

# The Authenticity of Chinese-styled Pastries in Bakery: Case of Tai Tung Bakery, Hong Kong

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**Abstract:** Among well-preserved Chinese foodways in Southern China, pastries and associated indigenous and local foodways in Hong Kong have never been discussed in the anthropological field. As the New Territories indigenous bakery, Tai Tung Bakery (Chinese: 大同老餅家) is exclusive of preserving great varieties of traditional Chinese-styled pastries, service of Mooncake Club, and practice of festive pavilion installment during Mid-Autumn Festival. Hence, this study would study the bakery in perspective of Cultural Anthropology, discussing the inclusive role of the bakery in space communities, the meanings of food and food practices preserved and transformed, and the grounded notion of authenticity, by conducting ethnographical research methods and collecting archives. Theories of Appadurai's Social Life of Things, Bourdieu's Practice Theory, Van der Leeuw's Production Sequences, and concepts such as authenticity and neo-liberalism would be applied as theoretical frameworks. From the findings, different social actors have created values to the pastries through stages of production, distribution and consumption, in which the pastries themselves has defined Tai Tung Bakery as authentic retail store, in claim of unbounded political territoriality, constructing indigenous identity for Yuen Long villagers and Hong Kong identity for local residents. Correspondingly, customers' submission to local authority and their imagination of hand-making local production exemplifies the foundation of pastries preserved in Tai Tung Bakery over generations.

## Background

In nineteenth century, the selling of mooncakes (Chinese 月餅) from teahouses and small grocery stores went viral during Mid-Autumn Festival held on every seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar<sup>1</sup>. In 1900, there were mooncakes with common fillings of bird's nest and preserved meat (燕窩肉月), ham (金腿肉月), assorted salted meats with Five Nuts (五仁鹹肉月), lotus seed paste with Five Nuts (五仁蓮子肉月), red bean paste (豇莎月) and green bean paste (豇蓉月) (Cheng 2003). From 1910s to 1920s, most of the teahouses and cake shops started decorating their store with large-scale festive pavilion (花牌) for celebration and advertisement. Since 1930s until 1970s, membership scheme for purchasing mooncakes has been commonly launched, called Mooncake Club (月餅會), in which the service was popular because the installment plans offer cheaper prices, satisfying the social needs of giving gift between relatives or to seniors.

Considering regional variations of Chinese food, which is recognized as “food cooked in the style assumed to be originally brought from China ... that is reproduced by Chinese in and outside China and in Chinese restaurants” (Tan 2008:15). While the southern Chinese-styled food are mainly represented by Guangdong cuisine (Anderson 1988). “Chinese-styled *Tang* pastries” (中式唐餅) in Hong Kong bakeries are thus believed to be originated from the

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<sup>1</sup> Lunar calendar is a Chinese calendar system developed from 24 solar terms. It determines agricultural activities with associated climates, and the months with associated festivals and rituals. For example, Chinese New Year is on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the first lunar month, vary from January to February according to Western Gregorian calendar. Hong Kong Anthropologist. Vol. 10, 2020

Guangdong provinces of Mainland China, in which the culinary skills and diets have been transformed with introduction of new ingredients and skills into “Cantonese pastries”. For example, wife cake (白餅) with filling of white gourd was invented by Lin Heung Lau (蓮香樓) located in Guangzhou, the eastern province of Mainland China. Afterwards, the cake evoked in Hong Kong bakeries with more fillings developed like green bean with garlic, which is now commonly seen as traditional ingredient combination, meanwhile majority of local bakeries preserve the Guangdong version with white gourd fillings. In other words, Chinese-styled pastries could be understood as regional Guangdong food in context of Hong Kong.

During Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), the rich harvest of Yuen Long village, western New Territories of Hong Kong, enabled enough supply of ingredients such as chicken, duck, egg, flour and sugar, whilst the government had launched rationing system of distributing insufficient food necessities to local people (James 2016). Considering the starvation crisis, the junction of Shanpui River (山貝河) and Shenzhen River (深圳河) located at Northern New Town enabled transportation of agricultural produces from Guangdong province to Yuen Long (Tang and Tang 2014). After war, Hong Kong started building industrial economy, when the wheat provision varies among societies. From the period of the 1950s through the 1970s, white cake made of flour, water and sugar, became an ordinary pastry which was filling and cheap for farmer and indigenous villagers, and various pastries such as baked pork cookies (雞仔餅), chess cookies (棋子餅), almond biscuit (杏仁餅) and steamed egg cake (雞蛋糕) (Tang and

Tang 2014). Hence, local production of traditional pastries in Chinese-styled bakery become a meeting ground for the local memories, which symbolizes the construction of food experience and embedded social relations, through arousing memories of shared meals (Sutton 2001).

Among forms of chain bakery in Hong Kong, some of them are originated from teahouse (i.e. Wing Wah Bakery 榮華餅家, Heng Heung Bakery 恆香老餅家), co-operated with restaurant (i.e. Maxim's Cakes 美心西餅), or facilitated in franchise business (i.e. Kee Wah Bakery 奇華餅家). Most of them has moved their production base, or partial production units, to Mainland China to enjoy low tax rates and land rents, where Special Economic Zones in proximity such as Dongguan were popular to Hong Kong merchants under economic reform policy of Mainland China (Tsang and Cheung 1997). Wing Wah Bakery has thus established factory in Dongguan to lower cost and explore market of China in 1994. Soon after, under Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement with zero tariff on imported mooncake of Hong Kong origin since 2005, it encouraged Wing Yah Bakery to launch more retail stores in Mainland for higher productivity (Tai Kung Pao 2012). Hang Heung Bakery has also moved their production lines of egg roll and lotus from Yuen Long to Dongguan in 2011.

Along with foodborne diseases and food contamination scandals in Mainland China (BBC News 2010), there were growing concerns on dishonesty of food producers. In particular, Hang Heung Bakery and Wing Wah Bakery re-invented mooncakes with Westernized flavors, and stressed the symbolic meaning of festival gatherings, in turn authorize their products (Lo 2007).

Trend of promoting modernized mooncakes began popular since 1980s, with modern branding and packaging to articulate the heritage value of Chinese-styled pastries. Of significant importance for the organizational value-adding is the authenticity of the food culture, however, important indicators have been ignored: the food ingredients, production technique, experience of heritage inheritors, and the nature of customers' engagement with food.

Likewise, the limitation of food heritage studies in Hong Kong lies in their approach of cultural symbolism, in which Clifford Geertz's insight of focusing upon the meaning we give to the "things" are widely reflected in academic works. Food is often studied from ethnic identity construction between indigenous people (Watson 1987), to issue of remembrance for understanding Hong Kongers' identity in context of decolonization (Cheung 2005). Only a few studies discuss the processed food products like herbal tea about development of nostalgia in historical perspective (Cheng 1997); dim sum serves symbol of power that contribute to the boundaries and hierarchies between social groups (Tam 1997); Japanese bread as gender role builder for women (Peters 2017). Nevertheless, we might try to understand what the mooncake itself in food production, distribution and consumption, coupled with the business relationships between producers, shopkeepers and customers, which is one of the frameworks of studying preserved foodways (Cheung 2013).

Regard to Tai Tung Bakery (大同老餅家), established in 1943 in Yuen Long during Japanese Occupation, it is renowned among Yuen Long residents for having traditional

Chinese-styled pastries with unchanged taste, as well as hand-making production. It was initially registered as Wagashi (Japanese:わがし) shop, primarily selling Japanese snacks, in which the bakery maximize resources for producing and distributing pastries. With the absence of franchises and preserved Mooncake Club and festive pavilion, the bakery has the capability of studying on how food itself shapes the meanings of authenticity, and further linking craftsmanship and memories with community members through the provision of pastries. Particularly, the head retail store has maximized human recourses for merely producing the mooncakes few weeks before Mid-Autumn Festival, adjusting the display setting of the store to enlarge spaces for distribution, with the festive pavilion installed, which is the only store preserves the outdoor pavilions for celebration of 1980s.

Furthermore, cuisine is socially and regionally grounded, in which people's discourse about food has significant function of maintaining the cuisine, as it "sustains both common understandings and reliable production of the foods in question" (Mintz 1996:104). Along with the New Town Development, Yuen Long represents a case of gentrification, implying that newcomers of higher social economic status limit existing residents' access to the place which they are historically and emotionally attached (Butler 1997). The suburb transformed from rural township consist of indigenous villagers to new town with growing population of middle-lower-income neighborhood with class clerks and professions (Minting, Igor and Guo 2015). Despite of having three retail branches over Hong Kong, food traditions preserved in Tai Tung

Bakery could drag original residents back to the headquarter, centralizing different social relations under town development in Yuen Long. It keeps the emotional bonds within a social network of existing members in Yuen Long market center including famers, indigenous villagers and Chiuchow<sup>2</sup> ethnic groups through providing preserved pastries, creating great influence on business development and consumer behaviors.

What interest me here is how the foodways of indigenous villagers and low-income farmers were transformed in the dynamic of gentrification, who were increasingly inaccessible to their food heritage from conventional Chinese-styled chain bakeries, meanwhile the role of Tai Tung Bakery values them with preserved food practice, authorizing Tai Tung Bakery to be a centrality of social relations with existing members in the town.

## **Literature Review**

Considering the role of food on the integration of community networks, it is suggested that food has subjectivity over human in different stages of its life history, which acquire abilities to “manipulate, within limits, these social and economic forces” (Appadurai 1986:31), different meanings of the food would be generated as it travels through different stages, Appadurai suggested,

“follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things” (Appadurai 1986:5).

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<sup>2</sup> “Chiuchow“ (or “Chiu Chow”) refers to the eastern Guangdong province of Mainland China, or people originated from the province speaking “Teochiu” dialect.

In view of food industry in Taiwan, procession of food has been widely utilized after 1942 in order to reduce production cost, various pineapple by-products derived from pineapple includes canned pineapple, pineapple juice, and pineapple pie (Chen and Tan 2018). While the value of pineapples has been changed through the changed social-economic context, the nature of agricultural ingredients encouraged the application of industrialization, shaping the production system. For instance, pineapple by-products have limitation on durability, to compensate the cost of seasonality of agricultural products, farmer and processor would sell the products in fresh and processed (Choi 2013). Without adding preservatives, Chinese-styled mooncakes sold in Tai Tung Bakery are of low durability, giving people a sense of freshness. The agricultural raw ingredients originated from China may thus have subjectivity to create and re-create meaning as humans do.

However, encompasses both food and social dynamics associated within particular organization in the public domain is rarely discussed, in which organization theories conventionally distinct between object and people, drawing that that organization is constructed and reconstructed by social interactions by the actors (Denzin 1989), coined their interpretation of symbolic meaning in those interactions (Fine 1992).

To analyze the relation between Chinese-styled pasties and headquarter of Tai Tung bakery under gentrification, I embrace Latour Bruno's "Actor-Network Theory" (2005) which provided framework of how to study food with networks of associations between

heterogeneous actors including people, ideals, symbolic constructions, and material elements (Plesner 2009). Bakery owners is not only “actor” with power and domination, but stakeholders of stages of food production, distribution and production could be seen as “actant” equally important within the bakery network. Particularly, Latour's definition of network as a concept that “does not designate a thing out there that would have roughly the shape of interconnected points” (Latour 2005:129). In this sense, pastries products themselves contributed the construction of network, in which indigenous, local or ethnic communities’ material culture are composed of various food traditions, formulating Tai Tung Bakery as a centrality of social relation including the indigenous villagers, Teochew ethnic group, non-indigenous local residents, non-Yuen Long residents and the immigrants of indigenous villagers.

In the concluding chapter of Latour (2005), he suggested replacing the traditional political question of “How many are we?” with the question “Can we live together?”. It is a revolutionary question specifically in organization theory, allowing a network with collective composed of actors and pastries. Considering the idea that things are living with us, it draws me to Tai Tung Bakery where traditional food products and practices has been preserved, which is good case study to explore how and why Chinese-styled pasties participate and negotiate collectively with other actors in the retail system, and its extent of integrating community networks and preserving symbols of villager identity.

Accordingly, I follow Savova’s (2013) theoretical framework of house-guarding heritage

where do people recognize community art centers as “house of culture” that people participate traditional cultural activities in former-socialist countries particularly Brazil, Bulgarian and Cuban (Savova 2013). The communal gathering spaces provide incentive for Bulgarian to preserve bread-making skill, who privatized a public center and collectively took part in baking and slept in the public space over time. The spatial ownership of the designated space then become the incentives for people to referred to as “homes” and safeguard their intangible heritage inside the community center by making cultural expressions visible.

Different from public center studied by Savova, the establishment of bakery in Hong Kong is not designated for cultural activities, where customers could not literally occupy the place. However, Tai Tung Bakery pull all the resources for housing great varieties of mooncakes and decorative settings in the headquarter, enabling individuals from local communities to return the shop regularly and participate the food traditions through consumption. The “where” of cultural transmission is then one important factor especially when the tradition is not an art or festival. Nevertheless, in spite of UNESCO’s emphasis on “community participation” as “vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2003:2), the process of participation has long been ignored, evident with literatures mainly focus on the symbolic meanings such as collective memory (Kong 1999) and utility of heritage for national building (Cwierka 2015). Similarly, researches in Hong Kong limited to festival events for identity construction like Cheung Chau Da Jiu Festival (Choi and Ma 2011) and Yulan Ghost Festival (Lui 2018). It is

given far less emphasis on the heritages that is ordinary practice to food culture, especially no direct cultural participation indicator for “bakery” alongside from the categories of cinema, theatre, archaeological sites, museum, exhibitions and gallery (UNESCO 2014).

By understanding Tai Tung Bakery as “cultural center” in business context, the ownership of bodily experience may instead become the incentive for customers to privatize the bakery. With Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of bodily cultivation on cultural consciousness and cultural identity from habitual practice, the sensation of taste could be accumulated over time forming “taste memory” (Peng 2013:44). It cultivates preference of food choice, and thus attract people to return the store for the unchanged taste. On that account, the value of the Chinese-styled pastries could be justified by sensory experience from taste, smell, texture and appearance associate with certain food. The community participation could then preserve and recreate cultural knowledge on traditional ingredient composition and baking method through regular participation in the headquarter over generations, for instance, buying mooncake in every Mid-Autumn Festival, exchanging mooncake, and joining Mooncake Club membership.

Bounded by the principle of freshness in Chinese-styled cuisine, scholar used to discuss the traditional apprenticeship of handling non-processed food such as snake meat and freshwater fish in terms of provision of warmth and softness, and associate the freshness associated with authenticity (Cheung 2013). Whereas authentic cultural experience is suggested comprising with thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Hastrup and Hervik 1994).

Complement to Cheung's (2013) research, although the by-product of snake meat has been processed with snake gall bladder combining other medical ingredients, the authenticity of gall bladders may attributed to the through-train production, in which the snakes were being caught from the wild, and then directly transported to the shop and being handled by the master in the shop. Its proximity to food production base and distribution has evoked sense of "unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional" (Handler 1986:2).

Different from the unprocessed food, the mass production of mooncake in chain bakeries implies standardization and the substitution of tasks which were taken part by single master in the past (Zeng 2012). Though the processed pastries rooted in its nature of being produced through specialized division of labor, the authentic features of processed food may be contributed to the sense of traditional and genuine with localness of food production, saying "local food becomes acceptable only if it is to some extent transformed" (Cohen and Avieli 2004:756). People would still construct particular flavor of mooncake as "real thing" that thought to be handcrafted, only when its transformation is associated with the low level of standardization, coupled with sense of proximity associated with production in local factory and in the kitchen at the back of the bakery store. Adopting the model of "authentic alliance" (Zeng 2012:1097) which combines a relatively high level of authenticity with a low level of standardization, Tai Tung Bakery's more oriented to provide cultural experience may then contributes to its greater success of differentiating itself from other local chain bakeries, and

presumed the hand-craft production with freshness and local production.

However, the conception of authenticity is often challenged when authentic experience is interpreted as culturally constructed (Handler 1986), in which professionals would mediate a sense of the past to the consumers (Walsh 1992). As such, past experience could be commodified and replicated when professionals construct the past of customers perceived or embodied, and selectively demonstrate the traditional craftsmanship. What the professionals present as authenticity then become the interpretation of authenticity that presumed to be traditional, which is “not only with genuineness and the reliability of face value, but with the interpretation of genuineness and our desire for it” (Spooner 1986:200). In this sense, the uniqueness of Yuen Long with provision of preserved pastries and food culture could then be interpreted as means of creating the altered experience derived from the past.

Furthermore, Berman (1970) described the full development of authenticity as self-realization, which implies that identity is associated with the modified authentic interpretation. Although the authenticity of the substance itself is selectively presented, the basis of selection is formed by the habituated past of the customers. In this way, Tai Tung Bakery provided us a way of understanding how professional manipulate the interpretation of authenticity, as well as how identity was constructed with their interpretation of authentic pastries, while collective memory of member in social network affirmed shared symbols through engaging food heritage.

### **Ethnic Solidarity in Gentrifying Yuen Long**

Tai Tung Bakery is a Chinese family-run company, currently owned by family members of second and third generation, and executives outside the family (factory owner, and shop manager, the wife of factory owner). It processes, wholesales, and retails Chinese-styled traditional pastries, with the head retail store located at Fau Choi Street (阜財街) in Yuen Long. Pastries in Tai Tung Bakery refer to various kinds of biscuits (called “beng” [餅] or “sou” [酥] in Cantonese), cakes (called “gou” [糕] in Cantonese) and bread.

The bakery was initially named Tai Tung Hou (大同號), and jointly operated by a group of Yuen Long residents. It was located at Hop Yik Street (合益街), one of the five streets in Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) along Castle Peak Road — Yuen Long<sup>3</sup>. One of the founders named Tse Muk Yiu (謝睦堯) originated from Shantou (汕頭) in Mainland China, who had established grocery store in Shantou, migrated to Hong Kong in 1920s to escape war. During Japanese Occupation, the shop produced and sold peanut sweets, due to the developed peanut cultivation in Yuen Long. Wheat were available in the market two years after the Japanese Occupation, when the bakery started producing pastries like white cake, baked pork cookies and steamed egg cake (雞蛋糕). In 1961, the bakery shifted to second-generation ownership, governed by Tse Ching Yuen (謝禎原), the son of Tse Muk Yiu, who started producing Mid-Autumn Festival mooncakes and Chinese New Year snacks. Due to the removal

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<sup>3</sup> Castle Peak Road—Yuen Long (青山公路—元朗段) was called “Big Road” (“Daai Maa Lou” [大馬路] in Cantonese) before removal of Yuen Long New Market in 1968. Many local residents and indigenous villagers referred it as “Big Road” during the interviews.

of Hop Yik Street, the retail store operations were transferred at Fau Choi Street (阜財街) in 1977, with the more inner-street location nearby local markets and residential buildings. In 2004, the bakery has shifted to third-generation ownership, governed by Tse Hing Zi (謝興之), the youngest son of Tse Ching Yuen's five children, who has developed retail stores in Sha Tin, Wan Chai, Tsuen Wan, and North Point (closed in 2016).

Identification of site for the bakery is attributed to enforce territoriality of immigrants of the same ethnic group. Yuen Long had been a market-town serving farming villages nearby. After World War II, Yuen Long became residential area for the Chiuchow ethnic group, when more people from Chiuchow and Shantou migrated to Hong Kong and settled in Yuen Long Town during 1940s. According to Sparks (1976), Chiuchow businessmen were heavily committed to the Chiuchow commercial networks. They have profound influence in business sector along the main road, emerging the area during the 1960s and rented land from local villagers. The foundation of Chiu Chow Clansmen's Association of Yuen Long District (元朗區潮州同鄉會) in 1967, coupled with religious celebration of Yu Lan Festival of Yuen Long Chiu Chow Fraternity (元朗潮僑盂蘭勝會) have established their network within Yuen Long to build up ethnic solidarity, in turn acquire socio-economic and political resources for solving conflicts with local government and local people (Sparks 1976).

Through setting up bakery in Yuen Long New Town, the owner of second generation could established mutual obligation, or *guanxi* (關係), through interaction with the Chiuchow people

in Hong Kong. For example, the master of producing festival pavilion is originated from Chiu Chow and worked for making flowery stands for Yu Lan Festival over Hong Kong regions. By receiving mooncakes from bakery owner, the master claimed that he was obligated to help creating Mid-Autumn Festival flowery stand for the bakery owner since 1960s, and become the business partner of the bakery. The maintenance of ethnic identity as the best way for gaining socio-economic security, attributing to the relocation of the new retail store before the removal of Hop Yik Street for urban development in 1984 (Kung Sheung Daily News 1984). The accumulated social capitals (Bourdieu 1986) could then be preserved by relocating at the same region of Yuen Long (Fig.1).

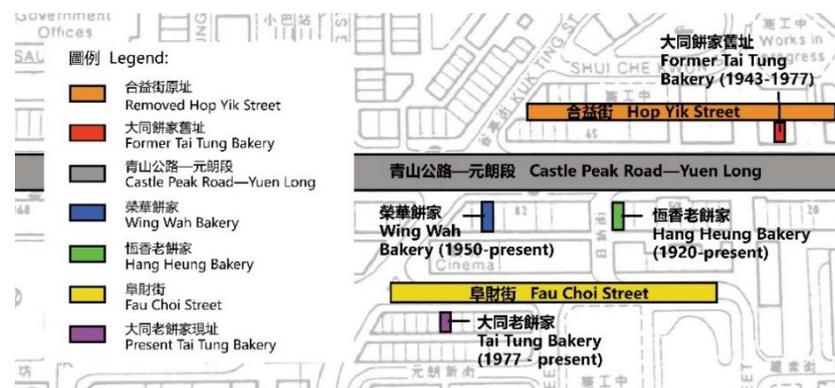


Fig.1 Map of Yuen Long town after the relocation of Tai Tung Bakery. Map modified from 元朗居民手冊 (Yuen Long Resident Guidebook), 1992, pp.45.

As a kinship-based district, the bakery owner has to participate in the lineage system, in order to ensure the maintenance of bakery store in Yuen Long, by forging political territorial alliance from “indigenous inhabitants”, which is defined as “a person who was in 1898 a resident of an established village in Hong Kong or who is descended through the male line

from that person” (Government Rent Ordinance 1997)<sup>4</sup>. Tang clan of Kam Tin had established Yuen Long Old Market (元朗舊墟) for villagers of Kam Tin and Ping Shan to trade agricultural products. To break the monopoly of Tang clan of Kam Tin, squires from other villages started up Un Long Hop Yick Company Limited (元朗合益有限公司) in 1915, and established Yuen Long New Market on five streets next to the main road, in which Hop Yik Street was included. Besides, Yuen Long Merchants Association (元朗商會) were constituted of indigenous villagers, in which one of the founders namely Lam Sin Coeng (林善祥), villager of Shap Pat Heung, had rented the store of Tai Tung Hou to Tse Muk Yiu. Peasants and villagers of Yuen Long shifted to the New Market for trading, who then became the main customers of the bakery early in the business. The high traffic flow attracted middle class to trade in market, and gradually evolved into a commercial center of Yuen Long.

The bakery owner could showcase bonds of loyalty with villagers and local institutions by participating local events. The owner said he was obligated to support the local events, through publishing advertisements to promote the villagers’ festival of celebrating Birthday of Tin Hou, and the Yuen Long Merchants Association, given the bakery never advertise itself through mass media. Also, he has operated relationships with local squires by opening

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<sup>4</sup> According to Hong Kong Government Gazette (1899), Yuen Long has accommodated largely by clans of Pat Heung (八鄉), Kam Tin (錦田), Shap Pat Heung (十八鄉), Ping Shan (屏山), Ha Tsuen (廈村), Tun Mun (屯門), Tai Lam Cheung (大欖涌), Lung Ku Tan (龍鼓灘), Lam Tsun (林村), and San Ting (新田), in which Tang clan has dominated Kam Tin, Ping Shan and Ha Tsuen.

restaurants with Lau Wong Fat, the former chairman of the Rural Council, representative of New Territories indigenous inhabitants in 1980s. During the Birthday of Tin Hou, representatives of indigenous Yuen Long clans, non-indigenous residents and local merchants association would join procession, and provide paper tower (花炮) to worship the goddess. Particularly, the Chiu Chow Clansmen's Association of Yuen Long District would perform folk dance in public sphere, justifying their commitments to local communities' prosperity.

Hence, the meeting point of networks and power formations was the allocation of traditional pastries and related ritual performances, in which the accumulation of regular local customers from serving the peasants at the initial business stage, and the territorial connection with indigenous villagers has built up local authority of Tai Tung Bakery in Yuen Long.

### **Bakery in Village Territorialities**

Though the bakery reorganized the ritual order with mixed ethnic groups and lineage branches, the development of the community would be still constrained "by the lineage organization as a whole" (Dean and Zheng 2009:226). In initial stage, small-scale production of pastries was conducted inside the store located at the Yuen Long New Market, where ensures efficient supply of plant ingredients from local market. Tang Sam Ren (鄧森仁), a patrilineal descent from Tang clan of Pin Shan, later joined the bakery as master and produced pastries with Tse Muk Yiu. Since the store has been transferred to inner street, Tang Sam Ren got sick and was replaced by his son, Tang Wing Ceong (鄧永昌). As the successor of mooncake and

wedding cakes production, he learnt the preparation of ingredients when he was young, who helped removing lotus cores from the seed during summer vacation, claiming “I am familiar with the whole procedure, and have eaten the pastries since I was small”. He received mooncake recipes from his father and worked with other masters. Meanwhile, with structural design of chimney, pastries were produced at the back of store, assisted with baking machine manufactured by Tse Ching Yuen and Tang Wing Ceong. The mooncakes were then packaged at the upper floor and hung down through the holes on ceiling for retail distribution in the store.

Accompanied with increasing demand of mooncakes and the restriction of dark smoke emissions from chimney stacks (Air Pollution Control Ordinance 1972), part of food production was relocated out of the store (Fig. 2), where Tang clan of Kam Tin has covered Au Tau (坳頭) in Kam Tin, the east of Yuen Long, whose allowed the temporary workshop to be built for lotus processing and frying procedure. Diesel fuel was available to be continually used in Au Tau. In 1993, higher demand of pastries has driven the translocation of workshop to factory in Ping Shan, the west of Yuen Long, where Tang clan of Ping Shan has dominated the area. Diesel has been switched to gaseous fuels for baking machine, and Tang Wing Ceong has created baking machines by himself. The allocation of food production was thus situated within indigenous clans’ sphere of influence.

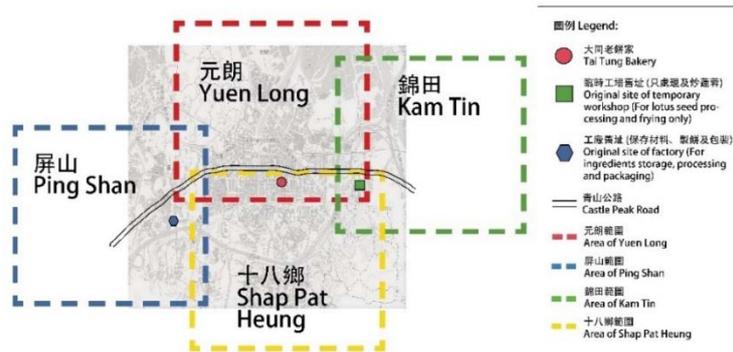


Fig.2 Locations of old workshop and factory of Tai Tung Bakery in context of indigenous clans settlement in 2019. Map modified from GeoInfo Map. Source of information from e-HongKongGuide.

In 2000, Tai Tung Bakery have relocated the factory to Tuen Mun, combining the separated production of Au Tau and Ping Shan, in which Tang family has gradually controlled the culinary resource over the Bakery, Tang Wing Ceong became the factory owner, responsible for production and machine management, with the family recipe of mooncake and Chinese New Year cakes kept, shifting power on the claims of ownership. Regarding to relocation, his wife, the store manager, said

“The Hop Yik Company raised rent every two years. It was hard to maintain the production if we do not own the factory. Since we have bought the factory in Tuen Mun, we could now combine the production units of frying lotus and dough preparation, which is more convenient for Mr. Tang. Before the relocation, he had to check the lotus frying process in Au Tau, and then transport to the factory for supervision, he might get overexerted with age.”

Most of the retired masters were recruited by Tang Wing Ceong. They helped producing Mid-Autumn Festival mooncakes and Chinese New Year cakes. One of the retired masters was complimentary about the factory owner, saying “he is hardworking... he participates in all the processes, you see, he had just carried the freshly steamed cakes to the packaging area,” the retired master pointed out. He has introduced the Chinese New Year cakes, made from secret recipe of his mother, after he joined the bakery. The New Year cakes were of growing popularity

attracting both indigenous and non-indigenous Yuen Long residents nowadays.

### **Formation of Inclusive Community**

Along with the New Town Extension plan, the improvement of road network and West Rail system has increased the attraction of Yuen Long since 1970s. The growing populations created demand for jobs and services in the urban peripheries, expanding economic activities and population from 578,529 to 625,000 during 2011-2017, an increase of 8% (SWD 2018). Urbanites and villagers of diversifying economic prospects were increasingly connecting with each other, as a mark of intraclass struggles for social position in gentrified development.

As the central cluster of bakery industry, with competitors of the Chinese-styled chain bakeries including Wing Wah Bakery and Hang Heung Bakery concentrated in Yuen Long town, the trend of shifting manufacturing base to South China increased the inter-urban competition. Whilst for Tai Tung Bakery, its production line has transferred to Tuen Mun, with spacious units for more machineries.

Without following the mainstream trend of exploiting transnational markets, the act of changing name from “Tai Tung Cakes & Pastries Company Limited” (元朗大同餅家有限公司) to “Tai Tung Bakery Company Limited” (大同老餅家有限公司) in 1995, reveals its positioning focus on Chinese-styled pastries and customers boundless to Yuen Long, with the Chinese word “Yuen Long” (元朗) deleted. Also, by addressing its time-honoredness with the Chinese word “Old” (老) added, it shows intention to gain legitimacy from indigenous and

local residents, whose submission to the authority through accepting Tai Tung Bakery as their collective memory. Many customers of Yuen Long residents claimed to buy mooncakes for their non-Yuen Long friends, suggested Tai Tung Bakery is one of the representatives of Yuen Long. The acknowledgement of Tai Tung Bakery was said to differentiate themselves from others, saying “If you don’t know Tai Tung, you are definitely not Yuen Long people. Tai Tung, Wing Wah, and Hang Heung are the oldest bakeries in Yuen Long”. Residents of Yuen Long juxtaposes with its competitors including Wing Yah Bakery and Hang Heung Bakery, and growing modernized bakeries, in which the pastries serve to construct ethnicity and solidify group memberships as “Yuen Long people”. The social allocation of pastries then provides concreteness to social position and class, associated with a geographically and historically defined food community (Mintz and Du Bois 2002).

Tai Tung Bakery stands to offer various kinds of traditional Chinese-styled pastries products in the head retail store, which has become a “contact point” where cultures “meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 1991:34). Yuen Long residents, non-Yuen Long residents and oversea customers were physically attracted to the bakery, with shared cultural practices to be discussed. Particularly, legitimacy of cultural practices in Yuen Long is highly defined by people in regional authority—indigenous squires of Yuen Long clans. Specific significance is placed on the inhabitants’ own cultural products and their taste, evident that Tai Tung Bakery secured a

continuous and stable supply of wedding cakes demanded by indigenous villagers. Though Hong Kong Islands and Kowloon have indigenous villages, their descendants do not enjoy legal rights as those indigenous villagers in New Territories, while none of the informants from those regions identified themselves as indigenous inhabitants

It is believed Chinese-styled wedding cakes have been a popular banquet food among local inhabitants for the traditional Chinese pre-wedding betrothal custom (called “gwo daai lai” [過大禮] in Cantonese). With regard to the tradition, number of wedding cakes is requested by bride’s family, which are to be purchased and paid by groom’s family. The cakes would be transported to the bride’s house, allowing the bride’s family to distribute the cakes to relatives in hand-to-hand way few weeks before marriage ceremony (called *paai mun hau* [派門口] in Cantonese). A middle-aged indigenous customer of Yuen Long suggested “we should *paai mun hau* when we get married, everyone in the village have to do so, this is our tradition for sure”. Village marriage as the continuity of patrilineal line, the groom’s payment for wedding cakes are a symbol of security, as if it was marriage registration fee before they held the marriage ceremony (Parish and Lartin 1978). While distribution of ceremonial cakes is performed to announce the social status transition of the bride as “rite of passage” (Gennep 1961), changing from adolescence of one village to woman of another village.

The significance of the Chinese-styled pastries declined under the influence of gentrification. Most of the young adult of non-Yuen Long residents stated their preference

towards westernized cakes for weddings, and were not acquainted with the details about the betrothal custom. While some middle-aged residents from Hong Kong Island and Kowloon preferred the use of traditional wedding cakes, saying they would buy coupons from other Chinese-styled chain bakeries that allows relatives from different regions to redeem the traditional bridal cakes in convenient way. Contrastingly, Yuen Long residents were keen to buy the wedding cakes from Tai Tung Bakery. A 54-year-old non-indigenous Yuen Long resident helped her younger son to order wedding cakes coupons in Tai Tung Bakery, suggested “*gwo daai lai* is our tradition as Yuen Long people. It passes over generations,” and emphasized on the quality of the cakes from Tai Tung Bakery over others, saying “I used to buy the cakes in Kee Wah (Bakery), until my friend suggested Tai Tung (Bakery) to me. I thought only Kee Wah offer the traditional wedding cakes, because the other two (Wing Wah Bakery and Heng Heung Bakery) they do not have much varieties provided”. While most of the wedding cakes customers were indigenous inhabitants of Yuen Long clans.

Chinese-styled wedding cakes then become constitutive of Tai Tung Bakery with collective symbols of identity for the indigenous villagers. The reduced varieties of traditional wedding cakes among chain bakeries evident the result of gentrification in Yuen Long, with the disappearance of amenities, safe spaces and neighborhood identities of the existing members (Mazer and Katharine 2010). Many indigenous customers claimed they learnt to buy wedding cakes in Tai Tung Bakery from their parents, in which the marriages were involving

their natal families for security purpose. While the purchase of community-based wedding cakes helped acquiring stability, it also helped affirming sense of identity as “indigenous villagers” through accessing to their own community by participating the traditional celebration.

Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) suggested communal brand is a foundation of group identification, in which the bakery became the loci of complex communities, showing where are they come from, experiences of social solidarity would be materialized in the taste for pastries, spatially inscribed with the bakery located at the centre of Yuen Long New Town. Moreover, indigenous villagers’ attachment to the pastries shows their initiation to regain power on maintaining boundaries around the space, through creating commonalities from Tai Tung Bakery, in turn set themselves apart from the middle-class urbanites. Nonetheless, the simplification of *paai mun hau* shows the change of village endogamy in the multi-lineage village of Yuen Long. It was said most of the brides of indigenous male villagers were not born in village, though they have to learn the ritual, some couples chose to buy Chinese-styled wedding cakes and transport to the wedding venue for distribution.

Different from Chinese-styled chain bakeries which sell the wedding cakes in pre-order packages, the display of individual cakes in the store allows customer to purchase cakes of different colors instantly (Fig.3). Individual cakes would be sealed, suitable for handily distribution, or decoration of gift box (Fig.4). Indeed, some non-indigenous Yuen Long residents came to the shop for buying great amount of wedding cakes without pre-ordering,

suggesting they were in hurry while no bakeries could provide the cakes straight away. Though there were sufficient stock of wedding cakes, customers were scolded and suggested to pre-order the cakes next time to ensure the availability. Whilst all indigenous Yuen Long residents never bought it in hurry, whose consumption of wedding cakes confined to Tai Tung Bakery.



Fig.3 Display of wedding cakes in the store. Photographed by Nicole Lee.



Fig.4 Gift box decorated by indigenous villagers, filled with wedding cakes. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

Besides of wedding cakes, majority of regular customers were middle-aged and elderly living nearby. On weekdays, they mainly purchased small amount of wife cakes, preserved egg cakes and breads, during lunch break, after buying cooking ingredients from markets, or after work. On weekends, the crowds were overwhelming, with more family groups and non-Yuen Long residents coming for large quantities of wife cakes, preserved egg cakes and indigenous snacks. The first-generation immigrants of indigenous inhabitant could also keep ties to Yuen Long through the pastries, who were habitual to visit the head retail store when they back to Hong Kong, purchasing numerous pastries or preserved meats to their friends living abroad.

Furthermore, the plant-rooted pastries were demanding among middle class, derived from upper class luxuries for festivals or wedding banquets as factory owner suggested, evident from daily supply of wife cakes and preserved-egg cakes, whilst the supply of white cakes were

reduced to two days a week. Without sense of warmth and rich flavor, white cakes were gradually ignored from general customers, whereas the arrival of middle class has disrupted local communities and privatized public space with hegemonic forms (Low 2011). Deterritorialization also caused the change of taste which loosens connections between people, ideas and territories (Appadurai 1996). Tai Tung Bakery thus reconfigured territoriality where indigenous residents of Yuen Long no longer buy pastries in the Yuen Long New Town, but shifted to Tai Tung Bakery for buying festive products, in turn define themselves and set boundaries among others, while urban transportation enable access of customers from different regions, implying the trans-local social relations of the bakery.

### **Inculcation of the Past for the Present**

In regular days, the bakery owner always sits at the corner of the store, working with documents or counting money, where every customer could see and approach him, many unplanned social gatherings occurred with acquaintance of the owner and manager. Both planned and unplanned social gatherings were taken part in public area, where some group chats happened at owners' desk, avoiding the blockage of pavement in the shop. The store has thus built up un-businesslike neighborly atmosphere, which has also maintained good relationship with the time-honor noodle shop nearby. Shop manager recalled "Whenever I buy dried noodle from them, the shop owner always wraps the product with paper ribbon dedicated for me, with meaning of gift giving and blessing in the past".

The owner of second generation also strengthen relationship between the flowery stand master and media through giving out pastries. The enactment of Mauss's conceptualization of "gift economy", is what Yan (2010) refers to "human feelings" (called 'jan cing mei' [人情味] in Cantonese) in Chinese moral discourse, acts of kindness promote notions of reciprocity. The implied social obligation could never be fully repaid and forgotten (Yan 2010). In the store, owner of the second generation and store manager were instrumental to develop social network from frequently gave out cakes. Their acquaintance were then obliged to pay moral debt by buying other pastries, or visiting the store in the future. A friend of manager claimed "Mrs. Tang (the manager) is genuine, she always treats me food when I come to greet her. I think I have to buy something, otherwise I would feel embarrassed," who was not going to buy any products before receiving free cakes from the manager. Nonetheless, gift-giving as a socialized practice of exchange, the agenda of recognizing network through social obligation above modern business operation, is the way to construct brand image of Hong Kong-rooted bakery, in which pastries are valued and distributed in turn demonstrate political authority and status.

Considering daily practices in the store, there were three full-time senior shopkeepers with more than 8-year experience, coupled with one or two part-timers. They were always in motion, responsible for check-out, launching products on shelves, answering calls, or clipping cakes for customers. They were encouraged to take their initiative in making small decisions such as changing the arrangement of pastries displayed, in which the manager was proud of

their collective work to make the organization responsive to personal needs. If they stopped for a snack, it was eaten leisurely but they still standing and ready for coming transaction. Generally, customers moved on and out of the bakery right after purchasing. They do not stay long and conduct conversation with shopkeepers. Some customers complained about shopkeepers' bad temper, saying they always show resentful facial expression when someone asked follow-up questions, or self-picking cakes from cabinet.

In post-modern marketplace, Holt (2002) argued through resisting conventional commercial influence, marketers could acquire authenticity as consumers were able to create distinctive personal identities. At the store, there were two cabinets storing plates of wife cakes and preserved-egg cakes, enabled self-picking of cakes. Nonetheless, the manager suggested local bakeries used to pick the cakes for customers, while self-picking practice was uncommon until Japanese supermarket namely Yaohan (八百伴) had been introduced to Yuen Long in 1980s, where operated self-checkout service. With more supermarkets established in similar operation, new Yuen Long residents and oversea customers were not accustomed to the former way of serving, but preferred picking cakes by themselves, establishing new cultural landscape.

Correspondingly, the self-picking practice was unwelcomed in Tai Tung Bakery. Shopkeepers always complained about customers' lacking force to clip the cakes, who peeled off the surface layer of the crust, causing additional work for them to collect the cakes and dump them. Customers were thus suggested to walk ahead to the counter and speak up for

desired cakes, shopkeepers would then head to the cabinet located next to the counter, and help getting the cakes for customers. This mean of serving was taken for granted by regular customers, which is recognized to mark cultural boundary. Though the increased social mobility and introduction of technology has gone against, shopkeepers' reaction was crucial to re-create the social order of building the shared cultural practice with new customers. Customers who learnt the protocol of serving food shared similar bodily experience of consumption with shopkeepers. When they speak out the chosen type of cakes next time, distinctive communal solidarity between value-shared customers and shopkeepers would be reinforced, who then recognized Tai Tung Bakery as authentic Hong Kong-rooted bakery.

### **Social Relations within the Mooncake Club**

The social order was also built up through the Mooncake Club membership registration. Early mooncakes were expensive and were perceived as necessities to be shared by family members for festival celebration, in which older generations attached importance on getting a box of mooncakes before Mid-Autumn Festival. It constructed social imaginary about the precious memories of family cohesion, which enables upfront resource allocation motivated by an extension of relationships. In the 1950s, the custom of joining Mooncake Club allowed customers to maximize the quantities of mooncakes through joining 12-month installment plan, starting from September. Club members would be given an offset-printed card with full Chinese name and card number written on the coverage in Tai Tung Bakery, and a table of 12 columns

for recording monthly payments (Fig. 5-6).

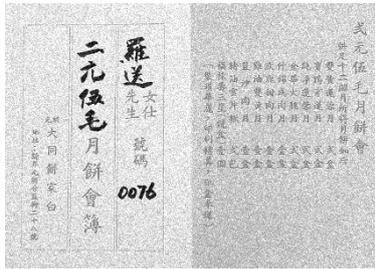


Fig. 5 Front of the Mooncake Club membership card in 1952. Adapted from “老餅愈老愈可愛” (Cute Old Pastries), from 明報 (Ming Bao), 2013.



Fig. 6 Back of the Mooncake Club membership card in 1952. Adapted from “老餅愈老愈可愛” (Cute Old Pastries), from 明報 (Ming Bao), 2013.

The accumulated transactions would be recorded on both membership card and journal book owned by the bakery, which the shopkeeper would apply stamp on bars of the card and of the journal book simultaneously (Fig. 7-8), facilitating the verification process with each other. The Mooncake Club membership is then a commodity exchange system with “human feeling” expressed, meanwhile connecting those require shareable mooncakes, who paid in advance to ensure the sufficiency of mooncakes and holding mooncake ownership. In all regards, the imaginary of sharing and building familial network was focused on luxury resource efficiency.



Fig. 7 Mooncake Club membership card in 2018. Photographed by Nicole Lee.



Fig. 8 A page of mooncake club book-keeping journal book in 2018. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

Subsequent to the decline of Mooncakes Clubs, modernized mooncakes dominate the

that is not necessary to develop the festiveness of Mid-Autumn Festival. The conception of mooncakes shifted from social cohesion to self-enjoyment and business networking. Adhere to the practice in 1950s, the Mooncake Club membership scheme was preserved in Tai Tung Bakery, offering 12-month installment plan of mooncakes with discount. Since 1980s, many regular customers have moved out, and adjacent stores went out of business due to the development of the streets. Meanwhile there were large changes on the demand side, with more employers and middle-class individuals of other regions ordered more mooncakes through the club, meanwhile more mooncakes were produced along with the relocation to spacious factory. Current club members were mostly employers or individuals from other regions, buying mooncakes for gifting to employees and business partners, who chose to pay all installments in once because of the remoteness of the head retail store.

Through Mooncake Club, Tai Tung Bakery demonstrates its stabilized relationships in relation to the imaginaries of consumer participation with indigenous villagers and regular residents of Yuen Long, in which its positioning of tradition as cultural value highlights the centrality of social relations. The language of the consumption practices in the Club includes the recording of customers' name and their expected return visits for accumulating 12 bars of transaction records on the cards. The manager has recalled her memory of 1970s, saying she was greeted by club members as an old acquaintance because most of them used to live nearby, "I know the village where they were living, let alone the name," said the manger. The allowance

of recording name then helped the bakery to develop a community identity among geographical disparate people of different ethnic groups in Yuen Long, whereas the manager's remembrance of customers blurred the line between producer and consumer, confirming an extension of relationships for social obligation to be exchanged.

However, the community-fostering value of the Club is questionable when consumer participation was not required in present mooncake exchange practice, with more new members of Yuen Long residents and non-Yuen Long residents. Some customers claimed they would not return to the shop if they lost the membership card, "that's alright if the card is missing, they (ordered mooncakes) are just few hundred dollars," said a middle-aged Yuen Long resident who paid off the instalments on behalf of the card owner living in other regions. The urbanization and economic expansion have destroyed the necessity for card owner to re-visit the bakery, which failed to provide social ties taken for granted in earlier societies, where the shopkeepers have no means to know the customers. Even though the form of indicating name and verifying process was preserved during card registration, it makes no attempt at establishing reciprocal relationship with the club members.

Indeed, many club members assumed the bakery to provide mooncakes on time due to its long-standing brand and renowned good quality. Their presumed submission to local authority has fostered social relations between new members from disparate locations and the bakery, who were habitually socialized to accept the distinctiveness of the bakery in turn acquire

personal security, believed that only distribute the mooncakes from Tai Tung Bakery could express their high cultural capital of having the real mooncake. Thus, current practices could not rebuild the pre-existing social relation in context of festive resource allocation, instead, power and authority were profound in maintaining cultural boundaries with customers.

### **Endurance of Festiveness through Performance**

Three weeks before the day of Mid-Autumn Festival, the bakery has installed festival pavilions for Mid-Autumn Festival celebration to perform the “traditionality” of Tai Tung Bakery (Fig.9). Tai Tung bakery is the only bakery which preserves the practice of installing stands, and it became an icon of the bakery, establishing the significance of its head retail store.



Fig.9 Outdoor festival pavilions, with couplet written at two sides, plaque on top, lanterns and bulb light string hanged on the ceiling. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

By preserving the bakeries’ 1960-1980s mainstream practice of installing festive devices, it invented a historic continuity of the past that the middle-aged and elderly could depict images of how the pavilions of other bakery or tea house looks like in the old days, and allow a comparison. While most of the young adults do not invoke memory of seeing similar decorations in the festival.

However, the installment was a representative of the past “selectively preserved pandering

to values currently held by the community at large” (Spenneman 2004:1), in which “mid- and long-term protection of heritage places can occur only if such places are ‘embraced’ or ‘owned’ by the community”. The festive stands and plaque were the first pavilion revived by the flowery stand master, who used to draw large-scale cartoon stand every year (Fig. 10-11).



Fig. 10 Drawing above the bakery in 1980s. Adopted from 飲食男女 (Eat and Travel Weekly), 2009.



Fig. 11 Drawing above the bakery in 1980s. Adopted from 飲食男女 (Eat and Travel Weekly), 2013.

“I can’t do it anymore, the cartoon drawing took me lots of energy and physical strength,” said the painter. The daughter-in-law of the painter clarified the painter would simply add color on faded images of the existing pavilion. The old practice of drawing cartoon was no longer available as the painter became older, and it was said no young generations would like to take over the job. In this sense, the existing festival pavilions is not old but new.

The similar rituals for Mid-Autumn Festival could be viewed a nostalgic longing for past which was disappearing. According to the manager, the store had been involved in Yuen Long redevelopment project few years ago, and she was afraid of relocation, saying “even you give me a new store, everything has gone. And we don’t know whether the new location allow us to set up the flowery stand”. The reintroduction of festive pavilion is however not to be confused with the genuine tradition of handcrafting cartoons, because “where the old ways are alive, traditions need to be neither revived nor invented” (Hobsbawm 1983:9). The installation was

indeed an “invented tradition”, which effectively stimulate the memory of those who had seen the stands before and appeal to those who had never seen, while demonstrating a class identity by which owners could distance themselves from other bakery practitioners.

Since the ordinance about shop front extensions was published (2002), the penalty of having street obstruction has restricted the extravagance of bakeries in Mid-Autumn Festival, resulted in decreasing visibility of festive pavilions in modern days. In respect of the persistence for installations, the bakery was likely to embody the endurance, without destroying the imagination of public towards tradition. The display of the plaque could be installed only in tenement building with high ceiling, which legitimizes its connection with the past. Installing the festive stands takes much time and effort, which were not easy to maintain because the bakery often received complaints from neighbors about the blockage of footpath (Fig.12). It also required craftsmanship, which stimulated negotiation between the current owner of third generation and the old painter. For example, the stands were detached from the shop due to the hurricane strike on 14 September 2018, in which Tse Hing Zi, the current owner, suspected the pavilion construction was in danger of collapse, whilst the painter and his family members insisted his wealth of crafting experience, and refused to further strengthening works.



Fig 12 Unloading lanterns, part of the festive pavilions, at the day when typhoon was issuing. Wooden ladder was sitting in front of the store, covering the pavement. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

Their attitude exemplified quality of endurance essential to the imagination admired in Tai Tung Bakery, who treated the shop as “mere instruments of utility” and so they abide by the logic of imagination they project (Weiss 2002). Such decoration was instrumental of articulating the past in the present, symbolized its distinction and ornateness, thereby the shrinking scale of the decorates demonstrating commitment to keep the traditional festiveness.

### Nature Cycle with Lunar Calendar

Through classifying food into categories, a system of communication could be found between symbols expressed. Social members who acquired the same classification system would then follow a relatively stable social order that unconsciously recognized by each other (Peng 2013). The shared food ideology among owners, factory owner and shop manager has influenced the food supply pattern due to the variations associated with lunar months (Table 1).

Lunar months	<i>Eighth</i>	<i>Ninth</i>	<i>Tenth</i>	<i>Eleventh</i>	<i>Twelfth</i>	<i>First</i>
<b>Festive products</b>	Mid-Autumn Festival products	· Wedding cakes · Preserved meats			· Wedding cakes · Preserved meats · Chinese New Year products	· Wedding cakes · Preserved meats
<b>Regular products</b>		· Traditional pastries · Indigenous snacks · Bread			· Traditional pastries · Bread	· Traditional pastries · Indigenous snacks · Bread
<b>Gregorian months</b>	<i>September</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>January</i>	<i>February</i>

Table 1. Provision of products in Tai Tung Bakery, by both Lunar months and Gregorian months.

Tai Tung Bakery provides different festive products regard to Lunar calendar, prioritized over regular products that regardless to calendar, in terms of resource allocation. Three weeks before the Mid-Autumn Festival, the factory stopped producing regular pastries, and started producing various flavors of mooncakes and pig biscuits (豬仔餅, by-product of mooncakes) for the festival. Display cases were largely removed to create space. From October to January, it sold types of preserving meats cured in Mainland China. In January, it produced more fried glutinous balls and dumpling than was limitedly maintained in regular days, which are kinds of festive snacks dedicated to celebrating Chinese New Year, as well as the steamed festive cakes. While the mythology of Lunar calendar was socially adopted in classifying pastries as auspicious or inauspicious in lunar months. The factory owner was able to predict the demand level of customers, saying the off seasons of the wedding cakes are the third, sixth, seventh and ninth lunar month that generally considered to be inauspicious for marriage in Chinese culture.

Besides, the consumption of pastries has been reconciled into shared value system of relatedness to nature, originated from farming practices. Based on the traditional Cantonese slang “Harvesting in Autumn, and Storing in Winter” (秋收冬藏), meat used to be cured and stored after “Autumn Commences” (立秋), at the eighth lunar month, when the cool wind has fasten the preserving procedure. Related slang “Eat preserved Meat when Autumn wind blows” (秋風起，食臘味) has been mentioned by many customers since October. Nearly all customers touched and smelled the meats in turn to check which smell more aromatic. Their embodied

associations of food with nature reinforced the oral idioms of suggesting preserved meat should be bought after summer, which would be further embedded through enjoying the preserved meat in appropriate manner of steaming with rice in Winter. Their practice of balancing production and lunar calendar then implied their value judgement on agricultural ethics, creating imagination of taste. People with similar food imagination would then visit the shop every Autumn for buying preserved meats, developing shared taste of food over time.

After “Winter Solstice” (冬至), unlike other chain bakeries which have started producing steamed cakes few months before New Year, Tai Tung Bakery started producing the cakes one week in advance without adding preserves. Among the festive cakes, radish cakes and taro cakes are based with rooted vegetables, in which radish cakes are served with shredded radish, flour, dried shrimp and dice preserved meats, and taro cakes are served with chopped taros and flour. The reuse of preserved meat and the “wild” plants represents ideas of “natural” and “ecological”. Considering the diversity of ingredients, masters hand-stirred the mixtures to ensure ingredients and seasonings were well-proportioned after using mixer (Fig. 13). Factory owner also added one layer of sugar syrup on the baked glutinous cake, to be baked again afterwards, to smoothen the cakes’ surface (Fig. 14).



Fig. 13 A master was hand-stirring the food ingredients of Chinese New Year radish cake in the factory. Photographed by Nicole Lee.



Fig.14 Factory owner was pouring sugar syrup on the baked glutinous cake in the factory. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

Similarly, in making mooncakes, master need to control the mixing time of dough, in turn ensure the different strength of gluten protein content on every dough would not be destroyed through over-mixing. The production and consumption of food products in Tai Tung Bakery are then synchronized with the life cycle of nature, through adjusting production procedures with different characteristics of ingredients, and changing food preference with seasonal changes and traditional myths related to ghost. Different pastries products, producers and consumers are harmonized, constructing a shared value system of maintaining natural ecosystem, and was expressed through engaging production and consumption in bakery.

Nonetheless, the authority of Lunar calendar or the relevant oral idioms from ecosystem was changing and not confining to young adults or most of the middle-aged customers. Many young adults in Tai Tung Bakery bought the mooncakes on behalf of their parents, who insisted their lack of appreciation towards Chinese-styled mooncakes, suggesting that eating traditional mooncakes was not a norm among young generations. As observed, there were no young adults interested in buying preserved meats, “I don’t know them (the preserved meat),” suggested by a 24-year-old Yuen Long resident who bought a piece of wife cake. Some middle-aged

customers who bought preserved meats have never heard the related idiom before. Their decisions of eating certain food were no longer guided by the idioms, which indeed worked within social groups to construct hierarchies of generation. The slang survives in the modern societies most through the preferential adoption by owners and factory owner, who should order the raw plant ingredients of the best quality regard to the harvesting period, or the indigenous locals who used to farm and aware of the climate changed.

Whilst, owing to modernization, young adults or the middle-aged were habitual in telecommunications, in which virtual products were more appealing to them. The existence of cyberspace “displace the need for physical movement between home and work, while urban functions will no longer have a physical presence as services are delivered in electronic form” (Graham and Marvin 1996:243). The gap between rural and urban is keep shrinking from the decentralized information flow, urban ways of life could then be obtained anywhere. It becomes less necessary for the younger generations to step in the shop and associate with the food products, resulted to the unrelatedness of agriculture ethnics.

Tai Tung Bakery has preserved the mainstream of the foodways in 1940s, in which the factory owner attributed the traditional ingredient combination to the idiom, such as “combining preserved egg with ginger” (皮蛋夾酸薑), saying “this is not our invention but tradition has been passed down from the past, the perfect combinations of preserved egg and ginger were part of the mainstream, your grandparent must know this term”. It implies certain

groups of middle-aged and elderly with cultural capitals about agriculture ethnics are privileged over others, in which the legitimization of associating Chinese-styled pastries with the past, in construction of community identity “revolves around the political authority of those who hold the right to tell its story” (Pearce 1998:224). Some slangs or ingredient combinations are carried more credibility, which led to the question as to the role of food producer and how the interpretation of old food ideology play in the present.

### **Invariant Production Sequences**

The social life of pastries may involve crucial variables and invariables determines their authenticity. Andre Leroi-Gourhan (1964) created model of *chaine operateire*, or “the series of operations which transforms a substance from a raw material into a manufactured product” (Van der Leeuw 1993:240), to deconstruct the production techniques in social context. By reconstructing the *chaine operateire* in Tai Tung Bakery, analysis of Chinese-styled pastries should focus on the choices made by masters, owners, managers and customers on raw material it contains, the use of tools and technical skills, and functions of the tools, techniques, or food products associate with the nature of raw material.

In case of mooncake, there are 3 invariant elements of production including: (a) raw materials originated from Mainland China, (b) the use of mixer, (c) the molding of dough, whereas variation occurs in (d) the reason for changing taste, (e) the proficient of determining level of gluten and relevant amount of mixing time, (f) the technique used to mold the dough.

To begin with, the factory owner insisted the raw materials of mooncakes must come from Mainland China, which were of highest quality, saying “there is no alternative to replace those from China”. There was once a customer suggested she used to buy a type of mooncakes with dried oysters filled, which did not give off oyster scent as rich as those produced few years ago. Regards to this opinion, Tse Ching Yuen suspected the oysters growing method has been changed, and claimed he was no power on controlling quality of oysters, whilst factory owner attributes to the seasonality, saying the oysters harvested in Winter time were much fleshier and more tender, the oysters purchased and processed in summer time before Mid-Autumn Festival were possibly with an inferior quality. Although both producers and consumers acknowledge the change of taste and smell, the origin of ingredients would not be changed, even it affects the profits of the business.

Besides, levels of gluten of each flour varies in different size of grains, which determines the amount of time in mixing dough with sugar and water. In use of electronic mixer, masters have to check the gluten condition of every mixing dough in the mixer, by hand-squeezing the mixing dough, “despite of the same type of flour, the content of every flour is different. We have to consider when to stop the mixer, depending on our experience,” suggested by the factory owner. According to the retired masters who have engaged in mooncake production, they agreed the quality of dough plays crucial role in the appearance of the baked crusts of the mooncakes. One of the masters who have worked for 13 years claimed “we can’t use the over-

mixed dough for baking, because the broken gluten would deteriorate the quality of crust, which could not bring out red-brown color of the crust, resulted a bad impression to customer when they first see the mooncake at the shop”.

Before baking, the pastries would be shaped by molding machine, or wooden mold with which the dough would be pressed in the mold to create patterns, then it would be flipped over and tapped to detach the dough (Fig. 15). Tai Tung Bakery used to hand-tapping the dough before the introduction of molding machine. Along with the establishment of molding machine, factory owner preferred automatic molding over hand-tapping, because the pressing force from machine would not destroy the gluten level of the dough, meanwhile it could roll the pastry skin uniformly thin without any clumps on the surface. Especially, the use of wooden mold caused joint pain from repetitive hand-tapping the whole day long. Tang Wing Ceong moaned, “Even if you could endure for the first two days, you would have pain in joints of hand or wrists at the third day. Many of us had to take antibiotic drugs or get injected to relieve the pain”.



Fig.15 Tang Wing Ceong, the factory owner, was demonstrating the use of wooden mold. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

The problems from molding pastries with wooden mold could be solved by adopting new techniques, implied neither the hands nor the tools determine the values of mooncake-making.

While they are not the defining element of the mooncake-making tradition, different traditions

including the use of molding machine would therefore be developed and co-existed with the use of wooden mold, where wooden mold would only be applied for the dough with fillings weighted more than 180 grams, due to the limited capability of the molding machine.

With the invariant aspects of production series, authenticity of mooncake may bound of the underlying “topology, partonomy and sequence” (Van der Leeuw 1993:259). The properties of ingredient originated from Mainland China, masters’ embodied experience on varying dough, and technical means compatible with machinery, were preserved under continuous climate change and technological innovation. These are fundamental to construct the basic entities of the mooncake in fixed sequence: raw ingredients, crust all the way round, or the entire baked product. The form and texture of the dough was always perceived as either fully extended or broken. Abide by the concept of partonomy, the full extent of gluten in dough was considered partitionable in the mooncake production, permitting the master to use mold and ovens subsequently, whereas the “gluten-broken” dough was disqualified.

However, customers’ dialogue with tradition were associated with invariant elements including unchanged taste, hand-made techniques and local production. Many customers also valued the freshly baked pastries and bread, saying “the bun is crispy now, let eat it”. Most of the elderly and middle-aged customer were loyal to mooncakes from Tai Tung Bakery, valued the pastries as tasty, nostalgic, or decent, attributed the traditionality to notion of “real and ample ingredients” (真材實料). Despite of invariant sequence of mooncake production, with

the ingredients originated from Mainland China and with machinalized production, the values of the food product altered when the reality defied food imagination of customers.

### **Invention of Imagined Tradition**

It is suggested that customer's underlying assumption of the local production, was the better food ingredients origin with the workshop based in Hong Kong, in which Chinese-styled pastries processed in Hong Kong were given supremacy over those processed in Mainland China. "This is the real Hong Kong production," said by a local resident who was introducing the bakery to his accompanies. Nonetheless, there were certain amounts of regular local customers authenticated mooncakes of Tai Tung Bakery as the 'real thing' with unchanged taste, whereas disgusting with the texture and smell of Heng Heung mooncakes. A 48-year-old non-indigenous Yuen Long resident specifically stated the quality of Hang Heung mooncakes became worse after their factories have been moved to the Dongguan, in which the filling of lotus paste was not smooth enough and the crust contained a burning smell, who associated the changing raw ingredients' origin with workshop relocation to Mainland China. They attributed the spoiled taste to the relocation of factory, implying customers' perspective of authenticity is the origin of pastries production, and the ingredients always originate from the production base.

However, customers' wishful thinking of local production is a matter of imagination, in which the factory owner underscored the mooncake ingredients from Mainland China were of the highest quality. Their obsession with pastries of Tai Tung Bakery and overemphasis on the

quality and taste of locally produced pastries might imply the insecurity of food safety with increasing financial interconnection with Mainland China. In view of this, indigenous villagers and local Hong Kong residents were informed by images of unhygienic factory environment through the mass media. It stimulated perception towards the past, reckoning hand-made production was better, which was further realized through routinized food scandals from China factories. As Appadurai has depicted, “fantasy is now a social practice” (Appadurai 1991:198), the imagined invariant elements of production sequence does not only represent customers’ dissatisfaction of food safety in Mainland China, but also the inculcation of imaginative relationship between local production and foodways.

Recognizing customers from different localities bought mooncakes from the head retail store of Tai Tung Bakery every Mid-Autumn Festival, aligned with their exclusion of mooncakes produced in Mainland China, and association of food quality with factory location. It shows social transformation is not only the foundation stimulates imagination as a routinized activity (Weiss 2002), but also entailed concentration of dispersed regions, pastries and customers in the bakery as part of food memory, whose has higher social capital could choose to buy the less likely contaminated mooncakes, in which the imagined association of Tai Tung mooncakes and past living style become essential to the expression of foodways.

Before Chinese New Year, the master of head retail store produced freshly fried glutinous balls, which is one of the festive snacks. The use of glutinous rice, sense of freshness with hot

gas and the texture of chewiness were appreciated by many customers, who relating freshness with imaging production of master stirring the balls with hot oil in large cooking pan in the kitchen. They thought the glutinous balls were nostalgic and delicious because they believed the imagined way of cooking was real. Against the imagination of customers, masters would place the balls into an automatic fryer located at the upper floor of the store, who did not have to stir the balls and check up on them during cooking. For masters, stirring the balls in the pan was an out-to-date practice, who took the use of machinery for granted, saying “if I could promote to an upper position, I would go to the factory and learn to use more machines”. Machinery have never been excluded from the production, while they were able to satisfy their creative potential from being acknowledged of the production sequence and learning to collaborate with the machinery, arranging baking schedule by themselves.

Besides, in a food programme titled “元朗老婆餅 用新鮮冬瓜全人手製 (Yuen Long Wife Cakes, Fully Handmade with Fresh Winter Melon)”, aired on 24 July 2018 in TVB channel, Tse Ching Yuen emphasized on the hand-making features, with the bakery master standing aside kneading and molding dough to demonstrate wife cake production, contrasting with daily machinery procedures (Fig. 12-15).



Fig. 16 Using automatic mixer to knead the dough in the factory. Photographed by Nicole Lee.



Fig. 17 Using machine to produce ball-shaped pastry dough filled with paste. Photographed by Nicole Lee.



Fig. 18 Using compressor to flatten the ball-shaped pastry dough. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

Fig. 19 Using oven to bake the dough in the kitchen of the head retail store. Photographed by Nicole Lee.

Hence, the imagined tradition of non machine-based production procedures were invented and reinforced by the owner of the second generation, which does not exist in daily operation. The reality and imagined tradition would be mediated through demonstrating how masters in the past produce cakes in traditional ways. With the mass-mediated TV program promotes the dissemination of imagination, the invented tradition was generally governed by “overtly or tacitly accepted rules...which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1983:1). The sense of continuity guided customer to think mooncakes of Tai Tung Bakery were traditional, affirming the cakes were handily made, and confirmed their embodied imagination towards local production. The falsification of production could also gain profit, evident from the increased customers who claimed their acknowledgement of production process, saying “I saw the baked pork cookies were entering the oven in the TV program”.

From this perspective, the configuration of media and owner were controlled by the dominant imaginative practice of the public, in which the invented imagination constitutes the

authenticity of Chinese-styled pastries in Tai Tung Bakery. Along with the distribution of imagination, relationship between pastries and past living style become concrete. When the perceptions of the imagined foodways were cultivated over time, “habit memory” (Bourdieu 1977) was formed, customers then habitually produced “taste memory” by recreating satisfying sensory experiences associated with the smoothness and sweet-scent of lotus seed pastes, greasy smell of egg yolk oil, crispiness of nuts and absence of musty oil smell. The preferred taste of mooncakes, as social norms among the middle-aged and elderly customers, would then passed on through generations and resulted in strong attachment confined to Tai Tung Bakery.

## **Discussion**

The authenticity of Tai Tung Bakery has been constructed by different social actors, through accomplishing cultural ingratiation and integration into different culture of social groups. The bakery owners have played prominent role in building territorial networks with ethnic groups and indigenous squires, through distribution of pastries regard and regardless to Lunar calendar, in claim of unbounded geopolitical territoriality contradictory with other chain bakeries. Meanwhile, the family of Tang clan hold power on culinary resource and personnel management. Social orders were built up and recreated under gentrification in Yuen Long, through preserving the use of ingredients originated from Mainland China, the Mooncake Club, the adoption of using machinery, and the revival of festive performance, which producer and consumers were able to bring values to the Chinese-styled pastries, in which the pastries

themselves has defined the authenticity of Tai Tung Bakery.

To create the “real” Chinese-styled pastries, articulation of the food ideology is necessary to claim of its localness, in which owners interpreted the past craftsmanship for the present through mass media, producing cultural meanings to the Chinese-styled pastries, showing the bakery is “fully in the know and grasps the profound significance of these ultimately most ‘real’ of places, persons and styles,” (Weiss 2002:116). While the aura of authenticity was salient for the media who wanted to romanticize a story of tradition, masters who alienated themselves from the pastries they made, shopkeepers who were recreating the cultural landscape, and the festive installation appealing to the public, in turn compete with modernized bakeries.

Perhaps most essential is the questionable existence of authenticity, indeed the combination of imagination and mass technology bring people closer to the head retail store at Yuen Long than to local bakeries in our neighborhood. Its ambiguity and flexibility for illusion thus become necessary for the Chinese-styled bakery to survive in the urbanized city of Hong Kong, which confirms local people of different localities that their imagined old life ways could be realized, and sustained in practice through enjoying Chinese-styled pastries in particular bakery at particular festival or seasons.

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