CHINESE LINEAGE AND SOCIETY

FUKIEN AND KWANGTUNG

M. FREEDMAN

ROUTLEDGE

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS MONOGRAPHS ON SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS MONOGRAPHS ON SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Annual Worshipping at the Tombs of Ancestors

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MAURICE FREEDMAN

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PREFACE

I published *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* in 1958.[1] It was an attempt to bring together what I then knew about its subject, mainly from published work, and to discuss the role of unilineal descent grouping in China against the background of anthropological theory. When I finished it I knew it was not ended, for I was conscious of having failed to tap the existing sources in Chinese and Japanese, and I was confident that my exercise in the armchair anthropology of China would fairly soon be improved on both by people sinologically better equipped than I and by field workers able to take advantage of the possibilities for research open in the New Territories of Hong Kong.

My confidence, especially in respect of the field work, was well placed; several anthropological studies have been made in the New Territories in the last five years or so (my own very brief one among them); and I have decided to continue the argument begun in *Lineage Organization*. But this new book is no more conclusive than its predecessor. It is able to call on more facts and I can write about them with greater assurance now that I have myself explored the New Territories and established from the evidence of my own eyes what, in timorous moments, I had earlier feared might be the product of a too enthusiastic imagination. Yet this second instalment is by no means the end of the story. The great bulk of the field work in the New Territories is still unpublished. The same is true of the field research in Taiwan which has an important bearing on the provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung. And we are merely at the beginning of the period during which the written genealogies and gazetteers (*fang-chih*) laid up by Chinese society and the documents produced by Japanese administrators and scholars in Taiwan will be fully exploited. A third instalment will be necessary in a few years' time, although it is very unlikely that I shall be its author.

It will be clear that I have not been able to remedy in this book

[1] London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, no. 18 (reprinted with typographical corrections, London and N.Y., 1965).

all the defects of the first, but since 1957, when *Lineage Organization* went to the printer, my view of Chinese social organization has been enlarged by several experiences. First, I have read in the new Western work on the sociology and social history of China. In recent years this literature has greatly increased, and, coming mainly from the United States, it places us deeper in debt to American scholarship. Second, during the years 1962 to 1964 I was lucky enough to take part in a series of seminars on the sociology and anthropology of China organized by the cumbersomely named but very agreeably conducted 'Sub-committee on Chinese Society of the Joint Committee on Contemporary China of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council'. In these seminars, as well as in other, less formal, settings, I was privileged to have access to the learning and experience of specialists whom, along with the people responsible for organizing the seminars (especially Mr Bryce Wood of the Social Science Research Council, New York), I should like very warmly to thank. Third, I have done more reading in the older literature on China – and re-read much of it, finding (the pleasure must surely be common) that it comes alive all over again as new questions are put to it. Finally, I was given the opportunity in 1963 to make a short field trip to the New Territories; it tied my earlier speculations to a living reality and gave me the chance to look more deeply into the documented past of the Kwangtung county of Hsin-an from which the New Territories were created in 1898.

This book draws on the newer literature, on older writings which I had not previously used, and on my field work in 1963. I have resisted the temptation to set out the results of this field research in great detail because they will be better presented independently of a work intended to be about southeastern China in general.[1] But I think it will be clear that many of the changes that have taken place in my view of society in Fukien and Kwangtung are attributable to my experience in the New Territories. It is for that reason that I must stress its importance.

[1] A preliminary account of my field research was given in a mimeographed report prepared to be read by officers of the New Territories Administration: *A Report on Social Research in the New Territories*, Hong Kong, 1963. A sketch of some aspects of New Territories society is given in my paper, 'Shifts of Power in the Hong Kong New Territories', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1966, Leiden.

In February 1963 I began a period of field study in the New Territories. It was cut short after three months by my falling sick, but in that time I had come near completing a general survey of social conditions and research needs. The survey was carried out under the auspices of the then newly created London-Cornell Project for the study of Chinese and South-East Asian societies, an enterprise financed jointly by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Nuffield Foundation. My work was in addition financed partly out of a Ford Foundation grant made to the London School of Economics and Political Science, and I was in several ways assisted by the New Territories Administration. I acknowledge all this aid with gratitude and record my appreciation of the help and advice given me in Hong Kong by Mr J. B. Aserappa, District Commissioner New Territories, and his officers and staff, especially Mr G. C. M. Lupton (District Officer Tai Po) and Mr Tsang For Piu; by Mr K. M. A. Barnett; by Mr J. W. Hayes; by Mr C. T. Leung; by Mr K. W. J. Topley; by Dr Marjorie Topley; and by Mr P. K. C. Tsui. In writing these names I acknowledge only some of my debts to the people who made it possible for me to move freely and profitably in the New Territories.

In the course of carrying out the survey I was able to confirm my earlier opinion that some of the guesses made in *Lineage Organization* could be tested by both historical research and anthropological field work in the New Territories. True, the historical materials are thinner than I had expected. There appears to be only a small amount of Chinese documentation bearing directly on the New Territories. But there is more than has yet been collected in the way of land deeds, genealogies, and engraved inscriptions. In an ideal world of historical and anthropological scholarship somebody would be paid to gather in or copy all that remains. (It is not only paper that perishes; inscribed stones and boards are removed and lost. It is more than an antiquarian and nostalgic *cri de coeur* that appeals for the rescue of the monuments of what, in the present state of the world, is a privileged part of China.) When the information to be culled from these Chinese sources is combined with the data from British documents and the memories of old men, there will be an opportunity to say something illuminating about a corner of southeastern China in the last years of the Ch'ing dynasty. An impressive example of what can be achieved

by using these varied sources of information on the past is given in a series of papers by Mr J. W. Hayes, a Hong Kong civil servant who was at one time a District Officer in the New Territories.[1]

As for anthropological field research, there are abundant opportunities for work on lineage organization and topics germane to it. The groundwork for the study of New Territories rural society has already been laid by Miss Barbara E. Ward, Miss Jean A. Pratt, Professor Jack Potter, Mr H. D. R. Baker, and Mr R. G. Groves. Other anthropologists will certainly follow them, and I should like to help dispel the notion that the New Territories have been so far affected by British rule and modern changes in population and economic life that they are no longer capable of being useful to anthropologists interested in the study of traditional Chinese institutions. Of course the New Territories have been profoundly changed since they were brought into the Colony of Hong Kong. Of course they are not a mere fossil of the nineteenth century. Of course they show many 'modern' problems worth investigating (especially as they arise from the industrial and agricultural revolutions of the last decade and a half), and we should be very foolish to ignore them. But old lineages still exist; power is exercised within them; land is still held in ancestral trusts; rites of worship continue to be held in ancestral halls. . . . We may see something of what went on under the Chinese Empire, but, just as important, we have the chance of understanding how lineages adapt themselves to the modern world.

A further preliminary point needs to be made on this sequel to *Lineage Organization*. The new book gets its focus from the one it is designed to supplement. It takes up an interest in the Chinese lineage which I developed many years ago. From this it does not follow that I think the lineage to be the paramount form of

[1] The first of these to be published are: 'The Pattern of Life in the New Territories in 1898', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 2, 1962; 'Cheung Chau 1850–1898: Information from Commemorative Tablets', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch . . .*, vol. 3, 1963; 'Peng Chau between 1798 and 1899', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch . . .*, vol. 4, 1964 (published 1965); 'Settlement and Development of a Multiple-Clan Village' and 'A Mixed Community of Hakka and Cantonese on Lantau Island' in Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong Branch, *Aspects of Social Organization in the New Territories*, Hong Kong [1965]. This last publication is a pamphlet printing a series of seven short papers, by H. Baker, R. G. Groves, J. Hayes, and R. Ng, read at a symposium held in Hong Kong in May 1964 under the chairmanship of Dr. Marjorie Topley.

Chinese local grouping, or local grouping to be the chief topic in Chinese society for anthropologists to study. As some of the remarks I have made elsewhere will perhaps have shown,[1] I am aware of the need for anthropologists to take a larger view of Chinese society and to raise their eyes (or at any rate stretch their imagination) to wider limits than those of the village. For the moment, however, I am concerned primarily with the local scene. I propose to reconsider the problem of how corporate descent groups in China fitted into a complex society, looking at that society from the point of view of the local group.

Finally, I have several debts to acknowledge in connexion with the writing of this book. Dr Chêng Tê-k'un made a number of comments on the typescript of *Lineage Organization* which I unfortunately received too late to take account of in that book; I have tried to profit from them in this one. On several sinological points I have been lucky enough to be able to consult Mrs H. M. Wright and Professor D. C. Twitchett. Professor Lucy Mair did me the great service of reading a draft of the book; she helped me to remedy many faults in argument and style. For his encouragement (it was a remark he made two years ago that gave me the idea of returning to the theme of *Lineage Organization*), intellectual help, and penetrating criticism of both earlier and later drafts I am deeply in debt to Professor G. William Skinner, my transatlantic colleague in the London-Cornell Project. My thanks to him are accompanied by an expression of regret that in this second attempt at the subject I am still very far below the standard of scholarship he has himself set for sinological anthropology. With Professor Skinner's name I must couple those of his colleagues in Chinese studies at Cornell University who many times since 1960 have offered me hospitality, intellectual and other. Among these colleagues I should like to single out Professor Arthur P. Wolf with whom I have had the privilege of discussing at length problems in the analysis of Chinese society, and who criticized an early draft of this book. From the correspondence I

[1] See 'A Chinese Phase in Social Anthropology', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. XIV, no. 1, March 1963. On the general issue of the anthropologist's place in the study of Chinese society see the Symposium on Chinese Studies and the Disciplines in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XXIII, no. 4, August 1964, especially G. William Skinner, 'What the Study of China can do for Social Science', and my own complementary contribution, 'What Social Science can do for Chinese Studies'.

have maintained with Mr Baker and Mr Groves while they have been at work in the New Territories, I have been able to settle a number of doubtful points and supplement my own all too short field experience of the things on which I write. And I have profited by Mr Baker's criticism of a late draft of this book. My wife went over the last two drafts in detail, helping me to remove a number of obscurities and giving me editorial aid without which this would have been even less of a book than it is.

The frontispiece (redrawn from an illustration in George Smith, *A Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to Each of the Consular Cities of China, and to the Islands of Hong Kong and Chusan*, London, 1847) and the maps were prepared by the staff of the Department of Geography, London School of Economics and Political Science. I wish to thank them warmly for this and for some preliminary work on the photographs from which the plates have been made.

London School of Economics M. F.
and Political Science
August 1965

CONTENTS

1.	VILLAGE, LINEAGE, AND CLAN	1
2.	FAMILY	43
3.	SOCIAL STATUS, POWER, AND GOVERNMENT	68
4.	RELATIONS BETWEEN LINEAGES	97
5.	GEOMANCY AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP	118
6.	LINEAGES IN CHINA	155
	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL POSTSCRIPT	185
	LIST OF WORKS CITED	191
	INDEX	201

PLATES

	Annual Worshipping at the Tombs of Ancestors	*frontispiece*
1.	A Geomantic Prospect	*facing page* 130
2*a*.	Geomancer and Compass	131
b.	Gate of a Walled Village	131
3*a*.	Ancestor Worship in a Lineage Hall	146
b.	Firing Crackers at Ch'ing Ming	146
4.	Ancestral Hall Altar	147

MAPS

1.	South-Eastern China	2
2.	Hong Kong and the New Territories	3

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I

Village, Lineage, and Clan

With the exception of the county of Shun-tê and perhaps a few scattered pockets in other counties (of which the Wun Yiu area of the Tai Po District in the New Territories is an example),[1] the villages of the provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung are compact. Many of them are communities composed of the male agnatic descendants of a single ancestor together with their unmarried sisters and their wives. To begin with, the chief problem to be discussed is the relationship between settlement pattern and patrilineal grouping.

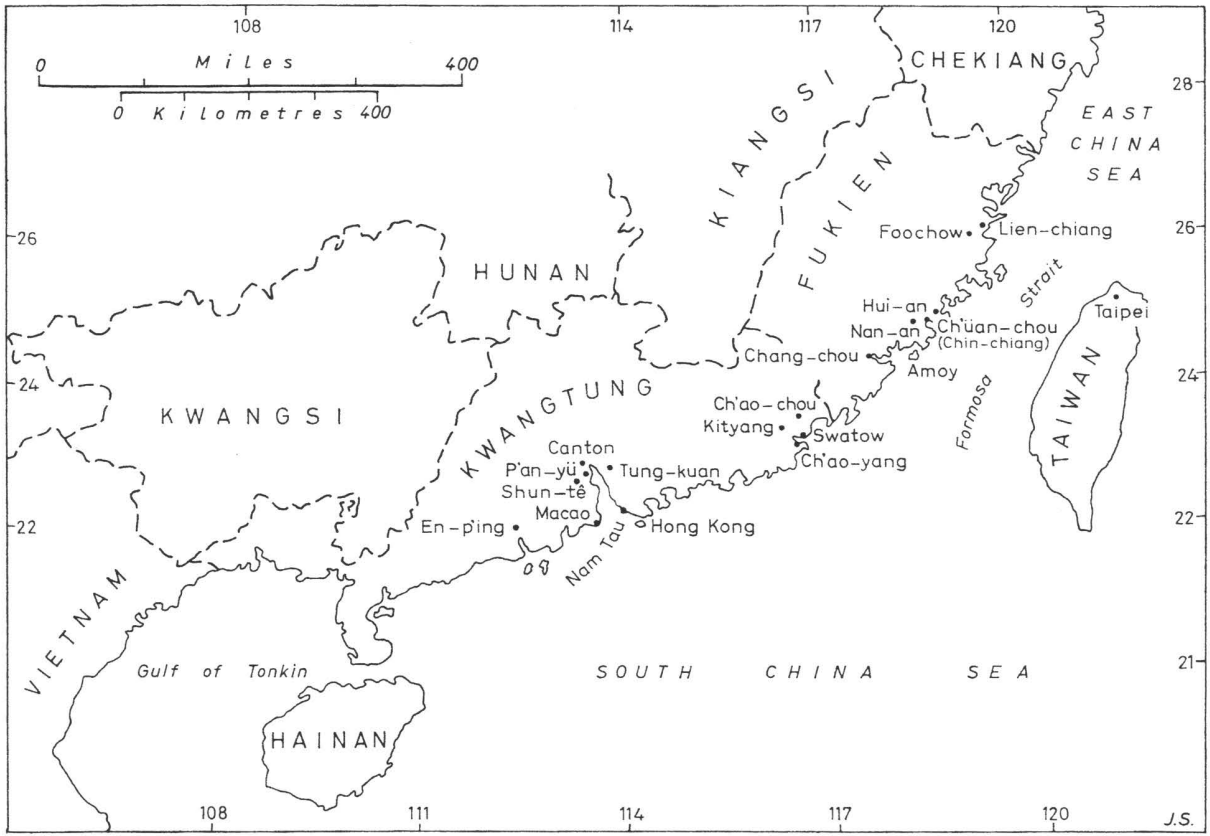
The literature published since 1957 can be made to serve as a point of departure. C. K. Yang has given us the results of the last village study to be made in mainland China (it concerns a community near the capital of Kwangtung province) before Communism had come upon the face of Chinese society.[2] And we have been afforded glimpses of two other village studies relevant to southeastern China, one of them being carried out in a Hakka community in the New Territories,[3] the other in a Hokkien-speaking village in Taiwan.[4]

[1] Chinese place names in Hong Kong have official spellings (based on the Cantonese pronunciation), and I have thought it wise to follow Hong Kong usage here even though other place names are given in their Mandarin form. The Hong Kong names are readily identifiable in *A Gazetteer of Place Names in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories*, Hong Kong, Foreword dated 1960, which gives the Chinese characters for the romanized versions.

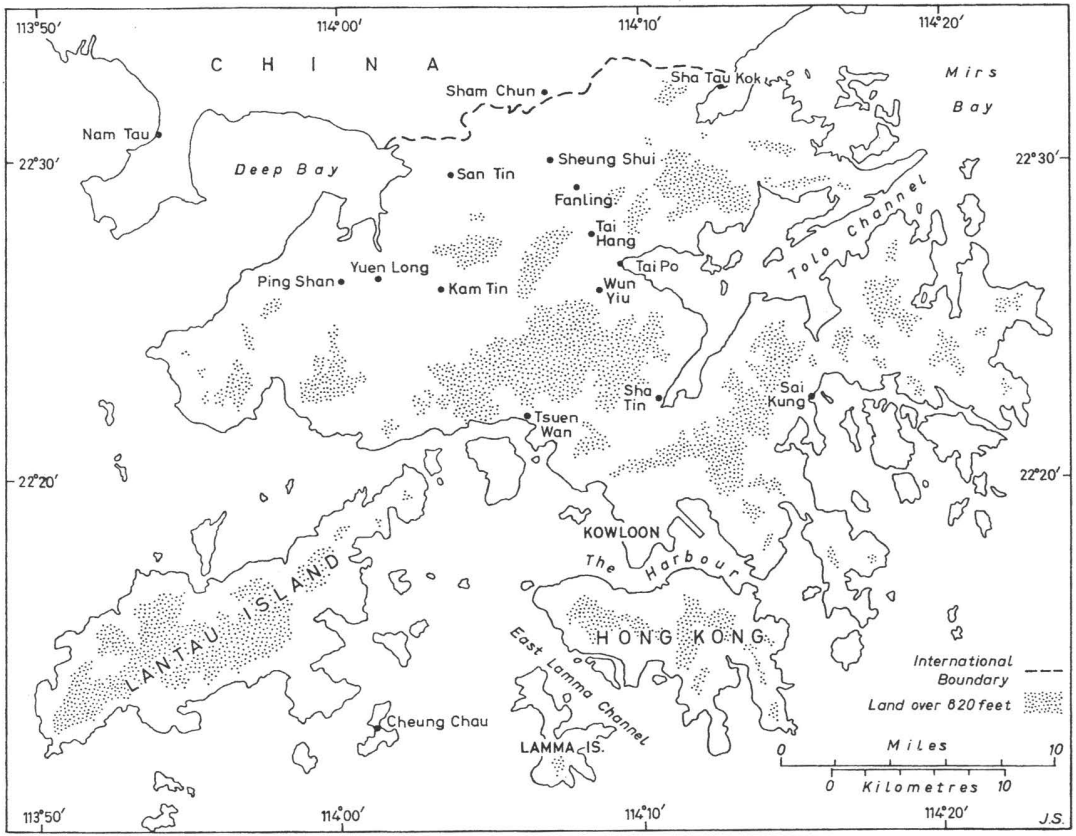
[2] C. K. Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition*, Cambridge, Mass., 1959.

[3] Jean A. Pratt, 'Emigration and Unilineal Descent Groups: A Study of Marriage in a Hakka Village in the New Territories, Hong Kong', *The Eastern Anthropologist*, vol. XIII, no. 4, June–August 1960. This brief and not too readily accessible paper is full of interesting things; one hopes that Miss Pratt will soon be able to publish more fully.

[4] Bernard Gallin, 'Matrilateral and Affinal Relationships of a Taiwanese Village', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 62, no. 4, August 1960; 'A Case for Intervention in the Field', *Human Organization*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1959; 'Cousin Marriage in China', *Ethnology*, vol. II, no. 1, January 1963; 'Land Reform in



MAP 1: South-Eastern China



MAP 2: Hong Kong and the New Territories

Yang's sociological field study was begun before the village of Nanching came under Communist government, and continued during the first phase of the new regime. The remarkable 'choice' of time at which to make observations of modern village life in China gives the book one of its major interests, but for the moment we are concerned with the data in the first part of the study where the traditional organization is described. In 1948 Nanching had a population of some 1,100 and was dominated by two 'clans', as Yang calls them, which accounted for the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants. The two main 'clans' and the three minor ones severally occupied distinct parts of the village. Moreover, segments of the larger entities were also spatially separated. 'Each branch within a clan also had its own street. . . . Thus the physical plan of the village was blocked out into many individual cells on a kinship basis.'[1]

One of the main 'clans' had ancestor tablets for members of the forty-second generation; the first ancestor had made his home in the village in 1091. The most recently dead of the other main 'clan' were members of the thirty-seventh generation.[2] It would appear that the counting of generations starts from a point genealogically much higher than the ancestors first settling in Nanching. As many as forty-two generations are unlikely to have elapsed since 1091. A genealogical framework wider than that of the localized lineage was evidently involved and, as we shall see presently, the 'clan' founded in Nanching at the end of the eleventh century was at the time it was studied a segment of a scattered lineage. Yang cites a written genealogy relating to this 'clan',[3] but he does not discuss its contents or its significance.

The village community studied by Miss Pratt in the New Territories is a small Hakka lineage of some forty families. This is a relatively isolated and poor hill community which we shall

Taiwan: Its Effect on Rural Social Organization and Leadership', *Human Organization*, vol. 22, no. 2, Summer 1963; 'Chinese Peasant Values towards the Land', in Symposium on Community Studies in Anthropology, *Proceedings of the 1963 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society*, Seattle.

[1] Yang, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 14, 81. The larger of the two main 'clans' numbered fewer than 600 souls: p. 93. (Yang's figures are approximate; he wrote his book from memory, his notes having been kept in China.) It is important to remember that there were large lineage villages in the area, despite the fact that Nanching itself was of mixed lineages. Yang mentions one of over 10,000, 'Chen Tsun, about forty miles down the Pearl River': p. 93.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[3] *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*, and p. 271 (note 13).

need to consider later as a close approximation to the theoretical model A discussed at pp. 131 f. of *Lineage Organization*. The lineage is sixteen generations deep and divided into three ancestral hall groups which 'tend to live in discrete areas of the village'.[1]

When we come to Gallin's Taiwan village we are dealing with a community of very heterogeneous lineage elements. The population of 650 (in 115 households) has twelve surnames in all, but there are in fact more than twelve lineages (if indeed we may legitimately use the term in this context), for families bearing a single surname are not all members of one lineage. Despite the heterogeneity, people bearing four of the surnames account for some 80 per cent of the village population. Most of the members of a lineage 'live in the same house or at least the same part of the village', and the genealogies of such units are of course very shallow. In this village 'with its relatively short history, almost all *tsu* [lineage] relatives in the village are related through a grandfather or at most a great-grandfather which they have in common'. It is a characteristic of the area of Taiwan in which this village is situated (the west-central coastal plain) that 'large clans' are lacking.[2]

These new cases raise again the problem of the emergence of single-lineage communities. One of the three villages is a single-lineage community: the small Hakka community in the New Territories. Nanching is in an area where single-lineage settlements are common, but is not itself one. The Taiwan village is mixed and fairly recent. Now, people have tended to interpret multilineage villages and shallow lineage organization in China as being the result of a breakdown of single-lineage communities by migration, the southern part of the country displaying a higher degree of deep and single-lineage settlement because of its relative immunity from invasion.[3] Van der Sprenkel, for example, in a recent re-appraisal of Max Weber's work on China, writes: 'The evidence shows that lineage organizations were more numerous, better organized and more influential in South China than in the North. This may be partly due to southward population

[1] Pratt, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–9.

[2] Gallin, 'Matrilateral and Affinal Relationships', pp. 633 f. In 'A Case . . .', p. 140, Gallin gives the total of surnames as 'about nine' and says the village has been settled some 150 years. The discrepancy in the number of surnames is apparently accounted for by changes during the period of the field study.

[3] *Lineage Organization*, p. 1.

movements of the Han Chinese under "barbarian" pressure. Such internal migrations were important as early as the Six Dynasties period, and notably after the fall of the Northern Sung and during the Mongol conquest.'[1] That is to say, there is a temptation to look upon the single-lineage settlement as the historically prior form and mixed settlements as evidence of a later disturbance of the primordial pattern.[2]

It must be true that migration and the different conditions in which it took place account in some measure for the pattern of distribution of large localized lineages in China; the problem will need to be dealt with later. But it would be a great mistake to think that the only direction of change is that in which what were originally in lineage terms homogeneous local settlements became heterogeneous. On the contrary, the process is reversible, single-lineage settlements emerging from mixed ones. The proof is contained in the New Territories genealogies which speak (with some evident relish) of earlier neighbours in the village territory (their surnames are usually given) now thrust into oblivion by those who have supplanted them, and, more surely and convincingly, in the abandoned ancestral halls belonging to surnames now no longer represented in what have become single-lineage settlements. Some of these derelict halls, to judge by their appearance, must have been in use in fairly recent times (say, even two or three generations ago), and we have no reason to suppose that the process of elimination has come to a stop. There is of course nothing special about the New Territories in this respect. Evidence of extinct lineages is to be found everywhere. Of Nanching, Yang says that, according to old villagers, 'in the dim past there was a Hua clan and a Fang clan who inhabited the northern end of the present village site. Apparently both of them were crowded out by the late comers, and there were no descendants of either clan in the village.'[3]

[1] Otto B. van der Sprenkel, 'Max Weber on China', *History and Theory*, vol. III, 1964, p. 367. But the passage continues: 'There are also strong grounds for associating developed lineage structures with local prosperity. The areas of fertile soil, productive agriculture, and dense population, conditions which are found predominantly in the southern and south-eastern provinces, are also those where clan organization is most frequently met with.'

[2] Cf. Hsiao Kung-chuan, *Rural China, Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*, Seattle, 1960, p. 328. But at p. 329 Hsiao stresses the correlation between strong lineage organization and economic prosperity.

[3] Yang, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Weaker and less prosperous lineages may 'die'. Their numbers may fall away by sickness and failure (again through sickness or because of poverty) to reproduce. The sad remnants depart. (Declining natural population will not by itself account for the disappearance of a lineage, for gaps in the ranks of a rich lineage could always be filled by stocking up with adopted sons. Chen Ta, writing of rural Fukien, says that formerly, when 'feuds between clans' were frequent, sons were sometimes adopted as a means of increasing manpower for defence.[1] There was, incidentally, much more buying of sons in southeastern China than the legal rules governing adoption might lead one to suppose. Merchant venturers in Fukien, for example, sometimes adopted sons to send out on their trading expeditions overseas. The law was in fact concerned with adoption aimed at continuing the line of succession in the ancestor cult – whence the stress on the need for the adopted son to be of the correct agnatic and generation status – and did not affect the adoption of sons taken only to swell the ranks of the family; they could be got from any convenient source.[2]) The happy survivors might attribute the ill fortune of their lost neighbours to disaster springing from geomancy, but it

[1] *Emigrant Communities in South China. A Study of Overseas Migration and its Influence on Standards of Living and Social Change*, London and N.Y., 1939, p. 131.

[2] The point needs glossing. In inheritance (or, as the lawyers put it, succession to property) all sons were on an equal footing, except in regard to a special portion connected with the maintenance of the ancestor cult. In respect of this cult a distinction must be made between the standing of the sons as defined in law and their status as it was in fact determined by custom and regular practice. 'In theory – and the theory formed the background of enacted law until the end of the Manchu dynasty – the duty of offering . . . [ancestral] sacrifice was not only transmitted through the male line of descent but was concentrated in one person in that line, namely the eldest son by the wife.' – Henry McAleavy, 'Varieties of Hu'o'ng-hoa . . .: A Problem of Vietnamese Law', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XXI, pt. 3, 1958, p. 609. To show how in reality the theory of the statute law was departed from, McAleavy goes on to translate a passage from the *Taiwan Shihō*, 1910–11, a Japanese compilation of the private law of Formosa: 'The old clan law has decayed. Sacrifice to the ancestors is not a privilege of the eldest son by the wife, but all sons are competent to perform it . . . [In] the provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung, and especially in Formosa . . . [the] ancestral temple and tombs and the business of sacrifice are in charge of all the sons or grandsons either jointly or one at a time.'—*ibid.*, pp. 609 f.; and cf. *ibid.*, pp. 613 f. That is to say, if a man lacked a son, he was in the eyes of the law obliged to adopt one from among his nearest agnates in the generation next below his in order to provide a legally satisfactory substitute in the interests of succession to the cult. The distinction drawn here between theoretical primogeniture and the practical equality of the sons is crucial to our understanding of ancestor worship, as we shall see.

is easy to understand how, once their numbers and riches are declining, a minority must soon find itself subject to political and economic pressure from its more fortunate fellow villagers to force it finally to abandon its crumbling foothold. The economic pressure on a weakening minority was not, however, always exerted directly by its stronger rivals. The climatic hazards of the area of China we are concerned with – typhoons, floods, and droughts – must certainly have borne more heavily on those with fewer accumulated resources and have led to their being the first to give up the struggle.

I think we must assume that the desire to form a single lineage in one village territory is a motive given in the system. Where there is enough land, a nucleus of agnates strive to build themselves up to form a large homogeneous settlement. If to begin with they must share a territory with members of one or more other lineages, they will await their opportunity to dominate and eventually drive out their neighbours. In many cases it is not clear why in the first place strangers are permitted into the village territory or how the newcomers manage to establish a strong position for themselves.[1] As far as I know, the historical evidence bearing on these questions does not exist; it is a deficiency which might conceivably be made good by a careful analysis of the recent past of certain lineages in the New Territories, but for the most part we shall probably always need to have recourse to speculation. (In present-day circumstances in the New Territories the 'invasion' of lineage territories by outsiders is taking place on entirely new terms; the refugees from Communist China admitted as tenants to the lands and houses of long-established lineages are unlikely to consolidate themselves to form agnatic groupings.)

It may be that, in the past, outsiders taken on as tenants of agricultural land were sometimes successful and contrived to organize to the point where they could begin to challenge their longer-established neighbours. Good fortune, and with it the power to drive off unwanted fellow-villagers, may perhaps on occasion have come from ties built up with the bureaucracy. The fighting between lineages, to which the study of southeastern China has

[1] Professor Skinner has pointed out to me that some outsiders admitted to a lineage-village will have been occupational specialists (shopkeepers among them), although one would not expect that such people would normally be able to consolidate their position to the point where they might rival their hosts.