

High Ancestors among the Hakka Chinese: Past and Present, Rural, Urban, and Global

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Anthropological consideration of ancestors and ancestor worship in Chinese religion has largely focused on genealogically close ancestors shared by small clusters of patrilineal kin. Based upon research in Hakka-speaking regions in southern Taiwan and in northern Guangdong Province on the China mainland, I want to stress the importance of ancestors at a much higher genealogical level, so far only sporadically dealt with in the literature. First, these Hakka areas share with other parts of China the genealogical importance of higher level founding ancestors, ancestors held to have been founders of the national surname itself, or at a somewhat lower genealogical level, founding ancestors for very large areas of China. These ancestors are intimately linked to the imperial Chinese state as high officials and founding ancestors within an administrative framework. Second, the appearance of these ancestors in highly variable institutional and religious contexts indicates the deep penetration of genealogical knowledge, certainly in imperial

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客家人的祖先：今昔、城鄉與全球

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人類學有關漢人宗教中之祖先與祖先崇拜的討論，大多聚焦於系譜關係較近的父亲親屬祖先。以南臺灣和中國粵北的客家地區研究為基礎，本文希望強調系譜位階較高之祖先的重要性。首先，客家地區和中國其他地區都一樣，不論是系譜位階較高的祖先（通常是全國性之姓氏的始祖）或系譜位階較低的祖先（通常是中國許多地區的開創者），都同樣具有系譜上的重要性。這些祖先和中華帝國有十分緊密的關係，他們或者是高官，或者是某行政單位的始祖。再者，雖然在制度脈絡和宗教脈絡上有不小的差異，我們卻都還是可以看到這些祖先的身影，這顯示出系譜知識強大的穿透性，而且影響所及的不僅是歷史上的中華帝國，甚至還包括當今的中國、台灣、東南亞及世界其他各地的海外華人社群。

關鍵字：祖先、客家、美濃、梅縣

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Anthropological consideration of ancestors and ancestor worship in Chinese religion has largely focused on genealogically close ancestors shared by small clusters of agnates, with an emphasis on death ritual and the transition from a deceased kin as object of mourning to an ancestor worshipped as such. The *locus classicus* for this line of research is Maurice Freedman's *Lineage Organization in Southeast China* which, while by now dated with its publication in 1958, remains the key referential source at least insofar as the shrinking community of anthropologists dealing with Chinese kinship is concerned (see Freedman 1958). Based upon research in Hakka-speaking regions in southern Taiwan and in northern Guangdong Province on the China mainland, I want to stress the importance of ancestors at a much higher genealogical level, a subject so far only sporadically dealt with in the literature (e.g., Baker 1977). First, these Hakka areas share with other parts of China the genealogical importance of higher level founding ancestors, ancestors held to have been founders of the national surname itself, or at a somewhat lower genealogical level, founding ancestors for very large areas of China. These ancestors are intimately linked to the imperial Chinese state as high officials and founding ancestors within an administrative framework. Second, the appearance of these ancestors in highly variable institutional and religious contexts indicates the deep penetration of genealogical knowledge, certainly in late imperial China, but even today in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and in overseas Chinese communities in southeast Asia and elsewhere.

Examples of the multiple roles of high ancestors include urban ancestral

halls linking administrative seat cities with rural lineages, as in Guangdong, or linking these halls to overseas Chinese ancestral association in contemporary times. In Taiwan, ancestral associations formed early during the period of Han Chinese settlement, by first settlers coming as isolated individuals or small families, focused on exactly the same founding ancestors.

The high ancestors were a manifestation of a powerful genealogical understanding penetrating deeply into society, but given meaning and dimensions by the imperial state, once again confirming that Han Chinese culture and society and the imperial system were different sides of exactly the same coin. Post-imperial culture and society continues to change, but the high ancestors still have their place and they still derive their legitimization from their positions in the old empire. Consideration of the high ancestors leads to rethinking old shibboleths, such as those regarding rural-urban and commoner-elite ties in China. At a more general anthropological level, it again questions the extent to which kinship can be disentangled from larger sociocultural formations.

My major focus is on aspects of Hakka ancestor worship during late imperial times, that is, during the Qing dynasty, although I refer to developments that are more recent. Most of the data presented here derives from my research in Hakka regions of south Taiwan, especially in the Meinong area, with Meinong known during the Qing as Minong. In the Hakka regions of both Taiwan and mainland China ancestral corporations were an important feature of the countryside; in both places income from

corporation-owned land supported rites of ancestor worship. A major difference was that in the mainland China Hakka core in Guangdong's Meixian and nearby regions these corporations were formed within densely settled localized lineage communities, which were often formed centuries ago; in the Hakka regions of Taiwan, however, these corporations commonly drew their membership from scattered multisurname villages with far shorter histories of settlement. In this paper I want to show how in spite of these and other differences there was a shared kinship culture, a shared genealogical imagination, such that the very same ancestors might be worshipped in Taiwan and China, albeit in vastly different social contexts. This shared genealogical framework thus supported social diversity at the same time that it facilitated ritual unity.

During the Qing dynasty, recency of settlement hardly discouraged Han Chinese in Taiwan from focusing in many ways on ancestor worship as a major religious activity and on patrilineal kinship for creating social ties and groups of various kinds. If associations based upon agnatic connections had been formed only through patrilineal descent on Taiwan, they would of necessity have been genealogically quite shallow and numerically very small, given the short history of Han Chinese settlement on the island. Dating from the earlier phases of the Chinese presence in Taiwan, there already is evidence that appeal to common surname for organizational purposes was hardly limited to the Hakka. The 1720 edition of the Gazetteer of Taiwan Xian (Taiwan County, not to be confused with the entire island), a predominantly Hokkien region

approximately encompassing what is now Tainan County, states the following:

In Taiwan [County] it is rare for agnates to live together [as a lineage]; when collecting money for the construction of an ancestral temple, everybody with the same surname can participate; it is not necessary [that everybody] belong to the same patrilineal descent line (臺鮮聚族，鳩金建祠宇，凡同姓者皆與，不必其同枝共派也。)(Chen 1961: 56).

On the fifteenth day [of the second month of the lunar year] people with the same surname have a banquet. They present offerings in the ancestral hall; lanterns are displayed, and there is a theatrical performance. This is called the “spring sacrifice” (十五日，同姓之人合辦酒席，致祭於祠中，張燈演戲。是謂「祭春」。)(Chen 1961: 63).

Another source confirms how common surname as an organizing orientation was understood to be different from the genealogically more intimate ties based upon shared descent from a local ancestor. The *Comprehensive History of Taiwan* (《臺灣通史》) notes how

on Qingming (the ancestors) are worshipped in the ancestral hall, and also on the Winter Solstice. After the worship, there is a feast.

In a hall dedicated to a recent ancestor, the lineage collectively undertakes to build it; in one dedicated to a distant ancestor, people of the same surname build it, collectively purchase sacrificial land and either choose a man to manage these holdings or have people take charge in rotation. Sacrificial land cannot be privately sold. Those without an ancestral hall worship their ancestors in their homes (清明之日，祭於宗祠。冬至亦然。祭畢飲福。小宗之祠，一族共之。大宗則合同姓而建，各置祀田，公推一人理之，或輪流主之。凡祀田不得私自變賣。無宗祠者祭於家。)(Lian 1962: 612).

A focus on common surname as employed for purposes of affiliation in Taiwan even during the earliest period of Qing rule, among both Hakka and Hokkien, carries with it the risk of missing the point that “common surname” really is short hand for relationship based on an assumption that common surname means common ancestry, albeit remote, and the religious acting out of this assumption through the worship of ancestors, as indicated by the above quote. Minong’s ancestral associations amply demonstrate, as we shall see, how common surname “binds” in the context of a rich and elaborate agnatic culture. In Minong these ancestral associations as a whole were somewhat better endowed with land than corporations with nonancestral orientations, known as shenming hui (神明會); certainly, with respect to their religious and social significance the ancestral associations were no less important than

were the others. Some ancestral associations focused on “surname founders” well defined in mainland south China as nation-wide ancestors, or as apical ancestors at the level of south China as a whole, the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, or with respect to various counties or subcounty districts making up the Hakka heartland. Others dedicated themselves to the worship of more recent mainland or Taiwan forbearers.

Because each ancestral association was an independent corporation, and because -- all other things being equal -- a man could belong to as many associations as he wanted, it is not surprising that within a larger agnatic framework different associations could fix on different ancestors. Affiliated with each of the more numerous surnames in Minong were several ancestral corporations focusing on different mainland ancestors as well as others dedicated to the worship of ancestors who came to Taiwan or were born there.

That organizers of different ancestral associations oriented themselves and selected defining ancestral foci from within a wide range of possibilities, ranging from Han-period figures such as Xiao He to recently departed forbearers certainly testifies to this agnatic culture which, from an analytic point of view, should be kept quite separate from the actual composition of agnatic groups of one kind or another.

Agnatic culture in Minong and the other south Taiwan Hakka areas was formed and fed by the immigrants from mainland China. Some aspects of this mainland tradition bear notice, due to their relevance to agnatic culture and forms of agnatic organization as these emerged in Minong. As is well known,

genealogical knowledge was recorded in the form of the written or printed genealogies themselves, as inscriptions on the ancestral tablets found in ancestral halls, as the calligraphy gracing the walls and columns of these halls and in many cases as the inscriptions upon graves, especially those of key focal ancestors. Equally as important, if not more so, was the institutionalization of genealogical relationships, which both drew upon and contributed to the body of genealogical knowledge. Institutionalization of genealogical relationships in the form of tight-knit residential lineage communities represented one extreme on a scale of social intimacy, such that genealogical relationships helped structure and frame daily village life. This form of institutionalization is what most anthropologists writing about “lineage” organization have had in mind. At the other extreme, genealogical institutionalization was expressed through the placement of major ancestral halls along lines suggested by a hierarchically arranged territorial framework, thus structuring in genealogical terms the relationships between entire communities distributed over large areas, relationships usually of special concern for regional elites.

On the mainland, agnatic inclusion was facilitated by placing genealogical connections within such large territorial frameworks. As described in the *Shiku Yizheng*, a late Qing description of Zhenping County in the Hakka heartland, in the towns and larger cities,

The local custom is to lay great importance on lineage branching.

There is not one of the large and small surnames that does not have

a temple (ci) in the county seat. In addition, in the prefectural capital there is the great ancestral temple (dazongci), which is jointly built by the lineages of the different counties. Ju Dajun says that ‘the dazongci is the temple for the founding ancestor.’ (俗重宗支，凡大小姓莫不有祠。一村之中，聚族而居必有家廟，亦祠也。 州城復有大宗祠，則併一州數縣之族而合建者也。 屈大均曰，大宗祠者始祖之廟也。)(Zhao Huang 1970: 157, 158)

In the Zhenping [now Jiaoling] county seat, at least 21 different surnames were represented by ancestral halls (zongci), according to the modern Jiaoling County Gazetteer, which notes that the “data are incomplete” (JCLGEC 1992: 669-670). There were numerous zongci in the larger Jiaying Prefectural seat, which today is Meizhou. In several of these, which I have personally visited,¹ the worshiped founding ancestor is the same as the apical ancestor appealed to by south Taiwan Hakka ancestral associations. In Meizhou, the zongci was a unifying focus, not for individuals of the same surname but from different villages, as in Taiwan, but for lineage villages of the same surname. By placing their zongci in an urban county or prefectural administrative center, with its yamen and examination hall, the rural lineages within that administrative unit were not only linked to each other, but also to the state. That a city would provide an ancestral focus for rural lineages is but one manifestation of

¹ I was in Meixian December 26-27, 2015 and August 19-22, 2016, visiting zongci important during Qing and in recent years revived.

rural-urban interconnectivity in late imperial China, so different from the rural-urban contrasts held to characterize Chinese society in more recent times.

In the genealogy of the Huang lineage of Chengguang, a village in Jiaoling, it is described how after his death in 1736 special tablets were placed in different ancestral halls to honor and venerate Huang Zuobin, an eminent lineage member who was a high degree holder and government official: tablets were placed in the Zhenping County seat Huang Ancestral Hall (Huangshi zongci), in the Jiaying Prefectural seat Huang Ancestral Hall, and in the Guangzhou provincial seat Huang Surname Academy (Huangshi shuyuan). Huang Zuobin's tablets did not attest to his genealogical centrality within the hierarchy of ancestral halls; rather, these halls framed the territorial dimensions of an agnatic community that even at the provincial level could claim Huang Zuobin as one of its members and take pride in his achievements (Jinbao Huang 1919: 100).² Note that by extending tablet placement to the provincial level, connections were established beyond the Hakka settlement zone, connections with implications for provincial or even national level elite formation.

In the progression from closer to more remote ancestors, genealogical

² This is an example of what in an earlier article I characterized as “associational” agnatic kinship, in contrast to the “fixed genealogical” mode (see Cohen 2005: Chapter 6). Szonyi (2002: 90-137), with respect to the Fuzhou area, sees the elite-style ancestral halls (cǐ) as characteristic of an earlier phase in the development of patrikin culture, with popular, lineage-based halls following later and becoming characteristic feature of Qing institutions of ancestor worship. However, in northern Guangdong, and most assuredly elsewhere, these elite cǐ remained of crucial importance, even with the spread of ancestor worship. For a description of an ancestral hall in Guangzhou built by a regional coalition of lineages, and serving members of these lineages coming in to take the government examinations (see Baker 1977).

scale is expressed as territorial scale; that is, the extent to which genealogical position encompasses an increasingly broad scale of inclusion as far as living descendants are concerned is given physical expression through the situating of ancestral halls at different towns or administrative centers, which themselves are arranged in terms of increasingly broad scales of territorial inclusion. This melding of genealogy and territorial-administrative hierarchy comprises an element of agnatic culture whereby shared place presupposes a genealogical connection; this is genealogical knowledge of how people related agnatically can be defined by their shared territorial frame, be this at various levels, such as *xiang* (sub-county region 鄉), county, or prefecture. Thus, genealogical knowledge presupposes territorial knowledge, so it is not surprising that the highest level of territorial inclusion is in fact China as a whole, as demonstrated by the use of hall names (*tanghao* 堂號) that linked every surname to a place of origin in the old north China heartland of the Han (some surnames had several *tanghao*, thus several places of origin; not all *tanghao* had geographic referents). Such territorially scaled genealogical reckoning of necessity includes stated histories of movement; an ancestor many generations removed who is worshipped as the founder of a particular lineage village will not necessarily be a significant focus of attention outside the village unless there has been movement from the village or other forms of recognition. Among the tablets in local lineage halls there could be found those dedicated to local founding ancestors as well as those inscribed with the names of surname-founders of much larger regions.

Thus another perspective encompassed in genealogical knowledge relates

to lineage organization per say, and in the Hakka heartland, dominated by powerful local lineages, such organization was represented by perhaps the most cohesive and intimate forms of multi-family organization among the Han Chinese during Qing. The solidarity of lineages or lineage segments was given support by so-called communal architecture in the form of structures in the Guangxi-Guangdong-Fujian Hakka area variously known as weilongwu (especially in Meixian and Jiaoling), weiwu (as in these latter counties and in the southern Jiangxi Hakka regions), and tulou or wufenglou (especially in western Fujian).³ The by now famous weilongwu compounds of Meixian and Jiaoling were made up of concentric semi-circles of joined living quarters, such that the family household was defined less as an independent unit and more as incorporated into the larger lineage or lineage segment community, with the weiwu representing similar arrangements in western Jiangxi. If anything, discrete residential households were absorbed architecturally into larger kinship units to an even greater extent in Yongding and elsewhere in the Western Fujian sections of the Hakka heartland (as well as in nearby non-Hakka areas), where the often large fortress-like tulou structures obliterated from the outside any physical expressions of social differentiation, presenting nothing but solid walls with long narrow openings from which weapons might be fired during sieges. Inside the tulou were concentric circles made up of living quarters joined together, with each household absorbed into a multi-tiered arrangement of living space, whereby the location at different

³ On these Hakka structures, see Lin and Lin (1992), Hanmin Huang (1994), and Wan (1997).

levels of kitchens, bedrooms, storage rooms and so forth would be standardized for all or most households. Ancestral halls were in all of these structures, which housed intimately interacting communities formed in the first instance precisely based on criteria of generation and descent.⁴ At the most intimate level of community life, then, genealogical relationships within the framework of lineage organization supplied vocabulary of daily life. In sum, the perspective of agnatic culture was one of agnatic communities, tight-knit in their inward-looking solidarity, but at the same time placed in space that was both territorial and genealogical, such that this cultural orientation blurred and rendered circumstantial the distinction between intimates and strangers within an agnatic framework.⁵

Interesting evidence of the position of genealogical knowledge in mainland Hakka agnatic culture is provided by a late Qing-period letter that a Zhenping lineage member wrote to certain of his Taiwan agnates living in Longdu Village in the Minong region. The entire letter reads as follows (also refer to the genealogy below):

4 This is not to deny the possible importance of major differences in economic circumstance, although I have no information on this point with respect to internal social arrangements in such dwellings. The same would apply to differences in gender and relative age, of obvious importance in structuring social ties in all Chinese communities.

5 See Cohen (2005: Chapter 5) for a discussion of the impact on family and social relationships of membership in a corporately well-endowed local lineage.

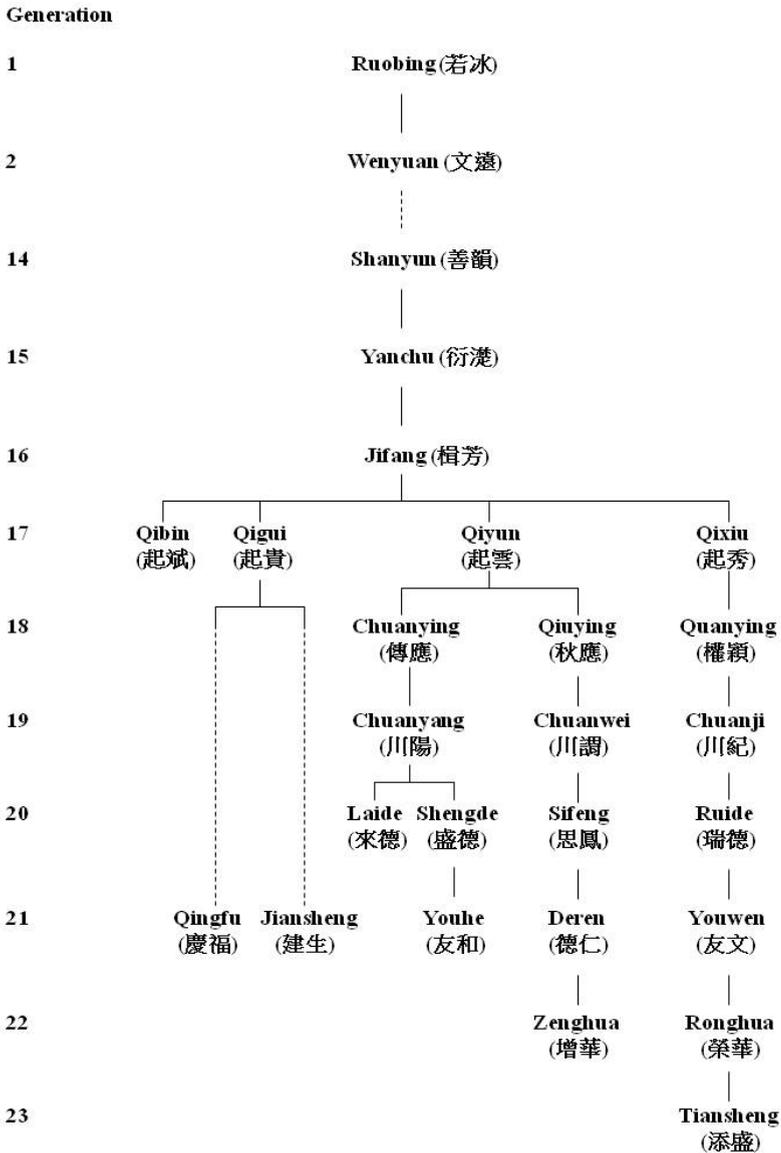


Figure 1: The Zhong (鍾) Genealogy

Now in the midst of summer, when warm breezes are blowing across the willow banks, it is indeed a good time for us to have a pleasant gathering. Yet we are separated by mountains, rivers and great distances, and it is most unlikely that we will be able to meet. In spite of the distances that separate us, my thoughts have always been with you. Today, I am fortunate enough to meet with our relatives A'zhi, Menglang, and Hongxi who recently returned here to their native village from Taiwan. They mention that Laide, the 21st generation descendent of the honorable Qiyun, as well as Zenghua and Youhe, the 22nd generation descendants of the honorable Qiyun, now living in Longdu Village and Longbei Village, of Fengshan [County] in Tainan, are all enjoying great prosperity, with many descendants in their families. Unfortunately, back in our native village, the descendants of the honorable Shanyun have not received the same kind of blessings and we do not know when they will become strong and prosperous. Moreover, by the time the honorable Shanyun's descent line has reached Qingfu and Jiansheng, the 21st generation descendants of the honorable Qigui, their families have only six children and are very poor. I do not know when we will be able to bring glory to our ancestors. Furthermore, the graves of the honorable Shanyun and Yanchu have been severely damaged. Their descendants are exceedingly poor and thus not able to carry out ancestral rites, nor repair the graves' damages.

Everybody says that our locality has extremely good fengshui; why then do I still suffer hardship? From now on, I hope that you, my senior brother Laide, would seriously considering coming back with our various [patrilineal] uncles and nephews to our native village to look and see how I could repair and improve the graves. Otherwise, I shall be plagued with worries both day and night, without ever being able to find peace. Today, back in our native region, there are many houses and properties available for purchase and sale. As the times have changed, might you not be thinking of returning home? Please think about it, think about it, and never forget it! Words are not sufficient to express fully what I want to convey to you. Sincerely, I wish you three, Zenghua, Laide, and Youhe much prosperity and good fortune. Please also convey my regards to our [patrilineal] uncles, nephews, and brothers. Written by your humble junior brother Qingfu on the 13th of the fourth month.

There is no way for me to determine if Zhong Qingfu was relying on written materials for the details on the genealogical links with his Taiwan relatives, although it is not difficult to imagine that at the very least much information was provided even by the ancestral tablets to which Qingfu was constantly exposed. According to a modern Zhong genealogy published in Taiwan, (Zhong and Feng 1971: 20, 43) the common ancestors of the mainland letter-writer and those to whom his letter was addressed in Minong's Longdu Village, include Shanyun and Yanchu of the 14th and 15th generations,

mentioned in the letter, as well as Yifang in the 16th. According to this genealogy, Yifang had four sons: two, Qiyun and Qixiu, went to Taiwan while two, Qigui, and Qibin, remained on the mainland (Zhong and Feng 1971: 43). Thus this letter concerns itself with the varying fortunes on Taiwan and the mainland of the 21st and 22nd generation descendants of the brothers Qiyun and Qigui, these latter being in the 17th generation and thus four or five generations removed from the various parties of immediate concern to Zhong Qingfu. The generation count takes Zhong Ruobing as the founding ancestor (1st generation). As the Xuxi (xiang or township) Founding Ancestor, he is the regionally based focal ancestor for many of the Zhong in the southern Taiwan Liudui Hakka regions; it is Ruobing who provides the otherwise unspecified genealogical link between A'zhi, Menglang, and Hongxi on the one hand, and the lines of descent from Shanyun on the other. However, as between Qingfu on the mainland and Laide, Zenghua, and Youde on Taiwan, the links are indeed made clear for they form the basis of a personal appeal for assistance; yet the foundation of this appeal is a shared ancestry remote enough to confirm how agnatic reckoning was a deeply embedded dimension of the Qing-period worldview.⁶

6 The genealogy I use here deals with the Zhong from all over Taiwan; while the brothers Zhong Qiyun and Zhong Qixiu -- who went to Taiwan -- and Zhong Qigui -- who stayed on the mainland -- are included in the genealogy, no descendants are indicated for the latter, who was the ancestor of the person who wrote this letter. I have no doubt that the compilers of the modern genealogy did not have access to the information in Zhong Qingfu's letter, in the absence of which Zhong Qigui is nevertheless remembered and recorded since he was the brother of the man who came to Taiwan. It may be that his descendants were forgotten on Taiwan during the long period when the island was cut off from communication with the mainland, at least by those contributing information to the genealogy's compilers; or it may be that Zhong Qingfu's worst fears had come true and in more recent years no descendants were left to remember his line.

Obviously, a broad casting of the patrilineal net also was very much part of the orientation of the Taiwan agnates, as demonstrated by their return to their ancestral mainland community. Although for Qingfu's purposes Qixiu, the other brother who went to Taiwan, does not figure into the genealogical connections he wants to draw upon, this third brother was also an ancestor for some in the Minong region, including Zhong Tiansheng, who in his autobiography provides another example from the Taiwan side of the continuing importance of deep agnatic genealogical reckoning. Although he describes events more than 20 years after the onset of Japanese rule, his actions then were obviously based upon cultural orientations formed as he grew up in Qing-period Taiwan:

In the dingsi cyclical year (1917), I was fifty-one years old. I recalled that ever since our ancestor Qixiu migrated to Wuluo Village in Taiwan and established himself there, up to the present sixth and seventh generations there has not been a single descendant who has gone back to the old homeland to make return to our ancestors for the kindness and bounty they bestowed upon us. It is my humble opinion that as a tree has its roots and a river its fountainhead, it is the same with our line of descent, so how can we forget its origins? Throughout my life, all I could hope for was that I would finally realize my aspirations by returning to the old homeland -- as I had to -- so as to show gratitude for the virtue of our ancestors. Thus on the twenty-third day of the third month (May 13, 1917) I

obtained written authorization from the [Japanese] government to travel abroad. On the 25th day, I began my journey to Guangdong Province, Shantou Port, and from there to Jiayingzhou, Zhenping Xian, Xuxi Xiang, Qixing [Village]. First, I paid my respects at the all-township ancestral hall and then I purchased cows, pigs, goats and other articles so as to make offering to the ancestors and the ancestral tombs. I invited more than two hundred people to a banquet in order to add to the glory of our ancestors. I also paid my respects at the tombs of the founding ancestor honorable Ruobing, the second-generation ancestor honorable Wenyuan and at each of the tombs of later generation ancestors⁷.

By worshipping at the tombs of Ruobing and the later ancestors, and at the ancestral hall, Zhong Tiansheng explicitly invokes the kinship ties also appealed to by Qingfu in his letter. The point here is that the genealogical foci of the territorially institutionalized hierarchy of ancestral halls serves in fact to define a popularly known genealogical hierarchy, and in Taiwan this knowledge was applied to the formation of the ancestral corporations appealing to various levels of genealogy. In comparing Minong in Taiwan with Meixian and Jiaoling on the mainland, we can see two different forms of genealogical institutionalization, but with one form of genealogical knowledge. In Taiwan, we shall see how this genealogical knowledge was

⁷ From the unpublished autobiography of Zhong Tiansheng. Zhong's autobiography is found in two manuscripts, copies of which are in my possession, the first dated 1927, the second 1934. They are largely but not completely identical and here I use the 1934 version.

combined with knowledge of place as fed by traditional understanding of local terrain, especially below the county level, but feeding into the administrative system hierarchy at the county level or beyond.

In Taiwan, genealogical knowledge derived from and shared with the mainland was applied in a very different context, with immigrants from numerous mainland villages and regions forming an agnatically heterogeneous population. This heterogeneity was not simply characteristic of the Minong region as a whole, but rather extended into its major component villages. Two factors can be singled out as especially important in encouraging this development. The first is precisely recency of settlement: the first Hakka Han Chinese arrived there only 159 years before the Japanese assumed control of the area. Since Hakka migration to Minong continued throughout Qing, by the end of the period a good many families had histories of settlement considerably less than the 159-year maximum. The second factor is that surname heterogeneity was characteristic of Hakka settlements from the outset. It is said that Minong Village was first settled in 1736 by over 40 people comprising 16 different surnames. Six surnames were represented among the immigrants first coming to Longdu in 1737. In Longdu, a local document relates how, after 1738, a *guanshi* (管事, village manager or village head) was appointed. In the document it is noted that “since persons of mixed surnames lived together and dissension could not be avoided,” one of the *guanshi*’s duties would be to “attend to minor and serious incidents occurring in the village” (MTGCC 1977b: 1215). Later, in 1748, Zhongyun was first settled primarily by persons with the Li and Liu surnames, entering via

Minong and later joined by others such that the pattern of mixed surname settlement was well established and maintained throughout the Minong region.⁸

That this pattern was still characteristic of the Minong area by the end of Qing is shown in Table 1. For this table, which conveys the dimensions of surname heterogeneity and surname representation in Minong, I use data from the 1902 Japanese cadastral survey. In that survey there is identified for every plot of land a proprietor or owner (*yezhu* 業主), which may be an individual or a corporation. In the latter case, a manager (*guanliren* 管理人) is also identified, and a few plots have managers even though they are listed as owned by individuals. Additional individuals are in some cases listed as having use rights due to conditional purchase (*dianzhu* 典主), as owners of “large rent” rights (*dazu* 大租), or as managers of associations having such large rent rights or conditional purchase use rights.

8 On initial settlement of the different Minong area villages, see MTGCC (1997a: 35-58).

Table 1: Minong Family Heads by Surname, 1902

Family Heads Surname	Number	Family Heads Surname	Number
劉	305	羅	26
鍾	217	涂	23
林	210	謝	22
黃	161	何	22
張	133	廖	19
陳	133	馮	17
李	123	王	16
吳	80	童	15
曾	77	梁	14
宋	70	卓, 鄭	12
溫	54	巫, 郭	9
楊	69	莊, 許	8
邱	67	葉	7
蕭	66	江, 盧	5
傅	53	麥, 高, 藍	4
古	47	賴	3
朱	38	左, 鄧, 韓, 芮, 余	2
徐	36	杜, 卜, 月, 利, 馬, 詹, 蔡, 唐, 練, 沈, 蘇	1

Note: This table includes all owners or right holders after eliminating those where residence is indicated as being outside Minong. The total is 2,229 people, down from the gross total of 2,333. All individuals recorded in the Japanese 1902 cadastral survey of Minong are taken to be family heads, in conformity with the Japanese practice of identifying owners, co-owners, pledge custodians, and managers of land, housing, or other forms of property covered by the survey, large rent rights or conditional purchase use rights.

In generating a master list of names, I combined into one database the names of all these persons and after eliminating non-residents of Minong, I merged the data into a list of unique individuals, which I then subdivided

simply based on surname. Because I used the cadastral survey, and not household data, the numerical breakdown of surnames has as its basis family heads only; as we know, families as corporate entities held rights to property, but the cadastral survey simply identifies each family by the name of its head. The survey will have missed those in Minong having no rights of any kind to any land, not even to the sites of residential compounds. Generally, the head of each component family in such a compound is listed as a joint owner, such that the landless poor in the vast majority of cases were included in the survey at least as co-owners of compounds, so that very few family heads were missed. In any event, given Minong's population of about 10, 000, the 2,229 persons included in the cadastral survey without any doubt can be held to be accurately representative of the dimensions of surname distribution. They amount to about one-quarter of the estimated population at that time.

That only 14 out of these 2,229 were women confirms the formidable focus on male authority within late imperial society, but also tells us, obviously, that these cadastral data include about half of the male population such that we can confidently use them for considering surname distribution in a population where patrilineality and virilocal residence were dominant arrangements. The 14 women, by the way, all have among the most commonly encountered surnames – be they natal surnames or those of marriage -- and thus do not influence data concerning different surnames or their distribution. In cross-checking surname data drawn from the cadastral survey with the surnames of individuals in the Japanese household registers, only three

additional surnames were discovered dating from pre-Japanese late Qing, each representing one instance of a women's marriage into the Minong administrative region from the outside, this being precisely a circumstance under which surnames would be missed by the survey. It can easily be seen from Table 1 that surname heterogeneity is the condition of every administrative village, with representatives of eleven surnames found in all six. Of the 56 different surnames found in the Minong area, evidence from household registration data as well as from the building sites included in the cadastral survey show all to be fully established in Minong by the end of Qing in that the presence of each surname is in the form of families, not isolated individuals, with at least some men from each of these surnames Minong-born and thus representing the continuity of settled agnatic descent lines.

Thus throughout the Qing period Minong was characterized by mixed surname settlement even at level of its constituent villages, not to speak of the region as a whole. Agnatic heterogeneity was characteristic even as far as each of the different surnames was concerned, or at least those where there were enough men to allow for it. Making up a population of a particular surname would be people from different mainland villages, lineages, and regional descent lines. Such heterogeneity hardly hindered powerful religious or organizational expressions of agnatic concerns. Indeed, it was mainland agnatic culture that in the first instance provided ideals of agnatic solidarity and genealogical knowledge in the form of the widely known and widely shared higher-level descent lines, such that in Taiwan immigrants from different

mainland villages and districts knew the common ancestors around whom they could organize. In Taiwan this genealogical knowledge combined with knowledge of place, that is, place of origin on the mainland as fed by understandings of native place local subcounty spatial hierarchies and also, at the county level and above, by the administrative system hierarchy. Location and genealogy were combined in the organization of ancestral associations. As has been noted frequently in the literature, the importance of Taiwan-born ancestors, or of the ancestors who made the move from the mainland to Taiwan, increased in tandem with the length of Han Chinese settlement on the island, the obvious point being that it took time to produce local-born ancestors, and even more for there to be generational depth sufficient to allow for the kind of intimate segmentation and branching characteristic of the larger mainland local lineage communities. As far as Minong is concerned, the Japanese cadastral survey of 1902 recorded ancestral associations as these had developed during the preceding 166 years, since the first arrival of the Hakka-speaking Han Chinese.

Thus the associations recorded by the survey fall into two large categories according to whether they worshipped mainland or Taiwan ancestral figures, it being understood that categorization of associations says nothing about membership per se, since people could and did own shares in several associations. Among associations with mainland ancestral figures, some focused on national surname founders such as Chen Hu 陳胡 of the ancient Zhou period, or the high Han Dynasty official Xiao He 蕭何; others on later

eminent figures such as Zhu Xi 朱熹, the venerable Neo-Confucian scholar, or Liao Guangjing 廖光景, another Song scholar-official. Most of the mainland figures selected as objects of worship by the Minong ancestral associations are regional founding ancestors (kaijizu 開基祖), with some associations, including the largest, focusing on ancestors held to be founders with respect to the entire Fujian/Guangdong Hakka heartland.⁹ Such major regional founding ancestors were (and still are) quite well known in both the Taiwan and mainland Hakka regions, and in Minong, as elsewhere, the names of these founding ancestors are commonly inscribed on tablets centrally placed in domestic ancestral halls together with those of closer ancestors. People see the names of these ancestors every time they enter the hall, for ancestor worship at particular times, but far more frequently simply as a consequence of everyday activities. Those founding ancestors chosen by Minong associations include regionally famous figures such as Gu Zongyue 古宗悅, Wu Jipu 吳吉普, Li Huode 李火德, Lin Pingshi 林評事, Qiu Xiao 邱休, Zhang Huasun 張花孫, Huang Rixin 黃日新, Wen Jiulang 溫九良, Liu Kaiqi 劉開七, and Zhong Kui 鍾達. Many lower level regional ancestors are also represented, including founding ancestors for Mei or Zhenping counties as well some founders of subcounty regions (*xiang* 鄉 or *bao* 堡).

9 The Hakka heartland of course includes adjacent areas of Guangxi. Nevertheless, the local genealogies and the genealogical summaries included in many of the introductions to association account books reflect the fact that most Minong Hakka traced their descent from long-established lineages in Guangdong, especially those in Zhenping or Mei counties. The common understanding in all of these documents is that within the Hakka heartland movement to Guangdong was from earlier settlements in Fujian; in the context of mapping a hierarchy of founding ancestors, Guangxi is not relevant.

But far less common are associations in Minong taking as an ancestral focus a mainland ancestor whose agnatic sphere of influence, so to speak, was confined to that of a village level founding ancestor, that is the founder of a mainland lineage still otherwise restricted to one community at the time of migration to Taiwan. Given what appears to have been the relatively few people from any particular mainland village who might find themselves once again living close by on Taiwan, the mainland ancestral focus usually represented an appeal to an agnatic ideology of social intimacy precisely so as to establish such intimacy among people with the same surname but from different mainland communities and regions.

Yet such lower levels of agnatic identification could be accommodated, especially by the larger associations, those appealing to major regional founding ancestors. Almost all association account books include a list of the original “share names,” by which a share is identified either by the name of the first shareholder or by an ancestor he chose to honor. In some associations, especially those drawing members from relatively many villages from within the south Taiwan Hakka region, there may be indicated on top of a share-name the name of the shareholder’s village or town in Taiwan. In others, however, the similarly placed identification is what is referred to as his “hu, 戶” or mainland place of origin. This term, which literally means “household” has, in the mainland and Taiwan Hakka regions the extended meaning of “a number of households with the same founding ancestor” (Zhong and Feng 1971:

58-9).¹⁰ In other words, this term conveys a specified geographic identification that asserts genealogical linkage.

The ancestral corporations in the 1902 records taking as their focus Taiwan-related ancestors can also be placed into two broad categories. First are those dedicated either to *laitaizu* 來臺祖 (Ancestor who came to Taiwan) or to a post-arrival ancestor who founded the agnatic line in a particular community, that is to a local *kaijizu*; it is obvious enough that under most circumstances a *laitaizu* will also be a *kaijizu*, but a *kaijizu* can also be several generations removed from his *laitaizu*, in that some of the founders of new local agnatic lines had moved from elsewhere on Taiwan. In the second category are generationally closer Taiwan-born ancestors for whose worship land was usually set aside during the process of family division, such that the corporation shares owned in the first instance by the brothers or (in a few cases) by the paternal nephews were acquired not by purchase, but according to the terms of the family division contract.

Ancestral corporations formed through the purchase of shares by men belonging to different families are known to the Hakka as “public ancestral

10 This term derives from the old Ming dynasty taxation system, whereby “official registry as a fiscal household [hu 戶] was a social honor for families to cling to as long as they could” (Dardess 1997: 75). According to Szonyi’s analysis, this Ming era state-imposed fiscal household was in its own right a major factor behind lineage formation and development in the Fuzhou region (Szonyi 2002: 56-89). Through time and family division, the number of families within the hu would increase thus turning it, de facto, into a unit of agnatic organization which outlived the Ming system that gave it birth. The Minong material shows that the transformation of what originally was the Ming fiscal hu into an agnatic unit went even beyond the local lineage, however, for in the Minong ancestral associations the hu is a unit of agnatic reckoning in most cases figured based on territorial rather than genealogical identification. For the purposes of a high-level association it is assumed that a hu identifies a genealogically coherent population of agnates, although, genealogies or sections of genealogies will sometimes identify a descent line as a hu.

estates” (gong chang 公嘗) or as “association share ancestral estates” (huifen chang 會份嘗); the former term refers to the quality of a new corporation as being open through share purchase to any man qualified on the basis of sharing descent from that corporation’s chosen ancestral focus; all with such a qualification are eligible to purchase shares, and those who do not are excluded from corporation membership. Corporations of this kind include all focusing on mainland ancestors, and some of those focusing on litaizu or kaijizu. Corporations created as an outcome of family division are known as “private ancestral estates” (si chang 私嘗) or as “sacrificial ancestral estates” (xie shi chang 血食嘗), both terms reflecting the fact that shares in such corporations are obtained as one procedure of succession to the family estate as based upon patrilineal decent line: the estate is private because succession rights to a share are the only basis for receiving one; it is “sacrificial” because it is created so as to protect and subsidize what is already the ongoing worship of a close ancestor.

The high ancestors, be they national or regional, who framed the rituals of small ancestral corporations in Taiwan were precisely those to whom the large urban-based ancestral halls in China were dedicated. If the urban ancestral halls were an important concern of the imperial degree-holding and merchant elites during the Qing era, the fact that ordinary farmers could bring to Taiwan knowledge of these high ancestors identifies kinship as a major factor with respect to rural-urban and elite-commoner social and cultural integration in late imperial times. My brief visits to Meixian City in Guangdong Province during

the past two years came at a time when rural lineage ancestral halls were being refurbished, as were several urban halls dedicated to high ancestors. All had been destroyed or put to other uses during the Cultural Revolution or at an earlier phase of the Maoist era. Among the urban halls newly revived were those of the Huang surname, dedicated to Huang Rixin, the Liao surname, with Liao Guangjing as the ancestral focus, one with a focus on Li Huode, worshipped by the Li surname, and yet another dedicated to Yang Yunxiu, taken as a focal ancestor by the Yang. As noted above, all of these high ancestors also served as foci of worship for Taiwan ancestral associations. The vast majority of what had been Meixian City's many ancestral halls remain unrecovered, but during brief interviews, it emerged that every high ancestor I could think of, as based upon my Taiwan research had had his ancestral hall in Meixian City.

During Qing what is now Meixian was the seat of Jiaying Prefecture, which was composed of four counties. In China's traditional examination system, tests given at the county level merely qualified those passing to take the prefectural exams, which awarded the lowest level and most common degree, shengyuan or xiucai. So it is not surprising that the various ancestral halls in Meixian tended to cluster in the vicinity of the examination compound, for one of the services provided by these halls was to make space available where examination candidates with the appropriate surname could spend a few days and nights prior to taking the tests. These candidates generally came from rural lineages located in the prefecture's different

counties. Also from different parts of the prefecture were the merchants and degree-holders who would present themselves at the prefectural seat ancestral hall bearing their surname and the tablets of their high ancestors. These urban ancestral halls were supported by contributions from the lineages bearing the surname, from wealthier private individuals, and through the selling of space where a family could place the ancestral tablets of close kin. The tablets in an urban hall did not comprise a complete statement of patrilineal genealogy, very much unlike the arrangement of tablets in many rural lineage ancestral halls, where lineage membership through birth guaranteed the men tablet space after death. In the urban halls, the high ancestor maintained his status precisely because the position of his tablet was not placed based on close genealogical connections with the mass of tablets arranged around his. Thus, these ancestral halls made common surname an urban asset for they in fact served to “departicularize” agnatic ties by framing them within very large-scale regional and administrative contexts.

It is not surprising that the tight-knit rural lineage in China has been an object of anthropological fascination since the mid-20th century, for this was a period when the lineage as a cultural and social form was heavily represented in the ethnographic literature, especially in British social anthropology and largely with reference to societies then under British colonial rule. Freedman’s research on the Chinese lineage was framed by this mainly British literature, and while he recognized and provided good analysis of ancestor worship within the local lineage and its significance with respect to lineage

segmentation, his consideration of state-lineage relations dealt with other matters, and rural-urban ties were largely absent from his consideration. Present-day anthropology, with its de-emphasis of the local in favor of connectivity and globalization is perhaps better suited to fill in the gaps in the understanding of the scope and significance of ancestor worship in China, as with respect to the links between city and countryside and between China and overseas areas of Chinese settlement. I suggest that the high ancestors are key to rounding out such an understanding, and while my discussion has been confined to Hakka-speakers in Guangdong and Taiwan I would hope that future research will broaden the picture considerably.

In the meantime, examples of the contemporary significance of high ancestor worship can be drawn from some of the recent publications of the revived ancestral halls mentioned above. The Meizhou Yang Surname Ancestral Hall, where the Yang high ancestor Yang Yunxiu is worshiped, puts out a bulletin, printed in color on glossy paper, and in the issue of September 3, 2015, page 3 (out of 4), there is a chart summarizing, by place of origin, contributions to the Hall during the period 1999-August, 2015. I list these areas of origin in Table 2, showing contributions from over large regions of China as well as from territories beyond the China mainland:

Table 2. Origin of Contributions to the Yang Ancestral Hall

廣東	Guangdong	馬來西亞	Malaysia
廣州	Guangzhou	湖北	Hubei
江西	Jiangxi	山西	Shanxi
廣西	Guangxi	湖南	Hunan
福建	Fujian	上海	Shanghai
貴州	Guizhou	日本	Japan
四川	Sichuan	吉林	Jilin
模里西斯	Mauritius	山東	Shandong
新加坡	Singapore	遼寧	Liaoning
臺灣	Taiwan	北京	Beijing
香港	Hong Kong	海南	Hainan
澳門	Macao		

Source: No Author (2015a)

The wide distribution of those making contributions largely reflects a shared perception formed during imperial times of Yang Yunxiu as a common high ancestor, but some of the contributors are more recent migrants from the Meizhou region. In either case, what is shown is the continuing significance of high ancestors in contemporary culture.

Another perspective on the importance of halls for high ancestors within an urban setting (present-day Meixian) can be seen from those included in one category in a list of contributors to the restoration of the Meizhou Great Ancestral Hall for his Excellency Guangjing of the Liao Surname 梅洲廖氏光景公大宗祠, as published in that hall's bulletin. Placed together in list are Meizhou ancestral halls of other surnames, all dedicated to their respective high ancestors, as follows:

江夏文化研究會 Jiangxia [Huang surname] Cultural Research Association

梅州市張氏宗親會 Meizhou City Zhang Surname Clan Association

梅州市李氏宗親聯誼會 Meizhou City Li Surname Clan Club

南門李氏祖祠管委會 Nanmen [Meizhou] Li Surname Ancestral Hall Management Committee

梅州市羅氏宗親聯誼會 Meizhou Luo Surname Clan Association

南門羅氏宗祠管理會 Nanmen [Meizhou] Luo Surname Ancestral Hall Management Committee

梅州市葉氏宗親聯誼會 Meizhou City Ye Surname Clan Association

梅州市葉氏始祖大經文化研究會 Meizhou Ye Surname Founding Ancestor Jingwen Research Association (No Author 2015b)

The various associations based in different ancestral halls are not only situated within large-scale regional and international networks based upon common high ancestors; they also are significant social groupings within the Meixian urban context, such that each frames an activist elite for whom interaction with similarly placed elites in other associations is one important means for the expression and preservation of their social standing.

That worship of the same higher-level Hakka ancestors could characterize the rituals of small ancestral corporations in Taiwan and those of large urban-based halls in China identifies kinship as a major factor as regards rural-urban and elite-commoner social and cultural integration in late imperial times, continuing on to the present. Certainly, as far as the Hakka are concerned, this kinship framework has also contributed importantly to the formation and reinforcement of a shared identity.

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