UNITY AND DIVERSITY

LOCAL CULTURES AND IDENTITIES IN CHINA

Edited by
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Hong Kong University Press
香港大學出版社

Hong Kong University Press
139 Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

ISBN 962 209 402 3

Printed in Hong Kong by Caritas Printing Training Centre.

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Introduction: What Does the Chinese Person Identify With?

Tao Tao Liu and David Faure

Within China, there exists a patchwork of local cultures. Experience on the ground suggests that the traveller in China is more likely than not to be confronted by local opinions that emphasize the local character of traditions, even though such character is often expressed in terms that are common to many parts of China. One cannot stress too strongly how very different some local traditions can be, and yet, if one were to be asked to define the uniqueness of one local tradition as compared to another, it would not be easy to do so. Especially within what is considered to be ethnic Han China, what counts as the uniqueness of a local tradition often turns out to be, upon reflection, a variation of what in many parts of China would be considered common Chinese culture. What passes as Chinese culture, on the other hand, is manifested differently in different areas. Discovering what counts as local culture is, in some ways, similar to debating whether Han Chinese dialects should or should not count as languages. The linguist may be able to divide China into linguistic regions, but there is no ready answer to the question of whether Han Chinese dialects are or are not mere variations of a common Chinese language. The conclusion comes rather naturally that local Chinese culture is part and parcel of the overall Chinese culture: one cannot have a local identity without being part of the greater identity of being Chinese, and one cannot be Chinese and not have come from some part of China (Cohen, 1991).

REALITY AND APPEARANCE

One might suppose that for centuries some process of standardization had been at work. Some years ago, Barbara Ward suggested that the standardization of local cultures was selective. It tended to occur in those aspects of local culture that were looked upon as indicative of its 'Chineseness', just as differences would have been cultivated in other aspects that were indicative of a community's distinctiveness from its neighbours (Ward, 1965). One might ask why funerals are so similar all over China and regional cuisines so different. The answer would be that funerals have to be similar because there are standard ways to pacify the souls of the dead, while even within Guangdong province, Cantonese food has to be different from Hakka food because that is, among other features, what sets the Cantonese and Hakka apart.

Funerals and food are therefore different types of markers of traditions; they must by definition be ad hoc and widely varying in nature from place to place. There is a common belief that the unifying features of local practices are those that relate to an orthodoxy emanating from the centre. This process of what might be termed centrism at work cannot be simply explained by a division between high and low culture (sometimes referred to as gentry and peasant). As Maurice Freedman pointed out in his comments on Chinese religion, the gentry did not practise a different set of rites from the peasant. Rather, gentry and peasant both practised variants of a common corpus of rituals, and observable differences fell not between social classes but between geographic regions (Freedman, 1974). More recently, Myron Cohen has proposed a stronger variant of the argument by relating the spread of standardized rituals to a process of upward mobility: an elite identifies itself with a central body of rituals and the rest of society emulate (Cohen, 1991). This is a stronger version of the argument because while it allows for the possibility of considerable overlap between the rituals of the elite and the rest of society, it also acknowledges the possibility of local variations.

Students of Ming, Qing, and Republican history should be familiar with Cohen's upward mobility argument. The elite educates according to its own stereotypes. This it does by establishing schools, by producing tracts that distinguish the orthodox from the heterodox, and by perpetuating practices sanctioned by the state. Moreover, these measures succeed because the stereotypes of the elite are widely accepted. However, it is implied in this argument that standardization often consists of the substitution of one stereotype by another. Emily Honig's recent book on the low-status North Jiangsu people (*Subei ren*) in Shanghai describes this substitution process (Honig, 1992). Not surprisingly, the stereotype of the North Jiangsu people carries strong ethnic overtones: the North Jiangsu immigrants into Shanghai were uneducated people fitting only for the lowest rungs of the social ladder in Shanghai city, doing the most menial jobs and living in the roughest areas. However, the boundaries created by ethnicity can be crossed through the suppression of identity: the rustic North Jiangsu sojourner in Shanghai who finds himself or herself a job and adopts southern mannerism grows into a refined Shanghai citizen (*Shanghai ren*). The transformation is not complete with this description of their identity. Honig tells us that the North Jiangsu people are fond of the Huai opera: does their taste for Huai opera change when they convert into sophisticated Shanghai citizens, or does something happen to Shanghai opera when many North Jiangsu people convert? There must be a range of answers to such questions, at the root of which one can perhaps find the elements of what came to constitute Shanghai culture. Culture is like language: you speak it, you live in it, the grammarian studies its rules, but only the native speakers, like members of a club, have the prerogative to change it.

There may be a great gulf between reality and appearance, or between reality and its perceptions by different people, just as there is often a gulf between reality and aspirations. Nevertheless one of the decided twists of the mind is that it allows us to see things as we would wish them to be seen and not as they really are, and it comes from the mind's ability to believe that behind an appearance is another reality. The mind knowingly tolerates an image constructed by itself, while being fully aware that it is not the whole story. Cantonese food must *really* be different

from Hakka food (why else advertise Cantonese restaurants?) and the village ceremony performed for the poor man who died yesterday must *really* be like the emperor's (how else do we ensure that the poor man's spirit would depart?). Stereotypes come into being when there is the need to construct an appearance, and having come into being, stereotypes are objectified and are capable of competing with one another. What becomes *really* one thing or another falls within the realm of public consciousness, as every Chinese social historian writing in the West, now emulating Habermas, wants to remind us. Frederic Wakeman and Wen-hsin Ye are right to remind us recently that we do not have to be a Shanghai native in order to study Shanghai's culture, but can we extend the statement to ask if there can be a Shanghai culture to study unless some people, at least, claim to be Shanghai natives (Wakeman and Yeh, 1992). This is why History is so closely tied to the creation of stereotypes, for so often it is the public realm of the self-definition of a community, real or imaginary, that seeks to set itself apart.

It is, therefore, not in ecological differences that one seeks self-conscious stereotypes. Like beauty, self-conscious differences appear in the eyes of the beholder. They need have nothing whatsoever to do with objective differences, however defined. Instead, they become impressions that are fixated, and for this reason, have more to do with the invention of writing, that great unifier of tradition. It is perhaps no accident that Chinese cooks do not learn from written texts, but funeral services are conducted with reference to written documents. Writing, moreover, takes on meaning as when in the course of its development it is associated with religion and power. The belief in orthodoxy that is associated with Confucianism is grounded in texts, and the scholarly classes recruited into administration likewise pride themselves on mastery of texts. Textual differences create more stereotypes than theological rulings. Thus, the Daoist is distinguished from the Buddhist, the Confucian from the neo-Confucian, whatever their common grounds. History documents these sea changes of ideology that sweep China every now and then, that create and recreate traditions. New ideology, new language, new texts come together to shape new identities.

In the twentieth century, the historically conscious May Fourth Movement was a great creator of stereotypes. If its stereotypes do not look very local, that is because supporters of the movement think that they should not be. The May Fourth Movement, in the eyes of its supporters, was a national movement that transcended local interests. In this respect, it was no different from earlier movements that had radiated from the centre. Local cultures found their place only within a unified Chinese culture. However, when the central government was strong, this would have been a view that fitted in closely with centrism. In times when the central government was weak, such as during the Warlord era in which the May Fourth Movement unfolded, a unified Chinese culture was that final article of faith required by the nationalism that was felt by members of the educated elite.

CONSTRUCTING LOCAL CULTURES

Describing culture from the outside is different from defining it from within. From the outsider's standpoint, culture is a part of other people's identity, to which

objective consistency must be applied as the most important criterion. But the right and ability to define culture is the prerogative of the insider, who may not hold to objective consistency. The historian looking in from the outside should respect the insider's rights, but in appealing to History, outsider and insider appeal to the same objectivity. Positing a difference between the insider and the outsider suggests that local cultures are constructs in the articulation of identities, but History is common ground.

This book brings together eleven papers that attempt to describe the processes in which the construction of local culture might be related to the quest for identity. Two of them have been written by insiders: Xiong Yuezhi writes about Shanghai from inside Shanghai and Helen Siu, although no longer resident in Hong Kong, writes about her own generation at a time when she herself lived there. However, no one writing about identity stands apart from the myth-making that cultural processes entail. The authors of the other nine papers in this book cannot claim any affiliation with the subjects they deal with, but whether or not wittingly, they must necessarily contribute to the redefinition of culture and identity that is undertaken each time the subject is expressed in words. Nonetheless, none of the eleven papers in this book claims the insider's licence to define local culture. These papers observe, summarize and comment, but they do so only by attempting to capture the insider's point of view.

One of the themes that will emerge from the papers in this book is the importance of local religious expression in the formulation of local identities. The presence of local deities in China is, of course, as well-known as the centrality of these deities in the organization of common-origin networks of relationships (Jordan, 1972; Weller, 1987; Hansen, 1990; Feuchtwang, 1992; Dean, 1993). An expression of the integration of state and local interests by the absorption of local deities into the state pantheon has also become a common theme in the current literature. In her chapter, however, Susanna Thornton takes the argument further in that she demonstrates how religious integration might cover contested grounds. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the local people of Hangzhou had taken to the temple on the Wu Hill devoted to the local *chenghuang* god. The imperial government in the fifteenth century appropriated the site by canonizing a man called Zhou Xin, who had in his life been a provincial commissioner in Zhejiang, thus displacing the local *chenghuang* god's prominence. This superimposed a provincial cult in the place of a local one, to the dissatisfaction of the local people who felt that the interest of the prefecture and city was put in second place, even though they were actually also inhabitants of the province, and Hangzhou was the capital of the province. In the eighteenth century, a local family managed to intrigue its way into attaching its own ancestral shrine to Wu Hill. In reaction, the salt merchants of the city, through subscription, built remodelled temple to house the spirit tablets of prefectural, county and city gods, which successfully re-focused the city god cult on the hill. One sees in the account of these events local interests tugging in a different direction from the state interest, and the desires of officialdom supported not by the urban population of Hangzhou but the Zhejiang merchants resident in Hangzhou.

One would have to be able to characterize the whole of Chinese society in terms of many Hangzhous in order to appreciate the ways in which local identities

were enmeshed within bureaucratic practices. However, as demonstrated in the chapters by David Faure and May-bo Ching, the historical evolution of the Chinese state has more to do with the adoption into local practice of language and rituals which were perpetrated by the state.

Faure's chapter on Ming dynasty Guangdong describes the processes in the sixteenth century by which a literati culture came into prominence in Guangdong. Focusing on the Pearl River delta, this chapter argues that the integration of society into the empire had taken place largely in the sixteenth century. The implementation of household registration and local people's successes at the imperial examinations in the fifteenth century provided the background. However, the standardization of rituals was very much an issue that appeared from the end of that century and reached into the sixteenth. Ritual, defined for the most part by Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals*, was standardized, along with an emphasis on the construction of ancestral halls for ceremonial activities within the lineage (Faure, 1989; Liu, 1990; Ebrey, 1991). The attachment to a wider culture through attaching oneself to ancestors and ancestral institutions bridged identification with the state with identification with the home village. This made possible the blurring of cultural boundaries, as a result of which groups of people, who might have set themselves apart for ethnic reasons, redefined their ethnic status. This is the context in which Myron Cohen's discussion of social mobility in the creation of an identity makes ample sense. Indeed, one could not have been Chinese without being also a member of some part of the Chinese empire, and one could not be a member of a part of the Chinese empire without being Chinese.

Chapter three by May-bo Ching remains in Guangdong to examine late Qing and twentieth century assertion of local identity. In different contexts Duara (1988) and Siu (1989) have argued for recognizing the crucial role of the struggle for legitimacy between the village leadership and the state in Republican China. May-bo Ching extends the argument and relates the making of a self-conscious Guangdong culture precisely to the interaction of the Guangdong provincial leadership and the Chinese state. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, there was a high-culture attempt to put Guangdong on the map of classical pursuits with the creation of the Xuehaitang Academy of classical studies. This movement developed side by side with, but separately from, the low culture revelry in adapting Classical Chinese to Cantonese songs and other attempts to establish Cantonese as a written language, this last endeavour being scuppered by the rising tide of Standard Chinese all over China. From the end of the Qing dynasty, it was elections to the local assemblies and the involvement of Guangdong Hakka people in the power hierarchy not only of Guangdong but also of the national government that set the agenda for re-defining what might be considered a Guangdong culture. Whereas in Guangzhou, the view of the early 1800s would have considered the popular practices of the Hakka and Chaozhou subordinate to those of the Cantonese, by the 1940s, the various dialect groups of Guangdong enjoyed an equal status, denied only to the minorities, such as the Yao. The central issue that gave Guangdong an identity had changed. Whereas in the early 1800s it used to be a matter of whether Guangdong had a culture which might be acceptable as high culture, by 1940 what Guangdong people were practising had become recognizable as their 'culture'.

The conclusion from the chapters by Thornton, Faure and Ching may, therefore, be stated differently for contexts beyond Guangdong; where religion was central to the local rituals, the internalization of state interests became coterminous with the integration of local and state religions. The fully integrated local culture disappears, and in its place is provincial identity.

If we juxtapose the maintenance of a religious system independent from the state's with the literati's experience of upward mobility and willingness to be absorbed into the state structure, we might argue that they represented opposing trends in the character of the Chinese state and its relationship to the provinces. This combination of circumstances may be found in those areas of China that in the twentieth century are looked upon as being inhabited by a large number of 'minorities', notably in Xinjiang, and also among the Yao or the Miao in the south (Gladney, 1991; Lemoine, 1991). Like Guangdong, the idea of the province, as an administrative unit of the Chinese empire or as a geographical unit, has been externally imposed on such areas. However, whereas in Guangdong, the Ming and the Qing dynasties had paved the way for isolated groups to convert to Han culture before they became effective components of the province, this was not the case in every region. In Xinjiang, Laura Newby's chapter argues, the Qing conquest of the mid-eighteenth century led ultimately to the creation of an administrative and geographic unit, defined by the regional government. But, it points out, the Qing government's involvement also assisted the spread of Islam. Islam not only played an important role in forging a sense of unity, however tentative, among the various Turkish peoples, it also at times served as a rallying force against the centralized state.

A discussion of the role of religion in local culture may also be found developed in Nicholas Tapp's chapter on the Hmong of Sichuan Province. Tapp questions the use of the word 'sinicization'. He agrees that the spread of elite values might be explained, but wonders how one might explain the spread of 'non-elite' values in China. He does not offer a direct answer for that, but his chapter describes the construction of history through a folklore about kings and battles that is related to place names, and that may, in turn, be related to geomancy, a body of knowledge that the Hmong believe is indigenous to their culture. Religion in this mould has to be broadly defined to include not only ghosts and deities but also the belief in the combination of history and geography. Ancestors come from somewhere: as told by the Hmong, from the Han-dominated areas of Hunan and Hubei provinces, while the unfolding of their history produces the models for the structuring of the state as well as the counter-models for the structuring of their own ethnic character. The stories of the 'kings who fly without their heads', told by the Hmong, capture this unfolding of history. They tell at once of the authority of the emperor as well as the authority of their private knowledge, the patriarchal character of politics as well as the interventionist role of mother, and they seem to cut across the boundary of the elite and the popular. Local culture within the imperial regime rests ultimately on a belief in a common origin. One might say that the belief in a common origin is in effect an expression of a common experience in which state-making had occupied a dominant part. As Tapp indicates, the experience of the Hmong would have been replicated time and again in many parts of Han China. What had made Han China Han is probably less the growth of an elite than the spread of an elite culture among elite and non-elite alike.

METROPOLIS AND MODERNITY: SHANGHAI AND BEYOND

A focus on elite culture in the definition of a regional identity raises questions on how that culture had spread across China. One thinks of the history of printing, of popular entertainment, of the demonstration of the imperial presence in the provinces, of the transformation of rituals and of the participation of the provincial elite in state affairs. It should come as no surprise therefore, that the social and political upheaval from the late nineteenth century that reduced the ability of the state to intervene in provincial affairs, that introduced the language of republicanism into China, and that established a strong urban-based entertainment and publishing industry in Shanghai which made capital of images of a new and modernizing China, should have ushered in changes in the sense of the local identity. Prior to the emergence of Shanghai, there had not been a Chinese city that gave its name to a local culture. After Shanghai, no city in China is prominent unless it can give its name to some such culture. The chapters on Shanghai in this book will not be describing once again the prosperity of that city and the prominence it reached from the 1860s to the 1940s. Shanghai's rapid growth and prosperity is a well-documented subject (Zhang, 1990; Wei, 1987). The three chapters on Shanghai in this book, by Xiong Yuezhi, Catherine V. Yeh and Mau-sang Ng, describe elements of the cultural transformation that left their marks on the Chinese regional identity. They are supplemented by a chapter on twentieth-century 'native soil' literature by Tao Tao Liu, that extended well beyond Shanghai.

Xiong Yuezhi's chapter in this book argues that Shanghai derived its character from descriptions given it by the popular press, in particular, newspapers and magazines. Xiong argues that like Shanghai, the Shanghainese is a modern creation. So modern, in fact, it is not clear at what point the Shanghainese themselves caught up with the idea that they were Shanghainese rather than sojourners from other areas that had moved into Shanghai. In other words, Shanghai gained an image within the national culture before the Shanghainese identity took root. Within the national culture, which was partly shaped by the newspapers and magazines that were published in Shanghai, Shanghai was a symbol of wealth and modernity: Xiong cites as examples of Shanghai's modernity street lamps and tap water. However, the self-conscious Shanghainese came to the fore only in the 1890s and early 1900s when, in popular protest movements, participants identified themselves as 'Shanghai gentry and merchants'. Xiong also feels that in the decades to follow, the Shanghai identity was more clearly recognized by people outside Shanghai than amongst the Shanghainese. The 'internal view' of Shanghai would have recognized differences of origin among native Shanghainese, even as the 'external image' of the Shanghai identity gained strength.[1]

The distinction between an 'external' and an 'internal' image of Shanghai, as suggested by Xiong, himself a Shanghainese, dovetails closely with a sizable Western literature that has been growing in recent years on the history of that remarkable city. In a sense, it also repeats the generalization that would have emerged from an examination of the growth of provincial identity in the imperial period, that is, that the local identity that went beyond immediate kin and village was shaped less by the pooling of culture among neighbouring communities than by the definition of

the state. It underscores equally the crucial role of the written word in this process. The provincial identity of imperial China had been propagated by a bureaucratic regime that could rely on an orthodox teaching internalized by its population; the republican regime commanded no central bureaucracy and in its political propaganda faced the concerted subversion of the popular press. Until 1927, Republican Shanghai did not project the image of an easy-to-govern part of China. It was not bureaucratic Beijing, but vibrant Shanghai, that led China's social and political movements. The background for this position was paved in the 1880s, as the Shanghai elite reached out beyond Shanghai in its donations towards the Shanxi famine (Rankin, 1986), in the early 1900s, when with the late Qing reforms the Shanghai City Council became a recognized political force that might represent local interests (Elvin, 1974), and in the 1910s and 1920s, when the Shanghai bourgeiousie might be said to have come into its own (Bergere, 1986). This bourgeoisie, however, did not gain sufficient strength to stand up to the authority of a national government backed by a well-controlled party. The Shanghai Municipal Government in the 1930s, however full of initiative, did not succeed in divorcing itself from the image that it was an agent of the central government. Henriot's conclusion is instructive: 'The mayors were no more than higher civil servants of the state . . . No example has been found . . . of any conflict between them and the national government, whose instructions they followed to the letter' (Henriot, 1993: 232–3). The 'Shanghainese' of the 1930s and beyond was the hollow cultural shell of an urban elite's unsuccessful bid for political power.

The urban identity of the Republican elite was, therefore the identity of dissipation, resignation, and nostalgia. This theme is brought out in the chapters by Catherine V. Yeh, Mau-sang Ng and Tao Tao Liu. Yeh examines a much neglected source for the cultural history of Shanghai, handbooks used by the clientele of courtesan houses that enjoyed their heyday from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the 1920s. As handbooks, these texts publicize the pleasure of Shanghai, but it is their subtexts that Yeh stresses: Wang Tao in the 1860s compared the helplessness of members of the literati like himself to the fate of courtesans, Hu Yuan wrote in the 1880s as the Shanghai sojourner who needed the courtesan house as a diversion from the feverish excitement of the city; and Li Boyuan, describing the courtesans in matter-of-fact manner as only a novelist would, seems in effect to be saying that all of Shanghai could have been one with the courtesan, that making a living is what it is, devoid of respectability or taboo.

The reality of that world, the make-belief world of courtesans, actresses and their clients, is, according to Mau-sang Ng, the world of *qing* and *yi*. Hard to translate like most such evocative words, *qing* is emotion-cum-compassion-cum-romance and *yi* the sort of righteousness that suggests that friends should stand by friends. The world of Shanghai fiction in the early twentieth century dealt with romances, with whether actresses should marry one or another man for whatever reason, and why they might shrink from it in the name of *qing* or *yi*. But, this is Ng's question insofar as it relates to the question of an urban identity: why should the Shanghai reading public have been interested in this literature? Why should they have wanted to read about actresses as ordinary women confronted by decisions that were to change the course of their lives? And the answer, according to Ng, lay

in the large number of women stranded in this strange city of Shanghai. To them, what was appealing was not the May Fourth cry for liberation in the name of Noraism embedded in Ibsen's *A Doll House* , but the practical matter of finding a home. For them, there was no home. Not in Shanghai, and not in the villages they had come from, socially destroyed as they were by the occupations they held in Shanghai. Thus, *qing* and *yi*, the cornerstones of solidarity in traditional thought, would have appeared appealing. Shanghai was a modernizing city, no doubt, but it was precisely in this modernizing that traditionalism was well entrenched.

One can see why, therefore, in the literary world produced by the May Fourth, as Tao Tao Liu reminds us in her chapter, the repudiation of traditionalism was not the repudiation of centrism. For the likes of Lu Xun, and later Lao She and even Shen Congwen, regional identity was not just local identity; it was the backdrop to a personal search to create an identity in the new Republican state for the new literary elite, something to take the place of the old Chinese cultural identity, that operated above provincial identities, that Confucianism had etched out and conferred upon the Chinese literati (Levenson, 1967). This was a process of rejecting the past that had failed them in the modern world, while the countryside was still locked in the anachronistic past.

The new internationalism brought awareness of foreign literary fashions such as regional literature: the world of Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner. Their drive to understand the passion for the native soil was imitated by Chinese writers, who also longed for China, as China, to be able to stand up to the world. They lived as émigrés in the cities, self-contained worlds that were set apart from the traditionalism of the surrounding countryside (Lee, 1990). Their own image of the countryside, as inferior to the new cities, prevented them from getting close enough to the people there to articulate a sense of local identity (Siu, 1990). Lao She was possibly the most interesting of the writers of regional literature: a Manchu by birth, he had grown up and lived among the poor of the city, the world of the little men, who saw nothing of the Beijing of the Republican literati, while he heralded the success of the Beijing dialect in *baihua* literature.

WHITHER CHINA?

Post-Second World War politics cast a new character for local culture in China. Republican centrism found itself on Taiwan, Hong Kong substituted for Shanghai as the beacon for modernization as well as the wide road towards moral corruption, and the People's Republic contributed towards an ideal of equality and internationalism, at least in the 1950s and early 1960s, before Cultural Revolution fervour turned into cynicism. In different ways, local identities in these different places picked up from when they left off in pre-war days, but they were twisted and turned in new and unexpected directions.

Tao Tao Liu's chapter strides the pre-war and post-war periods to bring out the continuities and new starts. There might be continuities in the 1950s and 60s, but localism in Taiwan literature from the 1970s emphasized either the predicament of the mainlander migrated to Taiwan since 1949 or the 'native soil' of the small

Taiwan towns and villages. On the mainland, the 'native soil' literature that grew from the 1980s reflected on the peasantry, but did not so much glorify the peasant, as the Party literature would have done in Maoist days, as to expose the reality of life under the political regime. In the process, the mainland writer had had to relearn the ways and means of rural society. When Li Rui (sent down to the countryside as a city youth in the Cultural Revolution) wrote in the 1980s about the ghost-marriage of the young village woman, who in the fashion of a good citizen, was drowned as she tried to hold back flood-water with her own body, local custom was not introduced into his writing as a sign of protest, but as a sign of realism. On both the mainland and Taiwan, a function filled by local literature was to provide the roots for which the young searched. Society had come a long way from the time within the imperial regime when the elite imitated the centre by redefining precisely those quaint rural practices so that they might appear more orthodox.

Questions of the continuation of tradition are raised once again in Stephan Feuchtwang's chapter. In exploring the connection between local religion and village identity, now in the 1980s, Feuchtwang shows that having a ready cultural repertoire to fall back on makes the village population sharply different from the urban population.[2] Nevertheless, it does not always do so, and it does not always do it in the same way. In the first of Feuchtwang's three case studies, the village of Meifa in southern Fujian Province revived traditional religion and put at its heart the territorial organization to which it had been accustomed. However, in the village of Jinxing in southern Jiangsu Province, traditional communal rituals had not been restored. In the third example, Cuihu village in northern Yunnan Province, the revival of communal rituals had been selective: women's temple gatherings are now held but communal rituals in which the men used to dominate have lapsed. Feuchtwang accounts for the difference between Meifa and Jinxing in relation to the ability of the village government to satisfy social needs. Where the village community, such as Jinxing, has been able to draw from its industrial profit to provide village infrastructure and social welfare, there has been little need to turn to the temple networks for organization. Cuihu is a difficult case to explain. Within Cuihu, the domestic units have expanded: 'Almost every family has extended, renewed or built new houses,' according to Feuchtwang, and yet no clear territorial boundaries had emerged. It might be expected to have followed the path of the weak-village government model of Meifa, but the strength of the family possibly undermined the need for community organization around temple networks.

It should by now be clear that the quest for status is never very far from the search for psychological reassurance in this construction of local identity, which is often referred to as 'discovery'. Both could have been strung together with the same political thread. The quest for identity is a quest for local identity, and that is a quest for power; it makes sense to a wide sector of any population because the concept of power itself, being malleable, could be variously shaped. The colonial situation wherein a class of people might be born and raised to maturity, be given recognizable status and allowed to compete, would be an ideal laboratory to see the concept evolve. The slight complication in the case of Hong Kong derives from the fact that the majority of the population takes it for granted that they are Chinese.

Helen Siu's contribution to this volume, therefore, begins with the question that begs the question: Is there a Hong Kong identity?

In her chapter, Siu finds expression of the Hong Kong identity only in two circumstances: among a rather small body of people educated in Hong Kong who by the 1980s were located in highly responsible positions, and in the context of the interflow of people between Hong Kong and China. The former was elite. It was not the only elite in Hong Kong, but it was the elite that spoke a common language that had been introduced through common education. The latter was popular, and it was popular not only because it kept alive an image that was widely perceived, but also because that was an image introduced and maintained by the media. Visible, vocal, and self-confident, according to Siu, the elite identifies Hong Kong's achievement as its own. The popular view distinguishes the indigenous Hong Konger from the new immigrant, associated with the image of the country bumpkin and the maladjusted. No doubt a class distinction comes into the perception, for in every generation the new comer has filled the bottom rung of the job ladder, vacated by the upward mobility of the previous generation of new comers. A phenomenon that Shanghai had witnessed in the treatment of its Northern Jiangsu people, the marginalization of the new-comer must be now common practice in those few Chinese cities, including Beijing and Guangzhou, that are flooded annually with new immigrants moving in from the countryside. The impact of the colonization of Hong Kong, in the long term, will only be detectable in the safe haven it had provided for an elite to mature. And as a Hong Konger said to Siu, when the safe haven is withdrawn as Hong Kong returns to China, they expect to find themselves foreigners in their own country.

The formula for the return of Hong Kong to China has been promised as 'one country — two systems.' The reality of Chinese local identity is not that there are only two systems, but that there are many, and that if they have not been necessarily created by the state, they have at least responded to its policies.

Questions of identity are complex; layer upon layer of meaning shrouds identity and identities. Past experience, like the human body, wastes first to its bones, and, when the skeleton finally collapses, disappears beneath the paraphernalia of death buried with it in the grave. Ultimately, local identity and the Chinese state meet in the realm of religion, where by an act of faith, history may be revived like the spirit from the grave. Worshippers offer it incense, meat, and wine, knowing fully well that only the incense goes towards heaven, that little wine is ever used in libation, and that the meat is to be consumed by themselves.

NOTES

1. Xiong's conclusion would agree well with Bryna Goodman's observation after studying statements issued by Shanghai native-place organizations in the 1920s. See Bryna Goodman (1992: 101).
2. Numerous studies in recent years have supported this position. Feuchtwang's observations here may be compared with Siu (1990), Wang (1991) and Dean (1993).

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