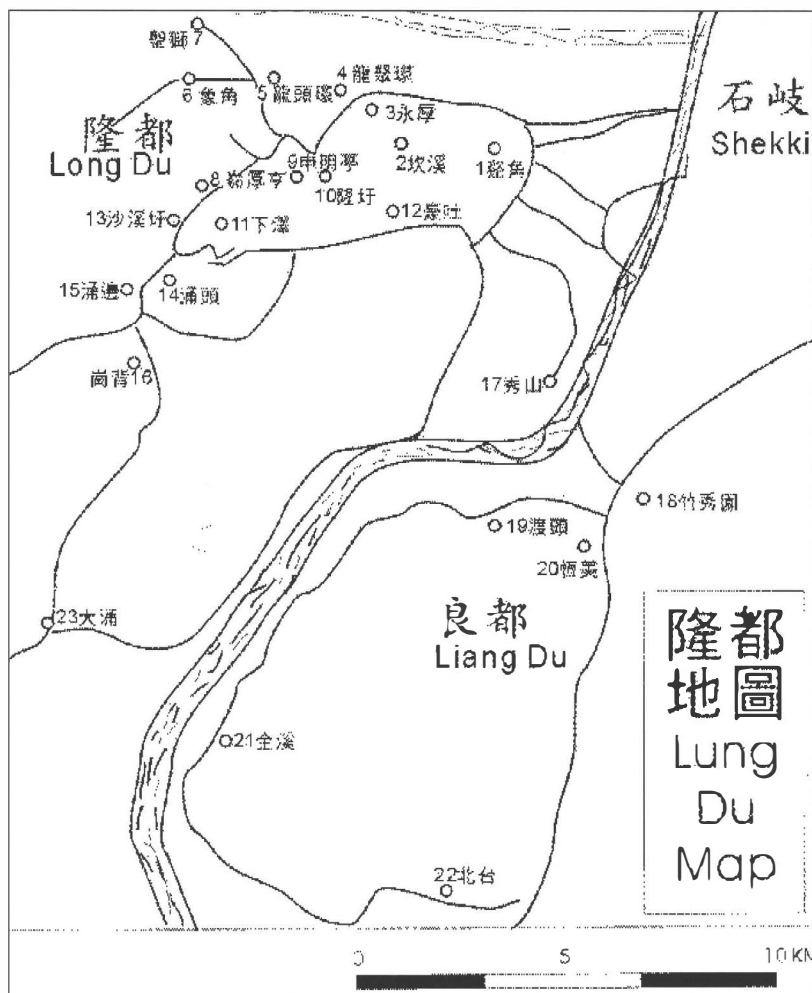
¹⁵ He Dazhang, “Zhongsan xian dili zhi xin renshi,” p.28.

¹⁶ B. C. Lee was the Hawai’ian-born son of a Buck Toy 北台 villager. He was a student and friend of the ‘Chicago School’ sociologist and researcher of Chinese in Hawai’i, Clarence Glick, and wrote a number of papers on Chinese people in Hawai’i, as well as assisting Glick in his field research.

⁸ See Map 3. On dialects, see Leo J. Moser, *The Chinese mosaic. The peoples and provinces of China* (London: Westview, 1985), pp.203–5 and 215 for a general discussion of Pearl River Delta dialects; p.208 discusses the arrival of the Hakka in South China; /p.216, their dialect enclaves; and p.199, the dialect enclave of Long Du. J. M. Rhoads, *China’s Republican revolution—the case of Kwangtung, 1895–1913* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp.12–14, discusses the tensions created by dialect differences. Choi Chi-Cheng, “Descent/

Map 3

Long Du and its villages (based on San Francisco Long Du Association map, c.1965, redrawn by Chen Mei-su)



隆都 Long Du

- 1 嶺角 Xijiao
- 2 坎溪 Kanxi
- 3 永厚 Yonghou
- 4 龍聚環 Longjuhuan/Lung Jui Wan
- 5 龍頭環 Longtuhuan/Lung Tou Wan
- 6 象角 Xiangjiao/Chung Kok
- 7 聖獅 Shengshi
- 8 嶺厚亨 Linghouheng
- 9 申明亭 Shenmingting

良都 Liang Du

- 10 隆吁 Longxu
- 11 下澤 Xiaze
- 12 豪吐 Haotu/Hou Tou
- 13 沙溪圩 Shaxixu
- 14 涌頭 Chongtou/Chong Tou
- 15 涌邊 Chongbian
- 16 岡背 Gangbei
- 17 秀山 Xiushan
- 18 竹秀園 Zhuxiuyuan
- 19 渡頭 Dutou
- 20 恒美 Hengmei
- 21 金溪 Jinxi
- 22 北台 Beitai/Buck Toy
- 23 大涌 Dachong

a stranger to distinguish one from the other.”¹⁷

These reports come from late in the period, and while there is less evidence from earlier times, those who had gone overseas could be easily identified by the late nineteenth century. As a visitor to Zhongshan in 1884 reported:

● One long day's walk of many miles, enabled us to pass through village after village from which people have gone out to the Hawaiian Islands or other parts of the world. It was very strange every now and then to have a man look up from his work in the field, or run out from a shop to greet us in English or Hawaiian.¹⁸

Another observer reported a few years later that “Shek Kéé” (Shekki) had “many large towns and important centres of trade and influence” and was considered to be wealthy due to the earnings of its merchants abroad.¹⁹

Ha Zak (Xiaze 下澤) Village

The diversity of the region under discussion, even among the eighty or so villages of Long Du itself, makes it difficult to form an overall picture of such villages. Even so, descriptions of villages are so rare that they cannot be ignored. A 1947 account of Ha Zak village, as it was remembered just before the Japanese occupation at the high point of the *qiaoxiang* links, gives a picture of a small prosperous village in Long Du. Ha Zak is close to the main cluster of Long Du villages, immediately to the west of Shekki, and probably represents a relatively prosperous late-1930s village. According to this account, in 1939 Ha Zak had 775 households or 3,733 residents and a well-equipped school with over 330 pupils. There was a reading room with twenty-three regular subscribers, a women's society publication to educate the public, a “National Skills Society” to promote traditional skills, and a “People Learning School” to teach people to read and write. Transportation to Shekki and other towns was good and ferries carried goods to and from the county capital. There was a self-defence troop and streetlights were lit at short distances the whole night. The public granary often opened for those in need, orphans and widows received monthly benefits, a medical clinic gave out free medicines, and the streets were clean and the waterways flowed smoothly.²⁰

Another description, not necessarily of a less wealthy village but by someone brought up outside the *qiaoxiang*, provides an alternative view of a village with *qiaoxiang* links. For a teenager born in Hawai'i and visiting in the 1920s her family's village of Buck Toy (Beitai 北台), Liang Du 良都, stated:

... life was almost unbearable. There was no place to go to, and the swarms of flies during the day and mosquitoes at night made me yearn for dear Honolulu.

There is no transportation. The houses are very near together. Sanitation and sewage system are mere words. Illiteracy is the rule among the older people. Water must be drawn from wells or springs.

How I survived it for nine months is still a mystery to me!²¹

¹⁷ Glick Archive, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i: Notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c.1930).

¹⁸ F. W. Damon, “Rambles in China,” *The Friend* (June 1884): 45. The Revd Frank Damon was an Hawai'iian missionary who worked with Chinese workers on the plantations and made a trip to Zhongshan in 1884. Another missionary who worked in nearby Pearl River Delta *qiaoxiang* reported in the 1870s that “returned emigrants are as thick as blackberries, and every third man on the road makes free to accost the missionary as ‘John’.” Thomas G. Selby, *Chinamen at home* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1900), p.205.

¹⁹ J. Dyer Ball, “The Hōng Shān or Macao dialect,” *China Review* 22 (1896–97): 503, and idem., *The Chinese at home or the man of Tong and his land* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1911), p.35.

²⁰ Ya Da, “Xiaze xiang zhi jin xi” [The past and present of Xiaze village], *Zhongshan yuekan* [Zhongshan Monthly] 2 (1946): 27.

²¹ Glick Archive, Box 2: Bucktoy Villager Families in Hawaii, n.d. [c.1930], p.9.

Family Life

²² Interviews in the villages give this impression. For a particularly clear example see the interview with Liu Lin Yan 劉林然, Long Jui Wan 龍聚環, 4 December 2000. See also Lucie Cheng, "Those who stayed at home: emigration and the women of Taishan," paper presented at a conference entitled "Lucky come Hawaii," East-West Center, Honolulu, July 1988, for similar impressions based on interviews conducted in Taishan county. Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.118–23, also discusses this aspect of families.

²³ Chin Tung Pok, *Paper son: one man's story* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), p.5. Long Du women may not have been as ostentatious but were still readily recognisable.

²⁴ Gan Hong, "Lun wo xiang funü zhizuoshi" [Comments on the habits of the women of my women], *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* [Zhuxiuyuan Monthly] 4 (1920): 8–9.

²⁵ Glick Archive, Card file: notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c.1930).

²⁶ For example, interview with Liu Lin Yan, Long Jui Wan, 4 December 2000.

²⁷ Yung, ARC 2000/62, Box 1, Law Shee Low, 20 October 1988, p.1.

²⁸ Interview with Arthur Gar Lock Chang, Sydney, 7 March 1998, Tape 1, A (14) [the number in parentheses, here and in later references re interviews, refers to minutes on tape].

Within these and other villages of Long Du and Zhongshan it was the family that was at the core of the *qiaoxiang* links and it was within the family that the effects of these links were most powerfully felt. A major feature of the lifestyle of families with overseas connections was the long periods husbands, fathers and sons spent away from the family. Many began their life in the destinations as young men or even boys, only returning after many years to marry, leaving again once their wife became pregnant. Often two or more generations of men would be absent at the same time as sons joined their fathers overseas. The result was that many wives and mothers effectively headed families and children were raised in the absence of their fathers. These women were expected to look after the household, including elderly relatives, raise children and await the return of their husband or at least the regular remittance.²²

"Gold Mountain women" (*Jinshan po* 金山婆), as the wives and mothers of those overseas are referred to in contemporary publications, were easily identified by their appearance and such habits as wearing jewellery, including gold accessories, the latter sometimes made from gold coins sent as remittances from the U.S. Chin Tung Pok vividly recalled when, as a six-year-old boy in a Taishan county village, he was frightened by the sudden appearance of "Gold Mountain wives," "with gold bracelets, gold earrings, and gold rings set with precious stones" that made the farm wives envious.²³ An article written in 1920 in Zhongshan that lamented changes in society generally, described the women of overseas-connected families as recognisable by the fact that they "speak fancy vocabularies, have wasteful and arrogant manners, wear modern clothing and much jewellery, go once every three days to Shekki, every piece of clothing is tailored, every thread and all shoes are bought in the market" ²⁴ According to another male observer, "The wives would live comfortably in the village with the money they receive, performing only the daily household duties and spending the time leisurely."²⁵ While the accounts of the women themselves who lived this lifestyle are similar, boredom rather than leisure is emphasised.²⁶

Wives waiting faithfully, if apprehensively, for their husbands' return or for remittances, was an inherent part of the lifestyle of those with overseas links. This dependence on remittances and responsibility for the family put women under great pressure should anything happen to stop the flow of money. Law Shee Low described how her sister-in-law lived in Shekki with her mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and "slave girls" on \$8 a month and reputedly went "crazy" when her husband failed to send money.²⁷ Arthur Chang remembers the fear in his family when his father failed to send remittances for an extended period and the relief when they began again.²⁸ Li Zi'er, a courier in the 1920s whose job it was to deliver remittance letters for a Gold Mountain shop in Shekki to the villages, has left an account of one wife's reaction to the absence of her husband. He regularly delivered remittance

letters to a woman of the Guo 郭 family whose husband had left the village of Hom Mei (Hengmei 恒美) within months of their marriage, promising to return soon. When Li Zi'er first arrived it was as if he were the "God of Wealth" and smiles, cigarettes and tea greeted him. However, after a few years his delivery of a letter and money was met instead with tears and a refusal to sign the receipt. When Li Zi'er tried to ascertain the nature of the problem, he was told by Mrs Guo that her "heartless man didn't keep his promise and still was not returning home." She was lonely, felt her life was meaningless and even swore excitedly that "seeing money arrive here is like cutting my heart with a knife. It is selling my man for money; I'd rather not have it." This was the reaction whenever Li Zi'er delivered the remittances and he became afraid to visit this house.²⁹

The impression most people had was that such women were well off, especially in times of deprivation. An article that appeared in one of the many magazines published specially for Chinese overseas (*qiaokan* 僑刊) and written after the end of the Japanese occupation describes how the "lucky wife" of a "Gold Mountain Guest" would make special offerings on receiving a "gold letter" and how, if it was generous, they would use it to prepare a family feast. According to the writer such a woman was envied by everyone.³⁰ Peng Qiqing, on the other hand, describes a life of toil for a woman of a family in which the remittances were small and infrequent: collecting wood in the mountains to sell and constant work in the fields and the house.³¹

When men returned it was for relatively short periods (a matter of months, or perhaps two or three years) and they spent their time at leisure, handing out gifts and visiting the families of their overseas companions with messages—this last activity perhaps undertaken in part so as to report on each other's families when they returned overseas. The impression given to the younger generation by these visits was of wealth and ease, impressions that naturally encouraged them to adopt a similar lifestyle. "When others returned from America, their clothes were beautiful and they had money to spend, and they had cookies for the whole village. I envied them and thought going to America would be good."³²

However, life overseas had its dangers and many people only returned posthumously. Records of the repatriation of remains from Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery and elsewhere cannot convey the anguish felt in the villages far off in Guangdong. Young Koon Nuen remembers his uncle's remains being returned from Australia, while the father of Liu Rubin lay dead in San Francisco for three years before his family knew of his fate, since he had last been in the village when his son was but three months old.³³ A regular item in local newspapers was a list of "departed friends" (*xianyou* 先友) whose bones were to be collected. Associations in the *qiaoxiang* also paid "funeral money" to the relatives of those who died overseas.³⁴

Nevertheless, marriage to a "Gold Mountain Fellow" was considered desirable despite the likelihood that one's husband would be away for long periods, if he returned at all. On occasion, wives who had married overseas

²⁹ Li Huari, "Qiao qing ji ku" [An account of overseas Chinese hardships], *Zhongsan qiaokan* [Zhongshan Overseas Magazine] 32 (April 1996): 29.

³⁰ Meng Xui'an, "Zhuxiuyuan de funü" [Women of Zhuxiuyuan], *Zhuxiu yuan yuebao* 19 (1949): 6–7.

³¹ Interviews with Peng Qiqing 彭綺卿, Shekki, 3 and 6 December 2000.

³² Yung, ARC 2000/62; interview with Koon T. Lau, 10 June 1990, p.2.

³³ Young Koon Nuen 楊觀暖, Long Tou Wan, 6 July 2000, Tape B, 55 and Liu Rubin 劉汝彬, Yuen Han, 12 December 2000. The delayed news was the result of the Japanese War.

³⁴ For examples of lists, see *Xiangshan renyan bao*, 15 November 1922, p.8; 2 June 1925, p.8; and 8 November 1924, p.4. For payments, see *ibid*.

³⁵ For example, a dramatic case reported in John H. C. Sleeman, *White China—an Austral-Asian sensation* (Sydney: published by the author, 1933), pp.127–31, and cases of impoverished Peruvian women in McKeown, *Chinese migrant networks*, p.71.

³⁶ “Report on the condition of the Chinese population in Victoria by Rev. W. Young, 1868” in Ian Francis McLaren, *The Chinese in Victoria: official reports and documents* (Victoria: Red Rooster Press, 1985), p.51.

³⁷ Glick Archive, Card file: interview with Mrs. F. W. Damon, n.d. (c.1930).

³⁸ Damon, “Rambles in China,” p.45.

³⁹ Glick Archive, Card file: interview with Mrs. F. W. Damon, n.d. (c.1930).

⁴⁰ Interviews with Chang She May 張雪梅, Long Tou Wan, 6 July 2000, (36–40), and Young Koon Nuen, Long Tou Wan, 6 July 2000, Tape B, 30.

⁴¹ “Report on the condition of the Chinese population in Victoria by Rev. W. Young, 1868,” p.50, and Selby, *Chinamen at home*, p.206, who also mentioned translating a letter from the mother of one such boy.

⁴² Interviews with Billy Gay, 19 March 1998 (210) and William Lee, Letter no.2, 5 June 1999 (4).

⁴³ Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red tape, gold scissors* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press, 1997), p.64.

sojourners, including women of non-Chinese background, were brought to the *qiaoxiang*. There are numerous individual examples of such wives, but as with many other aspects of this history, it is difficult to estimate the numbers involved. The examples that do exist are often associated with problems and the efforts of these women to return home, and such accounts probably give a false or at least a distorted impression.³⁵ As Revd Young reported in the 1860s, cases of “Chinese deserting European wives in China or Hong Kong” were rare, “not so rare, though, [as] the cases of European wives who desert their Chinese husbands.”³⁶ The Hawai’ian consul in the 1880s “had provisions for returning women” married to Chinese men.³⁷ The Revd Damon during his 1884 “rambles” in Zhongshan met at least two Hawai’ian women who, he said, “dressed in Chinese fashion and looked well and healthy,” and whose “husbands were kind to them.”³⁸ Another asked him for help to return to Hawai’i but this was because her husband had died, and although she now got on well with her dead husband’s first wife she longed to return to her home.³⁹ It is not clear what impact such women had upon the *qiaoxiang*. Villagers remember one or two in each village but the relative isolation of most women in their homes meant that little is recalled about these residents.⁴⁰ Such wives were more likely to have lived in Shekki than in the villages, or in Canton or Hong Kong.

It was also common for children born overseas to be brought back to the family in the *qiaoxiang*. Such children, often born of non-Chinese mothers, were brought to the village to be educated and raised by the village wife or mother. Revd Young reported on boys being sent “to China to be educated there” in the 1860s and a missionary working in the Sai-yap (Siyi 四邑) counties mentioned there being numerous boys of “non-Chinese mothers” in the 1870s.⁴¹ Older children were sent back in order to “learn more Chinese customs,” such as Billy Gay to his father’s village of Da Tou 渡頭, and William Lee to Hong Kong in the 1920s.⁴² Accounts of the reception of such outsiders indicate that they caused a stir, though ultimately they were able to get along.⁴³ Not all the children taken to the *qiaoxiang* returned to their foreign birthplaces and presumably, as in the case of those with Chinese forebears in New South Wales and Hawai’i, more people have non-Chinese ancestry than is realised in these villages today.

Contributions

In addition to the direct effects on family life, a significant impact on the *qiaoxiang* resulted from the numerous monetary and material contributions that came with the overseas links. Men had absented themselves from their families and villages in order to provide income and support. The income earned overseas was sent to families and spent on family needs in the *qiaoxiang*. Also brought to the *qiaoxiang* were gifts and practical items either difficult to obtain or tokens of status. Beyond the immediate family, numerous

donations were also made for the benefit of the wider community, particularly for health and education.

Remittances were a major element in the *qiaoxiang*/destination relationship, and the uses they were put to have often been analysed at the provincial level. Findings in general are that the poverty of most recipients meant that the bulk of remittance money was spent on basic family support, and after this, on the building of houses and the purchase of land.⁴⁴ Analysis of clan records, some going back to the sixteenth century, has divided the uses of overseas-earned income into five categories: immediate family support, building or repairing a house, helping brothers to marry, contributions to land purchase by the clan/relatives, and lending money for relatives to start businesses. In later times, investing in enterprises within the *qiaoxiang* was added to this list. Assistance during natural disasters, the building of temples and support for the revolutionary movements of the early twentieth century were also mentioned in these clan records.⁴⁵ These categories do not greatly differ from an analysis of remittance use in Fujian during the twentieth century (1905–37) which was: family support, 58 per cent; house building, 20 per cent; family events such as marriages and funerals, 15 per cent; local public facilities, 3 per cent; and investments and social functions, 2 per cent each.⁴⁶

Sources of information such as newspapers and journals produced for overseas Chinese focus on the public uses of money from abroad and give the impression that most individuals who earned money overseas could afford or were inclined to use their money in this way. The high proportion of remittances devoted to basic family support in the above studies indicates that for most people, the survival of the family was the primary purpose and use of their income. Nevertheless, there were always those who did better than survive and for these, spending that went beyond basic needs, as well as being a public demonstration of their wealth, was on housing.⁴⁷ Evidence for this comes from the earliest gold-seeker period in a report made on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s. The witness (who was probably from Taishan but possibly from Zhongshan), stated: "If I go home with so much money, I can buy so much land and a house, and buy so many wives, four or five wives, or ten or a dozen."⁴⁸ In 1884, Revd Damon reported from Zhongshan that "Many new homes at different points had been built by these returned laborers who had earned enough abroad to give their family thus a decent home. The dwellings are all of one stor[e]y."⁴⁹

Damon does not seem to feel that these houses were any different from other houses and the only feature he felt was due to foreign influence was the addition of an extra window.⁵⁰ By the 1920s, however, the houses of those who had been overseas were more distinctive, with references to "foreign houses" (*yanglou* 洋樓) becoming common. These references appear to have been to any two-or-more-storey non-traditional-style house.⁵¹ In Zhongshan at this time, those returning from overseas seem to have been building two types of houses: either a non-traditional-style two-storey house or a traditional house with a distinctive adjoining 'tower'.⁵² The towers, *diao lou* 碉樓, were designed to provide a family with refuge in case of bandit attack.⁵³

⁴⁴ Xiong Yue, "Lüelun jindai Xiamen de huaqiao huikuan ji qi zuoyong" [A brief discussion of modern Xiamen's remittances and their function], *Huaqiao buaren lishi yan jiu* 4 (1990): 16–21; Lin, "Cong zupu ziliao kan min yue renmin yiju haiwai de huodong," pp.16–23; Feng, "Lüelun jiefangqian Guangdongsheng huaqiao huikuan," pp.31–40; and Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.84–5.

⁴⁵ Lin, "Cong zupu ziliao kan min yue renmin yiju haiwai de huodong," pp.22–3.

⁴⁶ Xiong, "Lüelun jindai Xiamen de huaqiao huikuan ji qi zuoyong," p.19.

⁴⁷ Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.110–11, discusses this.

⁴⁸ "Evidence to the Commission on the Chinese," 15 January 1855, in McLaren, *Chinese in Victoria*, p.13.

⁴⁹ Damon, "Rambles in China," p.45.

⁵⁰ For houses built by Taishan returnees, see Hsu, *Dreaming of gold*, pp.44–5.

⁵¹ Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.110–11, and Elena S. H. Yu, "Overseas remittances in south-eastern China," *China Quarterly* 79 (1979): 341.

⁵² See Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5: houses of those returned from overseas, Zhongshan county, and wealthy returnee houses in Liang Du and Long Du.

⁵³ William Lowe, "Survey of Longtouwan tower houses," paper presented to the Brisbane Chinese Historical Society, July 2002.

⁵⁴ See Figures 3, 4 and 5: wealthy returnee houses in Liang Du and Long Du.

⁵⁵ For examples of such a donation, see Figures 6 and 7. And see Zhongshanshi Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui Bian, ed., *Zhongshanshi zhi* [Zhongshan city records] (Guangdong: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1997), p.1312, for examples of medical-related donations after 1911; K. C. Fok, *Lectures on Hong Kong history: Hong Kong's role in modern Chinese history* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1990), pp.111–14, for examples of Hong Kong-based donations for vaccinations, flood relief, bridges and schools; Clarence E. Glick, *Sojourners and settlers: Chinese migrants in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1980), p.271, gives examples of a hospital and library; *Renyan bao* [Renyan News], 21 August 1922, /OVER

Of course, not all who went overseas and returned would have been able to build such houses or towers, while others would simply have built a new or larger traditional house. In addition to these choices, the wealthy might build a completely foreign-style house or mansion. This the Kwok family did in the Liang Du village of Chu Shu Yuen (Zhuxiuyuan 竹秀園), as did the Ma 馬 family in neighbouring Hom Mei and Joe Wah Gow in Long Tou Wan 龍頭環 village, Long Du.⁵⁴

The building of these family homes had an obvious impact on the *qiao-xiang*, something that can still be seen today. Also of great impact were the many donations made, often in co-operation with others, to projects such as health clinics, schools, streetlights, reading rooms, tea pavilions, community buildings, village watch-towers and bridges.⁵⁵

These donations were not merely symbols but practical contributions designed to improve the living standard of those in the villages. Nevertheless, when those who earned money in the destination countries made donations,

Figure 1

A typical buaqiao house of Zhongshan (photograph by the author, 2000–01)

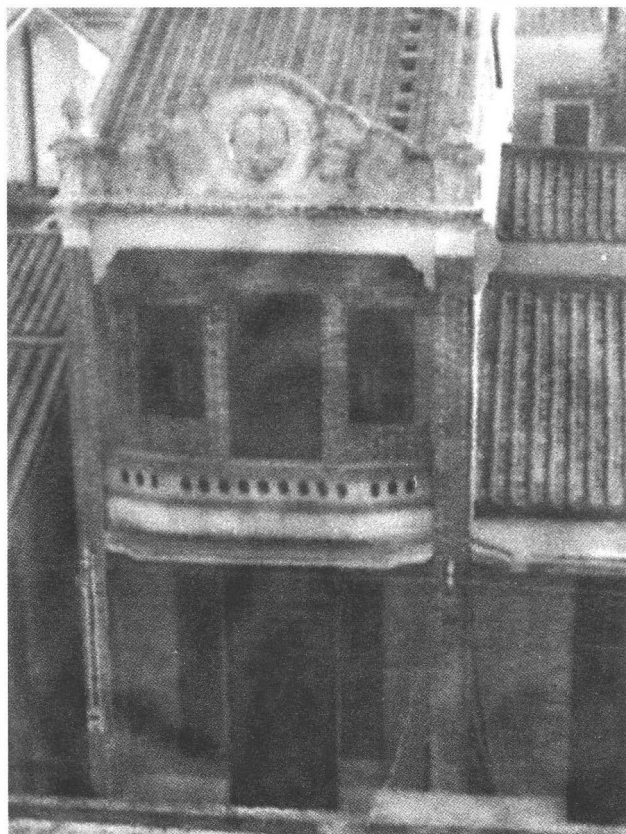


Figure 2

A typical tower house, built as an addition to a more traditional house (photograph by the author, 2000–01)



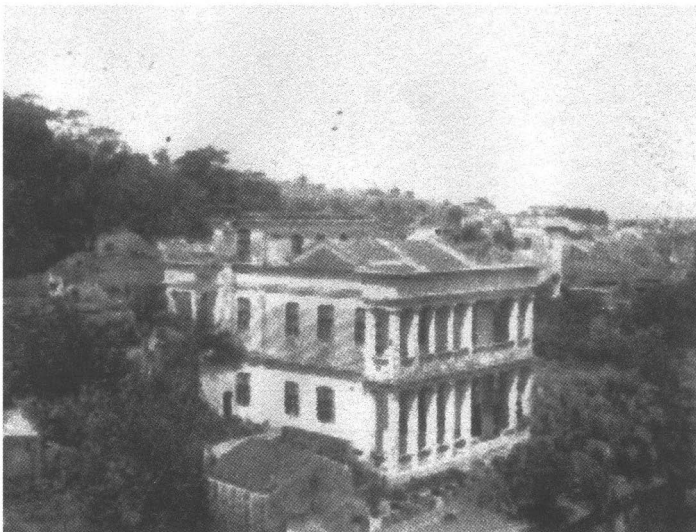
**Figure 3**

One of two Ma family mansions built in their village of Heng Mei (photograph by the author, 2001–01)

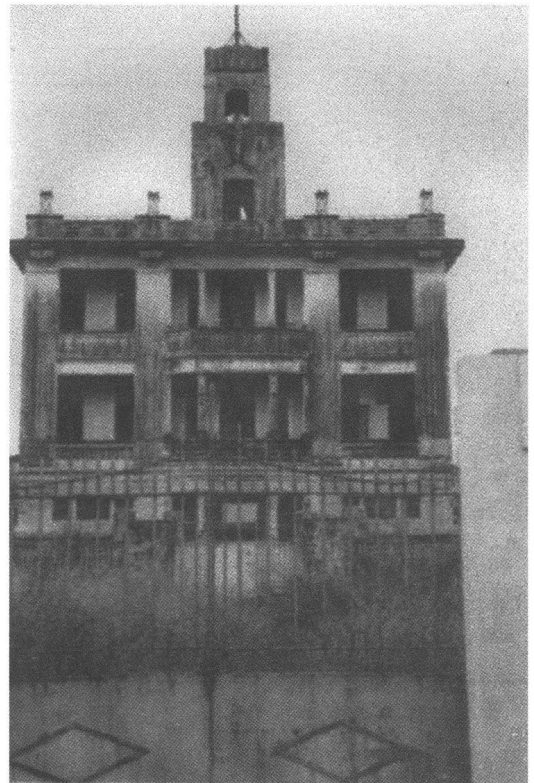
they were not only exercising personal generosity but mirroring a role that had long been played by the traditional gentry of China. According to a study of the pre-Republican gentry: “They

Figure 4

Mansion of the Kwok family in the village of Zbuxuiyuan (photograph courtesy of Victor Gow, c.1970)

**Figure 5**

Mansion of the Kwok family in the village of Zbuxuiyuan (photograph by the author, 2000–01)



/p.5, mentions a reading room; 20 April 1925, p.6, and 12 April 1928, p.5, donors are listed and thanks expressed for donations made; *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* 29 (1923): 7, a stone bridge; and Glick Archive, File 3: notes of Bung Chong Lee, 15 November 1935 and 16 June 1936, for examples in Buck Toy village.

⁵⁶ Chang Chung Li, *The Chinese gentry* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1955), p.51.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.56.

⁵⁸ Glick Archive, File 3: Notes of Bung Chong Lee, 16 June 1936.

⁵⁹ Chen, *Emigrant communities*, pp.175–80, analyses the prevalence of these diseases in the villages of south China, though not the Pearl River Delta specifically.

undertook many tasks such as welfare activities" "Numerous examples in local gazetteers show their very frequent activities in such public works as the repairing of roads, the building of bridges, the dredging of rivers, the construction of dikes, and the promotion of irrigation projects."⁵⁶

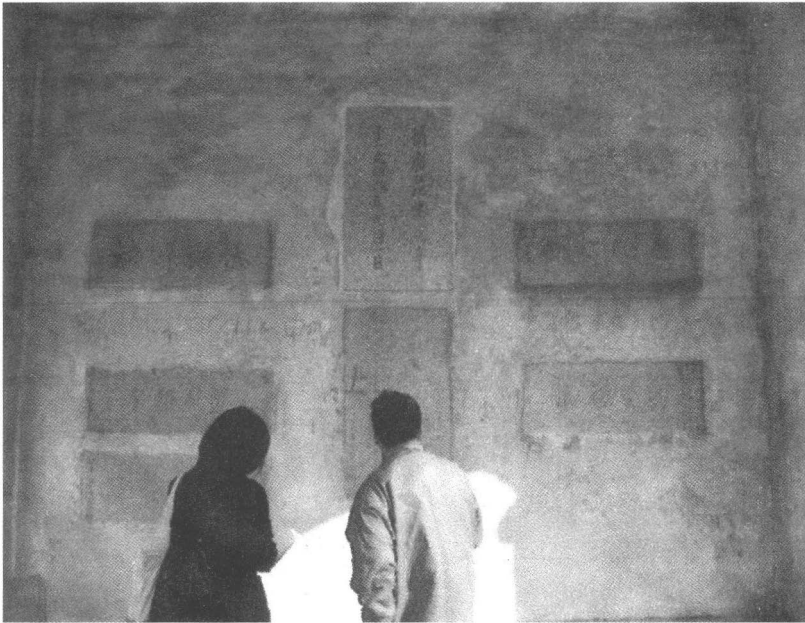
Non-gentry had always participated in the less costly of these community projects, contributing to wooden rather than stone bridges, for example.⁵⁷ It can be assumed, therefore, that those returning with money would have participated in similar projects. There is no evidence, however, that even wealthier returnees performed such tasks before 1911. During the 1920s and 1930s, on the other hand, certainly in Long Du district, there is much evidence of donations from those who had been, or were still, overseas. By the 1930s, for example, Buck Toy village had a reading room, telephone system, watch-tower and streetlights, all the result of its generous Hawai'ian returnees and those still living and working in Hawai'i.⁵⁸

The most common contributions were made in the areas of health and education. The general level of health in the villages of the Pearl River Delta was not high and diseases such as smallpox, cholera and leprosy were common.⁵⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that a favourite target of donations was health care, usually in the form of a village clinic which dispensed free medicines. A part of the Chung Kok village community hall, built in 1913, was used to dispense medicines, and the *Guangrenzeng Yiju* (廣仁贈醫局), the medical clinic of Long Tou Wan village, had both a Chinese herbal and a



Figure 6

Tea pavilion (photograph by the author, Sau Shan 秀山 village, January 2001)

**Figure 7**

Inscriptions of donors and their overseas destinations (photograph by the author; Sau Shan, January 2001)

western-trained doctor in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁰ The “Long Life Association” was formed in order to raise money for this Long Tou Wan clinic, which it did by subscription as well as through donations from individuals.⁶¹ Other health-related donations included a maternity home and the main hospital, both in Shekki.⁶²

By far the most favoured form of donation and one that probably had the greatest impact on the *qiaoxiang* in the long term was for education.⁶³ Education during the Qing period was the means of entering the scholar or gentry class and the various ‘Scholars gates’ scattered around the Pearl River Delta *qiaoxiang* testify to its community importance.⁶⁴ The contribution to the education of those with overseas connections took many forms, ranging from supplying the money to enable more children, including girls, to attend school, to building new schools and incorporating traditional one-teacher village schools into a more ‘modern’ education system. In the years following China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95) the desire to modernise and strengthen China swept the country and the keenness to contribute to education was certainly part of this.⁶⁵ When the traditional examination system was abolished in 1905 to allow for the development of new schools capable of teaching modern subjects, the opportunities for those with an education in these subjects greatly expanded.⁶⁶

While many in China supported schools and education, there is evidence that those with overseas links began doing so earlier, generally focusing their efforts on their own *qiaoxiang*. A study of Taishan county has shown that an imbalance of schools existed between districts within the county depending on their overseas links. This study also showed that the number of schools

⁶⁰ ChungKok village hall, Zhongshan county, Guangzhou: donors’ tablets, 1913; *Xiangshan renyan bao*, 17 November 1924, p.8, and interview with Chang She May, Long Tou Wan, 21 May (57).

⁶¹ *Chongshan renyan bao*, 25 August 1932, p.7.

⁶² *Chinese of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Overseas Penman Club, 1929), p.15, and *Xiangshan renyan bao*, 17 November 1924, p.8.

⁶³ On this aspect in Taishan, see Hsu, *Dreaming of gold*, pp.45–7.

⁶⁴ On education as the means of entry to the scholar class, see Chang, *The Chinese gentry*.

⁶⁵ For an examination of attitudes and support of education elsewhere in Guangdong as well as Fujian province, see Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.149–68.

⁶⁶ Chang, *The Chinese gentry*, pp.207–9.

⁶⁷ Zheng, “Shijiu shiji mo Taishan *Qiaoxiang* de xingcheng ji qi pouxi,” p.38. See also Yu Renqiu, “Chinese American contributions to the educational development of Toisan, 1910–1940,” *Amerasia Journal* 10.1 (1983): 47–72.

⁶⁸ Hsu, *Dreaming of gold*, p.47, figures from the Guangdong Educational Bureau.

⁶⁹ *Zhongshan wenshi* 25: 9, Australian English School, and 1–3: 69, American School.

⁷⁰ Rong Hui, “Zhongshan de you'er jiaoyu” [Education of young children in Zhongshan], *Zhongshan wenshi* 43 (1998): 95–6.

⁷¹ *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* 2 (1920): 18.

⁷² Mrs. Young Oy Bo Lee, interview by Kate Gong, 1987. From China to America (Chinese Historical Society of America), Regional Oral History Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California.

⁷³ Peng Qiqing, Shekki, 6 December 2000, Tape A, (53).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, (54), and *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* 29 (1923): 7.

⁷⁵ Interview, Chang She May, Long Tou Wan, 21 May 2000, (31).

⁷⁶ Interview, Liu Lin Yan, Long Jui Wan, 4 December 2000, (29).

greatly expanded in Taishan from five in 1850 to 47 in 1911.⁶⁷ Educational statistics for 1935 show the percentage of children at school in counties with strong overseas links: Taishan 75 per cent, Zhongshan 36 per cent, Enping 68 per cent, Kaiping 36 per cent, Shunde 56 per cent.⁶⁸ The relatively low proportion of schools in Zhongshan county overall probably reflects a concentration in Long Du district.

While no specific studies have been made of Zhongshan county, Shekki and Long Du certainly had many ‘modern’ schools which were established from at least 1895; both an Australian and an American English school were reported to exist in Shekki in the 1920s,⁶⁹ while the Ma family of Sincere & Co. 先施共公司 and Joe Soong, founder of the National Dollar Stores, supported schools in their home villages of Hom Mei and Long Tou Wan in the 1930s.⁷⁰ In addition to these schools for children, education for adults was also promoted and night schools were often set up by returnees.⁷¹

Another significant area of overseas influence in education was the schooling of females. It was not impossible for girls to receive an education; however, when resources were scarce, boys would have preference, and in any case, the tendency for girls to marry young often cut short their years of schooling. According to Young Oy Bo Lee, girls received three years of schooling and boys five years, at least in her village.⁷² Peng Qiqing was able to go to school as the result of remittances from her brothers in San Francisco, and her three years’ schooling enabled her to learn to write sufficiently to keep in touch with them after she had married and moved to another village.⁷³ With the cost of a year’s education at a village school in the 1920s being around \$8 to \$10, basic education was within the reach of those in the *qiaoxiang* who had access to remittances.⁷⁴

By the 1930s, an increasing alternative to village schools or schools in the county capital were schools and universities in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, or even the United States and Japan. Chang She May was sent to board in Guangzhou from an early age and then proceeded to university in Shanghai to study medicine, as did a number of her brothers in the 1930s.⁷⁵ Liu Lin Yan was sent to middle school in Hong Kong in the 1920s with money her father was earning in Fiji.⁷⁶ The proportion of overseas-connected students in the University of Hong Kong was around 20–30 per cent in the 1920s and 1930s, and this was only those born overseas. Those born in China who also attended the university on money earned by their fathers who were working overseas would also have contributed significantly to the make-up of the student body.

Investment

Developments in the form of houses, bridges, streetlights, medical clinics and schools were all based on the capacity to earn an income overseas. For some, income was also available for investment and this was another area in which a significant impact resulted from the *qiaoxiang* links. Many direct

investments in the *qiaoxiang* were made, often beginning with the purchase of rice land but also including the establishment of banks, stores and other businesses. A range of infrastructure investments was also made, such as for the building of roads, the developing of bus-lines and the setting up of electricity plants. Despite such investments, the main economic impact of the *qiaoxiang* links on the *qiaoxiang* themselves appears to have been the growth of high levels of consumerism and a dependence on outside income.⁷⁷

For these overseas earners and their families, land, after a house, was the most likely object of spending, as “wealth takes form in owning land, for land is the surest means of ownership.”⁷⁸ The exchange value between what could be earned overseas and purchased in south China meant that a relatively poor worker could usually buy sufficient land in his village to make his family well off. At a time when Chinese currency was depreciating in the 1930s, the cost of a *mu* 畝 of medium-grade land, which took eight years to earn in Guangdong, could be earned in only five days in Canada.⁷⁹ This may have been a somewhat extreme situation, and that a *mu* of rice land in the 1930s cost an average worker in Sydney or Hawai’i about a month’s earnings is more probable. The average amount of land that might be owned or that was necessary for an individual or a family to live comfortably is difficult to estimate. Young Koon Nuen’s father, for example, owned 100 *mu* which was rented out at 100 *jin* 斤 of rice per *mu*, while Arthur Chang’s family-owned 50 *mu* and the wealthy family of Joe Wah Gow, 600 *mu*.⁸⁰

The ownership of land was closely linked to social status, as land and its ownership and control was traditionally a source of power and prestige in the villages. However, as commercialisation in the *qiaoxiang* developed in the 1920s and 1930s, those with more education or business acumen did not necessarily buy land but preferred to make investments. So much was this the case that by the 1930s one observer felt that “[o]nly the poor buy land.”⁸¹ Those who owned land did not farm it themselves but rented it to tenants, transforming those who travelled overseas into landlords. Rent could be paid in cash or as a share of the rice crop and then sold on the highly speculative rice market. The handling of the family’s affairs, such as deposits on land, rent collection and the payment of taxes, was usually in the hands of the wife, though selection and negotiation with tenants usually took place through an intermediary. Tenants were also required to pay the rent in advance, thus minimizing difficulties for the landlord.⁸²

The purchase of rice land was a personal or family investment, but for those with larger capital or ambitions, investments were also made in wider *qiaoxiang* projects. Perhaps the most common of these investments were for the building of roads and the improvement of transport generally. Improved transportation and communications would have been important for those used to travelling. Improved transportation was also necessary if other developments were to occur and essential in an economy increasingly based on consumerism.⁸³ Until the late 1920s and early 1930s, the main means of transport in Zhongshan, apart from walking, was motorboat, after which improved roads rapidly transformed the situation. For roads to be built, land needed to be

⁷⁷ Feng Yuan is one researcher who feels that overall, remittances inhibited the local economy and promoted consumerism. Feng Yuan, “Lüelun jiefangqian Guangdongsheng huaqiao huikuan,” p.39.

⁷⁸ Glick Archive, Cardfile: notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c. 1930).

⁷⁹ Chen Han-Seng, *Landlord and peasant in China—a study of the agrarian crisis in south China* (New York: International Publishers, 1936), p.103. A *mu* as a measure of land varied but was approximately one-third of an English acre.

⁸⁰ Interviews, Young Koon Nuen, Long Tou Wan, 6 July 2000, Tape B, (3); Arthur Gar Lock Chang, Sydney, 7 March 1998, Tape 1, A (9); and Victor Gow, Sydney, 30 October 1997 (5).

⁸¹ Glick Archive, Cardfile: notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c. 1930).

⁸² Interview, Young Koon Nuen, Long Tou Wan, 6 July 2000, Tape B, (8).

⁸³ Cheng and Liu in particular make this link between remittances, higher consumption and the need for improved transportation. See Lucie Cheng and Liu Yuzun, “Chinese emigration, the Sunning railway and the development of Toisan,” *Amerasia Journal* 9.1 (1982): 63.

⁸⁴ Mei Shimin, "Qiguan chelu liushinian" [Sixty years of the Macao Road], *Zhongsan wenshi* 43 (1998): 151–61. See also Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.217–24, and Hsu, *Dreaming of gold*, p.48, for road building elsewhere in Guangdong.

⁸⁵ H. G. W. Woodhead, ed., *The China year book 1928* (Tientsin: Tientsin Press, 1928), p.332.

⁸⁶ See Li Gong, "Shiqi jiefangqian de shouche gongsi" [The Shouche Company of Shiqi before Liberation], *Zhongsan wenshi* 1–3 (1962–65), reprinted 1989): 74–6, on how rickshaws were organised.

⁸⁷ Interview, Young Koon Nuen, Long Tou Wan, 20 May 2000; see also, Glick, *Sojourners and settlers*, p.270, on the bus route to Shekki.

⁸⁸ Interview, Young Koon Nuen, Long Tou Wan, 20 May 2000, Tape 1, 10 min., and *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* (Jan. 1925): 43. *Zhongsan wenshi* 41 (1997): 136, claims the first steam power boats were introduced before 1908.

⁸⁹ Directorate General of Posts, *China postal atlas: showing the postal establishments and postal routes in each province* (Nanking: Directorate General of Posts, 1933), Pearl River Delta map.

⁹⁰ Gao Minchuan, "Zhongshanshi huaqiao dashiqi" [Record of major events of Zhongshan City overseas Chinese], *Zhongsan wenshi* 20 (1990): 11, and interview with Norman Lee, Sydney, 25 September 1997, (2).

⁹¹ Miao Wenyue and Gao Huanzhang, "Shiqi yinye de huiyi" [Recollections of the Shiqi silver industry], *Zhongsan wenshi* 1–3 (1962–65, reprinted 1989): 93, and Gao, "Zhongshanshi huaqiao dashiji," p.21.

⁹² Interview, Chang She May, Long Tou Wan, 21 May 2000, (15).

⁹³ Li Guorui, "Zhongshan shangmao yanbian gaishu" [A description of the development of Zhongshan businesses], *Zhongsan wenshi* 30 (1994): 75–80, mentions department stores, pawn-shops, silver-shops, couriers and letter-shops.

⁹⁴ Zhongshanshi Shaxizhen Renmin Zhengfu Bian, ed., *Shaxizhenzhi* [Shaxi town gazetteer] (Zhongshan: Huacheng Chubanshe, 1999), p.205, has a map of Shaxi businesses around 1945 to 1949.

⁹⁵ Xiao Baoyao, "Guiguo huaqiao Yan Di-guang beihai shimo" [The tale of Yan /over

purchased and this was done through private companies set up by overseas returnees. As these were often toll roads they also caused many disputes.⁸⁴ The main road from Shekki to Macao was an investment by such returnees, sixty miles of this road being constructed by 1928.⁸⁵ These roads allowed the introduction of the rickshaw, which soon replaced the sedan chair.⁸⁶ More significant changes in transport followed, especially when bus-lines began operating along the new roads.⁸⁷ Buses replaced the Long Du boats to Shekki in 1930, cutting the travel time down from two or three hours to twenty minutes, although boat transport from the villages of nearby Liang Du seems to have continued.⁸⁸ By 1933, the villages of Long Du were receiving a daily postal service delivered by "motor" along these roads.⁸⁹

After roads, a common form of investment was in shops and stores. Large enterprises such as Wing On 永安 and Sincere, founded in Hong Kong by people who had prospered overseas, are often mentioned. Less known is the fact that both these companies also operated branches of their department stores in Shekki, near the *qiaoxiang* of their founders. In addition to these branches of major Hong Kong stores, others also opened a range of smaller businesses in the *qiaoxiang*. Very often these were branches of stores based overseas and designed to facilitate the operation of remittance services and trade between the destination countries and the *qiaoxiang*. Kwong War Chong of Sydney, for example, established branches in both Hong Kong and Shekki.⁹⁰ In 1924, two "travellers," returned from Sydney, established the Xiangshan 香山 Bank in Shekki.⁹¹ Also in the 1920s, Chang She May's father used capital he had earned in Hong Kong, combined with that earned by his father in Sydney, to establish a department store in Shekki.⁹² These businesses aimed to meet the demand created by the cash-rich families of those who regularly sent remittances for consumer goods. During the 1930s, the main streets of Shekki were lined with pawn-shops, gold-shops and other businesses associated with the need to exchange foreign currency.⁹³ Shaxi, the market town of Long Du in the late 1940s, was similarly lined with pawn- and gold-shops.⁹⁴

Investments in such consumption-oriented enterprises as banks, department stores, pawn- and gold-shops were designed to serve the remittance-rich families of the *qiaoxiang*. However, other investments were intended to provide infrastructure for production. Electricity, essential for modern industry as well as domestic convenience, led to electric companies being formed as early as 1911.⁹⁵ Other industries established in Zhongshan by returnees produced bricks, shoes, glass and included numerous rice-processing companies.⁹⁶ In 1924, Australian returnees collected money for a new port designed to bypass dependence on Portuguese-controlled Macao.⁹⁷ Wong Hing Chow, an Hawaiian returnee, also set up a rice-mill in Shekki and invested in shipping companies in the 1920s.⁹⁸

Previous research has tended to focus on national projects and large enterprises in Hong Kong and Shanghai, in the process neglecting the matter of investment in the *qiaoxiang* or emphasising the failure of such investments,

especially following the Republican revolution of 1911.⁹⁹ The large enterprises established in Hong Kong or Shanghai by the returnees from Australia who founded Wing On, Sincere & Co. and Sun Sun & Co. 新新公司 were more successful and therefore figure more prominently in the research.¹⁰⁰ Neglected are small-scale investments and co-operative projects primarily intended to improve the *qiaoxiang*. The flow of overseas capital into the *qiaoxiang* never ceased, low returns or even losses being compensated for by the desire to bring benefit to and earn status in the *qiaoxiang*.¹⁰¹

Many investments in the *qiaoxiang* failed, corruption being a major reason. "Too many people get free lights," was how one observer put it.¹⁰² Corruption was part of a broader range of social and political issues in China of which Lee Yip Fay has left us a glimpse. Lee Yip Fay returned to Sydney in 1928 after trying to "float The Chosen Co. of Hongkong, Canton and Shakee [Shekki], General Importers and Exporters" of which he was Manager of the "Shakee Branch." As Lee Yip Fay reported it, "our Chinese internal trouble caused us no end of worry and suffered heavy losses and was continually harassed in business and my ambitions were scattered, so much so, ... it amounted to an ordeal" ¹⁰³

Control

One consequence of the many investment failures in the *qiaoxiang* was that without the development of their own productive industries the *qiaoxiang* remained dependent upon overseas. Without its own industries, a *qiaoxiang* like Long Du needed to renew continuously its links with the overseas destinations in each generation. For this to occur, the status and security of families within the *qiaoxiang* needed to be assured.

Evidence of local affairs from the late nineteenth century would suggest that *qiaoxiang* society was more integrated and less dependent upon overseas connections, or certainly less conscious of the destinations as the source of wealth or benefits. Various charity organisations and other public projects do not mention the involvement of returnees. The officials or gentry were in place and the major landowners and officials who dominated the villages in late pre-Republican China knew how to keep prestige to themselves. The earliest evidence of the involvement in the *qiaoxiang* of overseas relatives concerns donations for the repair or re-building of Ancestor Halls. The 1905 education reforms and the 1911 Revolution meant that barriers between formal titleholders and those with money collapsed completely, resulting in what has been described as a fusion of the old gentry and the merchant classes.¹⁰⁴ Those overseas, including non-merchants, would have been part of this class shift, at least at the village level. Through buying land and performing tasks previously undertaken by officials and the gentry class, the returnees would have added to their and their families' status and influence. This rise in status was clearly observed: "The returned emigrant because of bringing home of wealth and new things and ideas rise out of the position of peasants to

Diguang, a returned overseas Chinese] (*Zhongshan wenshi* 1-3 [1962-65, 1989] 66), states that a United States returnee in 1911 set up the first electricity company in Shekki, charging \$1.80c per globe per month.

⁹⁶ Lin Jinzhi and Zhuang Weiji, *Jindai huaqiao touzi guonei qiye shi ziliao xuanji—Guangdong juan* [Collection of historical material of modern overseas Chinese investment in national enterprise—Guangdong] (Fujian: Renmin Chubanshe, 1989), p.92.

⁹⁷ *Guangzhou minguo yuebao* [Guangzhou Republican Daily], 25 September 1924, p.5.

⁹⁸ *Chinese of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Overseas Penman Club, 1929), p.15.

⁹⁹ Michael Godley, "South China's railroad offensive 1904-8," *The Mandarin-capitalists from Nanyang: overseas Chinese enterprise in the modernization of China, 1893-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.149-72; Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.20-1, quotes a report on the increase in investment by those overseas in their home districts after 1911 and the general failure of these investments due to "disturbances," and pp.75-6, on the preference for keeping capital elsewhere due to China's instability; and see also Gao, "Zhongshan shi huaqiao dashiqi," pp.13-14.

¹⁰⁰ C. F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain: the Chinese in Australia, 1901-1921* (Richmond, South Australia: Raphael Arts, 1977), pp.56-8; Fitzgerald, *Red tape, gold scissors*, p.48; Tan Renjie, "Guo Shun zhuanlie" [A brief biography of Guo Shun], *Zhongshan wenshi* 24 (1992): 88-9, on raising capital in Australia for Wing On Co. textile mill expansion in Shanghai around 1920 and Wing On Life Assurance Company, *The Wing On Life Assurance Company Limited Golden Jubilee Book, 1925-75* (Hong Kong, 1975, n.p.); and Yen Ching-hwang, "Wing On and the Kwok brothers," in Kerrie L. MacPherson, *Asian department stores* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), pp.47-89.

¹⁰¹ Michael Godley, "The Nanyang connection: overseas Chinese enterprise in the economic development of South China 1900-1915," in Leo Douw, Cen Huang and Michael Godley, *Qiaoxiang ties: interdisciplinary approaches to 'cultural capitalism' in South China* (London: Kegan Paul, 1999), pp.113-18.

¹⁰² Glick Archive, File 3: interview notes with James Leong, n.d. (c. 1930s). Similar demands for free service and other forms of /OVER

/corruption helped to bankrupt the Taishan railway. See Cheng, "Chinese emigration, the Sunning railway and the development of Toisan," pp.68–9.

¹⁰³ Australian Archives (NSW), SP42/1; C31/135, Lee Yip Fay, letter, Lee Yip Fay to Collector of Customs, 15 May 1928.

¹⁰⁴ Marie-Claire Bergère, "The role of the bourgeoisie," in Mary Clabaugh Wright, ed., *China in revolution: the first phase 1900–1913* (1968; reprint ed., London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp.229–95.

¹⁰⁵ Glick Archive, Card file: Notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c.1930).

¹⁰⁶ Liu Tian Zhuo, "Zhi haiwai de qiaobao" [To overseas Chinese compatriots], *Xijiao yue kan* [Xijiao Monthly] (July 1948): 3–6.

¹⁰⁷ "Cong Chongtou xiulu shi shuoqi" [Let's start by talking about Chung Tou road repairs], *Chongtou yuekan* [Chung Tou Monthly] 10 (1 May 1949): 1.

¹⁰⁸ Glick Archive, File 3: Notes of Bung Chong Lee, 15 November 1935.

¹⁰⁹ Paul C. P. Siu, *The Chinese Laundryman: A study in Social Isolation* (New York: New York University Press, 1987, pp.164–75, discusses this influence from afar. Also Elizabeth Sinn, "Cohesion and fragmentation: a county-level perspective on Chinese transnationalism in the 1940s," in Douw, *Qiaoxiang ties*, pp.67–86.

¹¹⁰ Glick Archive, File 3: Notes on Chinese Chamber of Commerce Annual Report, 1930, p.6.

¹¹¹ Glick Archive, Card file: Notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c.1930).

¹¹² Interview, Young Koon Nuen, Long Tou Wan, 6 July 2000, Tape B, (34).

become a respected class and their importance and influence have elevated the position of those that depend on them."¹⁰⁵

This is not to say that the rise in the position of the overseas-connected went unchallenged or that the old gentry had simply disappeared. In a reference to relations in the Long Du village of Xijiao 谿角, the "gentry class" is described as despising returnees in the period before the Japanese invasion, a situation the author of this article feels greatly improved in the post-war period when reliance on the aid of returnees in rebuilding was high.¹⁰⁶ A similar example comes from an article about Chung Tou (Chongtou 涌頭) village in which the dominance of gentry in the way overseas donations were used in the pre-war period is contrasted with the post-war situation.¹⁰⁷

In order to influence the *qiaoxiang* and avoid being exploited it was necessary for those with destination connections to gain positions of influence. Spending, donating, investing, and the potential to keep doing so put those with overseas links in a powerful position. By the 1920s and 1930s, the returnees and the families of those still in the destinations were prominent in the Pearl River Delta *qiaoxiang*. At the village level at least, their prestige and wealth could give them the status of "village elders."¹⁰⁸ Their advice and support (and money) was sought and some were willing and able to influence politics, in many cases while still living overseas.¹⁰⁹ In 1930, for example, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Honolulu sent a telegram to the Commissioner of the Interior of Guangdong province requesting him to dispatch soldiers to Zhongshan for the protection of the inhabitants of Hu Chung village and to prevent future raids on it.¹¹⁰

For the majority, involvement in politics even at the county level was probably rare. As B. C. Lee put it, "The emigrants are conscious of what is going on in the village and [are] more interested in village affairs than in local politics."¹¹¹ One means by which this interest was maintained was through *qiaokan*, magazines specifically published for those living overseas. By the 1920s, *qiaokan* were being produced at the village level and distributed to the destinations to inform those overseas about goings-on in the *qiaoxiang* and to encourage donations. These *qiaokan* were not organised by a separate group but were run by those who had returned to the village. They were the means by which those both in the destinations and in the *qiaoxiang* kept themselves informed and solicited money for projects, in the process reinforcing their position within the *qiaoxiang*.

However, with corruption common, more involvement was needed than could be solicited through *qiaokan* alone. It was also necessary for those donating money to become involved in the management of projects such as schools if they wished to ensure that their aims were achieved. Thus many returnees participated in education committees. The United States' resident and Long Tou Wan village-born Joe Soong became the principal of the Long Tou Wan school to which he donated.¹¹² People were also able to use their role as benefactors to acquire official positions. Young Kwong Tat managed

a Honolulu store until 1921, when he retired to the village and became the magistrate of Zhongshan the following year.¹¹³ Lau On was able to make use of his Kuomintang and “Lung Doo” society connections to become what the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* described as the “sheriff” of Long Du district in the 1920s.¹¹⁴

Such influence was of course part of the same system that also made profitable investments so difficult. James Leong, who was born in Hawai‘i, felt that “no matter what they are prepared for in the States, when they go back to China, they get into government jobs. In Shekki there are many in government jobs and they follow the old system of squeeze.”¹¹⁵ The Young Kwong Tat who became the Zhongshan magistrate in 1922 was also a Buck Toy man. Those of Buck Toy origin in Hawai‘i suggested to their fellows in the *qiaoxiang* that they should naturally approach this magistrate in order to get their roads repaired.¹¹⁶

Negative Impacts

Despite a rise in status and increased official heft, the impact on the *qiaoxiang* of an individual’s overseas connections could also have negative consequences. Some of these were the result of dependence on outside income, while others were due to the political and social circumstances of which the *qiaoxiang* were a part. The threat from bandits, family breakdowns, a lack of opportunity for the younger generation and a general vulnerability due to dependence on outside income, were some of the negative issues with which those with overseas links had to contend.

The most obvious danger for returnees and their families was the threat posed by bandits. For those without access to land or driven into poverty, a common alternative was banditry and kidnapping. While bandits had always been part of Pearl River Delta life, they were an increasing threat in the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹⁷ Naturally people with money or access to money were targeted. Lee Man Duck, a vegetable shop owner in Sydney, was kidnapped while visiting his Liang Du village in the 1920s and only released after paying a ransom.¹¹⁸ In 1930, bandits entered a house one evening and kidnapped Wong Chock Tong, the son of the president of the Liberty Bank in Honolulu, while he was visiting his mother and grandmother in Long Tou Wan. A ransom of \$4,000 Mex. had already been paid and \$40,000 more demanded when he was able to escape and return to Hawai‘i.¹¹⁹ Buck Toy village did not have a kidnapping until the 1930s, when the grandson of Y. Akin, a Buck Toy millionaire, was kidnapped at the cost of a ransom of about \$10,000 Mex.¹²⁰

A result of this bandit threat was the building of “gun towers” or watch-towers in the villages and the creation of local patrols for village protection. Those with overseas links were expected and anxious to contribute to the building of such defences.¹²¹ Buck Toy village was only attacked two or three times in its history as it was surrounded by other villages, making it not easy

¹¹³ Glick Archive, Card file: Notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c.1930).

¹¹⁴ *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 26 May 1930, p.5.

¹¹⁵ Glick Archive, File 3: interview notes with James Leong, n.d. (c.1930s).

¹¹⁶ Glick Archive, Card file: Notes of B. C. Lee, n.d. (c.1930).

¹¹⁷ For examples of pre-Republican bandit activity in the Pearl River Delta, see *Donghua bao* [Tung Wah News], 6 July 1898, p.2; 24 August 1898, p.3; 21 January 1899, p.2; 20 September 1899, p.3; 16 June 1900, p.2 and 6 February 1901, p.3. Zhongshan was not particularly prone to such attacks and according to one list of robberies by county, perhaps on the lower end of the scale, there were only 10 in Zhongshan, compared to 235 in Nanhai (which included Guangzhou) and 57 in Xinhui, *Donghua bao*, 16 June 1900, p.3.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Cliff Lee, Sydney, 28 September 1997 and 12 April 1999.

¹¹⁹ *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 29 September 1930, p.1, and Glick Archive, File 3: Interview notes with Lee Kau, 8 October 1931. Mex. = Mexican or silver dollars, the major currency of the Pearl River Delta at this time.

¹²⁰ Glick Archive, File 3: Notes of Bung-Chong Lee, 15 November 1935. Also Liang Ya ozhong, “‘Daminghuo’ he qunzhong de fangfei ziwai” [‘Night attacks’ and group self defence against bandits], *Zhongshan wenshi* 31 (1994): 190–1. On bandits in Taishan, see Hsu, *Dreaming of gold*, pp.50–1.

¹²¹ Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.197–201, gives examples of public safety measures in “emigrant” communities.

¹²² Glick Archive, File 3: Notes of Bung Chong Lee, 15 November 1935 and 16 June 1936.

¹²³ *Renyan bao*, 3 June 1925, p.7, and *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* (Jan. 1923): 43.

¹²⁴ *Donghua bao*, 14 December 1898, p.2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1898, p.2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 August 1898, p.3.

¹²⁷ *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* 37 (Oct. 1924): 69.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, (October 1924): p.69.

¹²⁹ Interview with Victor Gow, Sydney, 14 April 1999.

¹³⁰ *Datong bao* [Datong News], 8 August 1927, p.8.

for robbers to get in without raising an alarm. Nevertheless, by the 1920s, the villagers of Buck Toy were soliciting donations from their Hawai'ian fellows to build watch-towers and support a night patrol.¹²² Despite such protections the threat continued. In 1925, bandits burnt down three tower houses in a Zhongshan village and in 1923 their repeated attacks on passenger boats threatened to close these as a means of transport between Chu Shu Yuen village and Shekki.¹²³

It was not always a case of helpless villagers waiting in fear to be attacked. Guns were apparently plentiful by at least the end of the nineteenth century, as when in 1898 bandits killed the Lius, husband and wife, despite their both being armed.¹²⁴ Guns were also used by villagers later that same year to drive off bandits after they made a second attack in two nights on the village of Bailigang 白歷港 in Zhongshan.¹²⁵ Villagers could call on soldiers for help, and when these came would join with them to storm the bandits in their mountain hideouts.¹²⁶ When bandits attacked Hom Mei village in 1924, the sounds of gun shots, sirens, warning bells and cannon from surrounding villages caused the bandits, according to a later investigation, to fear that their retreat would be cut off and abandon their onslaught.¹²⁷

Less directly violent means of getting money included "black-ticket fees" referring to money demanded by local "bosses" which, if not paid, led to a "black-ticket" being issued that would prevent crops being either sown or harvested. An account in 1924 mentions that at harvest time bandits sent stand-over letters to farmers. Various bandit chiefs asked for amounts per *mu* ranging from \$0.65c to a silver dollar, to be paid by a certain deadline before the harvest could begin.¹²⁸ An uncle of Victor Gow was seemingly not prepared to pay a black-ticket fee or knew that payment was no guarantee of safety. This uncle had a "station" or *wai gee* 圍基 in the 1930s, an area about the size of two football fields for threshing rice and surrounded by a moat and wall. The entrance had a swivel bridge and four breech-loading cannon, four to five feet long, at each corner. The station was about an hour's walk from the village and was often attacked by bandits. Victor himself carried a German Luger for protection.¹²⁹

From the point of view of those with overseas links, bandits were an outside force they could only protect themselves from as best they could. Family was quite another thing, and despite the strong family-oriented culture of the *qiaoxiang*, it was not unknown for the bonds of family to disintegrate under the impact of their lifestyle. It is impossible to estimate the proportion of families that 'broke down', but local Zhongshan newspapers, though not the *qiaokan*, carried numerous reports of family disputes and instances of total family disintegration. These reports include not only news items but letters and notices placed in the papers by family disputants themselves, such as when a Long Du man felt he needed to explain why he had used the police to claim money from his half-brother. The money had been lent to his brother to go to San Francisco, who on his return had repaid nothing.¹³⁰

Many family disputes involved the sale or leasing of land against the

wishes of other family members. A wife selling her husband's land in order to finance a love affair or a son needing to pay debts might begin such a dispute. More usually the problem seems to have been a lack, or a perceived lack, of support for a widow by a son or perhaps a daughter-in-law living overseas and not sending the necessary remittances.¹³¹ To prevent unauthorised sales or mortgages, newspaper items would be posted warning readers not to accept certain land deeds as guarantees for loans and denying any responsibility should this happen.¹³²

If a wife taking a lover while her husband was overseas caused trouble, a husband returning with a wife from overseas could also result in problems.¹³³ Others returned to find that their wife preferred the remittances they could no longer send to their own presence.¹³⁴ In at least two instances, sons of returnees became so enraged or were made so desperate by a father seeking to limit their spending that the fathers were shot.¹³⁵ These are dramatic stories suitable for newspapers and are not evidence that all or even most families with overseas links suffered this kind of disruption. However, they are a reminder of the pressures of such lifestyles and that diversity at the family and other levels needs to be acknowledged.

Many of these family disputes were the result of the younger generation's lack of opportunities. Joe Wah Gow had moved his entire family back to the village from Australia in 1929. Despite this he also felt there was "no future for the boys in the village" and had made plans at the same time for his sons to return to Australia and take up business.¹³⁶ A consumer economy dependent on outside income was not one that offered much scope to young people. Growing up in the villages and relying on remittances, the involvement of the sons of those overseas in opium, gambling and prostitution was often referred to.¹³⁷ Opium and gambling houses were therefore a great concern and those in the destinations were very supportive of efforts to drive out these practices, "especially by outsiders." During the 1930s in Buck Toy village, for example, three opium houses were taken over and closed, a move closely monitored and supported by the village's members in Hawai'i.¹³⁸

Part of the problem for the sons of those earning overseas money was that once educated it was not considered possible to take up a labouring occupation. For an educated person to work in the fields was "a disgrace in which his family would share."¹³⁹ Educated sons therefore found themselves in a similar position to those gentry who, while educated, had few means of support. In pre-Republican times the result was that "a sizeable proportion of gentry were deriving an income from their work in the teaching profession."¹⁴⁰ As in other areas, those with overseas links found themselves in a similar situation to the old gentry. Teaching was a low-paid occupation in the *qiaoxiang*, and the incentive to go overseas to earn an income continued to be strong in each generation.

¹³¹ *Xiangshan renyan bao*, 17 November 1924, p.8; *Zhongsban renyanbao* [Zhongshan Renyan News], 26 March 1926, p.6.

¹³² *Xiangshan renyan bao*, 17 November 1924, p.7; *Renyan bao*, 30 September 1925, p.6; *Datong bao*, 15 February 1927, p.4; and *Zhongsbandagong ribao* [Zhongshan Public Daily], 1 November 1932, p.6.

¹³³ For example, *Xiangshan renyan bao*, 21 August 1922, p.5; *Zhongsban dagong ribao*, 23 November 1931, p.7; *Zhongsban renyan bao*, 25 May 1932, p.4.

¹³⁴ *Zhongsban dagong ribao*, 23 November 1931, p.7.

¹³⁵ *Zhongsban renyan bao*, 21 August 1933, p.5, and *Zhongsban dagong ribao*, 28 July 1934, p.4.

¹³⁶ Interview with Victor Gow, Sydney, 30 October 1997. The plans did not eventuate.

¹³⁷ Chen Ta, *Emigrant communities*, pp.187–92.

¹³⁸ Glick Archive, File 3: Notes of Bung Chong Lee, 16 June 1936.

¹³⁹ Fei Hsiao-tung, *China's gentry* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.136.

¹⁴⁰ Chang, *The Chinese gentry*, p.217.

Occupation and Revolution

¹⁴¹ Helen F. Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China—Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989); “Subverting lineage power: local bosses and territorial control in the 1940s,” in David Faure and Helen Siu, *Down to earth. The territorial bond in south China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp.196–7, and *Zhongsan yuekan* 5 (1946): 27. For an account of these bosses and the political impact of the Japanese occupation in the neighbouring county of Xinhui, see Siu, *Agents and victims*, pp.88–97.

¹⁴² He Dazhang, “Zhongshan xian dili zhixin renshi,” p.28. For similar accounts of Taishan, see Hsu, *Dreaming of gold*, pp.179–80, and Cheng, “Those who stayed at home,” p.12, where an estimated 200,000 are said to have died in this period.

¹⁴³ Lew Violet Mebig Chan, “A sentimental journey into the past of the Chan and Jong families,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 28 (1988): 94–184.

¹⁴⁴ *Zhongsan yuekan* 2 (1946): 22; 3 (1946): 27–9; and 6 (1946): 30–3.

¹⁴⁵ Ya Da, “Xiaze xiang zhi jin xi,” p.27.

The dependence of the *qiaoxiang* on outside income made them vulnerable to disruptions to that income. Barriers raised to travel to destinations such as the United States and Australia by restrictive laws in the years after 1880 was one threat successfully overcome by some. The Depression of the 1930s posed another threat when many lost their source of income, but again, many would survive this also. Economic recovery in the mid-1930s was shattered by the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, which led to the occupation of Canton City (Guangzhou) and parts of Guangdong province in 1938. Between 1938 and 1941, loose Japanese control over Guangdong resulted in the rise of local “bosses” as political control of the *qiaoxiang* became divided between Japanese, Nationalists, Communists and bandits.¹⁴¹ Despite this worsening political situation, however, remittances continued to flow and people continued to travel back and forth after 1938.

The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong from the end of 1941 until 1945 dealt a devastating blow to the *qiaoxiang* link and to the *qiaoxiang* themselves. Remittances and visits ceased almost completely, while food shortages grew as imports dried up. The Japanese drove those who had previously taken refuge in Hong Kong back to their villages. The result, for many, was starvation. One account estimates that the population of Zhongshan county fell during the occupation from 1.1 million to 880,000 or less, losses which included those who fled to other areas as well as those who died.¹⁴² Begging for food by those whose remittances were cut off is said to have become common.¹⁴³ Tables published in *qiaokan* after 1945 list the results of the years of occupation and starvation, with whole families wiped out or left with only one or two members.¹⁴⁴

The article referred to earlier that described Ha Zak village before the war (see n.20) also gives a picture of the impact of the Japanese occupation on this village dominated by its overseas connections. According to this account, with the Japanese came a rapid decline and “hardship replaced happiness.” Gambling of many kinds took place, opium was traded and smoked in public as Ha Zak became a centre for such activities, and security disappeared once the Japanese moved in. Prices rose, and it was not rare to see people die from starvation. Most families could no longer receive money from overseas, and those who could turned to farming, raising pigs or working as peddlers to support themselves. People without skills sold their property and houses merely to survive a little while longer. Between 1939 and 1945 the population fell by over a thousand (from 3,700) and over one hundred houses were torn down. The worst fate befell the school. Equipment gradually disappeared and the students became fewer and fewer. In 1944, hundreds of Japanese soldiers came and used the school as a base. It was closed as classrooms were converted into kitchens and bathrooms, and furniture used to make fires in which 40,000 books were also reduced to ashes.¹⁴⁵

However, as with all accounts of the *qiaoxiang*, diversity must be consid-

ered and even during this period of devastation it cannot be assumed that all villages or families were affected in the same way. An account from Shaxi, a village just a few kilometres to the west of Ha Zak but on the “border” between Japanese and non-Japanese-controlled areas during the occupation, gives a very different picture. Shaxi became a thriving centre of commercial business as people avoided occupied Shekki. The County Middle School was moved to Shaxi, along with other institutions. Shaxi also had to suffer the presence of “*datian'er*” 大天二 or local bosses, who became dominant in this period, but overall does not seem to have suffered as much as Ha Zak.¹⁴⁶

The most significant factor during this time was probably the degree of pre-war dependence on remittances. According to Liu Tianzhuo 劉天焯, Xijiao village survived due to the good government of the village which regularly supported the poor by opening its grain stores. The village was close to rice fields and had many farmers, unlike other villages that were more reliant on remittances. During the difficult period of the occupation, therefore, Xijiao could operate relatively normally. In fact, during this time traders from other places came, bringing prosperity as grain and mixed business did well. There were many shops operating during 1943–44 and the whole village was using electric lighting.¹⁴⁷

There were those who survived the occupation intact and even prospered. For most families, however, dependent on remittances as they were, the impact of this period was devastating. Those who had been prevented from visiting the *qiaoxiang* by the Japanese occupation rushed to do so after 1945. Many had not had any news of their families for years and the revived *qiaokan* began publishing tables that listed families and their deaths or survivals.¹⁴⁸ Many returned to find only loss, such as one returnee from Australia who found his whole family dead except for one son.¹⁴⁹ Another father discovered that in desperation his wife had sold their son in 1943. The father wrote that he would send no more remittances until the son had been found.¹⁵⁰

The *Chung Tou Monthly* (Chongtou yuekan 涌頭月刊) in 1948 reported on the number of its members who had returned to the village and those that were still in the “travellers’ places of residence.” Of its 329 “travellers,” 55, or around 16 per cent, were in the village at the time.¹⁵¹ They had returned to a village and *qiaoxiang* more plagued by bandits and dependent on donations than ever before.¹⁵² But while things may have looked bad to the returnees they had in fact improved for those who had remained in the *qiaoxiang* during the Japanese occupation. For the recorder of Ha Zak’s fortunes, once the Japanese soldiers went to Shekki to surrender, the village began to recover, gambling places disappeared and village people regained their happiness. With support from those with overseas earnings it was possible to provide free grain for the poor three times: in December 1945, 2,532 people, or nearly the entire population, received grain; in April 1946, 1,350 people, and again in July, 1,063 people received free grain. Pupils at the school had by this time increased to 270 and many of the societies were functioning again. The writer felt that with the support of all, Ha Zak would

¹⁴⁶ Jin Guo, “Yidu fanrong de Shaxixu” [Once bustling Shaxi market], *Zhongsban yuekan* (1946): 27.

¹⁴⁷ Liu, “Zhi haiwai ge qiaobao,” p.3.

¹⁴⁸ Foreexample, *Zhongsban yuekan* 3 (1946): 27–9; and 6 (1946): 30–3.

¹⁴⁹ *Gu Jiao yuekan* [Gu Jiao Monthly] (June 1948): 22.

¹⁵⁰ *Zhongsban minguo yuebao*, 23 February 1947, p.3.

¹⁵¹ *Chongtou yuekan* [Chung Tou Monthly] 2 (Sept. 1948): 3.

¹⁵² On bandits, see *Zhuxiuyuan yuebao* 16 (1948): 28 (“Bandits demand \$500”); *Gu Jiao yuekan* [Gu Jiao Monthly] (Jan./Feb. 1948): 40 (“Bandit demands and restoration of water transport”); and *Zhongsban minguo yuebao*, 26 February 1947, p.3 (“Returnees from Cuba cheated”).

¹⁵³ Ya Da, "Xiaze xiang zhi jin xi," p.27.

¹⁵⁴ On donations, see *Xu Jiaoyuebao* [Xujiao Monthly] 5 (1946): 29–36 ("Report on spending of donations"); *Long Du qiaokan* [Long Du Overseas Chinese News] 2/3 (April 1947): 12; and *Zhongshan yuekan* 1 (1947): 44 (on donations from Hawai'i).

¹⁵⁵ Lowe, "Survey of Longtouwán tower houses."

¹⁵⁶ Liu, "Zhi haiwai ge qiaobao," p.3.

again be a place to be praised.¹⁵³

Rebuilding was also the aim for many who returned in the late 1940s. Donations flooded in to assist with projects for roads, bridges, fire equipment, libraries and hospitals.¹⁵⁴ Returnees, as well, made efforts to provide for the safety of their families. Land was bought and more towers were built during the years after 1945 than had been built in some villages before the war.¹⁵⁵ Due to the hardship suffered during the period when remittances were stopped, many bought land as a way of ensuring support for the family should such a situation recur.¹⁵⁶ For some, the situation after 1945 was one of recovery with many intending to continue life as before, while others chose to take their families to their overseas homes. It was not the case at this time of refugees seeking to escape the threat of a Communist government, a threat most were unaware of or did not consider an immediate possibility.

The continued strength of *qiaoxiang* links makes the ending of the Civil War in 1949 and the establishment of the People's Republic all the more significant. This is because, while 1949 did not necessarily see the total severing of links with overseas sojourners, it does mark the end of the *qiaoxiang* links in the form that had evolved since 1849. The movement of large numbers of people and monies back and forth between the Pearl River Delta *qiaoxiang* and the Pacific ports that had existed for a century dwindled after this date. The return of the aged continued into the early 1950s but remittances gradually declined, due both to the new Chinese government's policies and those of destination governments hostile to a Communist regime.

Conclusion

This case-study of the *qiaoxiang* of Long Du has demonstrated the role of *qiaoxiang* links and the impact of such overseas connections over several generations in the years before 1949. Over a period of around one hundred years the people of Long Du transformed their villages by establishing links across the Pacific. Family life was heavily influenced and contributions made to health, education, the economy and politics that affected the *qiaoxiang* at the village level. Not all the contributions were positive, and ultimately the *qiaoxiang* were left vulnerable to outside forces that proved devastating during the disruptions of the Japanese occupation. However, the links were durable, and the restoration and recovery of the *qiaoxiang* connections after the withdrawal of the Japanese were only cut short by the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.

This paper has been an attempt at writing local Chinese history, a local history that is also intimately connected with the history of many countries around the Pacific. The crossing of national boundaries makes the writing of such history extremely interesting and extremely difficult, as well as extremely valuable. Histories of Australia and the United States have focused on the history of Chinese people within their own borders, to the neglect of the significance of continuing links with their places of origin. Chinese research

has, on the other hand, neglected areas that appear small in the context of Chinese history and rarely delve below the provincial level.

An account of a single *qiaoxiang* cannot be more than one step towards providing an alternative to the many studies of successful merchants and permanent settlers in the destination nation-states. An understanding of the *qiaoxiang* and their role is essential to providing motivations for actions other than those to be found in ‘white’ hostility and restrictive laws. Those who lived either permanently or temporarily in the United States, Australia and elsewhere had considerations of family and prestige that greatly influenced their lives and activities. It is necessary to take account of the “big house” in the “Tang Mountains”, whether in reality or dream, if the full context of the history of Chinese people in the Pacific is to be adequately understood.

APPENDIX : CHARACTER TABLE

Place Names			
Mandarin (Pinyin)	Cantonese	Long Du dialect (L) & non-standard romanisations	
Zhongshan	Chongshan	Chung Shan (<i>L</i>)	中山
Xiangshan	Heongshan	Hsiangshan (<i>L</i>)	香山
Long Du	Lung Dou	Loong Doo (<i>L</i>)	隆都
Shiqi	Shekki	Shakee (<i>L</i>)	石岐
Liang Du	Leung Dou	Leoong Doo	良都
Xiaolan	Siu Lam		小欖
Siyi	Sze Yap	Ssu Yip	四邑
Xinning	Sunning	Sun Wing	新寧
Taishan	Toishan		台山
Kaiping	Hoi Ping	Hoy Ping	開平
Enping	Yanping	Ying Ping	恩平
Shunde	Sun Tak	Sun Duck	順德
Dongguan	Tung Guan	Toon Guan	東莞
<u>Villages – Long Du</u>			
Longtoughuan	Lung Tou Wan	Long Tow Wan	龍聚環
Xiangjiao	Chung Gok	Chung Kok	象角
Kanxi	Ham Kai	Kum Kei	坎溪
Shenmingting	San Ming Ting	Sun Ming Ting	申明亭
Chongtou	Cung Tau	Chung Tou	涌頭
Xiaze	Ha Zak		下澤
<u>Villages – Liang Du</u>			
Zhuxiuyuan	Chu Shu Yuen		竹秀園
Hengmei	Hom Mei		恒美
Dutou	Da Tou		渡頭
Beitai	Buck Toy		北台
General			
English	Mandarin	Cantonese	
overseas Chinese native place	qiaoxiang	kiu hoeng	僑鄉
overseas Chinese	huaqiao	wah kiu	華僑
overseas Chinese magazine	qiaokan	kiu hon	僑刊
port (place)	bu	fow	埠
sandy fields	shatian	sa tin	沙田
plot	mu	mau (mow)	畝
guest people	kejia	hakka	客家
traveler	lǔ	leoi	旅
departed friend	xianyou	sin jau	先友
Gold Mountain women	Jinshanpo	Gum Sam Po	金山婆
Gold Mountain fellow	Jinshanbo	Gum Sam Haak	金山伯
foreign house	yanglou	joeng lau	洋樓
guntower	diaolou	diu lau	碉樓
Boss (Bandit Chief)	datian'er	Da Tin Yi	大天二

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