



The Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

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on

The Moral Economy of Diasporic Relations, the “Public Good” and the Tributary Relation in a Former Village of Shenzhen

Friday, 31 March 2017

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 115 Humanities Building

New Asia College, CUHK

A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.

In Pine Mansion, the ‘public good’ (*gongyi*) is invoked not just in the context of fund-raising among the diaspora, but also, more generally, to refer to everything economic, social and religious which is undertaken for the common good of the villagers’ life. In this talk, I retrace how, as a result of the transformations that have occurred in this former emigrant village following the making of the Shenzhen special economic zone, there has been an economic and moral valorisation of local belonging, and the moral economy of diasporic relations has changed. Pine Mansioners voice explanatory schemes that retrospectively justify the “choice” made by those who did not migrate, by placing the emphasis on the present moral rewards of having stayed. They proudly emphasize the end of the relationship of dependence toward the diaspora and the village’s newfound self-reliance in financing public goods. Yet not so long ago, large diasporic contributions played an instrumental role in the resistance of the people of Pine Mansion to governmental decisions. I focus on the collective mobilization against the shutting down of the primary school. Founded in 1914 with overseas ideas and funding, the school has a central place in the lineage and village’s history. The district government’s reaction to the protest (*kangyi*) was an ultimatum that led Pine Mansioners to self-fund and build a new school. Through this tributary mechanism, the government has been able to tap into the funding provided by Pine Mansion’s diaspora, and exploit the villagers’ emotional ties to the school, I analyse the incorporation of the state in ritual, and the strategy that was used to save the school to reveal how Pine Mansioners consider themselves to be simultaneously – and subversively – acting like the state and in conformity to its demands.

Anne-Christine Trémon is a senior lecturer in anthropology at the Université de Lausanne (Switzerland).

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME