Rebuilding the Ancestral Village

Singaporeans in China

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce

Contents

Illustrations

1

Introduction

This book is a study of the relationship between two groups of Chinese, the Singapore Chinese and their village relatives in Anxi County, Fujian. It covers the Singaporeans' search for their cultural roots in their ancestral home villages in Anxi, which has resulted in the revival of their Chinese lineage. Anxi County is popularly known as a district of emigrant villages—a *qiaoxiang* (侨乡)—from which people emigrated to various parts of the world, especially to Southeast Asia, during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. The discussion here specifically focuses on the relationship between members of Xitou, or *kway-tau* [H] (溪头), Ke lineage in Singapore and Penglai.

Since the early 1990s, there has been much interest in the study of *qiaoxiang* and of the Chinese in overseas communities. While some literary works have focused on the attempts of 'overseas Chinese' to trace their roots back to their home villages in China, there has been very little systematic work done on the relationship between Chinese overseas and their *qiaoxiang* connections.

The focus of this study is to address the question of why the Singapore Chinese continue to be interested in their ancestral home villages and, more specifically, why they, especially those born in Singapore, have become involved in the life and socio-economic reconstruction of their ancestral villages, as well as in the revival of their traditional culture. This study is thus about the creation of a moral economy, which has incidentally resulted in the general prosperity of the ancestral villages within the county.

Central to this focus is an examination of how collective memory serves as a powerful force in pulling the Singapore Chinese back to their ancestral villages. Through this collective memory, the Singapore Chinese have been

able to revive their lineage and reinvent socio-cultural and religious roles. The involvement of Singapore Chinese in village activities has resulted in a need to reinvestigate the role of lineage structure in both contemporary urban Singaporean and rural Chinese village societies, and this will be discussed in the following chapters. The way in which a sense of moral responsibility has helped the Singaporeans to redefine their roles within the Chinese village milieu will also be discussed.

At a broader conceptual level, this study looks beyond the Singapore Chinese/*qiaoxiang* connection and seeks to link it up with phenomena involving Chinese communities elsewhere.

Finally, this is also a study of the positions of the Singapore Chinese and their *qiaoxiang* relations within a cultural network, and of the transformation of the Chinese lineage from a parochial structure to a transnational network structure.

Establishing a Moral Economy

Why do Singapore Chinese feel morally obligated to assist their ancestral homes? To understand their motives and actions we need to explore their understanding of, and their identification and affinity with, their ancestral villages and specific ancestral homes (*laojia,* 老家), as well as their understanding of their moral duty and the level of their moral consciousness. It is imperative to do this from an inter-generational perspective in order to understand the continuities and discontinuities between the Singapore Chinese and their *qiaoxiang* kin. Thus it is also important to understand the Anxi Chinese and their actions to create an environment which binds the Singapore Chinese to the villages and brings the moral economy into existence and maintains it.

From the inter-generational perspective, it is often the case that migrants who moved to Singapore maintain strong sentimental ties with their ancestral villages, and this includes the majority of first-generation migrants from Anxi. Such immigrants feel morally obliged to assist their immediate village kin financially and materially. They have also contributed substantially to infrastructure development and socio-religious activities in the ancestral village. Even during times of political restriction, members of this first generation managed to send small remittances, medicines and other material goods to their village kin. Among other things, they have been motivated to do this by their knowledge of what poverty is, as their ancestral districts have, throughout history, been some of the poorest in China.

But what about the Singapore-born Chinese, especially those of Anxi descent? How do they look at their ancestral villages, and what moral demands do they feel? A common view is that these Singapore-born Chinese have less emotional attachment and interest in their ancestral villages than do generations born in Mainland China, and are hence less likely to assist in village reconstruction or participate in village activities. According to this view, they do not see the ancestral villages as having any great significance; they are merely the places where their ancestors came from. They therefore want to have very little dealing with their ancestral villages.

In fact, Singapore-born Chinese of Anxi descent have substantial interest in their ancestral villages. A sizeable number of them have visited their ancestral villages and have participated in various socio-religious activities there. They have also contributed significantly to the infrastructure development in the villages.

Several factors account for this. The first is the strength of the lineage structure in Singapore in binding younger members to their primordial kinship networks. The fact that younger members of the lineage continue to socialize and have links with one another demonstrates that the lineage creates a critical group of younger members within itself. These younger members are then drawn into participating in village activities by the older members. Another factor is the strength of the family. Older members often encourage younger ones to visit the ancestral village, and to participate in and contribute to village development in Anxi. Finally, in recent years the (Singapore) Anxi Association has also played an instrumental role in encouraging younger lineage members to participate in the activities of their ancestral villages and of Anxi County.

In the village, the Anxi Chinese draw on existing social lineage ties, or *guanxi* (关系), to extract monetary and material benefits from their Singapore kin. They use moral arguments and persuasion to encourage the Singapore Chinese to become more involved in village affairs. By recalling their kinship ties and insisting on the moral duties of their Singapore relatives, the Anxi Chinese have managed to tap into the sentiments, including guilt, harboured by the Singapore Chinese, and are thus able to create a moral economy based on a sense of moral responsibility.

The Anxi Chinese publicly display various types of social recognition which they bestow on their Singapore kin for contributing to village development. By honouring them, the Anxi Chinese further strengthen the moral economy.

However, this moral economy is not a harmonious one; it is imbued with tension, conflict of interests, rivalry and resentment between the two groups of Chinese. Tension and resentment are most acutely felt by the younger generation of Singapore Chinese who, as the common view outlined above holds, in fact often do *not* feel that they belong to the ancestral village.

Collective Memories and Nostalgic Sentiments

A second major theme to be explored is that of the collective memories and nostalgic sentiments that the Singapore Chinese continue to hold for their ancestral homes. These are especially strong among the immigrant generation. Many of this generation are unable or unwilling to erase their memories and have passed them on to their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Their early experiences in their home villages in China have thus become a sort of collective memory for them and for their descendants.

What concerns us here is the social and historical memories of groups of people. According to Le Goff, memory is an essential element of any individual or collective identity (Le Goff, 1992: 98). Each society has its own forms of memories. Some aboriginal communities in Australia and Africa have no written records but only oral collective memories in the forms of songs and stories. Other societies have their memories written down so that their members and their future generations can turn to them for guidance. Through historical development, social and collective memories undergo changes. Depending on the social conditions and expectations of each historical epoch, collective memory undergoes change through, according to Le Goff, a process of divinization, secularization and rationalization. The focus on mythology and religious activities, in some societies, has led to emphasis on divine ideologies and religious structures and rituals. Many of these have been written into the collective memory of these societies (Le Goff, 1992: 58–64).

Memory is a subjective thought-process. It is the events and situations which individuals have experienced that constitute personal memories. These memories are passed on to others in various ways; these include recording in diaries, memoirs, letters; storytelling; and other forms of oral transmission. Those that are not recorded in any form are often lost permanently (Watson, 1994: 8). These are the individual memories. Apart from them, there are also collective memories. According to Halbwachs, 'while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember' (Halbwachs, 1992: 22). Thus, there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society (Halbwachs, 1992: 22). Collective memories are usually shared experiences of individuals within a group, who have 'remembered' events, in a sense that, although they may not have experienced the actual events, they are well versed in the images and imagery of them. These events are often represented in various forms—in historical monuments, stories, paintings, rituals, poetry, music, photographs and films (R. Watson, 1994: 8).

The remembering of events is never systematic. Memories are not logically presented; nor do individuals usually intellectualize them. Representations

of collective memory—whether in visible form, as in monuments, paintings, and rituals, or in documented form as in diaries—remain fragmented. Nevertheless, they provide groups of people with images to rely on, when they are in search of the events that affected the life of their ancestors, their society and/or their country. Collective memories allow individuals to reconstruct 'their' collective past—the past of the groups to which they consider themselves to belong—by thinking about what the collective events were like at crucial historical moments. But history and historical events are not snapshots and cannot be seen as such; it is the fluidity of events and their representations that allows for the corresponding flow of images and imagery that is encapsulated as collective memory. History records the interpretation of memories in various contexts—public, private and personal—but memories remain on the individual level.

Collective memories are derived from a collection of individual memories grounded in a particular social context, and therefore represent social memory. However, they are the products of individual understandings and are subject to personal and varying interpretations that change through time and space. Thus, it is not uncommon to have several variants of collective memories.

Historical and social memories are important in helping individuals to establish themselves in relation to the past and to provide anchorage in their search for self-identity in contemporary society, in which the past and the present have become increasingly separated. They provide continuity from the past to the present and into the future, and help to shape present actions and reactions in relation to past and present events, and to permit individuals or groups to use existing knowledge and recollections to pursue future goals. Thus the Singapore Chinese from Anxi 'remember' their ancestral or home villages and the social events there, and these memories help them decide 'who they are' and where they 'come' from, and in turn push them to react to (for example) calls for help from their ancestors' villages.

Since 'while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember' (Halbwachs, 1992: 22), individual memory must be located within the thought of the relevant social group of people in order for it to become meaningful and relevant to all within it. In many societies without written traditions there are 'memory specialists, memory men', who are similar to the 'genealogists, guardians of the royal lawbooks, historians of the court, traditionalists' (Le Goff, 1992: 56) of literate society. Their main preoccupation is to maintain the cohesion of the group through a continuous reminder of the commonality of its members. Le Goff considers this to be 'ethnic memory' (Le Goff, 1992: 55), and argues that 'the accumulation of elements within memory [are] part of everyday life' of individuals (Le Goff, 1992: 55).

In collective memory, family plays an important role in establishing the framework for the types of memories to be included and for the transmission of such memories to its members. Because certain activities and ideas are repeatedly transmitted to family members, they become deeply embedded in their minds and are reproduced for future use. Part of this involves the reproduction of the past.

The significance of collective memory lies in the roles which it plays within a society. It does not only help people to understand certain historical events but also present ones. Collective memories are known as historical facts, which embody a set of values that society once upheld. While some of these values are still held by the group concerned, others are, or have been, discarded. However, collective memories may also be reinvented, and attempts may be made to revive traditional values to assist the group in attempting to deal with social change.

Memory is seen as an instrument and an objective of power. As such, a struggle for domination over remembrance and tradition involves the manipulation of memory (Le Goff, 1992: 98). Types of memory that are reconstructed and/or censored are deliberately and consciously chosen in contemporary society in order to assert authority and/or to legitimize one's position. To understand how this works for a community or an individual, it is important to position collective memories within a relevant social framework. Halbwachs looks at the initial preservation of collective memory as the primary domain of the elite class, which has an entrenched tradition and sits atop a class hierarchy. Since it is the elite version of the collective memory that dominates society, it is also the elite version of social values that is dominant within society. However, when a group of non-elite enter the elite class, the society needs to reorganize and modify, to some degree, the frameworks of its memory, either by distorting its past or by limiting the field of memory in order to screen out less desirable elements. Often, such a reorganization is required because the new elite demand that their actions and values be incorporated into the collective memory. In this process, it is not uncommon for societies to 'forget' their remote past and only concentrate on the recent past contiguous with the present.

Additionally, Halbwachs argues that when a certain category of people have been conferred higher prestige and when this is collectively recognized by society, it is because these people and their activities are believed to have contributed most to the entire social body (Halbwachs, 1992: 138). Thus collective memories of the contributions of these people, in the forms of socio-political or economic functions and philanthropic and charitable acts, are based on the judgement that society makes of its members (Halbwachs, 1992: 144). In traditional societies, these are often associated with a gentry-elite class

and it is institutions involving these factors that have become established. It is this elite class that is subjected to challenges by new groups. The moral tradition of the elite is therefore part of the established social value system. Halbwachs argues that it is the rich who are responsible for imparting the moral tradition to the poor, for they do not have a moral tradition. However, with changing social order, moral traditions are subjected to challenges from the newly-rich-turned-elite, and there is thus an emergence of a new morality. The new members of the elite may comprise an assortment of people ranging from artisans to merchants and others. Today, the moral traditions that have emerged from the villagers are also significant in restructuring the social order of the Chinese society.

In modern society, the idea of virtue of the wealthy is that each family head has amassed wealth through his or her own efforts—an obvious ploy to justify one's position. To a large extent, Halbwachs equates the scale of wealth with the scale of perceived personal merit, and the moral value of the possessor of quantities of goods can be evaluated through this equation. However, such a person and his or her qualities have to endure the scrutiny of his or her society over a passage of time in order for the society to evaluate his or her contributions. Thus, his or her contributions to society, rather than the scale of his or her wealth, are the basis for his or her moral standing. After a considerable length of time, and if his or her qualities and contributions can make an imprint on the memory of the society, memories will serve to perpetuate the legacy of such a person or class of persons. In traditional society, the conferring of titles provides recognition of the desirable social qualities and virtues.

What happens with the emergence of new wealth and a new elite? Within the new moral tradition, wealth remains an important social asset, and those with wealth, irrespective of their occupational categories, assume high social status. Members of this new elite do not fit into the traditional framework of 'success'—wealth and money now become important yardsticks to measure their achievement. They therefore need to modify the existing social order to create an elite space for themselves. At the same time, the tradition must recognize them as the new successful elite.

Inevitably, the modification of tradition and the creation of new tradition come into conflict with existing tradition. The relationship between tradition and morality also comes into question. In Halbwachs' view, the old tradition continues to be seen as one that corresponds to morality, while the new tradition is associated with immorality or, at best, with utilitarian morality. Utilitarian morality is used by the new elite, in a society experiencing a rise of commercial activity, to justify its commercial moneymaking activities,

and it presupposes the need to contribute something back to society, such as philanthropic actions, perhaps involving an element of altruism.

As changes occur within a society, it is thus forced to adopt new values, and this involves consulting alternative collective memories and frameworks of social values in order to establish a new tradition and a new order of social values. Here, in addition to the dominant elite tradition and the elite version of collective memories that the society has been exposed to, alternative collective memories of various groups—not only of the new elite, but also of various existing social groups such as lineage, family and minority groups—become important. These groups begin to exert their presence and demand that their memories and social histories be incorporated into the mainstream societal thought process.

An anthropological discourse on collective memory and nostalgia is therefore important in attempting to understand a group of people—be it an extended family, a lineage, or a community—who are seeking to re-explore their cultural roots and identity. It is possible to see the pursuit of memory as promoting and maintaining cultural formations in all their fullness and complexity.

Kuchler and Melion (1991: 7) argue that memory is characterized as follows:

(1) it is an actively constructed social and cultural process;

(2) it operates through representations;

(3) the modalities of recollection are historically based and the project of understanding is a historical one; and

(4) forgetting and recollecting are allied mnemonic functions where forgetting is a selective process through which memory achieves social and cultural dimensions.

Memory can be tapped and activated through processes of philosophical inquiry, but it does not itself generate these processes (Kuchler and Melion, 1991: 3). It is thus significant to understand the ways in which experience shapes and reshapes the collective memory. For example, nostalgia is seen as a response to dissatisfaction with one's immediate situation. Such dissatisfaction provides an individual with a motivation to idealize past events as, by looking towards an idealized past, one can momentarily disengage oneself from the immediate, less-than-enchanting present (Nosco, 1990: 4). Nostalgia is thus one way in which collective memories can allow individuals or social groups to recreate the past to satisfy their present needs for identity and for interaction.

In understanding memory and its recollection, the accuracy and exactness of each event has become a subject of contention by scholars of inquiry, especially those practising psychology and psychiatry. Lengthy works have

been written on this issue. However, it is not the objective of this work to discuss the scientific inquiry into memory and of the accuracy of recollection. We are interested not so much in what is 'true', but rather, in the process of recollection and in the events, images and representations that are recalled as important. This involves selection (Fentress and Wickham, 1992).

The role of women is particularly important here. Geary (1994) argues for the need to study the 'memory of women' who are active in remembering, preserving and transmitting the past. It is through such acts of preservation, structuring and moulding that the past, along with its institutions, is remembered and its dynamics brought to knowledge in the present. Here, both women as rememberers and women who are remembered are important issues. However, while women as rememberers take a front seat in this area of collective memory, women tend to pale into insignificance in patriarchal social structures and are less likely to be remembered than men. Such is true in Chinese society, where remembered women are few. It remains to be seen whether, at the level of oral history, the prominence of women is more readily articulated than in the written tradition (Geary, 1994: 51–73).

This issue of the role of women is related to the issue of the professionalization of the carriers of memory. Oral transmission was and is still an important method of imparting memories to future generations, especially at individual and familial levels. At lineage and other social levels, however, there is a tendency, particularly in Chinese society, to establish memory on a permanent basis. Oral transmission here gives way to written records, which are kept by men. Genealogies, as official records, serve to formalize present events and preserve them as memories for future generations. Such texts maintain a high level of accuracy, which is important for future reference. Such documents and records of the past enable us to reconstruct it and to revive the memories associated with it, thus providing continuity from past to present. This allows for the development of two streams of memories. One is the official version, as represented by genealogies and written records. The other is the unofficial oral stream at individual and folk levels. These two may converge or diverge. Convergence and divergence spell out the emphases on different materials that different groups make in conscious remembering. This differential selection of material is very much influenced by the social, cultural, or political environment during the time and at the place when the collective memory was transmitted and documented and, obviously, by the different positions of groups within the current society.

In the daily discourse of individuals, from storytelling to the reproduction of cultural items and rituals, it is the personal version of memory that we are confronted with. What is articulated consists of individual, personal and fragmented accounts of what individuals can remember, what they choose to

remember and what they want to remember. These accounts come in the forms of stories, reminiscences and matter-of-fact statements. These are usually told to members of the inner kinship network, and children hear them from their elders. Such stories form part of the oral history of the early emigrants who arrived and settled in Singapore.

The operation of collective memory can help us to further understand the emotions and attachment of the migrants and their descendents to their ancestral home villages, and can also help us to comprehend, for instance, the eagerness of the first-generation Singapore Chinese to visit them, as well as to impart large sums of money and other contributions to help with village reconstruction.

Singapore Anxi Chinese and Their Collective Memory

The collective memory of the Singapore Anxi Chinese is tied to their shared understandings of their ancestral home, their past experiences and their present expectations. The crux of it lies in their desire to perpetuate a cultural identity. These cultural memories—including bittersweet ones of great difficulties, individual memories of first-generation migrants themselves, etc.— include an awareness of their ancestral home. This collective memory propels the migrants-turned-citizens to visit their ancestral villages, and pushes them to contribute financially to the socio-cultural and economic life of the villages. However, this collective memory may have a negative impact on some, who do not wish to visit their home village.

The collective memories of these Singapore Chinese are thus selective. In reconstructing past events, the collective memory of most Singapore migrant Chinese is one of poverty. Early experiences of poverty pushed many migrants to endure great difficulties and to work hard. Many recount the great difficulties and poverty that they were in, their fear of the unknown when they set sail for Singapore, and their eventual success, however modest, in Singapore. They also remember their struggle for survival in their villages before migrating. It is this memory that they have kept alive and that they choose to pass on to their descendants.

Today, even as many Anxi migrants to Singapore have become relatively successful and have accumulated modest wealth, they continue to work hard. This form of work ethic is now widely studied and debated. Neo-Confucian scholars have argued that it is attributable to the existence of a Confucian Ethic, citing the economic success of Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore, all of which have been influenced by Confucian ideology.

In Singapore, the state has consciously used various elements of Confucian ideology for purposes of economic and social engineering.[1]

Be that as is may, this collective memory of poverty is instrumental and has become, in part, a tool in dealings between the Singapore migrant Chinese and their village counterparts. By recalling the poverty that they have undergone, Singapore migrant Chinese may adopt a liberal, humane attitude towards the existing poverty experienced by their village kin in their ancestral villages. Gradually, after initially helping members of their immediate families and lineage, many became involved in village reconstruction, and since the 1978 reform years, they have become involved in county-level financial, technical and informational activities. In doing so, they have helped transform the emigrant villages from extreme poverty to relative prosperity.

The collective memory also provides the Singaporeans with a sense of identity, based on common cultural roots: 'who they are' is related to 'where their ancestors came to Singapore from', and the social customs, rituals and religious elements, now routinized as part of the communal social fabric in Singapore, which they brought with them. When visiting the ancestral village, they thus bring along their own understandings of these. Their strong sense of affinity (*ganqing*, 感情) for their ancestral home (*zuxiang,* 祖乡) allows them to locate their identity within a known and manageable social framework grounded in kinship ties.

Recalling collective memory and transmitting it to younger generations serve to keep alive the experiences of the ancestors and remind them of their ancestral villages and wider kinship networks. Most of these elements of the collective memory are transmitted, through oral stories and reminiscences, in a spontaneous and fragmented manner. Nevertheless, they remind them of their ritual obligations and duties to ancestors and encourage them to engage in cultural reproduction.

The Ideology of Moral Duty

This all brings us to consider the role of ideology in shaping the attitudes of the Singapore Chinese towards their ancestral villages and the effect this has on cultural identity. Although they have experienced various phases of change in Singapore, they continue to be governed by a sense of moral duty to their ancestral villages. What is this sense of moral duty? Is it related to Confucianism, Buddhism or what?

Halbwachs sees the preservation of collective memory as an important *moral* duty, irrespective of whether it belongs to an individual, family, lineage or a social group, arguing that it is the desire to preserve this memory that

leads group members to embark on philanthropic or charitable acts. Such acts are a tangible outcome that preserves the memory of the giver after his or her death. Such philanthropy thus aims for future gratification after the passing away of an individual or group, but also consolidates the socio-moral fabric of a society.

Weber (1966) argued that such creation and giving-away of wealth, involving a sacrifice of enjoyment, are grounded in one's moral duties. Weber considered specifically Christian calls for an inner-worldly asceticism in one's spiritual development. Thus, although the creation of wealth is important, the giving-away of this wealth is more important. This sense of moral duty is a matter of fulfilling God's calling, towards ultimate salvation and the giving-away of wealth is done in devotion to God Himself. In this Christian model of moral duty, Perry (1909) argues for the uncomplicated good nature of human beings as the key to moral duty to a community by individuals. The actions are altruistic, for the individuals desire neither fame nor social reward.

In Confucianism, the moral duty of an individual is governed by the observance of the five moral values. They are: *ren* (仁), or humanity; *yi* (义), righteousness; *li* (礼), rituals; *zhong* (忠), loyalty; and *xiao* (孝), filial piety. In the ideal-type situation, a person who has perfected all five moral values is a 'gentleman', or *junzi* (君子). Such a gentleman commits himself totally to the cultivation of these moral values as second nature. For an individual to attain the highest level of moral cultivation, he or she has to routinize moral practices as part of his or her daily routine.

To achieve moral and spiritual perfection, *ren* (仁) is most important. Tu argues that human nature is perfectible and that perfection can be achieved through a continuous process of 'inner illumination and self transformation' (Tu, 1985: 19) of a moral and spiritual kind (Tu, 1985: 22). According to Tu, self-knowledge of one's mental state and inner feeling is the key to this process of inner illumination and transformation (1985: 19). This self-knowledge will enable an individual to act, create and transform his or her self into a perfect self (Tu, 1985: 19–20). It is 'an objectless awareness, a realisation of the human possibility of "intellectual intuition"' (Tu, 1985: 20). One's true or real nature is thus 'a self-creating and self-directing process' (Tu, 1985: 20). It is also a liberating process, freeing oneself from the trappings of human desires. It is this that is considered becoming human.

In the book of Mencius, according to Tu, human beings are endowed with moral sense, which consists of four basic human feelings: commiseration, shame and dislike, deference and compliance, and right and wrong (Tu, 1985: 24). It is these feelings that push individuals to learn and refine the 'self', a term which refers to both conscience and consciousness. Interestingly, and revealingly, the character *xin* (心) represents both 'moral sense' and 'self'—

i.e., the conscious self is thus essentially a moral entity (Tu, 1985: 24). Imbued with the four basic feelings, which serve as imperatives for moral cultivation, human beings are able to cultivate and attain perfection. Thus, Confucian teaching sees altruistic motivation as an important force for the perfection of the self.

Morality and moral actions are to be found in daily social intercourse. The *Book of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing,* 孝经) stresses the moral responsibility of an individual to his or her parents, to family, and to other lineage members, including the dead ancestors. To neglect them is to be unfilial, *buxiao* (不孝); consciously to neglect one's parents or ancestors is to descend to the lowest level of moral irresponsibility. Thus, a consciousness of the responsibility to one's parents is a moral requirement. Aged parents should be regarded with high esteem, and an individual is expected conscientiously to look after the spiritual and material well-being of his or her parents. There are two reasons for this, the first being that the individual is indebted to his or her parents for the gift of life, the second being that the individual is indebted to his or her parents for raising him or her from infancy to adulthood. This form of indebtedness is incurred irrespective of the treatment the person has received during the various stages of growth and development. In the *Xiaojing*, individuals are expected to transcend personal feelings in carrying out filial duty and becoming morally worthy.

Buddhism has also influenced Chinese moral beliefs. The Buddhist notion of karma and merit-making shapes the way in which adherents devote themselves to cultivating moral good in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment. The Buddhist notion that one can realize one's self serves to encourage individuals to cultivate their spiritual being (*xiuxin,* 修心) through this-worldly asceticism. This involves a willingness to sacrifice immediate material enjoyment to prepare for otherworldly spiritual achievement. In particular, *xiuxin* involves doing good and depriving oneself of all material and sensual pleasures. The ultimate goal is to attain Buddha-hood, of becoming a Buddha, *chengfo* (成佛).

Within the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, the concept of the bodhisattva reveals the ultimate path towards Buddhist morality. Differing from Theravada Buddhism, which focuses on self-enlightenment, Mahayana Buddhism stresses mass salvation through the help of the bodhisattva, a perfected being who postpones his or her attainment of nirvana indefinitely in order to help all sentient beings to attain enlightenment. This altruism of the bodhisattva is something that those who aspire to Buddhahood will attempt to emulate. The taking of the bodhisattva vow by adherents is an important step in this process of self-realization. Hence, the bodhisattva is an excellent example of a superior altruistic being—total devotion to the welfare of others and different from

the many who desire to help someone in order to fragrance the name of the individual family on the lineage.

Buddhist doctrine declares that the heart of every individual is capable of doing good deeds. Within the mundane world, 'doing good' is translated into practical selfless actions that are aimed at assisting the welfare of others, in both spiritual and material senses. Good deeds and works of charity are regarded as important social actions.

Other key concerns of Buddhist behaviour are the notions of karma and merit-making. Every individual is subjected to karmic influences, and the situation of an individual is the result of accumulated individual acts during both past and present lives. There are both good and bad karma. The main purpose of performing good deeds is merit-making, as an accumulation of merit and good karma in this life can cancel bad karma previously accumulated. Since good merits can be transferred from one person to another, individuals can engage in meritorious deeds to help the dead to increase their store of good merits. It is thus a common sight to see charity being carried out in the name of the dead in order to provide them with a sufficient store of merits and good karma (the latter is also essential for ultimate enlightenment). Charity work and good deeds may likewise be carried out for the living, so as to ensure that in the after-life, and/or in future lives, individuals will be relieved of extreme suffering. A store of good karma will also enable the dead to move swiftly from the netherworld to the human plane. This is important, for it is only when one is reborn on the human plane of existence that there is hope for the ultimate cessation of rebirth.

Finally, Daoist morality considers that goodness and compassion are parts of human nature. Daoism sees moral good as the flow of nature. To do what is not good is to be unnatural and against the Dao. Moral good and moral duty are thus essential parts of human nature.

Reinventing a Chinese Culture

A fourth theme that will be investigated in this study is that of cultural reinvention and cultural reproduction. Hobsbawm defines 'invented tradition' as 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 1). The term 'inventing traditions' is taken to mean a 'process of formalisation and ritualisation, characterised by reference to the past' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 4). The invention of tradition is required under three circumstances: the first is a need to

establish social cohesion and membership of a group within a real or imagined community; the second is a need to legitimize the institutions and authority structures of a given society; and the third is the need to provide a set of values and beliefs for members of a community (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 8).

In the process of reinventing a culture, the significant elements that a group of people consider as representational of their culture are selected. These include material icons, ritual functions, ritual behaviours and social customs. During the process of reinvention, there are two groups of players. One group is engaged in the decision-making process. Its task is to detail the elements that are to be reinvented. This group comprises the elite and dominant members of a society, who have the resources and intellectual and cultural depth to engineer the reinvention of selected cultural elements that they see as significant for portraying their culture and cultural identity. The second group consists of those engaged in the actual process of reinventing these cultural elements and acts. These players lack the resources and administrative skills needed to initiate the process of cultural reinvention, but they are active participants in carrying it out. The culture that is reinvented within a society can thus be seen as the idealized and imagined culture of the dominant group. Through time, this invented culture disseminates into the wider community and becomes accepted as the culture. Under such an ideal situation, no one within the community would question its origin.

The timing and the socio-political context in which cultural invention takes place are important factors to consider. Success in cultural reinvention can only be realized when the timing is correct and when the political climate is conducive to reproduction. It is important that members of the group share a collective need for such a reinvention and believe that such action is necessary for the survival of their social collectivity. A conviction of such need will push the members to group together and engage in this process of reinvention. However, success can only be achieved if there is no hostile political climate to interfere with cultural reproduction. A relaxed and liberal climate will enable the group to engage in the reproduction of cultural elements without fear of reprisal for its members and without the suppression of its cultural practices. In many cases, it is important that the state supports such reinvention.

Within a migrant society where there are numerous groups in existence, each group attempts to reinvent its own culture. Within the Singapore Chinese community there are numerous groups based on dialect and territorial affiliations. These have brought varieties of cultural elements and have placed varying degrees of significance on the various cultural elements brought from their ancestral villages. Thus, there are several subcultural systems among Chinese subgroups.

However, for the Singapore Chinese, the ancestral village may provide a physical space in which elaborate socio-religious activities that are no longer fashionable within Singapore society are carried out. Functions conducted in the ancestral village are either religious or have strong religious overtones. Communal religious fairs and ancestor worship have become two important types of activity and the *raison d'etre* for village visits, and are conducted with great elaboration.

In the ancestral village, such socio-religious activities were not the central focus of village life until the early 1980s, when economic liberalization brought about some socio-cultural liberation. Formerly, from about 1950 to 1980, traditional practices had not been regarded as significant by the younger generation, and older villagers had come to realize their inability to carry out many of these activities. Only with the return of Singapore lineage members did attempts to revive and reproduce certain aspects of socio-religious practices begin. Thus, their reproduction within the village milieu can be seen as an outcome of a process of negotiation between the Singapore Chinese and the villagers.

When the Singapore Chinese began to visit their ancestral villages, they brought along the knowledge and cultural practices that they were familiar with in Singapore, and sought to reproduce them in the ancestral village. Within these and other Chinese villages, many of the cultural practices of the pre-Communist era were considered a waste of precious resources, and this was true of religious practices, as religion was considered superstition and was officially banned.

However, since the 1978 reform, the Chinese state has formally recognized the existence of institutional religions. Although religious practices continue to be low-key affairs, and, any form of organized religious function still continues to receive close attention of Communist officials, within the ancestral villages such functions have received a more liberal treatment. However, the villagers are forced to rely on their collective memories to reconstruct them, while ritual practices must be consciously constructed to suit the political ideology in order to safeguard the interests of the villagers and not to offend the state.

As a result of the differences in the social environments and political requirements experienced by the two groups of lineage descendents, those in the village and those from Singapore, there exists a great gulf between them in the understanding and interpretation of cultural and religious practices. What we see today in the ancestral village is thus a tradition negotiated and invented by the two groups, based on a shared understanding of what constitute the core elements of the culture and of what can be practised within the existing socio-political framework without arousing official dissatisfaction.

The content of this negotiated culture is geared towards ancestor worship and folk religion. These practices are known to both the Singapore and Anxi Chinese. However, there remain differences between them as to the style, ritual content and elaboration of these activities. An agreement on practice has been reached, and so today we see each lineage conducting ancestor worship and folk religious practices according to its own internally-agreed-upon agenda.

The invention of tradition is thus an outcome of a process of negotiation between various elements found within the social group of the community at large, and what are seen to be common and shared cultural elements are reproduced and accepted by all, while elements that do not have the support of the majority will either be eliminated or confined to subgroups and reflective of the particularistic values of those subgroups.

'Foreign' elements of culture may be introduced when inventing tradition. Cultural elements also undergo change and adaptation to new situations, resulting in new forms of practice and new interpretations despite the continued use of the old contents. Hybridization of old and new contents occurs, as culture changes. Thus, a quest for cultural authenticity becomes less useful than a study of how groups develop and interpret their cultural practices.

Bourdieu argues that possession of cultural capital by an individual will place his or her in a high position within society, thus allowing him or her a position in the social structure that would otherwise be inaccessible. Cultural capital, although it is symbolic capital, thus acts to enhance the economic status of individuals, groups or societies that possess it (Bourdieu, 1993: 75). Persons in possession of cultural capital who are able to make names for themselves and attain social prestige are called cultural bankers (Bourdieu, 1993: 75).

During the process of cultural reinvention in ancestral villages, selected members of both Singapore and Anxi Chinese groups are seen to be such cultural bankers. They possess the knowledge of ancestor worship and religious practices and help to reproduce them, so that the rituals are once again practised within the village structure. These practices bring the Singapore and village lineage members together in ritualistic fashion to acknowledge their shared identity.

Chinese Overseas and the China Connection

A study of the Singapore Chinese and their ancestral villages would not be complete without an understanding of their positions within the global history of Chinese overseas. Lately there has been great interest in the study of the

global spread of Chinese overseas, as well as of their communities and their links with China in general. This has been in part due to the economic success of the 'little dragons' of Asia (including Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan), where large Chinese populations reside. In this book, we will term the Chinese in the Diaspora as "Chinese overseas", in order not to confuse with the term "overseas Chinese" which has political overtones.

Two main streams of thought exist concerning the increasing economic integration between Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and the Chinese communities overseas, the first being *Da Zhonghua* (大中华), or the 'Greater China' thesis,[2] and the other *Wenhua Zhongguo* (文化中国), or the 'Cultural China'[3] model. Both approaches attempt to explain the continued cultural links among Mainland China; the peripheral areas of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau; and the Chinese communities overseas.

The idea of Greater China, according to Harding (1993: 660–686), can be seen at three levels. One level is manifested in the emergence of a transnational Chinese economy, involving the rapid rate of economic growth and integration of China with Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and with other Chinese communities. The interlocking relationships and the rapid growth are attributed to economic complementarities and cultural similarities among these regions, as well as the political integration of the first two. These developments have led to calls for the formation of a single economic bloc that would include all of the Chinese communities.

A second level of the Greater China idea is that of a globalized Chinese culture. The 'Greater China' thesis assumes that there is increased cultural interaction between people of Chinese descent internationally. Currently, many Chinese from Taiwan, Southeast Asia and many Western countries visit Mainland China. There are also visitors from the integrated regions of Hong Kong and Macau, and the number of Chinese from China who visit Chinese communities overseas has increased. Communication between these areas has grown with better and more open telecommunication, and the flow and interaction of both popular and traditional forms of culture between China and Chinese communities elsewhere is on the increase.

On yet another level, 'Greater China' is associated with the idea of a reunified Chinese state including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang. Harding suggests the ways which a reunified Chinese state might be governed. Should it be governed according to a 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, as Hong Kong is? Or should the 'reunified Chinese state' or 'Greater China' be governed as a 'Chinese Federal Republic'?

In the twenty-first century, as Hong Kong and Macau have returned to Chinese rule since 1997 and 1999 respectively and both regions have continued their capitalist economic system with great success and have

achieved greater economic and social integration with the Mainland, such a model is regarded as a possibility for Taiwan although there continues to be resistance from the democratic camp. However, with the election of Ma Ying-jeou of the China-friendly Kuomintang (KMT) Party as Taiwan president in 2008, there are great hopes that Taiwan would consider reunification with the Mainland under either the 'One Country Two Systems' model or a variant of it.

A central criticism of the 'Greater China' thesis is its failure to account for the status of the overseas Chinese communities scattered throughout the world. Wang Gungwu (1993a: 926–948) has argued that the use of 'Greater China' should be context-specific. When 'Greater China' is used to refer to a transnational economic system, it is important to point out that the 'economic integration' refers more to the 'South China Economic Periphery', where economies have been booming and where there are links among Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and other southern areas of China. When 'Greater China' implies a political concept, it refers simply to those regions within the PRC. In the sense of a 'globalized culture', the term includes overseas Chinese communities, where older Chinese values have undergone changes due to modern influences and adaptations with which those who live in them might find it possible to identify (Wang, 1993a: 926).

Chinese overseas have political allegiance and national loyalty to their nation-states, and increasingly have developed nationalist feelings for their countries. By confirming their loyalty to these nation-states (Wang, 1993a: 940), they have gained the trust of their respective national governments. The participation of Chinese overseas in the economic development of South China has gradually come to be accepted by the national leaders of the countries where the overseas Chinese live, and their actions are not considered to be disloyal to their nations (Wang, 1993a: 940). Wang argues that it is the acceptance of the Chinese as full-fledged, loyal citizens that has led to the possibility of their push for cultural autonomy and for its acceptance by the nation-state. Such is now the situation in Singapore, but other countries have yet to adopt such an attitude fully. An example of this is Indonesia, where Indonesian Chinese investments in the PRC continue to be viewed with suspicion by the Indonesian government.

The other main model that attempts to explain the increasing economic and cultural integration between Mainland China and Chinese communities elsewhere is the 'Cultural China' model or thesis initiated by Tu Weiming. The Cultural China thesis offers three symbolic universes. The first of these includes Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, which are populated primarily by ethnic Chinese. To the second universe belong the Chinese communities that form significant political minorities within their 'adopted' countries—Malaysia and the United States are parts of this universe.

The third symbolic universe consists of individual men and women—mainly scholars, teachers, journalists, industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs and writers—who attempt to understand China and bring their understanding of China to their own linguistic communities (Tu, 1994: 13–14). According to Tu, this universe membership in the global Chinese culture is defined in terms of cultural understanding and acceptance, rather than ethnicity.

Tu argues that the increasing influence of the overseas Chinese communities has created a situation where the periphery has become a centre in its own right, with much power and influence. He writes that 'it is unprecedented for the geopolitical centre to remain entrenched while the periphery presents such powerful and persistent economic and cultural challenges' (Tu, 1994: 13), and that 'the centre no longer has the ability, insight or legitimate authority to dictate the agenda for "Cultural China"' (Tu, 1994: 34).

Chinese overseas communities have attracted much attention among scholars who study the 'Chinese Diaspora' phenomenon. In one study, a group of scholars called for the study of Chinese overseas as part of 'Chinese Transnationalism' (Ong and Nonini, 1997). In another, Peter Van der Veer (1995) explored the 'politics of space' as a mediating factor between a displaced population's relation to a homeland and its relation to the nation-state of the displaced population. As he studied Indian populations living in different places around the world, his research can be classified as concerning a South Asian Diaspora. According to him, it is the 'politics of space' that connects Indian populations regardless of where they live. This is a politics by which the migrants, or the diaspora ethnic community, contest with the nation-state for a place to live and for a space to express their cultural and ethnic identities. Van der Veer sees space as the alienating property of the nation-state and not as a property of the Diaspora. The migrant communities thus continue to experience marginalized positions and retain marginal spaces.

In Van der Veer's work, this politics of space has grown as a result of two primary factors: British colonialism and the emergence of indigenous Indian culture and religion. He argues that it was British colonialism that brought about the sensitivity, which resulted in a search for an indigenous ideology to compensate for the British ideology. The result was, according to Van der Veer, the emergence of an indigenous Indian culture and religion, which has formed the ideological basis for Indians overseas to reproduce their cultural identity.

Not only space but also time is an important factor in the study of diasporas. According to Van der Veer, there are two types of time. One is 'structural time'; its starting reference point is the beginning of colonialism, from which it gradually moves to post-colonial time, then on to contemporary time, and ends with nation-state time. The second type is the so-called 'cultural

time' which involves moving back in history to the source of an indigenous culture and its religion, the purpose being to answer contemporary cultural and religious needs. In so doing, cultural reproduction becomes the key concern. Today, the mobility of the Chinese has ushered in a new phase of development where circulatory migration and return migration have been the norm. No longer are the Chinese contended to stay in one place, they move for a variety of reasons. Hence, locating the diaspora self in a transnational environment becomes an important consideration where territorialization and deterritorialization are two counter-movements working in tandem (Kuah-Pearce, 2006).

How relevant are these models to this study of the Singapore Chinese and their *qiaoxiang* connections? I find that the labels are less important than some ideas that have grown out of these various discourses. An important aspect of the Greater China thesis, as well as of the Cultural China thesis, is the concept of a globalized Chinese culture which is important to our understanding of the links between China and Chinese overseas communities. For the Cultural China thesis, the strength of the periphery dictating the agenda of Mainland China has some merit in discussing the contemporary relationship between China and the Chinese overseas. Likewise the issues of structural and cultural time help us to understand the significance of memories, social experiences and the acts of cultural reproduction, while the issue of territorialization and deterritorialization helps us to locate the individuals in a fluid transnational environment.

In searching for an appropriate framework to understand the social relationship of the Singapore Chinese with their *qiaoxiang* counterparts, I feel that the migration/diaspora framework is useful for evaluating the emotions and actions of the community. This framework also allows us to look at various disparate overseas communities from a global-historical perspective.

Therefore, we need to take into consideration the following factors: (i) the migration history; (ii) the changing status of the Chinese overseas from migrant to citizen of the adopted country; (iii) the formation of the Singapore nation-state, with its citizenship and the corresponding question of allegiance either to a national entity, to an ethnic entity, or to both; (iv) and the transnational cosmopolitan environment.

Conceptually, the formation of the Chinese community in Singapore can only be understood as part of the wider global migration history of the Chinese. Globally, the Chinese create physical spaces with which they come to identify, within which they reconstruct their socio-cultural structures. However, they maintain links with their ancestral villages through occasional letters and regular remittances.

Early Chinese sojourners to Southeast Asia went in search of economic opportunities and employment and, as sojourners—mostly were temporary traders or labourers—rarely considered settling as an option. Social and political forces were hostile towards their settling permanently. In the event, however, many settled down as permanent or semi-permanent migrants.

Although the concept of 'sojourning' was traditionally defined to refer to temporary movement to an unfamiliar place, Wang has considered sojourning not only as a temporary phenomenon, but also as a settlement for a lifetime, which might stretch over generations. Such sojourning is taken to mean 'that a highly particularistic loyalty towards family and the clan-based village formed the basis of linked space over a great distance. Under these circumstances, it was possible to create small independent groups, which were later supported by the advancement in technology and information. Sojourning for them was based on physical and trading ties with their ancestral homes' (Wang, 1993b: 138).

Today, the telecommunication revolution provides quick information and allows individual Chinese to communicate and travel at ease. This access to modern technology has brought individuals together (Wang, 1993b) and has made it possible to create an intensive network of linkages for Chinese in different countries, irrespective of their locality. What lies between those in overseas communities and those in their ancestral villages is the social distance between them.

After the formation of the Singapore nation-state, the Chinese in Singapore were given a choice of citizenship. Those who opted to remain permanently adopted Singapore as their home and assumed Singapore citizenship. This issue of loyalty to China or to Singapore remained important as a contest of allegiance until the 1980s. Only in the 1990s was there an acceptance of a Singapore Chinese identity by the Singapore state, a development which has created less suspicion within Singapore and between it and its geopolitically sensitive neighbours. In addition, globalization has also restructured the government mentality towards the mobility of its citizens in the global sphere.

The conceptual transition from temporary sojourner to Singapore citizen and now to global citizen is an important factor to consider in our attempt to study the Singapore Chinese and their *qiaoxiang* connections. It allows us to understand the sentiments that the Singapore Chinese continue to attach to their ancestral homes, and their present actions and participation in village reconstruction and cultural reproduction.

Contest of Identities

An underlying theme throughout this study is the issue of identity among the Singapore Chinese. Contests of identities occur at various levels. There is a contest of identity between the Singapore and the Anxi Chinese at the lineage level. On the state level, there is a contest between Chinese ethnicity and Singapore national identity. At the global level, there is a contest among Singapore Chinese identity, Mainland Chinese identity and global Chinese overseas identity as well as a global citizen identity.

At the lineage level, the issue of identity is a crucial one. By acknowledging the existence of the ancestral village and participating in village affairs, Singapore Chinese affirm that they are part of the lineage structure. They become insiders to the activities of the village and lineage. Inducting the younger generation of Singapore Anxi Chinese into the lineage structure becomes crucial, as in many Chinese overseas communities, a permanent break in lineage structure has already occurred. Chinese communities in the United States, Australia and Europe have entered their third, fourth and fifth generations, and most Chinese have very little knowledge of their ancestral villages, much less active interaction with relatives in the villages. In contrast to this, the Anxi Chinese in Singapore have consciously maintained lineage continuity and have ensured that a permanent break has not occurred.

The Anxi example thus illustrates the point that migration does not necessarily lead to the cessation of contacts with ancestral villages, and that ultimate integration with adopted countries, as in the nation-state, does not have to mean a discontinuity with the ancestral villages from whence the migrants, or their ancestors, first emigrated.

However, some Singapore Anxi Chinese may be viewed as 'others'. The list of differences between the Singapore Chinese and the Mainland Anxi villagers is a long one, and there are tensions between them. Contact between younger Singapore-born Chinese with Anxi lineage members has been very recent, notably from the 1980s onward and their feeling for 'their' ancestral home is very ambiguous. The great differences in attitudes and general lifestyle make them feel alien to the village members, and both groups are inclined to draw a dividing line between the two groups. Younger Anxi lineage members often feel that the younger Singapore members are arrogant and proud, and so tend to treat them as 'outsiders' and 'others'. Indeed, some younger Singapore members do not want to be seen as 'insiders', and so consciously behave as 'outsiders' when in the village.

However, for some Singapore Chinese, visiting the ancestral village is a return to their cultural roots, serving to reaffirm their Chinese identity as well as helping them to locate themselves within the Singapore polity. Thus, by

going to their ancestral base, they come to grips with a hybrid identity that they come to possess.

As citizens of Singapore, Singapore Anxi Chinese are very much influenced by the operation of the policies of multi-ethnicity and nation-building of the Singapore state. Their change of status from migrant to full-fledged citizen has involved a change in identity—they have become Singapore Chinese. On arrival in Singapore, the identity of the Chinese migrants was closely tied to their lineages, villages and territorial boundaries. They were differentiated according to dialect groups. Now, this identity is constantly contested with their national identity, and their cultural practices have been challenged and altered by the forces of modernity.

The creation of a national identity is part of the nation-building process. In Singapore, the state policy has been to create a set of common values among the different ethnic groups in Singapore. This relates to Anderson's (1986) 'imagined community' of the nation-state. The shared values which the Singapore state has, since independence, conscientiously attempted to create for its multi-ethnic population have been to shape them into people who would call themselves 'Singaporean'. To a large degree, this process has been successful, and citizens identify themselves as Singaporean.

Thus the Singapore Chinese today have multiple identities—both as Chinese and as Singaporean. Within their own world, they, as the case of the Anxi Chinese, further identify themselves according to their different dialect and territorial, *tongxiang* (同乡) affiliations. Within the Singapore polity, they are Chinese, an ethnic group within the national boundary of the Singapore nation-state. In the twenty-first century, they also see themselves a part of the globalized citizen identity.

Within a Global Chinese Cultural Network

A final consideration is the study of the globalization of the Singapore Chinese–China connection. One key factor here is the role played by the lineage structure and other traditional institutions in providing an interconnecting network structure for members scattered throughout the world. By exploring the lineage structure as a cultural network and resource base, it is possible to map out the linkages among disparate groups of lineage members. The Singapore Anxi Chinese and their village counterparts have begun to create a network to help bring together lineage members from all over the world. Through their formal institution, the Anxi Association, they consciously search for members, whom they invite to participate in various activities that the Association organizes. Modern information technology has

allowed the association to establish a database of membership and to provide a communication channel for its members.

There were early migrations of Chinese to Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries and later migrations to the United States, Australia and Canada, and other countries. In these countries, numerous Chinese communities have thus been created and Chinese associations based on territorial origin or lineage/surname origin have also been formed. The lineage association has been important as a cultural network, and has thus remained a key social institution in contemporary Chinese society.

Lineage organization has created a globalized space for members to interact with one another socially, economically and culturally. Important for this has been the encouragement of lineage members to visit their ancestral villages and to participate in their cultural and religious activities. The lineage has also become actively involved in both economic development of the ancestral home and in trade between China and the rest of the world. In recent years, Ke lineage members have operated businesses in both the ancestral village and in other parts of China. For this and other purposes, the lineage provides necessary social connections (*guanxi*) and helps its members to venture into new economic areas in China and Southeast Asia. In this manner, the lineage has extended its socio-economic space.

The contemporary expanding globalized roles of the Chinese lineage should be conceptualized as a cultural network. With the ancestral village as the conceptual point of origin or source, continuous regional and peripheral interaction takes place through the nodes of this network and its regional and peripheral organizations scattered throughout the world. By belonging to this lineage cultural network, members in various parts of the world are brought together to acknowledge their ancestors and their ancestral home and village; by participating and involving in socio-religious activities and village development, they renew both their lineage and cultural identities.

Methodology

In Singapore, research was conducted in various stages. Participant-observation started in 1991 and was easily conducted, as the author herself is part of the Anxi community and of the Ke lineage, and there was much interest in her work. Non-intrusive participant-observation was conducted on numerous communal socio-religious activities in Singapore. Conversations among lineage members were recorded. Collection of this data was unstructured, but this was followed by 20 interviews with selected members, especially with those actively involved in activities in Singapore and in the development of

Anxi. Two sets of questionnaires were also issued to a random sample of 40 Singapore Anxi lineage members, one for first-generation migrants and the other for those with Anxi ancestry only, in order to provide greater quantitative breadth. The questionnaire interview was conducted with the help of a research assistant. This part of the research was conducted from February to March 1995.

Fieldwork in Anxi did not follow the conventional village-study pattern. It was conducted in Penglai Town (Penglai Zhen), of Anxi County, Fujian, in a manner that I thought would provide me with the most opportunities to interact and to observe the socio-religious functions and decision-making processes. I usually followed Singapore Chinese back to Anxi whenever there were major events that they had organized, and when they were returning to participate in. In such cases I was able to participate and observe as a member as well as a researcher. I followed the conventional anthropological method of participant-observation. I observed, participated and recorded detailed accounts of the social, economic and religious activities of the villagers. I also participated in meetings of the village elders pertaining to their organization of the various functions as well as their meetings with the schools and village cadres. The first trip was made in 1988. I talked extensively to the villagers of various age groups. I also issued two sets of questionnaires in Anxi, one to tap the views and attitudes of the villagers and the other to tap the views of the official cadres. This questionnaire survey was conducted with the help of four researchers from Xiamen University. The two sets of questionnaire were issued to the villagers and cadres primarily in the Kuitou precinct in Penglai where there were a large number of Ke members of the various emigrant villages. These were Penglai Market Town, Lianzhong Village, Lianmeng Village, Lingdong Village, Lingnan Village and Pengxi Village as well as the neighbouring Kuidou Market Town and Kuidou Village. The total number of questionnaire interviews conducted on the villagers was 200; those conducted on cadres at various levels totalled 98. These interviews were conducted in April 1995. Further updates were observed when I visited Anxi on various festive occasions, the last being in 2003.

In addition to the above, I have collected letters from both Singapore and village Chinese and this has provided me with additional information, particularly concerning the livelihood of lineage members during earlier periods.

In conducting this research, I was confronted with several problems. One was the dichotomy insider/outsider. As a member of the community, I am an insider and so was given access to much information. The members were usually friendly and open to me. In this sense I had a great advantage, which made my research much easier. Another advantage is that there had

been, on the whole, no desire on the part of informants to 'please' me by saying only things that they thought I wanted to hear. Most of the time, in both Singapore and Anxi, I was regarded as an insider, and a high level of trust was lavished on me.

This brought me to a major dilemma: with so much trust lavished on the researcher, there was an expectation to write only the good and not the bad. To a large degree, the interpretation and the presentation of the data reflects the intersubjective views of the researcher and her informants. While I have consciously attempted to distance myself from my informants, it is inevitable that such subjectivity can intrude into the analysis.

Outline of the Book

In this research, I attempt to bring together various theoretical understandings to the study of the relationship between Singapore Chinese and the emigrant villages, and especially of the continuity between the two. In Chapter 1 I have explored the various themes that are conceptually significant to the understanding of this relationship. Chapter 2 examines how the Singapore Chinese attempted to establish a cultural identity within the Singapore polity, using their experiences in both China and Singapore. It is a multiple identity that they have assumed. Chapter 3 provides some background information about the state of poverty that Anxi experienced during the early years, and even today. Chapter 4 looks at how the Singapore Chinese remember their ancestral village and how their collective memories and early social experiences have played a large role in their way of looking at village life today, thereby influencing their participation in village development.

Chapter 5 examines the role of the Singapore Chinese in village reconstruction, explains why they are primarily involved in the development of infrastructure in the village, and discusses the strategies adopted by the villagers and the village and county-level cadres to encourage them to do so. It also shows how the Singapore Chinese use their contribution to infrastructure development to bargain for concessions in the area of cultural reproduction.

Chapters 6 and 7 look specifically at cultural reproduction—namely, ancestor worship and religious revivalism. Chapter 6 investigates why ancestor worship is significant for both the Singapore Chinese and the villagers, while Chapter 7 explores the extent to which religion and religious fairs have been revived in the village since the mid-1980s.

Chapter 8 examines the rewriting of the genealogy and how, through the genealogy, the two groups reclaimed their social identities and re-established their lineage links. This brings to mind an important conceptual issue—

that of how we should conceptualize the Chinese lineage, given the fact that migration, in both historical and contemporary times, has led to the creation of new Chinese communities around the world. Here I attempt to locate this study within an understanding of the wider Chinese overseas community and to reconceptualize and argue that in contemporary world, we are confronted with a globalized Chinese structure.

Building on the arguments and information of the other chapters, Chapter 9 provides a theoretical conceptualization of the Chinese lineage, arguing for the need to look at Chinese lineage as a cultural network rather than as a social institution.

The concluding Chapter 10 draws together the various themes and explores possible future directions for Chinese overseas communities and the process of maintenance and change of their identities.

Notes

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. For a discussion of the use of Confucian ideology for statecraft and economic development, see Kuah (1990); Chua (1995: 147–168); Wong (1996: 277–293); and Kuo (1996: 294–309).
2. For a discussion on the debates supporting the 'Greater China' phenomenon, see *The China Quarterly*, December 1993, vol. 136, special issue on Greater China.
3. For a discussion on the debates supporting the 'Cultural China' phenomenon, see W.M. Tu (ed.) (1994), *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), originally published in Daedalus, as a special issue on 'Cultural China', Spring 1991.

Chapter 2 Constructing a Singapore Chinese Cultural Identity

1. A conference entitled 'Luodi Shengen: The Legal, Political and Economic Status of Chinese in Diaspora' was held on 26–29 November 1992 in San Francisco which discussed the status of Chinese overseas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
2. Straits Chinese men are called *baba* while the women are known as *nonya*. Their unique cuisine, often prepared by the women, is termed *nonya* cuisine.
3. It is to be noted here that the Malays and Indians are not homogeneous ethnic groups either, as within each group there are numerous subgroups, with a great variety of dialects. Also encouraged by the state, they are similarly embarking on a process of cultural standardization in a quest to portray ethnically unified images.

4. In 1994, the Singapore government introduced the Maintenance of Parents Act (Cap 167B) that enables Singapore citizens 60 years of age and above to claim maintenance allowance, either on a monthly basis or a lump sum payment, from their children if they are unable to sustain themselves. They could initiate a court case for this purpose. This is an attempt by the state to prevent adult children from neglecting their parents. This act requires adult children to provide financial assistance, set at S$500 a month, to their parents.

Chapter 3 The Ancestral Village in Anxi County

1. Figures provided by Anxi County Administrative Office.
2. Figures provided by Anxi County Administrative Office.
3. Figures provided by Anxi County Administrative Office.

Chapter 4 Negotiating Collective Memories and Social Experiences

1. Kaye did a sociological study of families in Singapore during this period and concluded that there was much overcrowding, with as many as five or six households living in a two-storey shophouse. See B. Kaye (1960), *Upper Nankin Street: Singapore* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press).
2. Many were able to identify members of their kinship circle: their father's elder brothers as *bofu* (伯父), father's elder brother's wife as *bomu* (伯母), mother's sister as *muyi* (母姨) or *yimu* (姨母), father's brother's sons (paternal male cousins) as *tangxiongdi* (堂兄弟), father's brother's daughters (paternal female cousins) as *tangjiemei* (堂姐妹), and mother's brother's sons and daughters (maternal cousins) as *biaoxiongdi* (表兄弟) and *biaojiemei* (表姐妹).

Chapter 5 The Moral Economy of Rebuilding the Ancestral Village

1. For a discussion on early remittances by overseas Chinese to China, see G. L. Hicks (ed.) (1993), *Overseas Chinese Remittances from Southeast Asia 1910–1940* (Singapore: Select Books).
2. For a discussion of this, see Chen Kechen (1994), *Anxi Huaqiao zhi* (Xiamen: Xiamen University Press).
3. Other uses included the starting of small businesses, the purchase of equipment and electronic goods and the financing of marriages.

Chapter 6 The Bond of Ancestor Workship

1. For a discussion on death rites and ancestor worship, see J. J. DeGroot (1964), vol. 1.

2. Among the Singapore Chinese, this is one main reason for staging large-scale communal sacrificial offerings to the wandering ghosts during the Hungry Ghost Festival (Zhongyuan Jie) during the seventh lunar month.
3. For a discussion on the relationship between space and social structure, including identity, see M. Castells (1976: 60–84); see also D. Harvey (1985).
4. Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce (2004), 'Cultural and Network Capitals: Chinese Women and the "Religious" Industry in South China', in Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce (ed.), *Chinese Women and Their Social and Network Capitals* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International), pp. 121–143.
5. In recent years, people with Chinese ancestors overseas who have high official titles have been given due acknowledgements by the provincial government. One example here is the restoration of the ancestral grave of the former president of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, when she visited her ancestral village in Hongjian Village, Longhai County, Fujian.
6. For a discussion of karma and merit-making, see G. Obeyesekere (1968: 7–40).
7. The debate on whether the practice of Chinese religion is a matter of orthodoxy or orthopraxy is discussed extensively by J. L. Watson, who favours orthopraxy, while Whyte argues for the importance of orthodoxy. See Watson (1988: 3–19); see also Whyte (1988: 289–316).
8. The six Buddhist planes of existence are Heaven, Human, Azuras, Animal, Preta and Hell. See D. D. Daye (1978: 123–126).
9. See M. Freedman (1979: 296–312) for a discussion on geomancy.

Chapter 7 Religious Revivalism

1. In 2010, during a visit to the Penglai temple in Singapore, I was informed that the leasehold of the temple was coming up for renewal, there was still no decision taken on this. If members of the seven temple groups could not come to an agreement, then the land on which the temple stood would be reverted back to the government and the fate of the temple would be at stake.

Chapter 8 Rewriting Geneology and Reclaiming One's Cultural Roots

1. During my research, I discovered that many village households had more than one child; some had several, especially daughters, as many couples would continue to reproduce until they finally had a son. Under the one-child policy, they dared not risk registering all their children. As a result, many daughters and sons were not formally registered with the Bureau of Birth. Such children are called 'Japanese sons' by the locals, to differentiate them from those who have registration papers issued by the village

government. Only after giving birth to a son, or after having the desired number of children, would the family bring all the children for registration and pay the required fines. On another trip to the village, the local family planning unit had tightened their policy and for those women found pregnant with a second child, the husband was arrested and locked up until the wife aborted the child. I am aware of one such case where despite the fact that the woman was already in her second trimester of pregnancy, she had to abort her child (which turned out to be a son) so that her husband would be released from custody. They already have a daughter.

Index