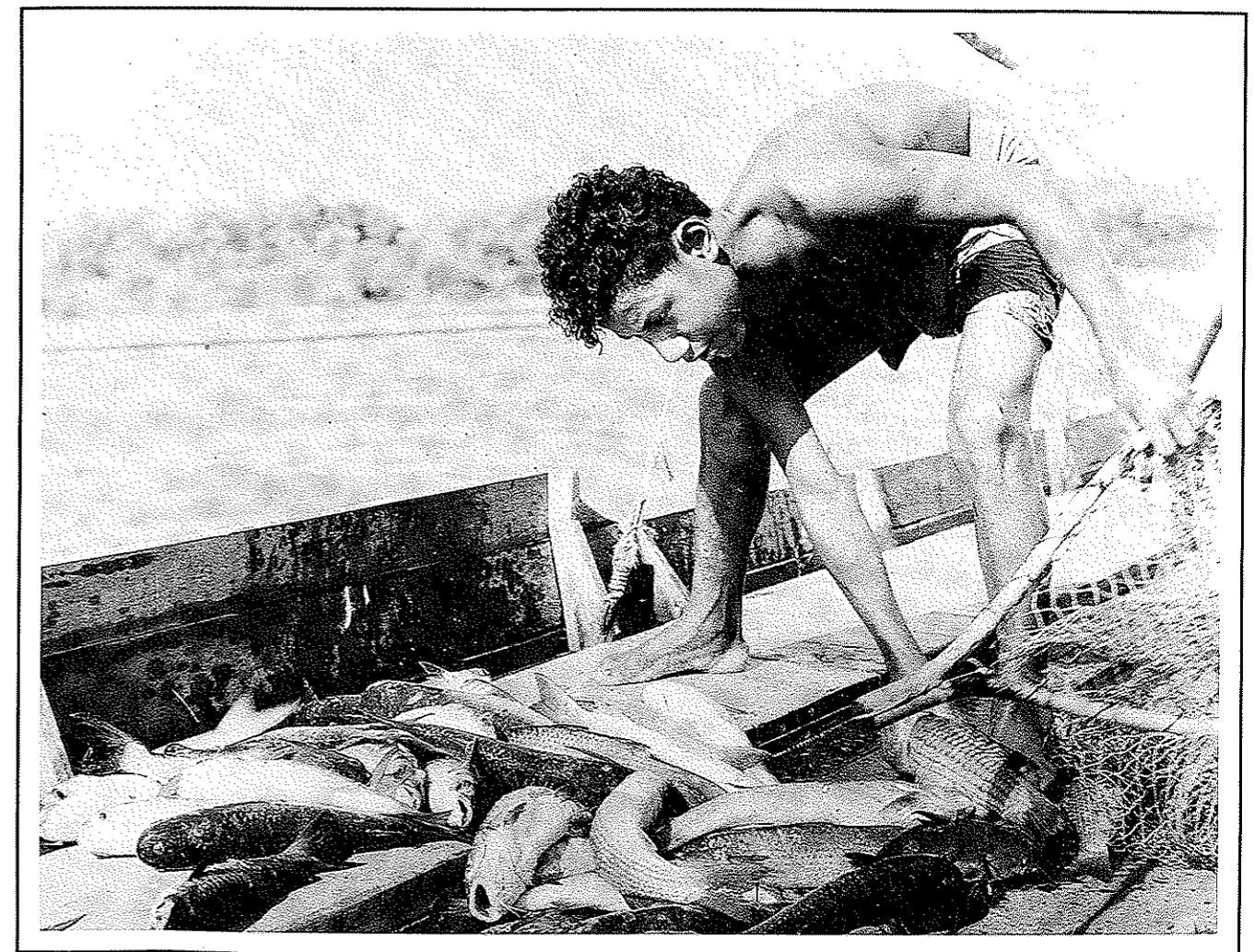


Hong Kong Anthropology Bulletin



No. **IV** JUNE 1990

FISHING AT MANUMANU • A WOMEN'S MUSEUM
PREGNANCY TABOOS • WORKERS IN SHENZHEN
THE GODDESS OF HEAVEN

Hong Kong Anthropology Bulletin

JUNE 1990

EDITORIAL

The shade of Barbara Ward, whose early death in 1983 was a tragedy, continues to inform the work of many ethnographers of Hong Kong. In particular her pioneering studies in fishing people and the role of women in society have been influential. In this issue we are proud to present a major contribution by Professor Murray Groves on the fishing people of Manumanu, which was delivered as the 1989 Barbara Ward Memorial Lecture, and also deals with recent issues in reflexive and participatory anthropology. Professor Groves, who knew Barbara Ward well, has recently retired from the Chair of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong, where for many years he encouraged young anthropologists in Hong Kong. We are pleased to be able to publish also in this issue an article by Leung Chor-On, a post-graduate student at Cambridge where Barbara Ward used to work, on the patron deities of fishing people in Hong Kong.

Other have continued Barbara Ward's work on women in the light of the recent interest in feminist anthropology. Diana Martin's article on childbirth practices in Hong Kong shows how many of the traditional customs and beliefs of Chinese women in Hong Kong still persist, while Dr. Jaschok draws attention to an exciting new project on the mainland; the establishment, for the first time, of a National Museum of Women's History in China which will emphasise women's daily life at a regional level and also include minority cultures. In terms of the encounter between capitalism and socialism which has become vital to Hong Kong's future, Siu-Mi Tam's description of the largely female labour force being attracted to the new industrial zone of Shekou is also of great topical interest.

Barbara Ward taught at Newnham College in Cambridge and the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University, as well as at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. When I returned from my fieldwork in Thailand to the School of Oriental and African Studies in London where I was affiliated, I visited my old supervisor in English Literature at Newnham College, Mrs. Sita Narashiman. What a pity Barbara was no longer with us, she mused; she would have been the perfect person to supervise me at Cambridge. Little did I know at that time that I would soon be joining the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which she helped to found. Ancestor-worship is a preoccupation of many anthropologists; I think Barbara Ward would have been happy with the growing interest in anthropology in Hong Kong.

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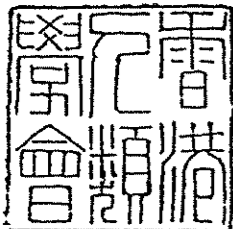
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HONG KONG ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

FISHING AT MANUMANU: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC ENQUIRY

THE BARBARA WARD MEMORIAL LECTURE 1989

MURRAY GROVES

I

I must thank the Hong Kong Anthropological Society for the opportunity to honour the late Barbara Ward by giving this lecture. I knew Barbara, and over the years since we first met— in 1967, I think— came to like and respect her. Our very first contact conveyed some of her flavour: my phone rang in Singapore, and when I picked it up a firm female voice said “Hello. Is that Murray Groves? Good. You don’t know me. I’m Barbara Ward, but not the Barbara Ward” — referring to a Cambridge economist, popular writer and pundit well known in England at that time. Over lunch, we exchanged anthropological gossip. As a result of our first meeting, one of Barbara’s students came to serve for a year as a tutor in the Sociology Department at Singapore. She was dedicated to, and believed in, her students.

Many years later, while Barbara was working at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I saw much more of her. She was a pragmatic “Let’s get on with it” kind of lady, and contributed much not only to the development of sociology and anthropology at the Chinese University but also to the work of a board set up by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority under my chairmanship to plan and conduct an A-level sociology examination in Hong Kong. While I was sitting at home for some weeks brooding as to whether we should yield to the political manipulations of the Secretary for Education, who wanted a sociology A-level for other than academic reasons, Barbara, recognising and facing the political realities, was busy at her home drafting a syllabus. The syllabus that we finally adopted was mainly hers.

If my memories of Barbara seem so far somewhat hard-edged, let me hasten to add that she was a kind and caring woman, a gracious hostess, a good companion, and a firm friend. We have missed her.

II

Before proceeding to the substance of the lecture, I should perhaps say something about my choice of topic, which was described on R.T.H.K. this morning as “somewhat esoteric”. Why talk about fishing, Manumanu, and ethnographic enquiry?

First, fishing. Some months ago I was invited to submit a paper to a memorial volume in honour of my late friend and sometime colleague, Ralph Bulmer, a social anthropologist and meticulous ethnographer whose special interest was in ethnobiology. In

collaboration with a member of the Kalam ethnic group in the highlands of Papua New Guinea he had published or prepared before he died three books on Kalam perceptions of, and relations with, birds, plants and animals respectively. For my contribution to the memorial volume, a topic with some biological component seemed appropriate, but the only biological species other than *homo sapiens* with which I have ever had any extended acquaintance were fish. This acquaintance developed at a fishing village in Papua New Guinea called Manumanu.

Manumanu is a small seaside village community, on the southeastern shore of the main island of New Guinea, in which I did more than two years’ field-work in three periods between 1954 and 1959. The people of Manumanu belong to an ethnic group who call themselves Motu, which is a common Pacific Austronesian word for reef or island. They are themselves Austronesian speaking, and traditionally had a predominantly maritime culture, fishing and trading. Inhabiting a series of villages at the water’s edge along a stretch of coast from about 40 miles east to 40 miles west of the capital city of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, the Motu have been in contact with, and under the influence of, western explorers, traders, administrators and missionaries since Captain Moresby first made landfall at the port which now bears his name in 1872. Since then, the villages closest to the Port Moresby have been urbanised, very rapidly since the Second World War.

Manumanu is the westernmost Motu village, standing at the mouth of a large, complex river estuary called Galley Reach at the head of a wide, open bay called Redscar Bay. Unprotected by the offshore barrier reef which extends along the coast past all other Motu villages to the east of Redscar Bay, the people of Manumanu had no easy access to Port Moresby and, though subjected to alien “western” influences, were still maintaining what from earlier reports of the Motu we know to have been their traditional institutions when I first landed there in 1954. Only one adult male was at that time working for wages, away from the village. All other adult males were engaged in subsistence activities — fishing, trading, and making gardens — and the women manufactured pottery and grass skirts for exports as well as gardening, gathering crabs and shellfish, and attending to household chores.

For the Bulmer memorial volume, I decided that the role of fish and fishing in the lives of the Manumanu people might be an appropriate topic, and I was working on what was intended to be a descriptive ethnographic account of traditional fishing at Manumanu when invited to give this lecture. In trying, however, to write descriptive ethnography after some years away from the task, I began to think about the nature, difficulties, and problems of ethnographic enquiry in general, particularly in the light of recent fashionable attacks on “empiricist” ethnography. The nature of ethnographic enquiry, then, rather than a narrative account of fishing at Manumanu, is the central topic of this lecture.

III

The term “ethnography” first came into use among anthropologists. Among British anthropologists in this century it has customarily referred to the descriptive and interpretative study of some particular people or culture or society, as against the theoretical, comparative study of people, cultures and societies generally. Ethnography was what cultural and social anthropologists did in the field, and wrote about later. Until recently, most anthropologists viewed ethnography as an empiricist and substantially objective pursuit. Ethnographers were seen as meticulously observing, experiencing, and recording other people’s ways of life, or cultures, and then in their written reports representing, translating, or interpreting those cultures in their own language within their own universe of discourse, whether for lay or professional audiences or both. By and large, anthropology took its ethnography on trust; accepting that what the ethnographer claimed to have observed out there in the field was a reasonably close approximation to what was objectively there, and what any other competent observer would have found there.

Anthropologists of my generation and earlier were not unaware that many ethnographers infused their own values, world-views, emotional and psychological dispositions, and imaginative creativity into their published representations of what they claimed to have found “out there”. The debate as to whether ethnography was or could be “science” began many years ago. Yet those anthropologists who rejected positivism and denied that ethnography was science did not necessarily argue that ethnography was only art, offering no objective empirical knowledge whatever — a position towards which a number of anthropologists have recently been heading.

Once the exclusive preserve of anthropologists, the term “ethnography” has now been taken over by all sorts of other intellectuals and academics, particularly philosophers and literary scholars. It has been given a new, more general meaning, to denote any writing that purports to interpret or represent cultures, particularly writing that examines the relations between cultures or seeks to interpret one culture for another. With this broadening of the field, there has been cross-fertilization between formerly separate areas of learning. Philosophers and literary critics have sought insights from anthropology’s ethnographic texts, and

anthropologists now draw on all sorts of philosophical and literary intellectual traditions — semiotics, hermeneutics, deconstruction, symbolism, etc. — in their view of their own ethnography.

As a result, in recent years there has been among anthropologists a widespread, self-conscious ferment of diagnostic and programmatic statements as to how anthropologists have in fact constructed, and how they should seek to construct, accounts of the peoples, societies or cultures that they study. Somewhere near the heart of this ferment are to be found a number of central, interrelated views. The field-work experience of an ethnographer is viewed not as a process of objective scientific enquiry, but as a prolonged, subjective personal encounter, conditioned both by the historical context in which it occurs and the personal dispositions of the parties to it. It is suggested that the way in which the ethnographer subjectively perceives, constructs and writes up his account or “text”, rather than any representation of objective reality the account purports to contain, generates ethnography’s important insights and ideas — what James Clifford (1986) has called ethnography’s “constructed truths ... made possible by powerful ‘lies’ of exclusion and rhetoric”, reflecting “the historical predicament of ethnography, the fact that it is always caught up in the invention, not the representation, of cultures”. Attention is drawn to the truism that ethnography involves the translation, interpretation or exchange of meanings between cultures, or, as Clifford prefers to put it; “Ethnography is situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders”. It is also argued that the practice of ethnography can be viewed as a political activity.

There is much that I can accept as useful in this set of ideas, though I dislike the inflated dogmatism with which Clifford expounds them and declares that they provide a programme for ethnography as “an emergent interdisciplinary phenomenon”. I must confess, however, that I very strongly resist the claim that ethnography produces, should produce, and can produce only what Clifford calls “coherent ethnographic fictions”. This does “raise” my “empiricist hackles”, to quote Clifford again, doubtless thus reflecting, as he says, “the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience”.

Acknowledging, however, as I do, the subjective component in ethnographic enquiry, I can agree with the advocates of a “reflexive” ethnography that ethnographers have a duty to give a full and frank account of their encounter with the people among whom they did their field-work. So let us turn now to myself and my own field-work.

IV

In 1954, when I first landed on the beach at Manumanu, I had with me some intellectual baggage, as most ethnographers do. From Evans-Pritchard’s writings, as well as his personal influence, I had acquired

the view that the ethnographer's aim should be to encapsulate the minutiae of the culture and social system within some systematic, abstract general account or model; a rather vague idea that an essential element in ethnographic enquiry was the identification and exploration, and ultimately the successful translation, of key concepts in the cognitive system of the culture studied; a Durkheimian belief that the essence of a social system is to be found in its collective normative representations rather than the statistical examination of what in fact happens on the ground; the notion that ethnography is more like history than anything else; and, last but not the least, a desire to write as well as he did. I did not dispute E-P's view that ethnography could be reasonably objective. As he put it: "It is almost impossible for a person who knows what he is looking for and how to look for it, to be mistaken about the facts if he spends two years among a small and culturally homogeneous people doing nothing else but studying their way of life". To this, however, I added the notion, expounded in a three-hour essay paper in my Diploma examination at Oxford, that social anthropologists were also "novelists manqué".

In 1954 I was, like most of my contemporaries, completely innocent of any of the doubts or dissatisfactions which the empiricism in our approach to ethnography has since aroused, totally unaware of such terms as "hermeneutics" and "reflexive anthropology", largely though not entirely unconcerned about the allegedly colonialist nature of our enterprise, and, though not unversed in Marxist social thought, uninterested in applying it to ethnography.

Unfortunately I have no time tonight to give you a full and final account of my encounter with the Motu of Manumanu, although such an account would be essential to any final decision as to the degree of objectivity or subjectivity in my reported results. All I can say is that a full and frank account would have to refer, among other things, to: my identity as perceived by the Motu and by myself; my connections with the colonialists; my command of the language; where I lived and slept (and with whom); my relations with individual villagers, with one of whom I fell in love, most of whom I liked, and a few of whom I disliked; what kind of records I kept, and how; what activities I actively participated in, and how; how and with whom I obtained information; how and with whom I spent my leisure; how the Motu allocated me a status position (member of a lineage group) in the social structure, and how I performed the appropriate role; and much, much more. Let me say, summarily, that my relations with the people of Manumanu became, in the later stages, more intrusive, more intimate, more instrumental, and more emotional than was, I believe, customary among anthropologists of my generation.

V

Fish and fishing loomed large in the consciousness of the men of Manumanu. When not actually fishing, their ears and eyes were always alert for the sounds or signs of fish moving in the water. They were familiar with, and had

names for, many hundreds of different fish; whereas, as their land-based horticultural neighbours used to say, they could hardly distinguish one blade of grass from another. Theirs was a predominantly maritime culture. Exploiting the closed waters of the Galley Reach estuary and the open seas of Redscar Bay, they produced a surplus of fish which traditionally they traded with inland people for garden products, and more recently with copra and rubber plantation managers for rice and bully beef and other trade-store products.

The fish they most esteemed was a fish known in Australia as barramundi, found only in river and estuary systems and the immediately adjacent open sea over an area extending from the Bay of Bengal through Indonesia to Papua New Guinea and Australia's northern shores. In the water, it is a formidable opponent. It fights back, and frequently cut its way through the traditional gill nets made of bark fibres. The Manumanu fishermen could tell from the violent agitation of the net's surface floats that they had a barramundi trying to break free, and hopefully, in hushed voices and with eager expectation, they would say "*Anama!*" (Barramundi). I myself, when out fishing with my friends, felt its mystique, and then, sharing a meal back on the beach, savoured its cooked flesh with sylvan pleasure.

Barramundi were most abundant in the wet season, the season of the northwest monsoon, from about October to March, when they came out of the rivers and the estuary into the open sea, to spawn. The other most abundant fish, silver mullet, came in large schools into the estuary from the open sea during the season of the southeast trade winds, from April to September. Barramundi and mullet were the staple catches. Over a year, Manumanu fishermen caught more mullet and barramundi than all other fishes combined.

For each of these fish, which they caught in the estuary or along the open beaches, they had evolved a technology quite different from the fishing technology of other Motu villages, who fished the barrier reef and the lagoon it enclosed.

Fishing for barramundi was done with a net called *ole*. This was an adaptation of a net used by other Motu to catch dugong and turtle. The *ole* was used as a gill net.

The *ole* was made, stored and assembled in separate panels, each ten to twelve feet deep with wooden floats at the top and large heavy shell sinkers at the bottom. These panels were tied together side by side before the net was cast into the water. The *ole's* mesh was large enough to trap a medium sized barramundi by its gills, but the net's cord, spun from bark fibre, was not always strong enough to withstand the fish's efforts to struggle free. Using the cutting bone behind their gills, barramundi often broke through the net and escaped, leaving holes in the net to be repaired before the next fishing trip.

At Manumanu each *iduhu* (the residentially localised

small agnatic descent group which made up one of the component political sections of the village community) owned and maintained its own *ole*, with enough panels to extend over about 30 feet of water. Sometimes the men of one *iduhu* would take their *ole* out by themselves, but more often two or more *iduhu* fished for barramundi together, their combined nets encircling a much wider stretch of water.

Barramundi idle and browse on the bottom, often around tree trunks and other snags, at the edges of the estuary. They were not often visible from the surface through the estuary's muddy water, but Manumanu fishermen knew where they might be. Having identified a likely spot, the men on each canoe would successively lower their nets into the water to form a circle around the fish, which they would then seek to arouse by beating the water or shaking trees or snags near which the fish might be browsing. As each barramundi ran into the net under the water, it agitated the floats on the surface, and this indicated how many fish there might be in the net. When the nets were hauled in, however, there was always the risk of finding holes in the net where fish should have been.

Though several canoes fished together, each kept and distributed its own catch. Barramundi catches could

vary greatly between canoes on one fishing trip, from no fish at all to more than a dozen, and between fishing trips. Variations were attributed not to luck or skill, but to ritual causes. The duration of a barramundi fishing trip also varied, from some hours to half a day, the fishermen returning as soon as they felt that they had caught enough or that conditions were no longer favourable. For most of the season, there was a sufficient supply to ensure that all the villagers ate barramundi regularly, and often a surplus to exchange for other foodstuffs or for areca nuts with trade partners elsewhere.

The net used for catching mullet, called *rahe*, was a net about eight feet long and six feet high, with a small mesh, attached at its base and on its two ends to wooden poles. Each household owned one, which two men or boys of the household operated. When fishing for mullet, each pair of fishermen mounted the net lengthwise on a frame above the outrigger of their canoe. At least nine or ten pairs of fishermen and preferably more, each with their own *rahe* and outrigger canoe, were needed to catch mullet. Paddling quickly, one man fore and one aft, they moved across the water, towards a reach of the estuary or towards one of the open beaches facing the bay where, given the conditions of wind and tide and swell, they felt mullet might be



Barramundi and the net used to catch them, *ole*: Groves 1957.

expected or encouraged to congregate in water of appropriate depth, ideally about three feet. When they sighted or heard a school of mullet, they paddled in formation towards it, seeking to force it inshore and encircle it in the shallows. It became a battle of wits and speedy reaction times, with the mullet suddenly changing course and the fishermen seeking to anticipate and close off their avenue of escape.

Once the mullet were driven sufficiently close to the beach or shore, the canoes formed a semi-circle around them, outrigger side to the sea. Each pair of fishermen then lifted the *rahe* from its frame over the outrigger and plunged it into the sea, the base of the net resting on the bottom, with the two side poles and the top of the net standing two or three feet out of the water, one net next to another, in a single semi-circular line cutting off the mullet's escape to the sea. Sometimes, failing to drive the mullet sufficiently close to the shore the fishermen would have to try to encircle them completely with the net at some distance from the shore. Once encircled in whichever way, the mullet reacted frenziedly, darting and leaping in all directions, seeking escape. As mullet hit the net, usually above the waterline, the fishermen picked them off with small long-sleeved hand nets from which they then dumped the fish into the hulls of their canoes. It was all over within several minutes. With luck, there could be hundreds of mullet in the canoe hulls, as many as 40, 50 or 60 in a single canoe, and the fishermen would abandon the hunt and return to the village. The two men of each canoe kept and distributed their own catch.

Mullet, fresh or smoked, were a regular part of the daily diet at Manumanu throughout the season of the southeast trade winds. Substantial surpluses were smoked and carried inland to trade for fruit, vegetables and areca nuts with trade partners in the villages of the Gabadi and Doura peoples, Manumanu's nearest inland neighbours.

VI

I turn now to discuss the social organization of fishing, and the ways in which fishing activities related to the village's social structure.

On the production side, barramundi nets were, as we have noted, the property of, and used by, members of the localized lineage groups, *iduhu*, of which the village was composed. The head of the *iduhu* was customarily the custodian of the net, which was kept on the rafters of his house's front verandah. As we shall see later, the manufacture of the net and its use were constrained by lineage ritual rules. The distribution of a barramundi catch was also a lineage group affair. The first barramundi caught was cut in two; the head section went to the senior sister (or classificatory sister) of the lineage leader, who would by marriage be residing with some other lineage group. The tail half was cooked and eaten by the fishermen themselves, on the beach, sitting around the net at the centre of the canoe, its sacred place (we shall discuss that concept later). The rest of the catch was distributed equally among all the married

adult members of the *iduhu*, including female members who had married out into other *iduhu*. As they conceived it, the men of the *iduhu* caught fish not only for themselves and their families, but also for their sisters and their sisters' families. With a really good catch, each household which received barramundi would have a surplus, which the men would then distribute to their affines, with the results, such were the ties of kinship and affinity within the village, that almost all people in the village shared in the catch. The smaller the catch, the shorter the genealogical distances over which it was distributed. The rules, embodying a fixed order of precedence, were meticulously followed.

As we have also seen, mullet nets were owned by individual households, and normally used by two male members of the household: brothers, or father and son. Although the nets of a dozen or more households joined in encircling the mullet, the fish taken from each individual net belonged solely to the two men operating that net. The mullet accumulated in the hull of their canoe. When they returned to the village, their catch was taken to their household, or, if two men from different households had worked the net, which was unusual but did occur, to their two households equally. From there, any surplus would be distributed to the households of cognates and affines, the genealogical range of the distribution again varying with the size of the catch. With a really big catch, each household would smoke its surplus mullet and take them to an inland trading partner.

VII

I turn now to the rituals of fishing. Motu religion centred around acts or things that were considered *helaga*: sacred, ritually charged, decreed and sanctioned by the ancestors. In enterprises of high endeavour, such as organizing a trading expedition or fishing for barramundi or making a barramundi net, which were all undertaken by and in the name of a lineage group, it was considered necessary to have sacramental gatherings of the participants at the *irutahuna*, or sacred place, which was in the centre of the main room of a house or in the centre of a canoe on the side opposite to the outrigger. At these gatherings, food would be shared and/or tobacco smoked. The *irutahuna*, or sacred place, was conceived as a place where ancestral spirits could in a sense be convened and honoured. Ritual offences were thought to "soil" the *irutahuna*. When a barramundi net was completed, it would be placed at the *irutahuna* of the lineage group's leader's house where a feast would be held and offerings made to the ancestors, before the net could be put into use. When the men of the lineage group went fishing for barramundi, each took a section of the net on his shoulder and, in single file, they carried the net to the beach where they assembled it at the *irutahuna* of the canoe. At the fishing grounds, the crew would assemble around the net at the *irutahuna*, sharing tobacco and betel nut, prior to casting the net overboard into the water. When asked why they did these things, Manumanu men always replied, quite simply, "because it is *helaga*: if we did not do it, our net would have no strength and we would catch no fish." What, then, if

they caught no fish even after performing the rites? Then someone must have angered the ancestors in some other way; perhaps the leader of the enterprise had intercourse with his wife the night before, thus rendering himself ritually impure, "soiling the *irutahuna*", or perhaps a member of the lineage group had neglected some important duty or had committed some positive offence against another lineage member, in that way also weakening the *irutahuna*. After discussion, and possibly with the help of a diviner, the breach of norm would be identified, and rectified, and the net would become *helaga* again, ritually potent, and would catch barramundi.

In fishing for mullet in which each net was owned by a single household and operated by two of its male members, ritual played a less significant part, though some minor ritual prescriptions and proscriptions were invoked.

VIII

In the five years during which I did field-work at Manumanu, the villagers lost their inland markets. A road was opened from Port Moresby to Manumanu's hinterland, but not to Manumanu, and the inland horticulturalists began to market their vegetable products for money in Port Moresby rather than exchange them with Manumanu people for fish. The Motu at Manumanu had no way of marketing their fish in Port Moresby. The road was too far from their village, and fish were more perishable than vegetables. They needed motorized sea transport, but their technology was inadequate to cover the capital costs; their gill nets were not sufficiently extensive, nor sufficiently strong, to maximize their barramundi catch, and the two-man mullet nets were not technologically efficient or sophisticated enough to maximize the supply of mullet.

Being a somewhat intrusive field-worker with sentimental and emotional attachments in Manumanu, I decided to play the role of innovator and provide the necessary capital equipment for the villagers to market their fish for cash in Port Moresby. The Australian National University provided, through my field expense account, an outboard motor, and I entered into an arrangement with a Port Moresby produce company for them to buy barramundi from us on the Port Moresby waterfront. They flew the barramundi to Australia. My objective was to establish a co-operative communal commercial fishing enterprise, accumulating capital by retaining 50% of the sales returns in a capital fund and paying the other 50% to the individual fishermen who caught the barramundi. I failed to achieve this objective, for many reasons, possibly the most important of which was that communal rather than lineage group or household ownership of capital equipment was unacceptable to the Manumanu people. If I had fully understood their ethos earlier, I should have foreseen this. Nevertheless, we had pointed the way to successful technological change, and after I left a number of the villagers established a thriving fishing business using powerful outboard motors and light, strong, Japanese

nylon gill nets, with the different meshes appropriate to barramundi and mullet.

IX

Well, there you have it: fishing at Manumanu. Was it really like that, or have I made it up? My own view is that I have reported mainly what was there, though distorting ideas and values and emotions of my own have undoubtedly crept into the account.

The claim that ethnography cannot be objective is usually based on one or more of the following grounds:

- (a) By being there, ethnographers change the reality they came to observe: what they are observing is an encounter between themselves and others, and not any objective reality existing outside that encounter.
- (b) Their observations are not representative: what they observe is matched or outweighed by what they don't observe, the people with whom they interact are offset by the people with whom they don't interact, etc.
- (c) Their own theoretical and intellectual preconceptions both select and also shape what they observe and how they interpret it.
- (d) Similarly, their own emotions, values, personal relations, or creative imagination may enter into the way they select, describe, and interpret what they observe.

There may just be time for me to draw attention, summarily, to some of the ways in which subjective elements have indeed entered into my account of fishing at Manumanu. In describing the technology, which by and large seems to me a fully objective account, based on direct observation on scores if not hundreds of occasions, unaffected by my personal emotions or values or imaginative concerns, I have made general interpretative statements about the importance of fish in the consciousness of Manumanu people, and I have tried to evoke the mystique which I claim attached to barramundi in Motu perceptions of fish, without being able to produce any compelling objective evidence for these suggestions. They simply emerged from my day-to-day interactions with Manumanu people. On the distribution of fish, I think I could document what I have said very powerfully from my field notes. Certainly I have not tinkered in any way with the genealogical relationships involved, and I'm quite sure I got them right, though professional anthropologists have been known to get such things wrong, as indeed the only other anthropologists to have worked among the Motu, Cyril Belshaw, did get the kinship terminology wrong. He, however, worked through an interpreter, did not learn the language, and was not able to hear the kinship terms in use repetitively, day after day, in the everyday interactions of the group he was studying. When it comes to ritual, I am aware that I have given to Motu religious beliefs a unified coherence which is a construct of my own, pieced together from thousands of particular observations and discussions of particular ritual

occasions. There was no indigenous theologian at Manumanu. Further, I am aware that when I say that Motu believe something, the status of the word "believe" is problematical. As for my venture into the commercial fishing industry, I was certainly changing the objective reality that I was there to observe, but I believe that from this attempt to change it I learnt a lot about aspects of it, such as entrepreneurial norms and views on property ownership: call it "action anthropology", if you will.

For all that, I persist in the conviction that any other competent ethnographer observing social life and Manumanu in the period I was there would have come up with a substantially similar account. Of course, there is now no way in which I can prove such a claim. Ethnographers have to establish trust.

I had also hoped to raise and discuss the question whether whatever might be considered objective in an ethnographer's account is essentially trivial, and whatever might be considered interesting is subjective – a view which I cannot accept, but again have no time to discuss.

X

The premises from which the new enemies of empiricist ethnography claim to derive their position are undeniably true. An ethnographer's encounter with the people studied, both face to face in the field and analytically in the mind, is necessarily partial and selective, deeply influenced by the historical context in which the encounter occurs and the political, moral, emotional and imaginative dispositions of all the participants, not least the ethnographer. Does it necessarily follow from these premises, however, that the ethnographer's account cannot in any measure truthfully reflect or replicate objective realities among the people or in the culture described? One of the dispositions that it was assumed, at least among ethnographers of my generation, we took to the field was what might be called a scientific temper: a determination to collect and record detailed information (which we called "data"), by prolonged, intensive, systematic observation and enquiry (called "research"), using professionally acceptable canons of procedure (called "methods"), and to relate our discussion clearly and explicitly to the data. Clifford's sneering reference to these procedures as "writing reduced to method: keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, 'writing up' results" does not invalidate them.

Like Evans-Pritchard I came to ethnography and anthropology from history, and like him I believe ethnography and history have a lot in common. I also continue to share E-P's view that what distinguishes social sciences from natural sciences lies essentially in the nature of their subject matter and not the logic of their methods, though in practice their methods involve very different kinds of research procedures and produce very different kinds of results. I believe that good history and good ethnography should be scientific in the sense that they should be based upon the meticulous, systematic

and critical evaluation of evidence and the precise, systematic and sophisticated use of abstract concepts to produce generalizations or models or theories of explanatory, if not predictive force, applicable in the case of history and ethnography at least to the particular universes, of time and place, under observation, if not, as in the case of natural sciences, to the whole universe.

Good ethnography and history also require, however, a certain concern, sensitivity, and imaginative creativity in their authors' awareness, perceptions and understanding of the human scene surveyed. An element of subjectivity is not only unavoidable, but also desirable. For the historian in his archives no less than the ethnographer in the field, every act of observation is indeed a human encounter, subject to the values, sentiments, perceptions, wit and wisdom of either party to it. The ethnographer and the historian both emerge from these encounters with a desire to explore and proclaim both the common humanity that binds them to their subjects and their subjects to each other, and also the singular individuality of particular human beings and human groups at particular times and places. As, however, they are scientists manqué, constrained by the uncertainties of their subject matter and their own subjectivity from complete scientific fulfilment, so also are they novelists manqué, constrained by the rigours of scientific method from giving fully free play to their own moral, emotional, intellectual and imaginative capacities and concerns.

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ON ESTABLISHING A CHINESE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN'S HISTORY: A PROPOSAL, A VISION; A STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES, OF SIGNIFICANCE, AND OF NEEDS. 關於【中國婦女歷史博物館】

Maria H.A. Jaschok

I. THE PROPOSING PARTIES

Li Xiaojiang, professor in the Chinese Department and director of the Centre of Feminist Studies at Zhengzhou University, in Henan Province, and Maria Jaschok, research associate with the Centre of Asian Studies, Hong Kong University, and the director of the Friends World College (New York) China Centre, are proposing to establish a National Museum for Chinese Women. It is to be set up initially in the grounds of Zhengzhou University in a currently vacant building. Later on, plans include the erection of a purpose-built Museum in a location still to be decided upon.

Professor Li is able to rely on an extensive network of contacts in the world of academia as well as in official circles. Her scholarship and her contribution to feminism through the activities of her Centre (activities which include organizing national conferences and workshops) are well-known and respected throughout China and receive the support and active collaboration of the Henan branch of the All-China Women's Federation.

It is planned that, in a division of labour, Professor Li will coordinate such activities as facilitate both the approval for designation of a building as a Museum as well as the identification of trained and qualified women to act as members of teams to set in motion the collection of artifacts.

I shall see it as my role to give publicity to the proposed Museum and establish contacts with those trusts and foundations most likely to be interested in helping to fund such a project. Also, it will be necessary to call upon the help of such scholars as are willing to contribute their expertise, time and knowledge to facilitate the foundation of a permanent collection. There are, furthermore, institutions which might usefully contribute from their experience in setting up similar projects.

For example, the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, which opened its doors in 1986, has been building up a permanent collection of women's paintings over the centuries and at the same time given space over to contemporary women artists whose works are featured in temporary exhibitions.

II. OBJECTIVES

The Museum we are proposing to establish will be the first of its kind in China. Indeed, how many are there of its kind in the world?

The objectives are, in the words of Joan Kelly-Gadol, "to restore women to history and to restore our history to women." That is, to rectify what has been traditionally too long and too insistently an invisibility of women not only in the general spheres of political, social, and economic life but also, more pertinently, in the sphere of cultural production.

Whilst in recent times, Chinese women have joined the labour force in vast numbers, have entered public administrative structures to occupy responsible positions (if less well represented in leadership roles), have been granted equal legal rights and educational opportunities – perceptions of the essential nature of women, of their natural sphere of responsibility, of their natural capabilities and limitations, have changed only slightly, or not at all. This contradictory situation then of national economic and social requirements which resulted in bringing out women from their domestic confinement, and, on the other hand, unchanging patriarchal perceptions of women as fundamentally an integral part of a more limited, bounded world, is putting on women oppressive dual roles (domestic and public), is responsible for inequalities at work and in the home, is expressive in the different sets of value judgement applied to the two sexes.

Such an institution as the projected Museum would constitute a territory which allows for a demonstration, and re-evaluation, of what are deeply ingrained gender perceptions of women's legitimate creative outlets, to display in public exhibition the extent of their creativity, imagination, and skills that have gone into work traditionally perceived to be of little transcendent value as produced in the main for non-public (invisible) domestic consumption.

It is the essential objective of such a Museum envisaged by us to recover those artifacts from obscurity, and from their (demeaning) identification with a domestic context, to bring them into the public limelight – for women to discover through a new context a new worth of their contributions to society, and thus

a new self-worth, and for men to be discovering the necessity of reappraisal and reclassification of what constitutes the stuff of history.

At the same time as it is hoped to make contributions to present-day perceptions of women's value and societal contributions, another objective would be met: that of preserving for posterity ways of life that have been structuring women's existence for countless generations. Towns and villages are changing under the impact of China's modernization drive, technology and new products coming to replace those tools and utensils as well as artifacts designed for ritual and decorative purposes which have of old served women in their work and given meaning and pleasure to their lives.

The Museum will also seek to provide an opportunity for women creative today to bring their work to public attention. Purchases of important contemporary works (in whatever medium) will form the beginning of a collection of modern art.

Most certainly then the criteria for selection of what should go into the Museum collection will closely reflect the assumptions that underlie the collection of the National Museum of Women in the Arts: that is, craft and 'high' art are not mutually exclusive; patriarchal, hierarchical divisions between craft and art are in need of revision as they reflect an ascending ranking from Nature to Culture (raw materials to civilizing artifact) which reinforces a status quo of sexual segregation along gender lines by placing craft as a category firmly in the domestic area of creativity (women's territory) and reserving art for the public arena (men's territory).

From the above other important objectives are derived. If the collection and display of such artifacts are to support the above-outlined purpose, then there is great need for suitably trained staff – museum curators, field trip directors, lecturers, and the like – to ensure a continuous upgrading and reassessment of Museum projects. Ultimately the Museum might serve also as a national training centre for aspiring curators.

III. PLANNED FEATURES

A permanent exhibition is going to house a collection of artifacts that seeks to be all-comprehensive and yet context-specific. Comprehensive in that the Han culture will be only one of the cultures; that is, minority cultures will be targeted along with the regional variations existing within the Han culture.

Every effort will be made to introduce the work created by women within an environment recreating as faithfully as possible through displays of traditional interiors, furniture, tools and implements, ritual objects and clothing, the specific cultural setting within which such display exhibits must be viewed and understood. Further reinforcement will be given through slide shows, recordings of indigenous music, photographic displays of physical environs and their inhabitants, of domestic architecture, and whatever else might be considered helpful to stir the imagination of the public.

A precedent for a more innovative staging of exhibitions can be found in the format employed by the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne, in 1985, which created fascinating tableaux as 'rooms' – replicas of traditional peasant and town dwellings – with each 'room' properly bounded in through the erection of three walls, the fourth being the 'door' through which visitors would pass into the interior. These tableaux then housed the displays which constituted the theme of the exhibition (a comparative cultural perspective on THE BRIDE). The purpose of such a format was to inspire a three-dimensional experience and thus a cultural totality into which the visitor could walk and, so to speak, 'participate'. This type of the exhibition design would lend itself ideally to the purpose for which the Museum of Women's History is intended.

We realize that the most ambitious exhibition will have little significance if the pedagogical dimension is neglected.

In China (and this is true of most countries), general attitudes, when it comes to visiting a museum and, in particular, a museum dedicated to women's history and creativity, are needful of education.

Thus it is our plan to devote as much attention to the training of staff as to the collecting of exhibits. Members of this staff would then be assigned special responsibilities for guiding visitors and lecturing on general topics relating to women: encompassing historical, anthropological, and sociological perspectives.

IV. PROJECT PARAMETERS

The museum will initially be located in Zhengzhou as we have the hope of being given almost immediately facilities. We are looking for support from both the Zhengzhou University leadership and provincial government leaders and are optimistic it will be granted, given that sources of adequate financial assistance and of expert know-how can be found. Why? Such a project is, on the whole, seen as politically uncontroversial; it is the first of its kind in China and therefore worthy of backing; and because it is the first of its kind, it will be seen as a worthy project by the University and the provincial government. We understand members of the local All-China Women's Federation branch are interested in providing woman power and material for the Museum collection.

The project is seen as proceeding in terms of several stages:

1. occupation of the building designated for the Museum,
2. appointment for positions of project directors, curators, field-trip coordinators,
3. preparation for, and execution of, fieldtrips for the purpose of collecting exhibits,
4. research for, and planning of, first exhibitions in conjunction with experienced experts,

The idea is to produce at first a pilot exhibition, focusing on a specific local culture, and taking this to a point where a first opening of the Museum gates will give the wider public an impression of the nature of the future collection, and the Museum it will provide with the publicity and support needed to proceed with its work.

As soon as first funding monies are approved, the above envisaged first phase can be set in motion. The first two years, assuming that it is possible to start in the summer of 1990, will be devoted to collecting artifacts, training staff and creating designs to stage exhibitions in an appropriate form. After two years, from 1992 onwards, emphasis will be placed also on the educational parameters which will necessitate the printing of brochures, national and international advertising of the project, and general liaison work with work units and, specifically, with educational institutions. The following years will see a solidification of the staff training program, educational activities, and quality of exhibition designs – with the activities involved in adding to the Museum holdings considered an ongoing process.

Within ten years – between 1990 to 2000 – the Museum should have acquired its basic shape; at that time plans will have matured, hopefully, for the building of a new Museum.

V. PROJECTED NEEDS

1. The different phases envisaged in the foundation of the Museum require funding that could either be a general contribution to the establishment of the Museum, or specifically designated monies for certain aspects, as described above.
2. There will be great need for consultation of experts in the relevant fields. Application for such consultative arrangements, and, ideally, for international collaboration with scholars, will be made on short-term and long-term bases. Help will also be needed in advising on up-to-date fieldwork techniques and on the collection of sociological and ethnological data.

This outline of an ambitious, urgent, significant project is presented here for advice, suggestions, and criticism.

Notes

1 This is very much a testing of waters for a project which, although considered to be of crucial importance, must depend for its birth and subsequent growth on a great deal of outside support and generosity. We invite feedback and comments from interested parties.

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RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE IN CHINA'S SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES: THE CASE OF SHEKOU

Tam Siu-Mi

In February 1978, China adopted the "Four Modernizations Program" as the overall plan for its economic development. The provinces of Guangdong and Fujian were authorized to set up four experimental "special economic zones" (SEZ) to modernize the industrial and agricultural sectors through developing enterprise, with the principal capital to come from foreign investment.

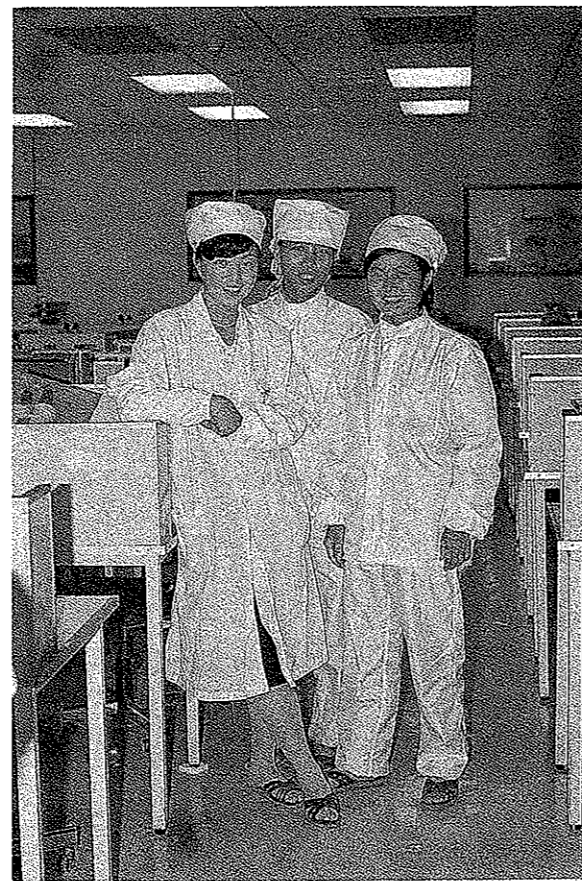
Despite the optimistic plans and their implementation by enthusiastic personnel (investors, bureaucrats and employees alike), the realization of the "special economic zone" (SEZ) as a viable measure at the interface of capitalism and socialism has not been easy. Rapid economic development especially in Shenzhen SEZ has led to fundamental changes in aspects of organization, interpersonal relationships and ideology. Here we look at how these processes take place in Shekou Industrial Zone (SKIZ), at the western end of Shenzhen SEZ.

In terms of government, the SEZs bypass the province and are directly responsible to Beijing, enjoying autonomy in most economic and administrative decisions. Innovation is officially endorsed and bureaucrats have been using "special" policies to attract foreign capital to industrialize. One important change is the way labor is secured. As the original population of Shenzhen (23,000 in 1978) could not meet the needs of the intended pace and scale of development, vast numbers of professionals, as well as all levels of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers have been hired by contract.

Together with their families, this incoming population now makes up over 90% of the SEZ's population. Coming from neighbouring counties as well as interior provinces, the immigrant workers boosted the population in SKIZ alone to over 40,000 in 1989. The SKIZ's policy keeps the population mobile because employees are required to return to their places of origin when their two-to-three year contracts come to an end. This helps to keep the work force young, while investors can keep their production costs low. However, a number of problems have arisen from this population policy. First, the resultant population explosion and its high turnover rate leads to difficulties in supplying food and basic facilities under the existing production system. Not only is Shenzhen now unable to produce enough for export, as it originally did, but it has also to import food in order to feed the industrializing population. And since most residents are technically temporary, there is an unwillingness on the part of the municipal government to design and provide long term public facilities for these

migrant workers - let alone social welfare and security.

Housing, medical and health care, and sewage facilities cannot keep up with the economic acceleration. Housing in particular has been identified by Shekou residents as their biggest problem. Workers find their living conditions stifling and lacking in any degree of privacy. In-migrants cannot reunite with their families and young people postpone their marriages because of a low supply of apartments. Even if one had the funds, the normal waiting time for an apartment is two to three years, and also depends upon one's social position and relations. Medical care for SKIZ employees is provided at nominal cost. But workers avoid going to this single hospital in the Zone for what they consider unprofessional services from uncaring personnel. The poor sewage system has become a serious environment nuisance as dumping grounds are uncovered, untreated and randomly spaced right outside homes. This is particularly serious in the older part of the SKIZ where the original residents live.



Shenzhen workers at the assembly line: Tam 1988.

In addition, the cost of living soared by 66.6% between 1979 and 1982, particularly affecting the livelihood of residents who are not employed in enterprises that involve foreign capital, and who, therefore, are not receiving higher wages. They are particularly vulnerable to fluctuating prices in staples such as rice and foodstuff such as eggs and meat. The new influx of workers and professionals has also created a wage gap. While a peasant's household income ranges from 100 to 200 yuan per month (Li and Zhang 1982), and state workers individually earn an average of 65 yuan, workers employed by foreign companies or joint-ventures earn an average of 190 yuan per month (Wu and Ip 1985). Foreign investors and expatriate professionals including those from Hong Kong enjoy living standards that are conspicuously higher than those of the indigenous population. They also tend to reside and socialize in certain areas of the city with high consumption and concentrations of commerce and entertainment. The managerial class live in seaside apartments rented for 25,000 yuan per month. They get their food and daily necessities from the supermarket which is part of a Hong Kong based supermarket chain. They go to work in limousines and ride bicycles for fun. Given their privilege of moving freely across the border while the physical mobility of local Chinese is still restricted, this group has understandably become a "higher" class whom the local people will try to imitate or will have to tolerate. As the SEZ is marked off from the interior of China by a guarded "second border", it has truly become a zone separated from other parts of the country. Both geographically and socio-economically, then, Shenzhen is closer to capitalist Hong Kong than to the rest of China. While still far from returning to the "spheres of influence" situation of the nineteenth century, a clear social hierarchy can be foreseen: first come the foreign capitalists and professionals, then come workers employed in foreign enterprises and in joint ventures, and lastly state workers and peasants.

Shenzhen is also the experimental area for a re-structuring of administrative and executive responsibilities. This decentralization of decision-making has created a tripartite city organization in which the Communist Party, the local government and the enterprise become three separate divisions, supposedly working symbiotically. They in turn interact and negotiate with foreign investors on the one hand, and with workers' councils in individual enterprises on the other. The conflicting interests of the various parties concerned, however, show that this new structure is unwelcome. Investors see it as a source of red tape which forces them continually through a maze of changing policies and conflicting advice. In the SKIZ, the picture is simpler because the China Merchants Group acts as the Zone's biggest employer/investor as well as manager/local government. Nonetheless, workers in general feel more regimented and exploited than they did before coming to the SEZ. On the one hand, they no longer enjoy the all-round facilities provided by state factories, such as free housing, childcare and pensions. On the other hand, absenteeism and sluggishness is no

longer tolerated as in the "iron ricebowl" system. Workers now have to punch in punctually every morning and work eight hours a day, plus two to four hours overtime, or be penalized.

At the grassroots level, closely-knit street/block committees throughout China's cities have been effective in taking over some responsibilities traditionally performed by kinsmen, such as providing domestic help and settling disputes. This tight social control system, however, is difficult to enforce in the fluid situation of the SEZ due to the transient nature of its working population. Para-voluntary associations are emerging among the workers. They are not formally organized, but *tung xiang* or fellow villagers help each other to adapt to urbanism by supplying company, friendship, security and recreation. They are also a source of information on job opportunities, prospective spouses and a link with one's hometown. This has further implications for the workers' interpersonal relations.

Workers in Shekou are from very diverse backgrounds. 92% of the manual laborers and 97% of the professionals currently working there come from outside the zone, mostly arranged through the Labour Bureau which organizes the overall labor supply required by the various enterprises. As in a lot of export processing zones in Asia, these workers are cut off from their family and circle of friends, and enter into new social networks in the workplace and the dormitories. But when they do not speak the Cantonese dialect, adaptation to the new environment becomes especially difficult. Another type is the young people from Baoan county itself, who have come for better job opportunities, higher pay and a more attractive lifestyle. Those who are indigenous to Shenzhen, formerly peasants or state workers, have little choice but to accept the structural changes directed by the Committee for the Management of Special Economic Zones. These categories, moreover, are variable with other factors, such as the age, sex and class of the workers, the extent to which they have been exposed to the urban capitalistic lifestyle of Hong Kong, whether they have relatives in Hong Kong or overseas, their length of stay in Shenzhen and their former occupational background.

Although much of the employment of workers is indirectly mediated by the state through the local administration, decisions in migration to the SEZ do tend to be influenced by relatives or friends who live in or have worked in the zone. The choice of being a migrant worker in a certain trade or industry therefore may imply connections, whether regional, linguistic, or cultural in nature. Such a development, carried to the extreme, may see a sub-ethnic division of labor, or even segregation, across occupations or industries. The Shenzhen municipal government, for example, has complained about the difficulty in getting local residents to do menial jobs. In the workplace, a sub-ethnic cleavage has also appeared and it starts with recruitment: a decision-maker goes to his hometown for mass recruitment of workers. Workers who are employed at the same time come to the SKIZ in the

same bus, are put in the same dormitory and on the same assembly line. *Tung-xiang* (fellow villagers) therefore have the same work age, are roommates and workmates. They rely on one another in the workplace, and spend their leisure time together. Without support from the family, workers find emotional, economic and material support from their fellow villagers. On the basis of language and similar cultural background, fellow villagers have a priority in spouse selection. This close relationship between workers affects also their relations in the workplace. Some workers come in batches from different counties; they are naturally divided into regional groups: the Hunanese group, or the Hong Kong group, or the Swatow group. Engineers and the management are either expatriates or they come from big cities in China, while clerks and workers come from different counties in Guangdong; the power structure thus fits neatly with sub-ethnicity to form a conspicuous social-regional stratification in the workplace.

In the organization of production relations, special administrative arrangements in the SEZ provide foreign investors with relatively great freedom of action, including the power to hire and dismiss workers based on individual performance. Where the government is involved in the screening of potential workers, its aim is to ensure that the workers will comply and cooperate with the demands of the workplace. Workers have absolutely no participation in the effective ownership of the enterprise. Only two workers' councils in the SKIZ have full-time staff, but they are employed by the factories. Workers' councils thus inevitably move towards the direction of mainly organizing recreational activities and playing consultatory roles in workers' welfare.

State enterprises provide most of the basic facilities the workers need: very cheap housing, meals, and day-care centres and education for their children. When a permanent worker retires, his/her children are entitled to inherit the job; medical care, insurance, pension and funeral expenses are also provided for. The enterprise, thus, for individual workers, takes on a benevolent, paternalistic role, and encourages a sense of being one big family. In the SKIZ, most welfare responsibilities are taken over by the municipal government, which carries them out with funds negotiated from foreign investors. By subjecting the workers to such a system, the process of proletarianization is accelerated and employer domination becomes more conspicuous. Workers who return to their places of origin meet problems of employment, marriage and generally re-adapting to the lower living standards in their hometown. But to stay in the SKIZ requires a totally different set of skills. This is because once their contracts terminate, workers have passed the prime age of work (especially where good eyesight is required to work with microscopes). They either move up to be supervisors, which is relatively difficult, or they have to be assigned another job in the factory. Employers find it more to their advantage to recruit new workers who will receive the lowest salary, are easier to control and physically more fit. Old workers then have to look for another job because being

employed is the prerequisite to staying in the SKIZ. Clerical and secretarial skills are seen to be the best investment that one can have. Evening classes, especially those in English, secretarial duties and computer-operation, are extremely popular. Promotion is also heavily dependent on whether one has the necessary certificate. The SKIZ is clearly on the road to diplomarism.

The change in ideology is also evident in other aspects. While discipline in the workplace is felt to be much stricter now, paradoxically there is an increasing tendency to climb up the social ladder by acquiring more cash income through more work time. Workers are identifying with capitalist ideology despite having been indoctrinated for most of their lives that the capitalist mode of production dehumanizes and alienates. One may ask whether there is a consciousness of the proletariat at all. A possible answer is that workers have never felt that they are really owners of the state enterprises in which or for which they work. The difference now is that foreign entrepreneurs have taken over the management and act as middlemen of effective ownership previously practised by the State.

The special economic zone is an experiment not only for the People's Republic of China but also for the world. The effects of the structural changes that it brings about will be significant not only for understanding socialism and capitalism as economic systems, but also for "managed capitalism" as a way of life, and whether it is really the happy medium between two ideologically contradictory systems.

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POPULAR RELIGION, PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH IN HONG KONG

Diana Martin

That the birth of a child is an important event for a family is a truism¹. That the time between the baby's conception and its birth is a time of risk and uncertainty for both mother and child is to state the obvious once again. Even the most advanced obstetric knowledge cannot anticipate all the problems, nor always provide solutions in the event of their occurrence. It follows that traditional Chinese culture, where the birth of a child is an eagerly awaited event, both for the family as a whole and also for the young wife/daughter-in-law whose status will thereby be greatly raised, is rich in ideas as to how to ensure the successful birth of a healthy infant. What, perhaps does not follow but that nevertheless seems to be the case, is that women in Hong Kong who have received modern, urban schooling and often some tertiary education and who are currently working in a sophisticated and international environment, continue to practise many of the traditional do's and don'ts. Of course, many of these are passed on to them by their mothers and grandmothers, who, given the relative lack of education for women until recent times, may themselves be less well-educated. But the ideas also receive reinforcement from other young mothers and pregnant women.

Other anthropologists have documented the restriction followed by village women in Taiwan (M. Wolf, 1972), and by illiterate, poor Hong Kong women (Topley, 1974).

Margery Wolf notes that in the village where she worked in Taiwan:

'There are many restriction placed on a pregnant woman, but few of them are for the protection of the mother. Her diet is not supplemented to assist her body in its task of building another.In fact nearly all of the restrictions placed on the pregnant woman are designed to protect the fetus, not the mother. The little god Thai-sin becomes a major character in the household's daily planning. An old lady told me that a truly virtuous woman consults the almanac before she does anything, particularly when she is pregnant. Thai-sin is a vindictive little god who moves about a great deal. The almanac tells which room of the house or part of the yard he is in on any given day. If Thai-sin is in the bedroom and out of ignorance or arrogance a pregnant woman should sew in that room, she might poke the little god in the eye. In retribution her child will be born blind. If a knife or other sharp instrument is used in the room Thai-sin is visiting, the child may be born with a cleft palate. In Sanhsia I was shown a child with a

sadly deformed hand, the result of her mother crocheting fish-nets (a cottage industry) in Thai-sin's presence. A woman in her 40's and her new daughter-in-law interviewed me one day about the frequency of cleft lips in the United States. I assumed they wanted to know if the deformity was operable. No, indeed. They were interested in whether Thai-sin was in the United States, and this was the most obvious evidence. Another woman gave as evidence of Thai-sin's power the fact that even the Japanese feared him. The Japanese colonial administration held regular house inspections to ensure a minimum standard of cleanliness, but made exceptions for the room of a pregnant woman out of consideration for Thai-sin.'

In addition, pregnant women must avoid Taoist ceremonies as these are dangerous for her.

'Before a Taoist priest begins to perform in a house, the family sends someone to warn pregnant women in the neighbourhood to close their doors. The ritualized act of driving nails into a coffin is also very dangerous. In fact, if a death occurs in the family, a pregnant woman must wear a particular kind of mourning cloth around her abdomen to protect the unborn child'.

Pregnant women must also keep out of the way of brides 'since the meeting of two persons in an auspicious state... is dangerous to both.' (Wolf 1972:137) It is not advisable for her to cuddle other people's children as this might make them *kui khi* meaning expensive or difficult to raise. It is assumed that her own children are *kui khi* during their mother's pregnancy.

Marjorie Topley (1974) who worked with illiterate women in urban Hong Kong found that:

'A pregnant woman is temporarily like a poisonous entity: forces pulling in opposite directions are contained in one body. She is described as "four-eyed"—having two eyes in the head, two in the belly. The whole entity, so to speak, is *k'ei kwaai*. She herself is polarized in the direction of cold and the fetus in the direction of hot. The woman is considered cold because internally she is losing blood to the fetus. Each month women move from cold toward hot, which they reach in the middle of the month, and then back to cold when blood is passed as menstrual fluid. Because the woman and the fetus have opposite polarizations, "wind" is generated and poison condenses in the womb. Because of this condition, which is like the incubation phase of a strange disorder, the fetal soul (*t'oi-shan*)

wanders around outside the mother's body to avoid danger. The pregnant woman should avoid poisonous foods or her "disorder" will erupt, i.e. she will go into labor prematurely and lose the child. She should also avoid foods that are definitely either cold or hot, for they will polarize the two entities further, generating more poison and wind. Her ideal diet is very restricted: no vegetables and little meat besides pork, which is regarded as neither hot nor cold but perfectly balanced. Chicken is barred because it is hot, and fish because it is either cold or poisonous. Some informants also believed that pregnant women should avoid all places of worship.'

Although I read these accounts some years ago in the course of my reading on Chinese culture, it was not until recently that I took an interest in pursuing this topic in Hong Kong. I was having lunch about two years ago with two Chinese friends with whom I worked at the time. One is an administrator and one an accountant and both were pregnant, one for the first time, the other for the second. While we were ordering our lunch (in a Vietnamese restaurant) they both started mentioning the kinds of food that they were not supposed to eat and the effect that doing so could have on the baby. Having left my anthropologist's hat at home, I tactlessly remarked: 'You don't believe that, do you?' Oh yes, they did, they replied, the conversation took another turn and I realised I had put my foot in it. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to see how far their attitude was shared by other women of their level of education. Was this another area of life in Hong Kong where traditional and modern go hand in hand?

So, recently I started asking around among friends and acquaintances who have children, preferably fairly young ones. My first informant is an administrator, 35 years old, of Shanghainese parents, she herself born and brought up in Hong Kong. She is married to a Cantonese, a Western-trained doctor. Her first baby, now 7 months old is a girl and she says there is pressure on her from her husband and his family to try again soon to have a son. The restrictions that she told me about — I shall call her Mary — fell into two broad categories and these I found to be general. They are foods that must not be eaten and activities that must not be undertaken for fear of damaging the baby or in some cases losing it altogether.

Mary's mother and sister-in-law were the main proponents of the restrictions, though she added that her mother was very open-minded and did not force any of this on her. 'She didn't even force it on my sister-in-law,' Mary commented, for of course, she herself and the coming baby would not be her mother's concern but that of her mother-in-law. However, the mother-in-law, who lived apart from the couple, knew that she could not force her ideas on Mary. She simply insisted that Mary should eat ginger after the birth and Mary went along with this. During her pregnancy Mary

was told that she should not eat mango because it is 'hot'; that to eat banana in the early months would cause a miscarriage and in the last months a premature birth. She was told not to eat crab or prawns as this would give the baby eczema. The sideways walk of the crab would also give the baby an undesirable character. However, Mary did eat crab and prawns and now that the baby suffers from mild eczema, her mother blames her for it.

Of prohibited activities, she was told not to sew or use scissors in bed as to do so would give the baby a split lip or hare lip. A hare lip would also result if the parents moved their bed. Mary said that her friends told her there were many documented cases of that happening. To move house in the first few months would bring about a miscarriage, and in fact is not advised throughout the pregnancy. She and her husband did move house a short while before the baby was born, and her mother insisted that she should have nothing to do with it and should go somewhere else for the day. Nor must a pregnant woman attend a funeral for the ghost will harm the baby. The baby will also be able to see the ghost and this will frighten it. Mary took this restriction seriously. Nevertheless she believes that a crying fit that the baby had was caused by the baby seeing horrible things that she herself could not see.

My next informant was also in her mid-30s, a University lecturer married to a foreigner. When we discussed these issues her first child was about 5 months old, born just over a month premature but strong and healthy. Like Mary's, her parents were also from the Shanghai region while she herself was born and brought up in Hong Kong. She avoided eating banana and also watermelon because of the danger of miscarrying. However as she herself has no skin problems, she ignored the restriction against eating crab and prawn. She had not come across the idea that crab would also affect the baby's character. She knew that she should not go to a funeral and fortunately the occasion did not arise. But her mother did successfully dissuade her from visiting a dying uncle in Shanghai. She and her husband did not have cause to move house, but she told me that a friend of hers waited till a month after the birth of the baby before moving, with the new house sitting empty and waiting for them.

I also discussed these matters with three medical scientists, all of whom had had children within the last five or six years. All are Hong Kong born and bred and all of Cantonese parents. I shall call them Angela, Carmen and Terry. They reiterated that the foods to avoid were watermelon and banana which will cause miscarriage in the first three months. Mango and pineapple are also harmful. Lamb should not be eaten and another informant told me this is because the character, *yeung*, for lamb, features in the term for epilepsy, (羊癲瘋). Linda Koo's work (1984) on Hong Kong Chinese views on the causation of illness upholds this idea as 16% of her informants thought that epilepsy was caused by the mother having eaten lamb. A much smaller percentage, 4%, thought that polio was caused by the mother having eaten 'something wrong'. My three

informants said that eating snake and eel, because of the scaly nature of their skins, is thought to transfer skin problems to the baby. Goose and pigeon are also to be avoided.

They also knew that using scissors in or on the bed was bad for the baby as was knocking nails into the wall. The nails could make holes in the baby's face, they said. This is an idea that seems to be quite widespread. They knew that they must not move their bed and Terry's grandmother had told her that it would make the god who guards the bed angry. Terry did not know which god it was. Angela did move her bed, shortly before the baby was born to fit the baby's cot in beside her. None had cause to move house during pregnancy. Carmen explained the restriction as being to do with avoiding lifting weights and stressful situations. They had the same explanation, in terms of physical exertion, for not moving the bed.

With regard to funerals, Terry said she would not have attended one had the occasion arisen; Carmen said that she would have; and Angela did, as her father-in-law died a few days before the baby was born. However, she observed certain precautions at the funeral that the funeral parlour attendant instructed her to observe. He gave her a red ribbon to tie around her abdomen, a piece of ginger, some pine leaves and a small pair of chopsticks. Her child still uses the chopsticks. She does not know what the ginger or the pine leaves signified. When the corpse appeared she had to turn away so as not to look at it.

Another idea I have come across, but only once so far, is that the attractiveness of a child's looks will depend on how good-looking the people near the mother were in her pregnancy. The Mongkok-based hairdresser of a friend of mine is convinced that her second baby is beautiful because she surrounded herself with good-looking people.

CONCLUSIONS

Many of the food taboos seem to fit in with notions of what food is bad for people according to the hot/cold and wet/dry principles. Koo (1976) finds, for instance, that hot/wet foods like shellfish are thought to produce 'poisonous' energy which is manifested in allergic reactions or skin eruptions such as measles. A woman in a vulnerable and marginal state will be even more likely to pass on these disorders.

How far all the foods avoided in pregnancy conform with those which are generally thought to be harmful is something to investigate further. As for the other restrictions, it makes sense on one level to see them as mechanisms for the mother to avoid stress and strain. As everyone knows, moving house is an exhausting and strenuous undertaking. It is furthermore followed by a period of unsettlement as the people involved adjust to the new environment, whether it is that of the building or of a new neighbourhood and new neighbours as well. As one of my informants pointed out, many pregnant Hong Kong women are now moving to Canada. She

wondered how they were faring.

Knocking nails into a wall is an activity during which one can hurt oneself, especially if one has, in addition, climbed onto a piece of furniture to do it. But why is this expressed in terms of the baby having holes in its face? And why should using scissors in bed be thought to cause a hare-lip? As is moving the parents' bed. Is a hare-lip particularly prevalent among the Chinese population? A senior nursing sister with many years experience of ante-natal and post-natal care tells me that this is not so. Certainly I have never noticed it to be so. What anyway is the significance and what are the associations of this minor deformity in Chinese culture?

Obviously a funeral is an upsetting occasion.

Presumably it is easier to be consistent in the practice of restrictions if they are ritualised than if they are left to individual decisions. The rules are there to follow regardless of any particular woman's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, they have the power and authority that comes from the gods or other extra-human forces. I have not yet investigated the effects of pregnancy on the other members of the family, and whether any restrictions apply to them. Cornelius Osgood (1975) says that his informants on Lung Chau in southern Hong Kong told him that the husband of a pregnant woman should not take part in the Dragon Boat races as the boat will not move very fast. It is noteworthy that his participating is not seen to affect the foetus or the mother or himself, but the activity. He will spoil the outcome for the rest of the team. Are there any other activities that will be similarly affected? Is anything that he does thought to affect the child? It would be interesting to see how much he knows about the restrictions affecting his wife and how active is his part in assisting her. Traditionally, after all, the child was an addition to his lineage and in the event of a divorce continued to belong to his family.

These findings are preliminary ones, and a good deal more people will have to be talked to, and these issues discussed in far greater depth, before any further conclusions can be reached. I cannot yet tell how generally these restrictions are observed. When that has been established one can try to ascertain how far the women's work in factories or offices is affected.

Hong Kong has had a British administration for over a hundred years in a territory which is 98% Chinese in population. A western-based medical system predominates, alongside of which are Chinese medical practitioners and above all the traditional Chinese health beliefs of the lay population. The sophisticated world of international business and finance spends a vast amount of money on *feng shui* specialists. Whenever the outcome is uncertain in a risky venture and the state of knowledge incomplete, people will use all the means at their disposal to guard against failure. The same could well be true in the 9-month period before a child is born.

Notes

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WHY DO FARMERS WORSHIP THE PATRON DEITY OF FISHING PEOPLE? RETHINKING THE WORSHIP OF *TIAN-HOU* IN HONG KONG.

Leung Chor-On

The most popular temples located on the South China coast, including Hong Kong and Taiwan, are those dedicated to *Tian-hou*, (commonly known as *Ma-zu* in Taiwan) or the Heavenly Queen. She has long been accepted as a patron deity of those who owe their livelihood to shipping. The reason for this honour is not difficult to understand in terms of how she is depicted in the innumerable legends associated with her. One of the most popular legends about her life on earth tells us that she was the daughter of a fisherman who lived in Fukien in the tenth century. After her death at the early age of twenty-eight, her fame increased when people claimed, in story after story, that they saw her rescuing fishing people and seafarers at sea.

In Hong Kong, the celebration of her birthday on the twenty-third day of the third lunar month is the most spectacular of numerous festivals. On that day, tens of thousands of fishing people and residents of coastal villages stop their work and make their annual pilgrimage to their favourite *Tian-hou* temples in the region. However, it is striking that *Tian-hou* is popular not only among the fishing people as one would expect, but also among peasants and city dwellers. I am not just saying that many people from all walks of life worship *Tian-hou*; I want to emphasize that *Tian-hou* is indeed the principal deity of many village temples or village alliance temples in agricultural communities as well as fishing communities.

C.K. Yang (1961) presents a neat functional classification of 1,786 major temples found in eight localities in Mainland China. These temples are classified "according to the nature of the main gods in each temple" (1961:8). In this scheme, *Tian-hou* is labelled as a "Goddess of Sailing" and classified under the functional category "Patrons of Crafts and Trades" (ibid., p.446). As I have pointed out elsewhere (Leung 1989:10-16), one can easily find in Yang's neat functional classification a number of ambiguous cases, even some inappropriately classified ones. But here what I consider more interesting and heuristic is to ask whether Yang's functional model of patrons can explain why *Tian-hou*, being the patron deity of the "boat people", is respected by the "land people" as the principal deity of so many village temples and village alliance temples in agricultural communities? Why do the peasants not worship *Shen-nong* or the "Creator of Agriculture" (Yang 1961:444) instead, as C.K. Yang would probably expect them to do? Is there at least a

certain degree of cognitive dissonance involved?

Before we try to solve this problem, we need a better understanding of why one deity, rather than others, comes to be particularly favoured by the people in a village. Some ideas on this occurred to me when I came across the inscriptions of stone tablets which have been kept in village temples for commemorative purposes. For example, a stone tablet dated 1798 was set up inside the *Tian-hou* temple at Tap Mun, a fishing community in the northeastern New Territories, to commemorate the rebuilding of the temple. In the inscriptions (see Faure, Luk and Ng 1986:53), it is briefly mentioned that those who have made contributions to the people are worshipped, in order to praise their virtues and to repay their contributions.

Therefore, one of the main reasons why a deity is worshipped is that he has made contributions to the welfare of the people. However, the meaning of 'contribution' here is rather ambiguous. To the fishing people and seafarers, a deity like *Tian-hou* who often protects them from disasters at sea can certainly be seen as having made a contribution to them. But a 'contribution' need not be confined only to the meritorious services of a patron deity. It depends on their own interpretations, which are sometimes strategically manipulated in order to attain certain goals. This ambiguity in the meaning of contribution and the flexibility of different interpretations of it are the major factors that make the actual practice of worship in social reality deviate from the simple patron-oriented functional model.

An inscription on another tablet, found inside the *Hong-sheng* temple in an agricultural village called Hung Ling, is even more enlightening. This stone tablet, dated 1866, was set up to commemorate the rebuilding of the temple. Besides the list of subscribers, it is stated in the inscription (see Faure, Luk and Ng 1986:120) that anyone can get what he prays for at the *Hong-sheng* temple. Although the temple was built in this particular village, the merit of the deity actually 'lights up' all the places in the four directions because the deity has proved himself to be highly *ling-yan*.

From this statement, we learn that it is because the deity is regarded by his worshippers as highly *ling-yan* that he is so popular, even among people from different places and of different occupations. The

"experience-near" (Geertz 1974:57) concept *ling-yan* is used here to mean "efficacious and able to give accurate predictions". In a recently published article, Stephan Feuchtwang translates the word *ling* as "extraordinary efficacy" and "extraordinary intelligence" (1989:18-19). However, even though grammatically speaking the word *ling* may be used as a noun, it is seldom presented in this way by native speakers of Chinese in a social context. Rather, it is more commonly used as an adjective to describe persons, deities or things. For example, when saying that a deity often grants his worshippers what they pray for (i.e., is "highly efficacious"), Cantonese speakers would say that he is "*hou ling*" and Mandarin speakers would say *hen ling-yan*.

When the term *ling-yan* is used of a person such as a fortune-teller, it means that the person can foretell the future accurately in most cases. A deity is said to be *ling-yan* when he always demonstrates to his worshippers a manifestation of efficacy and has an excellent reputation for the accuracy of his forecasts and advice. It also implies that a devotee of the deity can often succeed in getting what he prays for. The term *ling-yan* can also be used to describe things which are, in most cases, associated with divination. For example, when the saying of a *qian* (fortune stick) is said to be *ling-yan*, it means that the predictions it has given are quite accurate.

It has been pointed out that the Chinese in relation to their deities are "rather like consumers determined to get the best value for their money. Otherwise, they will shop elsewhere" (Bloomfield 1983:38). This is especially remarkable in the urban areas or new settlement areas where temples are in most cases open to the public. Under these circumstances, people can choose freely the favourite temple(s) to which they want to pay visits and make offerings, at the expense of only a small amount of money for transportation. Under this "free marketing system", one of the factors the clients will certainly consider seriously in making their choice is whether the principal deity of a particular temple is *ling-yan* or not, in order to get the best returns. Even though some worshippers may favour a less popular temple, among other plausible personal reasons, this is most probably mainly because they hold a different judgment about which of the deities is most *ling-yan*. In Emily Ahern's (1979) usage of terms, the rituals performed by a Chinese worshipper at a temple should be classified as "strong illocutionary acts" because the worshipper "intends his acts to have certain consequences, and wants what he requests" (ibid., p.9). In this sense, it seems quite reasonable for the worshipper to turn to a deity whom he believes, or whom he is persuaded to believe either by himself or by others, to be more *ling-yan* in order for his request to be fulfilled.

In Hong Kong, some of the temples which are opened to the public, such as the *Tian-hou* temple at Joss House Bay, the *Huang-da-xian* temple at Wong Tai Sin and the *Che-gong* temple at Shatin, are the most spectacular temples in the region because it is commonly believed that the principal deities of these temples are *hen*

ling-yan. On occasions of festivities such as the birthday of the principal deity, tens of thousands of people from different parts of Hong Kong and all walks of life crowd these sites. It should be noted that nowadays the significance of whether a deity is considered as *ling-yan* or not sometimes actually transcends the demarcation lines drawn by patron affiliation, community affiliation, or even ethnic affiliation. This results partly from the fact that, though their lives are heavily coloured by religious belief and rituals, most people may in fact have limited knowledge of their religion and the deities to which they are praying (for example, see Cohen 1977:3). Maybe these people do know little about the demarcation lines just mentioned, or they actually know about them but simply do not regard them as significant as the pragmatic question of *ling-yan*.

In fact, tolerance is a typical characteristic of the Chinese attitude towards religion. A worshipper may attend the celebration of the birthday of his patron deity with sincerity, but at other times, he may go to other deities whom he believes to be *hen ling-yan*. In his conception, rather than being mutually exclusive, the two activities can coexist without conflict or cognitive dissonance.

In the village world of the New Territories, the picture is a bit different. The villagers here have a stronger sense of affiliation with their own village temple or village alliance temple, because the temple is a sacred symbol of the village or village alliance itself, and the principal deity of the temple becomes the patron deity of the community concerned. Sometimes the villagers are delighted to tell legends about how the patron deity of their village helped their ancestors to win battles in feuds between villages or village alliances, which were quite common in the New Territories in the past. In fact, the temple, together with its governing organization and associated rituals, often serves as a focus of solidarity. This fact is especially significant in villages or village alliances where there is no dominating lineage which is strong or solidified enough to fight against neighbouring enemies.

Except in the case of joint celebrations of festivals, a villager dares not visit temples of villages or village alliances other than his own. For such an act may imply that the principal deity of his own village temple is not *ling-yan* enough to fulfill what he prays for. It would be a great insult to the deity to go elsewhere and certainly he would be criticized by his fellow villagers.

Therefore, in the case of village temples or village alliance temples, local-level politics and the problems of *ling-yan* are often the most significant factors to be considered in communal worship. Under these circumstances, it is quite reasonable that the villagers should often have a strong belief that the patron deity of their own village or village alliance is *hen ling-yan*. In many cases, large-scale celebrations are held on occasions such as the birthday of the principal deity or *Da-jiao*, in which the deity is praised and thanked for the efficacy and helpfulness he has shown.

With the foregoing discussion on the problem of *ling-yan*, we can now build up a simplified model of how a deity is addressed by Chinese speakers. A deity may be referred to at three different levels in a hierarchical order. For example, *Tian-hou* is sometimes simply addressed by the collective term *shen* (deity) (level 1) in contrast with other categories of the same type such as ghosts, ancestors and human beings. When the term *Tian-hou* is used without further specifications, however, she is addressed as a named particular deity (level 2) in contrast with other deities. At this level, *Tian-hou* is referred to as a patron deity of fishing people and seafarers, with many popular legends associated with her. Finally, when someone talks about "the *Tian-hou* at Joss House Bay", she is addressed as a named deity in a particular temple (level 3), in contrast to the same deity in other temples. The last case is especially interesting. When a Hong Kong Chinese says that "the *Tian-hou* temple at Joss House Bay is *hou ling*", he may not imply that in his view all the *Tian-hou* temples are equally *ling-yan*. He is just saying that the *Tian-hou* in that particular temple he has mentioned is *hen ling-yan*. At first sight, this presents a baffling problem because the speaker seems to imply that *Tian-hou* has an avatar in each of the temples dedicated to her and these avatars are not equally *ling-yan*. In fact, however, it is a quite reasonable statement because, besides those popular legends associated with *Tian-hou* as a named deity (level 2), each of her "avatars" is probably associated with a number of legends specifically concerning her efficacy at the local level which are not shared by her "avatars" in other *Tian-hou* temples. In addition, the locality of each *Tian-hou* temple has its own specific topological features associated with its surroundings. This implies that the *feng-shui* (Chinese geomancy) of each *Tian-hou* temple is different, which may be regarded as a reason for the popularity of a particular *Tian-hou* temple, and hence, the efficacy of the specific "avatar" concerned.

Finally, let us go back to the problem of why a "Goddess of Sailing" has become so popular among the peasants. When I traced the origins of the *Tian-hou* temples found in certain agricultural communities, I found that some of these communities were mainly inhabited by fishing people in the past. For example, the famous Tai Shue Ha *Tian-hou* temple, which is now the village alliance temple of Shap Pat Heung in Yuen Long District, was built about three hundred and fifty years ago by a few 'Tanka' boat people. Unlike the present landscape, the site where the temple is now standing was very close to the sea (Deep Bay) at that time. There had been a large tree at the site and the 'Tanka' people built a small temple dedicated to *Tian-hou* under the shade of the tree. That is why the temple was called Tai Shue Ha, which means "Under a Big Tree". In later periods, as a consequence of land reclamation in the area, more and more people moved in and earned their living by farming. The fishing community gradually changed into an agricultural community. Following the practice of the 'Tanka' people, the peasants also worshipped *Tian-hou* at the temple. As the population grew, the temple gradually became a village alliance temple of Shap Pat Heung.

The reason why any particular *Tian-hou* temple was built in a place which later became an agricultural community may be due to different local historical factors. The case of Tai Shue Ha *Tian-hou* temple illustrates just one of the most popular patterns and more extensive fieldwork is required to exhaust other possible reasons. Here, it is more significant to ask, as in the case of Tai Shue Ha *Tian-hou* temple, why the peasants continued to worship *Tian-hou* instead of changing their faith.

First, I doubt whether the villagers would have dared to pull down the old temple or to replace the principal deity because, in their belief, such a decision could have resulted in awful or even fatal sanctions by the deity concerned. Most likely, what they would do is to build another temple dedicated to their favourite deity. However, there is no doubt that economic and political factors would often present difficult problems to solve.

In fact, as we have seen before, tolerance is a typical characteristic of the Chinese attitude towards religion. Furthermore, the Chinese speakers have a flexible model of how a deity may be addressed. For the people in Shap Pat Heung, *Tian-hou* is likely to be addressed as the patron deity of the village alliance (level 3), rather than as a patron deity of fishing people and seafarers (level 2). The exact territory (i.e., Shap Pat Heung) where this particular *Tian-hou* resides and which she protects, and the specific name of the temple (i.e., Tai Shue Ha) will be much emphasized on many occasions such as temple festivals. Accordingly, we would expect that the people in this community would be able to recite more legends about how their *Tian-hou* rescued local farming people from disasters than fishing people. In fact, that is exactly the pattern I found there and in other similar cases such as in the *Tian-hou* temple at Tai Po Old Market. Finally, as mentioned before, the villagers will come to strongly believe that the patron deity of their own village alliance is *hen ling-yan*.

With the foregoing analysis, the problem of why *Tian-hou*, commonly regarded as a patron deity of fishing people and seafarers, is so popular in agricultural communities, will become more understandable.

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Glossary

<i>Che-gong</i> 車公	<i>ling</i> 靈
<i>Da-jiao</i> 打醮	<i>ling-yan</i> 靈驗
<i>feng-shui</i> 風水	<i>Ma-zu</i> 媽祖
<i>hen ling-yan</i> 很靈驗	<i>qian</i> 籤
<i>Hong-sheng</i> 洪聖	<i>shen</i> 神
<i>hou-ling</i> * 好靈	<i>shen-nong</i> 神農
<i>Huang-da-xian</i> 黃大仙	<i>Tian-hou</i> 天后

* Cantonese

SUMMARY OF THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

The year began on 22 March with a talk by Eric Himsforth, a former Magistrate, on 'Hong Kong Sixty Years Ago'. On 12th. April Valerie Garrett gave a talk on 'Traditional Chinese Clothing', and on May 9th. Professor Murray Groves of the University of Hong Kong delivered the 1989 Barbara Ward Memorial Lecture which is reprinted in this issue. The Lecture was preceded by an Appreciation by Kenneth Topley, a former Director of Education in Hong Kong. On the 26th. May a joint meeting was organised with the Centre of Asian Studies at Hong Kong University at which Dr. Geoff Pope lectured on 'Hominids and Early Man in Southeast Asia and North China: Recent Reinterpretations'.

Following the tragedy of 4th. June in China, Colin McKerras, Chairman of the School of Modern Asian Studies at Griffith University, gave a talk on 'Recent Events in Tibet' on 6th. June, while Elizabeth Finn, of the History Department at Hong Kong University, lectured on 'Regional Associations in Hong Kong' on 20th June. Following the summer break an outing was organised to Rennie's Mill Cottage Area in the New Territories on 7th. October, an area originally set up for refugees from China after 1949. A major anthropological event of the year was the opening of the 'Human Story' exhibition from London at the Hong Kong Museum of History, for which Dr. Pope's talk on 26th. May served as a good introduction. On October 25th. Professor Shih Hsio-Yen of the Department of Fine Arts at Hong Kong University delivered a lecture on 'Bronze Drums in South China and Southeast Asia' which was of great interest, and this was followed, on 31st. October, by a guided tour of the exhibition organised by Dr. Nina Jablonski of the Department of Anatomy at Hong Kong University.

On 4th. November the Society organised another joint event with the Hong Kong Archaeological Society; a coach tour to Tuen Mun, which featured a visit to the planned excavation at Lung Kwu Sheung Tan undertaken by the Office of Antiquities and Monuments with the Centre for Chinese Archaeology and Art at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Archaeological Society. The group also visited the historic monastery at Castle Peak. On November 21st. Veronica Pearson of the Social Work Department of Hong Kong University presented a lecture on the 'Treatment of Schizophrenia in China: A View from Guangzhou', and on 13th. December Barbara Reeve, of the Sam Tung Uk Museum, gave a talk on 'Ethnographic Conservation'. Laurence Yau, Acting Curator of the Sam Tung Uk Museum, began 1990 with an illustrated lecture on 17th. January on 'The Symbolic System of Cantonese Opera'. On February 14th. M. Joel Thoraval of the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong lectured on his recent research on Islam and 'Shifting Ethnicity on Hainan Island', while on 27th. February Dr. Grant Evans of the Department of Sociology at Hong Kong University presented an illustrated lecture on 'The Tai of Laos and Vietnam'. It has thus been an exciting and fruitful year; it seems a good idea to organise occasional events jointly with other societies and institutes in Hong Kong, and we hope this will continue. We are as always grateful to the Hong Kong Museum of History for making their facilities available to us.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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HONG KONG ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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