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Introduction

What Does It Mean to Be Hakka?

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The term Hakka, which literally means "guest people" or "strangers," is the name of a Chinese ethnic group whose ancestors, like those of all Han Chinese, are believed to have originated in north central China. Estimated to number in the tens of millions today, Hakka now reside mainly in Southeast China, Taiwan, and regions of Southeast Asia, but the Hakka diaspora extends to virtually every continent in the world.

The main question we pose in this volume—"What does it mean to be Hakka?"—may appear deceptively simple. The easy answer—which has been accepted and even preferred by many scholars who have worked in Hakka communities—is that Hakka are simply those who call themselves Hakka or who are so labeled by others. While we agree that this is an important starting point, it has too often been assumed that to merely "know" that a person, a community, or a custom is Hakka is sufficient. As we argue in the course of this volume, this is not enough. We need to examine the cultural and historical construction of Hakka identity, and its social, political, and economic relevance in different locales and particular contexts.

The number of English-language anthropological works based on field research in Hakka communities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and in other regions has greatly increased during the past two decades, but most of this literature does not pose questions pertaining to Hakka identity. Important and interesting though such studies of the Hakka may be for their contributions to sinology and anthropology (e.g., Myron L. Cohen 1976, Pasternak 1972, Strauch 1984), the fact that the subjects of the study are Hakka as opposed to members of other ethnic or dialect groups has not been considered of great importance. Although there are some important exceptions (cf. Blake 1981, Myron L. Cohen 1968, and Lamley 1981),

1. This includes the majority of the very interesting papers that were presented at the first International Conference on Hakkaology, held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, September 24–26, 1992.
Hakka has generally been treated as an essential, unchanging, unproblematic label—a given or objective truth, rather than a topic for analysis in and of itself. Thus scholars of Hakka language, religion, or community structure, for example, have been less concerned with the Hakka factor of the equation than with the topic in question. They largely gloss over or ignore the question of who exactly the Hakka are, and what Hakka means in different contexts.

In the chapters that follow, Hakka ethnicity is not treated as a given. In our attempt to develop a more complex understanding of Hakka identity, we do not neglect issues of who is labeled Hakka, or of Hakka self-ascription. These issues have long been acknowledged to be of central importance to the study of ethnicity. Nor do we avoid popular notions and generalizations about Hakka origins and history. These, however, we take as starting points in an attempt to separate objective Hakka history and experience from the more localized constructions and expressions of Hakka identity.

The contributors to this volume have also been influenced by the growing number of anthropological works on the cultural and historical construction of identity that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Blu 1980, Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Daniel 1984, Kondo 1990, Michelle Rosaldo 1980, Eric Wolf 1982), as well as those that emphasize both the experiential side and the symbolic expressions of various types of identities (e.g., Alter 1992, Behar 1993, Lavie 1990, Renato Rosaldo 1986, Turner and Bruner 1986). In this volume we collectively describe the diverse histories of Hakka communities, the way Hakka identity is culturally constructed and symbolically expressed in different contexts, and the sociological significance Hakka identity takes on in each setting.

It is not enough to speak of a monolithic Hakka identity. The Hakka diaspora reaches well beyond the geographic borders of mainland China. Although their estimates are judged as high, members of various international Hakka associations claim that there are as many as seventy-five million Hakka worldwide today, with thirty to thirty-five million residing outside mainland China.2 Since the seventeenth century, and particularly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Hakka who came mainly from Guangdong agricultural communities emigrated to Taiwan, Malaya, and other regions of Southeast Asia, and as far as South Asia, Africa, Oceania, Europe, the Caribbean, and North and

2. Many scholars consider these estimates, particularly the ones for Hakka outside the mainland, excessively high. For further estimates, see Erbaugh (this volume).
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South America. Hakka emigrated for a number of reasons, but their motives were mostly economic and, in some cases, political. They often worked as manual laborers, taking up opportunities created by capitalist and colonial expansion. They built railways, labored in mines or plantations, worked as farmers, or set up small businesses. The descendants of these early Hakka immigrants speak different languages, eat different foods, and belong to different economic classes and political parties, yet they may retain the name Hakka and identify themselves as such.

In and of itself, this cultural diversity does not create a significant problem for anthropologists, whose models have long rejected the naive equation of an ethnic group as a cultural unit. But this does raise the practical and theoretical question of what these Hakka share with one another, with those who still reside on the mainland, and those who have emigrated in recent years, besides the label Hakka.

As we see in this volume, Hakka identity is of widely varied political, economic, social, and personal significance. Its relevance varies depending on time and place. The settlers of the Hakka communities we examine left mainland China at different times—as early as the seventeenth century and as recently as the twentieth—and Hakka now live in extremely diverse situations. But Hakka communities are not so endlessly varied and infinitely distinct from one another that they preclude any useful analysis. The communities we describe in this volume are distinct, but they share historical origins in South China. Moreover, they share certain ethnic processes that are of more generalizable significance. We do not, in other words, simply accept the Hakka claim that Hakka all share an innate bond, nor do we acquiesce to the postmodern dilemma that there appear to be such infinite subjectivities of Hakka identity that they defy wider social or cultural patterning. As John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff have argued for anthropology in general, “If our models are supple enough, they should make sense of even the most chaotic and shifting social environment. . . . Absence and disconnection, incoherence and disorder, have actually to be demonstrated”

3. Following the Taiping Rebellion (1851–64), for example, many Hakka—including those who were not involved in the uprising—fled South China for fear of political persecution. At about the same time, and following the Hakka-Punti Wars (1850–67) and the turmoil of the late nineteenth century, members of many Hakka Christian congregations are also known to have fled to Hong Kong, North Borneo, and elsewhere in order to escape religious and ethnic oppression (see Constable 1994:37).

4. See Bentley (1983:2–3) for a critique of the equation of social groups with culture units.
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(1992:24). Our challenge is to make sense of shifting Hakka collective identities, their similarities, apparent discontinuities, and divergences.

A central question that this volume raises is the extent to which common mainland cultural origins—not to say Hakka identity—explain the similarities we find among Hakka communities, or whether some of the patterns we witness arise from more general processes of social change or ethnic interaction in the new setting. We need to account for the common stereotypes found in many of our cases regarding, for example, hardworking Hakka women, political patriotism, cooperativeness, and agricultural or working-class occupations, and we also need to question the extent to which these ideological patterns are reflected in social reality. In the diverse ethnic contexts in which Hakka now reside, they may be recast in a subordinate social and economic position or find themselves in different situations of hierarchy or inequality. These may replicate, to some extent, earlier ethnic hierarchies from mainland China, or they may be quite distinct. Thus one question we raise relates to the connection between Hakka ethnic consciousness and class or other systems of inequality.

Because many of our observations regarding the Hakka contribute to understanding ethnicity and ethnic processes in general, I have found it particularly useful, throughout this introduction, to refer to some of the general propositions and patterns regarding ethnicity described by Comaroff and Comaroff (1992:49–67). In general, the contributions to this volume support the Comaroffs’ view that ethnicity is the product of historical processes but is not primordial; that ethnicity is not “a unitary ‘thing,’” but it “describes a set of relations and a mode of consciousness” (1992:54); that ethnicity originates in systems of political and economic inequality; and that ethnicity “tends to take on the ‘natural’ appearance of an autonomous force, a ‘principle’ capable of determining the course of social life” (ibid.:60). Our cases also clearly illustrate the way ethnicity “may be perpetuated by factors quite different from those that caused its emergence, and may have a direct and independent impact on the context in which it arose” (ibid.:61).

Whereas Comaroff and Comaroff draw mainly on examples from Africa, the Hakka cases in this volume support and further illustrate many of their points. The social patterns we observe in Hakka communities generally have more to do with the wider ethnic processes and sociological patterns of which they are a part than with the “fact” that they are Hakka. On the other hand, some of the cultural patterns upon
which the idea of social differences is inscribed appear to be more uniquely Hakka, despite differences in the social contexts in which they occur.

HISTORY AND THE EMERGENCE OF HAKKA CONSCIOUSNESS

One answer to our central question, as many Hakka are likely to suggest, and the contributors to this volume would agree, lies in Hakka history. Hakka are not only those who define themselves or are so labeled by others; they are those of whom it can be said that their ancestors shared a real or imagined history. There are two types of history in which we are interested in this volume. One is the collective history that Hakka believe they share, and that is often the most basic theme in the rhetoric about what it means to be Hakka. The second refers to the particular historical forces out of which Hakka ethnicity first emerged. These forces may have since caused Hakka ethnicity to diminish, to be perpetuated, or, possibly, to become a potent force in its own right. These two histories are not necessarily the same, but they may overlap.

The first history is fairly easy to collect or solicit from Hakka informants, and because it is simply a subjective point of view, we need not necessarily be concerned with its accuracy or "factual basis," or with reducing it to one authoritative version. Its importance is primarily in the belief by Hakka themselves that it is true and based on fact. As such, it can take on a special power in the mobilization of ethnicity as a social force. This type of history is reflected in the quotations from my own informants and those cited by Ellen Oxfeld, in Howard Martin's citations from spokespersons in the Taiwan Hakka movement, and in Sharon Carstens's translations from Hakka association (huiguan) volumes.

The second kind of history, which, as Myron Cohen, Mary Erbaugh, and other authors illustrate, may be derived in part from the first, is far more difficult to critically and accurately ascertain. It involves an attempt to identify the historical forces through which Hakka ethnicity is constructed. Through this type of history, as Comaroff and Comaroff propose, our objective is "to show as cogently as possible... how realities become real, how essences become essential, how materialities materialize" (1992:20). This second kind of history is, of course, like the first, a mental construct claiming a basis in fact. But it is perhaps best described as a "second order" construction of history, one that attempts
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to explain how the first view of history came about, and one that aspires

to be more consciously critical and analytical. As Comaroff and Coma­

roff suggest, it requires a “historical imagination.”

The idea that history provides the key to ethnic identity is not new
(cf. Keyes 1976, 1981:5). But when Charles Keyes discusses ethnicity as a
“cultural interpretation of descent,” as a kind of descent writ large, this
glosses over significant distinctions between ethnic and totemic groups
who also share a collective identity. As Comaroff and Comaroff explain,

while totemism emerges with the establishment of symmetrical
relations between structurally similar social groupings—group­
ings which may or may not come to be integrated into one
political community—ethnicity has its origins in the asymmet­
ric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a sin­
gle political economy. (1992:54)

The asymmetric or unequal relations between ethnic groups is of central
importance, as it is from an awareness of inequality, not merely cultural
difference, that ethnic consciousness develops. “The emergence of ethnic
groups and the awakening of ethnic consciousness are . . . the product of
historical processes which structure relations of inequality between dis­
crete social entities” (ibid.:55). The inequality between groups comes to
be viewed, at least by those who belong to the group in a superior
position, as justified by the ascribed, intrinsic character of each group.
Thus Cantonese and Hokkien have accused Hakka of being uncivilized
barbarians, while each of these groups claims to be “more Chinese than
the other” (Blake 1981:4), and “Hakka, in turn, view the Cantonese and
Hokkien . . . as descendants of aboriginal barbarians” (ibid.:5).

Assertion of the importance of history should not be mistaken to
mean that ethnicity is merely a function of primordial ties. As the
Comaroffs have written, “Contrary to the tendency, in the Weberian
tradition, to view it as a function of primordial ties, ethnicity always has
its genesis in specific historical forces, forces which are simultaneously
structural and cultural” (1992:50). As they go on to explain, “It is the
marking of relations—of identities in opposition to one another—that
is ‘primordial,’ not the substance of those identities” (ibid.:51). Many

5. This is not to say that the first kind of history cannot influence social change as well.
See Comaroff and Comaroff (1992:3–48) for their detailed discussion of the importance of
history to what they call “neomodern” anthropology.
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Hakka themselves, of course, present Hakka identity as primordial, factual and essential—it did not emerge, it persisted. Many scholars share this view. However, this Hakka history, which begins centuries ago, in time immemorial, paradoxically predates the existence of the name Hakka, of Hakka ethnicity, and the existence of the Hakka as a social group distinct from other Chinese. It should thus be clear that this history was not experienced at the time as Hakka history, regardless of later Hakka sentiments, because Hakka had not yet emerged as an ethnic group. And, significantly, this history is in many ways indistinguishable from Chinese history in general. Nonetheless, this history has been claimed as their own by many Hakka and provides the ideological basis for the notion of a universal, shared Hakka identity (see Constable 1994:20-38).

Versions of both histories converge momentarily with the widespread belief that Hakka are the descendants of Han Chinese people who migrated southward from north central China before the fourth century C.E., and who, by the fourteenth century or so, had settled in China’s southeastern provinces (see Cohen, this volume). From there they spread farther south and overseas to several of the communities described in this volume). As discussed below, the particular dates and stages of migration have been a topic of debate (cf., Myron L. Cohen 1968, Constable 1994, Hsieh 1929, Kiang 1991, S. T. Leong 1985, Lo Wan 1965, Luo Xianglin 1933, Moser 1985, Jerry Norman 1988, Ramsey 1987), but it is well accepted that the main body of those who later became Hakka migrated from north central China.

Han Suyin, herself descended from Hakka ancestors, colorfully describes in her autobiographical family history how Hakka fled southward to escape the advance of Chinggis Khan and the Mongol invasion during the thirteenth century:

The Hakkas were driven further south, or to mountainous poor areas. . . . Because of their mobility, hardihood and fierceness, the dynasties began to regard the Hakkas as potential pioneers, good for resettling the sub-populated areas. . . . Circumstance thus defined their group character: clannish, thrifty, loyal to each other, bad neighbours and ready fighters, the name Hakka stuck to them and they became proud of it. (1965:24)

Like Han Suyin, many Hakka writers associate Hakka “character” with their historical experiences, and here again the history with which
Hakka define themselves—in the form of character and qualities—may be separated from the actual forces that created the identity itself. Hakka historian Hsieh T'ing-yu explains:

The character of the Hakkas is shown quite clearly in their name and history. They are a strong, hardy, energetic, fearless race with simple habits but a very contentious and litigious disposition. Self-reliant and active, their rapid expansion and fondness of property have often brought them into conflict with their neighbors. . . . The Hakkas are proud of the literary accomplishments of their ancestors; they claim many well-known literati. . . . The Hakkas are a “people of the future,” unhampered by the prejudices or the easy-going slackness of the old land owners. . . . Fundamentally the Hakka is a farmer, forced by poverty to struggle with the unproductive soil. . . . They usually occupy the hilly and less fertile districts, while the Punti [earlier Chinese inhabitants]6 remain in possession of the fertile deltas and plains. . . . The sexes are not so strictly separated in domestic life as in the case with some of the other Chinese. The women folk are strong and energetic, and have never adopted foot-binding as a custom. (Hsieh 1929:203–5)7

These quotations illustrate how ideas about Hakka history permeate a Hakka self-image. As passages from James Michener’s historical novel Hawaii illustrate, popular images of the Hakka hard work and industriousness are not found exclusively in Hakka texts and Hakka association publications.

6. Punti (Mandarin: Bendi) are the earliest Han Chinese inhabitants of a region. This term is often translated as “natives” or “indigenous” inhabitants. Even though there may in fact have been earlier non-Han inhabitants in a particular region, they are not usually referred to as Punti. In Guangdong the Punti are Yue (Cantonese speakers); in Fujian they are Min (Hokkien). In both cases this distinguishes the Chinese who were already settled in the area from Hakka and other later arrivals. In Hong Kong Punti are legally classified as those who resided in the New Territories before 1898; thus, members of a number of older Hakka lineages are classified as Punti. In Hong Kong, in certain contexts, the term Punti may be used to refer to Cantonese natives. As Elizabeth Johnson (this volume) describes, Hakka who are descended from those who were resident in Hong Kong before 1898 may distinguish themselves as benturen (also meaning “indigenous people”).

7. For a revised and slightly modified version of this article, which was one of Hsieh’s bachelor’s degree requirements at Yenching University, see Char and Kwok (1969), which includes a collection of Hakka mountain songs.
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In one scene of the book, set many generations ago, a Cantonese man named Uncle Chun Fat is helping the American Dr. Whipple recruit Chinese laborers to work on a Hawaiian sugar plantation. Chun Fat wants to enlist Punti laborers from his natal village, but Dr. Whipple will agree only to an arrangement in which half of the men are Hakka. Chun Fat wonders how Whipple has heard about the Hakka and asks:

"Why you want Hakka? No good Hakka." Dr. Whipple looked sternly in the eye, and his forty years of trading for J & W fortified his judgement. "We have heard," he said slowly, "that Hakka are fine workmen. We know that the Punti are clever, for we have many in Hawaii. But Hakka can work . . ." Chun Fat began cautiously, "Maybe Hakka work well but too much fight." (1959:397)

Dr. Whipple and Chun Fat then proceed to climb from Low Village, the Punti village, to High Village, where the Hakka reside. The climb to High Village is strenuous, but as Dr. Whipple approaches, he experiences a feeling of identification with the Hakka.

Whipple looked about him as if he had come upon familiar terrain and thought: "The climb was worth it. This feels like a New England Village. I'm home again, in China." The feeling was intensified when strong, sullen and suspicious Hakka began cautiously gathering about him, and he could see in their conservative faces portraits in yellow of his own ancestors. (1959:398)

The particular historical forces out of which Hakka ethnic consciousness emerged, and the period during which Hakka ethnicity was generated are debated. If we accept the proposition that ethnicity involves "subjective classification, by the members of a society, of the world into social entities according to cultural differences" and "the stereotypic assignment of these groupings—often hierarchically—to niches within the social division of labor" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:52) or, as Fredrik Barth (1969) proposed, that ethnicity requires at least two groups in

8. Swiss missionaries who worked in Hakka regions of Guangdong in the early twentieth century described to me the same feeling of being "back home" in that mountainous region of China, which was similar to the Alps. They also spoke of the honest, hardworking, rugged Hakka who reminded them of pious European villagers.
competition over resources, then Hakka identity could not have emerged earlier than the seventeenth century. It was at that time, S. T. Leong asserts, that Hakka came into contact with other Chinese, who were culturally distinct and with whom they competed for resources (1980:14).

When the ancestors of the present-day Hakka arrived in South China, their language and some of their customs distinguished them from other Chinese whom they encountered. In this new environment the Cantonese label Hakka (Mandarin: Kejia) which, as mentioned above, translates literally as “guest people” or “stranger families,” or less literally as “newcomers” or “settlers,” may have first served as a way to differentiate in population registers the newcomers from the local inhabitants (S. T. Leong 1980). Hakka ethnic affiliation is thus likely to have originated from an attribution of ethnic identity to them by other Chinese. But the term Hakka has since become accepted by the people themselves as a group or ethnic label, as “an emblem of common predicament and interest” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:53).9

Exactly when and where Hakka cultural differences coalesced into an expression of social group differences is difficult to say. It is clear, however, that a conscious, collective group identity did not form in all regions where Hakka speakers existed, and its relevance clearly shifted in the different regions to which Hakka populations emigrated.10 As one Hong Kong Hakka man explained to me, it was not until he left Meixian (known as Jiaying or Kaying until this century), the region of eastern Guangdong where he grew up, and came to Hong Kong in the 1920s, that he realized that he was Hakka. Back home, he explained, everyone was Hakka, so he never really thought about it. In some regions of Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi, Hakka speakers worked as tenants or farmed and settled in the less fertile, hilly regions, while the Punti among whom they lived maintained their hold on the more fertile plains. In these new social situations, Hakka and Punti gradually became integrated into a single political economy (see Cohen, this volume).

As was mentioned above, the date of the emergence of a Hakka ethnic consciousness—as opposed to their existence as a cultural category of

9. Unlike other Chinese, such as the Cantonese, Chaozhou (Teochew), and Shanghainese, whose identities and languages correspond to the name of their place of origin, the Hakka, whose place of origin is a topic of debate, generally accept the label Hakka (S. T. Leong 1980).

10. Hakka consciousness and Hakka-Punti conflicts in areas of Guangxi where the Society of God Worshipers (Bai Shangdi Hui) first made inroads are discussed by Kuhn (1977); see also Constable (1994: chap. 2).
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people or a dialect group—has been widely debated. But certainly before the nineteenth century Punti rhetoric about the Hakka bears “the assertive stamp of protectionist ideology; a legitimation of [their own] control over economy and society. Concomitantly, it involves the negation of similar entitlements to others, often on putative cultural or ‘civilizational’ grounds, and may call into doubt their shared humanity” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:52).

Punti exhibited their protectionism, for example, in their attempts to prevent Hakka from participating in the Chinese civil service examinations, thus attempting to prevent them from achieving positions of authority in the government hierarchy (Lo Wan 1965:95–96, 113). As early as 1789 a separate examination quota was set up in certain parts of Guangdong in order to reduce the competition and the conflicts “between the minority groups and the rest of the population” (Chang Chung-li 1955:81; see also Lamley 1990, S. T. Leong 1985).

By the early nineteenth century Hakka rhetoric had begun to reflect a strong and growing ethnic consciousness. Hakka asserted their own legitimacy and espoused their views of exclusive Hakka history (S. T. Leong 1985:302-307). Of course, unlike the Punti, they attempted not to protect their position, but to improve it. By the end of the nineteenth century Hakka consciousness had blossomed, and there is little doubt that for many Hakka—especially those living in ethnically mixed or urban areas—ethnic identity had assumed both “experiential” and “practical salience” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:53).

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, due to the local wars between the Hakka and Punti in Guangdong and Guangxi, and the prominent Hakka involvement in the Taiping Rebellion, Hakka drew the attention of foreign scholars, missionaries, travelers, and writers. Many of these writers were influenced by Hakka converts or informants they encountered, or by Hakka written sources, which flourished by the beginning of the twentieth century and exuded Hakka pride (see esp. Hsieh 1929, Luo Xianglin 1933). Still other Europeans echoed the statements of non-Hakka Chinese informants who doubted that the Hakka were “true Chinese.” They often cast the Hakka as even more “strange and exotic” than other Chinese, suggesting that they were “backward” or “primitive” like the mountainous “hill tribes” of South China.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^\text{11}\) Regardless of their particular bent—whether they viewed Hakka as more or less Chinese than others they encountered—Western sources nonetheless projected what Edward Said (1979) has described as an Orientalist discourse on the subject.
In the early twentieth century a number of English-language publications contributed to the competing version of Hakka history, which suggested that Hakka were “less Chinese” than other groups in South China. The Encyclopedia of Missions, for example, described the Hakka as a “peculiar race or tribe, inhabiting the mountains near Canton and Swatow, who are a lower social rank than the local Chinese” (cited in Campbell 1912:474). The 1920 edition of Geography of the World, a textbook by Roger D. Wolcott published by the Commercial Press of Shanghai, also suggested that Hakka were a “backward people” (Hsieh 1929:207). Wolcott’s views of the Hakka were derived from the work of Timothy Richard, a nineteenth-century Welsh missionary who wrote Comprehensive Geography of the Chinese Empire (S. T. Leong 1985:311). As Hsieh explains, Wolcott’s entry on the Hakka was translated in “Kaying [Jiaying] Magazine,” a local Hakka publication, and the statement that the Hakka were “a wild and backward people” set off extensive protests from Hakka organizations around the world (1929:20). Thus European historical texts influenced the process of history, and generated social action in the form of a mass meeting of Hakka concerned about their identity. The conference was held in 1921 in Guangzhou (Canton) and included over a thousand representatives from five provinces. Resolutions were passed and Wolcott was forced to retract his inflammatory statement (ibid.). Yet as late as 1945 the Encyclopedia Britannica still reported that the Hakka might not be “true Chinese,” but might instead “be related to the Burmese and Siamese” (Moser 1985:236).

As was mentioned above, this theory has been repeatedly criticized in the work of Chinese and non-Chinese scholars, as well as many European missionaries, who draw primarily from genealogies and local histories to document Hakka origins and migrations from north central China (e.g., Eitel 1873–74, Hsieh 1929, Luo Xianglin 1933, Piton 1873–74. See also Cohen, this volume, for an outline of these migrations). Linguistic evidence, although not in agreement about the exact time of “proto-Hakka” migrations, supports the claim that Hakka language has some unmistakably northern features (cf. Hashimoto 1973, Moser 1985, Jerry Norman 1988, Ramsey 1987, Sagart 1982, Paul S. J. Yang 1967). Jerry Norman classifies Hakka language as part of the “southern group” of Chinese languages, which have existed since the first to third centuries C.E. (1988:222). But rather than refuting the idea of northern origins, this only suggests an even earlier period of migration than Luo Xianglin’s (1933) earliest wave (during the fourth century)—one more
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compatible with Hsieh's (1929) scheme of classification (see also Cohen, this volume).

In keeping with these views of northern origins, Hakka often identify themselves, and are officially counted in the People's Republic of China, as Han ren (Han persons), descendants of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E. –220 C.E.), members of the ethnic Chinese majority (see David Yen-ho Wu 1991). More to the point however, is that the Hakka are undoubtedly as Chinese as the Cantonese and Fujianese, who also developed from northern Chinese populations. Like these other groups, Hakka are likely to have mixed to some extent—both genetically and culturally—with other southern non-Chinese populations with whom they came into contact and, like these groups, they continue to assert their identity as preeminently Chinese (Blake 1981:4–5; Kiang 1991; Carstens, Constable, and Oxfeld, this volume).

But despite the academic and anecdotal arguments to the contrary, the idea that the Hakka might not be “pure” Chinese has persisted in some quarters, particularly in situations where ethnicity is viewed as the vehicle through which power struggles are expressed or articulated. This is not surprising when we consider how ethnicity is related to power. As we shall see, although Hakka ethnicity arose out of the group's subordinate position within the Chinese economic and social structure during and perhaps earlier than the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in many of the cases we discuss occupations or class differences no longer break down along ethnic lines. Hakka ethnicity no longer strictly corresponds to economic or class differences. Nevertheless, derogatory images of Hakka, which were generated during times of greater conflict and competition, may persist and produce an ideology of class hierarchy.

CASE STUDIES AND APPROACHES

The contributors to this volume address the question “What does it mean to be Hakka?” from a number of theoretical vantage points and in a variety of sociocultural, political, geographical, and historical contexts. Some are more concerned with meaning and interpretation, and others with history and social organization. Yet all deal with issues of

12. A belief in the persistence of these ideas exists in and around Shung Him Tong, in the New Territories of Hong Kong, but not in Kwan Mun Hau (see Johnson and Constable, this volume; Blake 1981).
power (symbolic or more explicitly political) and with the historical and situational relevance of Hakka identity, and all would agree that Hakka identity, as with any ethnic label, ought not to be treated as an essential permanent or unchanging category, although it may present itself as such. One contributor (Mary Erbaugh) is a linguist and the other six are anthropologists who have conducted intensive field research within Hakka communities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, India, and the People’s Republic of China.

Myron Cohen’s chapter was originally written in 1963 and published in 1968. It is presented here, three decades later, for several reasons: to make this landmark study more widely available to sinologists, China anthropologists, and Hakka scholars in particular; to provide important contextual and background material for the rest of the volume; and for the sake of its subtle contribution to intellectual history and the history of anthropological thought.

Although the overall picture Cohen presents is still widely accepted, the article may in some ways seem outdated. It was written in the more “objective” and “factual” mode of the time, which did not question an objective existence of group identity. Dialect, for example, is treated by Cohen as a given, not as constructed. The original article also predates G. William Skinner’s influential work on locality and marketing regions (1964), and since it was written, more information regarding Hakka migrations has become available (notably S. T. Leong 1980, 1985; Lo Wan 1965).

Cohen’s article is nonetheless still a very significant piece. It provides useful historical and sociological background material—both for the study of the Hakka in general and for the chapters in this volume—focusing primarily on the Hakka in Southeast China during the nineteenth century. Most important, perhaps, is how it documents the emergence of dialect as a sociocultural variable, one that went beyond the social categories of kin, class, or locality, and that provided the basis for social alliance and social action. In many ways this article demonstrates the instrumental and political use of Hakka identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although Cohen wisely avoids reference to the Hakka as a self-conscious ethnic group, the material he presents can be used as a clear example of what is referred to as the instrumentalist or circumstantialist approach to ethnicity, which was characterized by the work of Abner Cohen (1969, 1974) and Fredrik Barth (1969).13

Cohen demonstrates how nineteenth-century conflicts and collective action aligned with Hakka/Punti dialect differences, thus illustrating one part of the process by which Hakka identity became the basis for motivating collective action.

Elizabeth Johnson focuses in her chapter on the Hakka identity of the people of Kwan Mun Hau, in the New Territories of Hong Kong. At the turn of this century Kwan Mun Hau was a two-surname village located in a relatively isolated region comprised of twenty Hakka-speaking rural villages. It has since become incorporated into the largely Cantonese-speaking industrial city of Tsuen Wan. Johnson asks what it means to be Hakka for people whose ancestors settled in the New Territories during the eighteenth century, and who are officially acknowledged by the Hong Kong government to be Punti—original inhabitants of the area and acknowledged as an “indigenous” New Territories population. Kwan Mun Hau people, however, refer to themselves as benturen (indigenous), and reserve the use of the term Punti for the Cantonese-speaking indigenous population.

As Johnson explains, Hakka identity is not perceived as being particularly important in Kwan Mun Hau, nor does it take the same form as in other cases described in this volume. Unlike the Calcutta Hakka described by Oxfeld, the Kwan Mun Hau Hakka do not consider themselves “still guests.” Unlike the perception of the people of Shung Him Tong, which I describe in chapter three, Kwan Mun Hau people are not defensive of their Hakka identity, nor do they consider it stigmatized, or something they must preserve. Moreover, Hakka identity in Kwan Mun Hau is not the basis for political action, as is the case in Taiwan (see Martin, this volume).

The form Hakka identity takes in Kwan Mun Hau can be explained by the historical background, social organization, and political context of Tsuen Wan. For the people of Kwan Mun Hau, Hakka identity is of far less importance than their status as Punti or, as they would specify, benturen, or as Tsuen Wan people. They derive economic and political benefits from both their Punti and Tsuen Wan identities, but not from being Hakka. Yet despite a decline in the use of Hakka language in the Kwan Mun Hau region, and despite the fact that many of their purportedly Hakka practices have disappeared, there is still some sense in which people identify themselves as Hakka and consider themselves culturally distinct from other dialect groups around them. As Johnson illustrates, Hakka identity is expressed mainly through private and domestic rituals. But overall, for the people of Kwan Mun Hau, being Hakka is
“neither a matter of shame nor pride, but simply one aspect of their being, acknowledged, but not asserted” (Johnson, this volume).

My own chapter is also based on fieldwork in Hong Kong, but the people among whom I conducted research belong to a community very different from that described by Johnson. On the whole, the people of Shung Him Tong (a village in the northeastern New Territories founded after the turn of this century by Hakka Christians) have a much stronger sense of Hakka identity than do the people of Kwan Mun Hau. Unlike Kwan Mun Hau, which was established in a predominantly Hakka region, Shung Him Tong settlers arrived in an area dominated by a powerful Cantonese lineage.

I describe how ideas about Hakka identity in Shung Him Tong are expressed verbally and symbolically, through gender roles and the construction of a Hakka Christian cemetery. In contrast to the people of Kwan Mun Hau, the people of Shung Him Tong are in a sense doubly stigmatized by their Hakka and Christian identities. Unable to escape Hakka identity in the narrow confines of the local rural face-to-face community in which they live, they have chosen to interpret it in a positive light, and in a way that is compatible with their Christianity. Hakka identity in Shung Him Tong is maintained not because of the way it is tied to earlier economic or political struggles between Hakka and Cantonese, or because of any particular class structure, but because of Christianity. Christianity has influenced Hakka identity in at least three important ways: it created a social context in which Hakka identity was considered important, it provided a reason to perpetuate Hakka identity, and it influenced the form Hakka identity could take. Most important, perhaps, is that within the context of Shung Him Tong, asserting Hakka identity became a way for people to link their Chinese and Christian identities, and to claim that they could be both. In Shung Him Tong, as in Taiwan and Calcutta, we find that Hakka ethnicity is “perpetuated by factors quite different from those that caused its emergence” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:61).

Sharon Carstens’s chapter is based in part on her fieldwork in the Hakka Chinese community of Pulai in Malaysia. For most of her discussion, however, Carstens casts her net further afield so as to analyze the connection between social and cultural patterns found among Hakka in Malaysia and Hakka patterns that existed centuries ago in China. Pulai villagers, like many Hakka Malaysians, are descendants mainly of Hakka men who emigrated to Malaysia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in search of gold and who, largely unsuccessful in their at-
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tempts, turned instead to subsistence rice farming. Among Pulai Hakka in Malaysia, Hakka identity seems secondary and of far less significance than a broader Chinese identity, which stands in juxtaposition to ethnic Malays.

Carstens asks whether, despite the apparent lack of concern for Hakka identity and culture among most Hakka in Malaysia, certain social and cultural patterns found among them can still be considered Hakka. She identifies three distinctive characteristics of Pulai villagers—economic conservativeness, egalitarian political orientation, and distinctive gender roles—and asks whether these are peculiarly Hakka features transmitted from China, or whether they might be more simply explained by the rural socioeconomic environment in which Pulai Chinese found themselves. Utilizing Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of “habitus,” Carstens argues (as does Bentley 1987, 1991) that one need not necessarily be aware of, or consciously able to articulate, one’s ethnic identity in order to reproduce ethnic cultural patterns. Thus Carstens suggests that Malaysian Hakka have unconsciously reproduced Hakka cultural patterns despite their disinclination to emphasize Chinese dialect-group differences.

The Hakka community of Calcutta is described by Ellen Oxfeld (see also Oxfeld 1993). The Hakka are the largest of the three Chinese ethnic groups in Calcutta, some of whom arrived in West Bengal as early as the end of the eighteenth century. The Hakka tanners among whom Oxfeld studied, however, arrived only during the First World War, and have since overwhelmingly adopted the polluted but lucrative occupation of leather tanning. Oxfeld takes an interactional approach to Hakka ethnicity in Calcutta and shows that to understand it, we must consider the wider context of state and local politics, the stratified economy, and the socioreligious principles of the host society—primarily the Hindu concepts of purity and pollution. Oxfeld shows how Hakka define themselves vis-à-vis other Chinese and the wider Indian community, and also how they are perceived by others.

Although Calcutta Hakka live and work in an Indian community, they still define and identify themselves as Hakka. In contrast to Malaysia, where Chinese are also a minority, but where Hakka downplay Chinese dialect-group differences, Calcutta Hakka maintain a clear distinction between themselves and other Chinese. Calcutta Hakka express a hierarchy of “otherness” with non-Chinese referred to as gui (ghosts), non-Hakka Chinese as lao (fellows), and themselves as ren (persons). Their identity, again in marked contrast to Hakka in Malaysia as well as on the Chinese mainland, is tied to an image of Hakka as sharp business
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people with a strong entrepreneurial ethic. Their dominance and success in the tanning industry is linked with their view of wealth as the basis of power and the measure of success. Among Calcutta Hakka, we again hear the claim that they are the loyal bearers of Chinese tradition. Cantonese, in contrast, are considered either more Westernized or more Indianized than are Hakka.

Several Hakka individuals encountered in the chapters by Johnson, Carstens, Constable, and Oxfeld express a perception or expectation of decline in Hakka identity, often as a result of decline in use of Hakka language and decline in knowledge of Hakka customs or the perceived relevance or awareness of Hakka identity. Yet as the example of the Hakka movement in Taiwan suggests, these concerns are not necessarily indications that Hakka identity is disappearing or diminishing—merely that the outward manifestations and expressions are changing.

In his chapter Howard Martin shows that what may appear on the surface to be a marked lack of relevance of and concern for ethnic identity may be significantly revitalized within a short period of time. Martin describes the recent resurgence of Hakka identity in Taiwan. This Hakka movement was not in evidence during the early 1980s. While it is too soon to tell exactly what direction the Hakka political movement will take, or to predict what longer-lasting impact it may have, it is clear that while the overt political relevance of so-called ethnic identities waxes and wanes, their existence—aside from their overt political significance—is far more complex. Identities that appear to have faded or diminished may well resurface as political factors or other variables change.

Martin outlines the development of three trends in the Hakka movement in Taiwan since the mid-1980s, which political leaders label loosely as traditionalist, moderate, and radical, and he explains briefly how the wider issue of political liberalization has allowed for the emergence of ethnic politics. Each faction within the Hakka movement has different ideas about what it means to be Hakka, different goals, and different visions for Taiwan's political future. Traditionalists look to reunification with the mainland, while radicals oppose Chinese reunification. Traditionalists draw on images of the old and glorious Hakka past before they arrived on Taiwan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and they view themselves as one with all Hakka worldwide. In contrast, the younger, more radical faction of the Hakka movement in Taiwan appeals to Hakka in a “Hakka anthem” to “stop repeating that Hakka are so extraordinary, . . . so remarkable” and to instead “struggle
with uplifted heads for freedom, and recreate Hakka spirit" in Taiwan. This anthem asks Hakka not to focus on former Hakka glory, but to construct a new identity based on "migration from China, suffering, shedding sweat and blood, pioneering, and establishing roots in Taiwan." The "New Hakka," Martin writes, "do not intend to borrow the greatness of the old to create a sense of ethnic solidarity." And yet, even these "new" images of the Hakka and their history on Taiwan clearly draw on and echo many of the traditionalists' themes.

Mary Erbaugh looks at the recent reemergence of Hakka studies in the People's Republic of China today and asks why—since the early decades of this century until very recently—so little was said about the Hakka and the important role of Hakka-speakers and individuals from Hakka regions in Chinese revolution. Basing her study primarily on written sources and historical documents, and supplementing it with interviews, Erbaugh illustrates and substantiates what has long been claimed by many overseas Hakka: that an overwhelming and disproportionate number of Hakka have been involved in the process of communist revolution, the Chinese Communist Party, and the top levels of Chinese government. Most of these public figures, however, kept silent about their Hakka identity. And despite the important role of Hakka, the communist revolution has not been perceived as a Hakka ethnic movement.

Erbaugh describes several important factors that, until very recently, helped to obscure the importance of the Hakka in China. Perhaps the most important involves the Chinese national ideal of Han unity, to which Hakka and non-Hakka alike are committed, especially those who were active in the communist movement and who attained high offices in government. Hakka who succeed in politics take pride in their achievements as Chinese, Erbaugh notes, rather than as Hakka. Another factor is the importance in matters of ethnicity of official historical categories, such as locality or place of origin, which tend to obscure the importance of the Hakka, since they do not belong to any one region or locale. Another is the stigmatized nature of Hakka identity.

Most interesting about this case is that the rapid emergence of public discourse about the Hakka corresponds to the declining political role of Hakka individuals. Paradoxically, at what might have been considered the peak of Hakka political power, Hakka identity was kept silent. An important question raised by Erbaugh's essay is Why, just as Hakka leaders are dying off and Hakka distinctive traits are disappearing, are Hakka studies beginning to flourish in China? According to Erbaugh,
mainland scholars date the recent burgeoning of Hakka studies to Deng Xiaoping's return to power in 1977, when "reformers reduced central control, encouraged local market economies, and aggressively solicited overseas ties." Linked to these changes are growing contacts with more ethnically aware overseas Hakka, and also the increasing acceptability of minority differences and "otherness." Like Martin, Erbaugh shows how the expression of ethnic identity can be either impeded or promoted by state policies.

**SOME RECURRENT THEMES**

Despite the geographical, historical, and cultural diversity of the Hakka groups described in this volume, much of the discourse about Hakka identity revolves around a set of remarkably homogeneous themes. These themes may be said to help structure the history and/or collective memory of particular Hakka communities in such a way as to maintain the integrity of certain key ethnic concepts. While there are numerous recurrent themes and further comparisons that can be drawn from the case studies described in this volume, I will limit my discussion here to the following key issues: the widespread notion that the Hakka are poor and rural, their reputation for unique gender roles, the problematic relationship between Hakka identity and Chinese identity, differing degrees of ethnic consciousness among Hakka communities, and the importance of Hakka language to ethnic identity.

**Poverty and Rural Occupations or an Entrepreneurial Ethic?**

Hakka are widely thought of as poor and hardworking farmers. As should already be clear, in most cases this image relates more to perceptions about the Hakka, or to the Hakka past, than to present reality. The articles in this volume show that the actual socioeconomic positions of the Hakka today are many and varied. In the Christian community of Shung Him Tong we find a broad spectrum of occupations and class identities: a highly educated group of Hakka who work as teachers, scholars, and bureaucrats (some at the highest level of the Hong Kong government), as well as factory workers. Only a small minority are farmers. In Calcutta the Hakka primarily are successful entrepreneurs, tanners, and shoemakers, and they are also found in the restaurant and haircutting businesses. Their occupations set them apart from Calcutta Cantonese, who predominate as carpenters, and Hubeinese, who gener-
ally are dentists. The Hakka of Kwan Mun Hau are now mainly landlords and small business owners. In mainland China before the communist revolution, as Erbaugh points out, Hakka were far more likely to work in sideline industries than to be landlords. Many worked in mines, or in urban areas as ricksha pullers, barbers, or teahouse clerks. After the revolution Hakka regions of the mainland remained poor, but a number of Hakka individuals attained high government posts. In Malaysia and Taiwan, as in China, Hakka are still well represented in agriculture, but they are involved in other occupations as well.

Although Hakka may once have been tenant farmers on the mainland, they no longer are exclusively poor and powerless, and they span various economic classes. Yet in many settings this has not altered their reputation. As a man in Hong Kong explained, one reason this stereotype persists is that successful Hakka readily pass as Cantonese. Certainly in most parts of Hong Kong, and also in Malaysia, this often appears to be the case. Sharon Carstens observes that Malaysian Hakka who became economically successful “seemed especially interested in investing themselves with the credentials of proper Confucian gentlemen and displaying their loyalty to general symbols of Chinese high culture” (this volume). This is also suggested by Mary Erbaugh’s analysis of Hakka who reached positions of power in the People’s Republic of China. Upper-class or successful Hakka are better able to escape the stigma of being Hakka, and are therefore more likely to present themselves as successful Chinese than successful Hakka. As Comaroff and Comaroff describe this process, “on leaving the underclass” those who become successful “must either seek to discard their ethnic identities—which, after all, mark the predicament from which they contrived to escape—or sustain the contradiction of being a member of a group whose primary class position is different from their own” (1992:63). For the prominent mainland Chinese leaders who came from Hakka regions and spoke Hakka but who never presented themselves as Hakka in


15. Shung Him Tong provides a notable exception. Regardless of their degree of economic success, Hakka Christians of Shung Him Tong are very likely to continue to identify themselves as Hakka and to be regarded as such by others, at least within the local context of the church and village. In the wider context of urban Hong Kong, however, most Shung Him Tong residents could easily pass as Cantonese (see Constable, this volume).
public, however, political considerations and ideals of Han Chinese national unity were also important factors.

Why, then, do some successful Hakka continue to identify themselves as Hakka? In Shung Him Tong the answer lies in the fact that they are also Christian. In Taiwan it may be that upwardly mobile Hakka have identified their group as a potentially powerful social force. In other situations, such as in Kwan Mun Hau, upward mobility has been accompanied by a decline in the importance of Hakka identity (if, indeed, ethnicity was ever consciously articulated there).

Calcutta Hakka are in a very different situation. There, economic success does not serve to blur the boundaries between Hakka and other Chinese (or Indians), nor does it cause the Hakka to present themselves as Chinese instead of Hakka. On the contrary, ethnic distinctions are strengthened by the inversion of the hierarchy that existed in mainland China. In Calcutta Hakka economic success depends in part on maintaining ethnic boundaries to protect monopoly over the tanning industry (cf. Barth 1969, Abner Cohen 1969). As Ellen Oxfeld suggests, citing Eric Wolf, ethnicities are "historical products of labor segmentation" (1982:381). Similar to the competitive situation between Hakka and Punti out of which Hakka ethnicity first emerged in China, Hakka ethnicity in Calcutta is related to the segmentation of the labor market. In the new setting, however, Hakka are in a position of power relative to other Chinese, and Hakka consciousness can only contribute to maintaining their position.

In contrast to the Hakka of Calcutta, with their entrepreneurial ethic, Pulai Hakka told Carstens that "Hakka have no head for business." Carstens suggests that lack of business success along with mainly rural residence and rural occupations (such as plantation work and mining) among the Hakka of Malaysia may be explained primarily by the legacy of rural occupations and economic conservativeness back in China. Yet if this is the case, the legacy clearly takes on new meanings in the new context. The Hakka of Kwan Mun Hau do not frame the issue in terms of Hakka versus non-Hakka business ability, but in terms of newcomers versus natives. The newcomers, they suggest, are forced by their circumstances to be "more capable and enterprising" than Kwan Mun Hau natives, who are more economically conservative and rooted in the place. In Shung Him Tong we find yet another permutation. There Hakka insist that it is not that they are unable to succeed in commerce, but that because they are Christian, they have little desire to do so.

Although the Hakka of Calcutta are the most explicitly entrepreneurial
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of the cases we examine, and they appear unique in their expression of an entrepreneurial ethic, this ethic is associated with and supported by similar notions about the Hakka that appear in other locales. According to Oxfeld’s Hakka landlady, Cantonese in Calcutta are less financially successful than Hakka because they are overindulgent. “When Cantonese make money, they get lots of servants, eat with ivory chopsticks, and use tablecloths, . . . but Hakka keep working hard” (Oxfeld, this volume). The idea of Hakka frugality and thrift is also expressed by the Hakka Christians of Shung Him Tong. According to a young Hakka schoolteacher from Shung Him Tong, “Hakka people are very good people—hardworking, thrifty, and practical. Not like the Punti, who like to have a good time and are not hardworking. When they [Punti] make money they just become opium addicts, in contrast to [Hakka] people like my grandfather, who was poor and saved a little bit of money so he could buy some land” (Constable, this volume). In these vastly different contexts, similar statements distinguish Hakka from other Chinese. In one case the emphasis is on entrepreneurial success, in the other, morality and piety.

Unique Gender Roles

As is noted in several of the chapters of this volume, the belief that Hakka women are particularly hardworking and that Hakka gender roles mark them off from other Chinese is extremely widespread among scholars and among Hakka and non-Hakka alike. During the nineteenth century westerners traveling in Hakka regions of China observed that women worked very hard in the fields, did work that non-Hakka often assigned to men, and were less likely to have bound feet than were other Chinese women. Hakka women’s contributions to agricultural work and the custom of leaving girls’ feet unbound are often unquestionably linked with the poverty and greater demands for agricultural labor that existed in the harsher regions of China in which Hakka often resided. However, in many Chinese agricultural regions, including many Cantonese areas in Guangdong, regardless of the degree of poverty, daughters’ feet were bound at an early age and women worked only within the confines of their homes. In Hakka regions this was not usually the case. It is widely believed that even girls who were born into wealthy Hakka families were unlikely to have their feet bound, and that Hakka women who married into wealthy families often continued to participate in manual labor outside of their homes.

Nineteenth-century Hakka gender roles are often regarded simply as
logical economic adaptations and as essentially Hakka. Such assumptions neglect the fact that this particular gendered pattern of labor represents only one possible response to economic circumstances, and also fail to ask how such characteristics came to be widely identified as uniquely Hakka, although they are not. The practice of footbinding, for example, originated in the north as a marker of elite status, and was later emulated by members of the lower classes in many other regions of China. Scholars believe that by the nineteenth century footbinding was practiced to some extent throughout the country, but that it was least popular in the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (Carstens, this volume; Gaw 1991:12-13; Levy 1966; see also Anagnost 1989). In the wealthy silk-producing regions of the Canton Delta footbinding was not widely practiced, and although it was not a Hakka area, women there shared Hakka women’s reputation for independence, diligence, and making important economic contributions to their households (Stockard 1989:175).

Female participation in agricultural work, unbound feet, and the greater degree of freedom attributed to Hakka women are features that are characteristic of non-Han minorities as well (Constable, this volume). Such cultural practices have therefore been used to support the view that Hakka were at best very unorthodox Chinese, at worst not Chinese at all. The association of these practices with Hakka and other low status groups is also likely to have further fueled the perceived need for poor non-Hakka Chinese to bind their daughters’ feet and to restrict their public roles.

Because of the widespread persistence and extreme uniformity of the stereotypes of Hakka gender roles today, it is tempting to conclude that these stereotypes maintain a strong factual basis. Specific research on the economic roles of Hakka women, however, points to the problem with such broad generalizations. In Calcutta, for example, Ellen Oxfeld found that Hakka women are widely recognized as an important source of labor in the tanning industry and that their hard work and economic contribution is regarded as uniquely Hakka. However, Hakka women in Calcutta who belong to wealthier and more economically successful families are less likely to participate directly in the daily operation of the family firm (Basu [Oxfeld] 1991; Oxfeld 1993, and this volume).

While it is certainly likely that in the Hakka (or pre-Hakka) past, at least during the last century, Hakka women played a very active and visible economic role in the public sphere, in contrast to many of their non-Hakka Chinese neighbors in the immediately surrounding regions,
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this is far less likely to be the case today. Undoubtedly, Hakka women continue to make important economic contributions, but many, as in Hong Kong, find themselves in new, more urban, and socially heterogeneous situations where the pattern of female extra-household work has become far less of a uniquely Hakka pattern than it once was.

Moreover, to acknowledge the important economic roles of Hakka women in particular contexts is not to say that Hakka women actually work harder than other women. All we can say is that in some contexts they appear more likely than other women to participate in extra-household work, and that when they do, their work is often perceived in ethnic terms. In Hong Kong, among the people of Shung Him Tong, one commonly hears the assertion that Hakka women work harder than other Chinese women and are given a greater public role. But, as in Calcutta, it does not appear that all Hakka women work equally hard, or that they categorically work harder or more often outside of their homes than non-Hakka women in the region. According to Sharon Carstens, there is some indication that in Malaysia Hakka women have played a greater role in extra-household production—in tin mining and rubber tapping—than have women from other dialect groups. Hakka women in Pulai still commonly participate in agricultural work and are thought to have particularly “strong backs” and “strong wills” compared with women from other groups. As in Shung Him Tong, however, their hard work does not appear to translate into greater power or influence in community affairs. Kwan Mun Hau people also believe that Hakka women have a distinctive role, although it is not as explicitly economic, and that Hakka unity, inclusiveness, and egalitarianism distinguish them from the non-Hakka in the region. These features are all expressed in their ancestral hall worship. In contrast to Cantonese halls, in which only the tablets of certain prominent male ancestors are installed, Hakka halls display only one tablet, that of the founding ancestor, so that in theory and belief all ancestors—rich and poor, men and women—are included.

The persistence and uniformity of Hakka gender stereotypes may suggest the reproduction of older patterns in new contexts, but more likely it is explained by a more general, more universal, growing pattern of female labor participation in the formal sector of the economy worldwide, paired with a constructed and widely articulated idea about essential Hakka gender roles. What still requires further explanation is why, as female labor outside of the home becomes less and less exclusively Hakka, the stereotype of hard-working Hakka women and unique gen-
der roles should persist. And why, even in Calcutta, where financial success is associated with a decrease in women’s participation in family enterprises, do we still find such a stereotype?

One possibility is that Hakka gender stereotypes today are not linked to any actual numbers or percentages of Hakka working women, but to the idea that characteristics that at one time served to identify Hakka and other groups as poor or backward can now be interpreted in a very different way. In many societies, including mainland China, allowing women to participate in the paid work force has gained political currency. Indeed, as I assert in my chapter, the idea of Hakka women’s involvement in the public sphere, at least in Shung Him Tong, has come to be associated with modernity and progress. Ideas pertaining to Hakka gender roles now help lay claim to a type of Hakka protofeminism, women’s liberation, and gender equality that is historically constructed as having been far ahead of its time. As was discussed in the previous section, when members of an ethnic group become increasingly upwardly mobile, we would expect, following Comaroff and Comaroff, at least some members to discard ideas and practices that distinguish them from other elites. 16 Such may be the case for wealthy Calcutta Hakka. In other cases, however, leaving the underclass may not be accompanied by a need to repudiate Hakka gender roles, because they can be adapted and transformed to fit a new rhetoric of gender equality.

The connections among Hakka identity, class mobility, and gender roles deserve further research. The essays in this volume suggest that despite changes in the economic and social position of Hakka in various settings, and despite the fact that greater numbers of non-Hakka women have entered the public work force in many regions where Hakka live, the idea or perception of distinctive Hakka gender roles persists (see also Blake 1981, Pasternak 1983). Even in Calcutta, where Hakka women’s roles vary with the family’s economic status, this reputation endures (Oxfeld, this volume). In some cases—perhaps those most closely resembling the Hakka rural past—Hakka gender roles are still articulated as an economic necessity. In others, ethnic patterns may be giving way to ideas about class mobility. In yet others, particularly those in which Hakka seek to actively transform and legitimate Hakka identity, gender roles may be transformed into a modern discourse of gender equality—one that does not necessarily reflect social reality.

16. See Erbaugh (this volume) for a discussion of the fascinating example of Sun Yat-sen’s family.
The Hakka as Chinese

In several of the cases in this volume, Hakka claim to be both distinctly Hakka and preeminently Chinese. This is a bit of a paradox. Mary Erbaugh explains that the Hakka as a whole have seen themselves as the preservers of traditional northern Han culture. The Hakka of Calcutta claim that they are more faithful bearers of Chinese tradition than are other Chinese, and the Hakka of Kwan Mun Hau have couplets outside their ancestral hall that read “The descendants of those who came from Henan continue / The customs of the North are retained.” The Hakka of Malaysia—both rich and poor—insist on being respected as “true [Han] Chinese” and are determined to preserve their Chinese cultural traditions (Carstens, this volume). The Hakka of Shung Him Tong do not claim to have preserved all of the customs of the north, since many conflict with their Christian beliefs and practices, but they do claim that Hakka are the purest Chinese. As was mentioned earlier, the idea that they are the most Chinese of all is not unique to the Hakka. Ethnicity commonly involves a claim to purity or authenticity.

While it would be easy to say that these cases all share the fundamental feature of equating Hakka identity with being Chinese, if we look more closely, we can see differences in the ways Hakka and Chinese identity are related. To the Hakka of Kwan Mun Hau and Pulai, Hakka identity is only of secondary importance to the fact that they are Chinese. We have seen that for the successful Hakka of Malaysia wealth provides the means to express Chineseness, not Hakkaness. For the people of Kwan Mun Hau, secure in their status as Punti (or benturen) and Tsuen Wan natives, there is little question in their minds, or those of others, but that they are Chinese. In contrast, in Shung Him Tong to be Hakka is to assert one’s Chineseness, despite possible accusations that one is no longer Chinese because one is Christian. In Shung Him Tong there is also a desire to defend the preeminence of Hakka Chineseness. In Calcutta Hakka identity appears to be even more exclusive. Calcutta Hakka view themselves as Chinese, but place an emphasis on their superiority as Hakka. In Taiwan there appears to be little doubt that Hakka are Chinese, but in recent years Hakka identity has taken on far greater importance and the distinction between Hakka and others is now being emphasized.17

17. Cantonese, both in mainland China and overseas, assert that they are people of the Tang dynasty, rather than the Han dynasty.
What is shared in all of these cases is the provision by Hakka history of means to argue that Hakka are the most Chinese Chinese. As one missionary writer aptly put it, Hakka history is essentially “nothing else than an outline history of the Chinese in general” (Piton 1873–74:225). On one level we cannot deny that this is true: all Chinese claim to have north central Chinese origins and the Hakka are no different (Blake 1981). We should also note that many of the characteristics with which Hakka describe themselves (diligence, honesty, hard work, etc.) also reflect archetypally Chinese values. But although in many significant ways the history and culture of the Hakka resemble those of other Chinese, Hakka are at the same time regarded as distinct. It may be precisely the flexibility of Hakka history—that it is at once distinct from and the same as Chinese history—which makes it adaptable to a variety of different claims and situations. The same view of Hakka history is shared by those who choose to emphasize their distinctiveness and by those who choose to emphasize their connections with other Chinese.

**Hakka Consciousness**

Most of the Hakka communities described in this volume are comprised of populations that descended from emigrants who, originating in different villages and regions, left China at different times. One question this raises—which is impossible to answer, but interesting to speculate about—is whether there is any correlation between the time and place from which people migrated and the importance of Hakka identity in the new immigrant community. For example, would communities founded by later emigrants exhibit a stronger degree of Hakka consciousness than those established by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century emigrants?

While this question presumes that Hakka communities in China became increasingly conscious of their Hakkaness through time, we know that the pattern, more accurately, also varies from one location to another. The more isolated and homogeneous Hakka-speaking communities (such as Meixian) seem less likely to be ethnically aware than those in which Hakka and Punti live interspersed, such as the Shenzhen or Bao’an regions of Guangdong, which adjoin the New Territories of Hong Kong. As we have already asserted, a sense of ethnicity originates in an environment in which competition between groups comes to be understood as ethnic. But we have also suggested that by the end of the
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nineteenth century Hakka consciousness in Guangdong and Guangxi had reached a peak and was fairly widespread.

Since we have little specific information concerning the degree of Hakka consciousness in different mainland communities to begin with, or even enough information to say much about the particular communities in China from which immigrants came, our answer can only be speculative. But the question itself raises some important issues. While we would not expect the ethnic sentiments of early immigrants to be perpetuated over centuries except under certain conditions, the stronger sentiments of later immigrants are more likely to persist over a short period of time, despite their possible lack of—or changed—relevance. Thus what deserves attention is not so much the mere perpetuation of Hakka identity, but the specific conditions in which it continues to be of relevance or in which its significance declines.

Of the cases described in this volume, the most recent immigrants are the Hakka of Calcutta, who arrived around the time of World War I, followed by the Hakka of Shung Him Tong, who began to arrive after the turn of this century. Indeed, these two communities exhibit a much stronger sense of Hakka identity than do the Kwan Mun Hau Hakka, who arrived mainly during the mid-eighteenth century, and the Hakka of Malaysia, who arrived mainly during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Hakka of Taiwan, who arrived there at about the same time as Hakka went to Malaya, present an interesting exception. In Taiwan Hakka identity most clearly takes the form of an ethnic political movement, but this is most likely a modern development that has emerged out of local political history.

The Hakka in Malaysia are certainly far less conscious of their Hakka identity than are those in Taiwan, Shung Him Tong, or Calcutta. In the new context other allegiances, based on local or on Chinese (as opposed to Malay) identity, have taken on greater relevance. In Kwan Mun Hau and Malaysia people acknowledge when pressed that they are Hakka, but show little concern for their Hakka identity. Their more relevant identity is Punti. Although not Cantonese, they, as early settlers in the New Territories, have more in common in terms of status with the New Territories Cantonese Punti than with later Hakka immigrants, such as the people of Shung Him Tong.

The Shung Him Tong Hakka have come much more recently to Hong Kong, many of them from linguistically mixed Hakka and Punti regions of southern Guangdong. In contrast to the socioeconomic position of the people of Kwan Mun Hau, Shung Him Tong people arrived
in a region dominated by powerful Cantonese-speaking Punti lineages, and in which they were a Hakka minority. Today the memory of the animosity and competition between Hakka and Cantonese-Punti plays a role in the maintenance of Hakka identity, and Christianity provides the key.

Hakka identity in Calcutta is not maintained merely as a remnant from the past, but, as we have suggested, with renewed and vital significance in the new context. In Calcutta, where Hakka dominate the tanning industry, they maintain social boundaries between themselves and other Chinese and, as in Shung Him Tong, they declare their superiority over other Chinese. In Taiwan, as Howard Martin suggests, it was only after the government lifted martial law and the political climate allowed for the emergence of opposition politics that a Hakka political movement was mobilized. Similarly, Mary Erbaugh demonstrates the importance of political change in the recent reemergence of interest in the Hakka in the People’s Republic of China. These cases suggest that time of migration is only a minor factor, alongside a number of other, far more important issues, including the new ethnic landscape, political climate, and other, less predictable, issues.

Language

Hakka language is an important consideration in each of the chapters, but particularly in those of Cohen, Martin, and Erbaugh. According to Martin, the common thread that ties together all Hakka in Taiwan—whether they be traditionalists or radicals—is their concern for Hakka language. Erbaugh also emphasizes the historical importance of language among the Hakka in China during the Taiping Rebellion and also during the Long March (1934–36) and its aftermath, and she hints at the possibility of Hakka language serving as a badge of Hakka identity at a time when other public expressions of ethnic distinctiveness were officially criticized and publicly denounced.

In Hong Kong in particular Hakka language is on the decline (as it appears to be in Taiwan and Malaysia) and for many Hakka this is perceived as a threat to Hakka identity. To some this threat is not such a serious one, but, as in Taiwan, it can quickly become transformed into an important and volatile political issue. Despite the decline in Hakka language in many regions, the contributions to this volume do not support the view that there is necessarily a direct and predictable correla-
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...tion between linguistic and ethnic demise. Although language may be a sociocultural variable (see Cohen, this volume), it is clearly not coterminous with ethnicity; nor does a language or dialect group automatically or necessarily form an ethnic group. Language as a cultural characteristic may become a powerful ethnic symbol, as has Hakka language in Taiwan, or as in the cases described by Benedict Anderson (1983). But the existence or persistence of Hakka language does not, as in the case of Kwan Mun Hau and many regions of China, suggest the necessary coexistence of a correspondingly strong sense of Hakka identity. The reverse is also true: as several of the chapters here illustrate, the demise of Hakka language does not necessarily point to the decline of Hakka ethnicity.

CONCLUSION

This volume demonstrates that there are few, if any, actual observable cultural differences that distinguish Hakka from others across the board. Hakka language is diminishing in a number of settings, Hakka mountain songs (shan ge) are rarely sung, and Hakka clothing is no longer worn. But ideas about Hakka distinctiveness—that they have distinctive gender roles; that they are cooperative, hard working, egalitarian, or frugal; and that they share a common past—persist.

Hakka identity was first formed at a time when the Hakka were an underclass. Today it is clear that not all Hakka are poor, but the stereotype of Hakka poverty continues to shape identity. Hakka individuals can respond to such a stereotype in a number of different ways and can consider it as either a negative or positive quality. Like Hakka leaders in the People’s Republic, they may choose to ignore it, or even cease to identify themselves as Hakka. Alternatively, like many overseas Hakka and recent Hakka scholars in the People’s Republic, they may embrace Hakka identity and transform or resist negative stereotypes. In some cases, where there appear to be contradictions between the real-life economic situations of Hakka and the existing stereotypes, the discrepancy may be attributed to individual differences, or to differences between the Hakka past and the Hakka present, or, as in Kwan Mun Hau, Hakka identity may simply lose much of its salience. Such responses are likely to vary among communities, among individuals within the same community, and even for the same individual in different social contexts or periods of the life cycle. What is clear, however, is that many of the
stereotypes Hakka are faced with are relatively consistent, although the applicability of the stereotype to particular situations, and the response to it, vary widely.\textsuperscript{18}

Many of the contributions to this volume also suggest that there are some patterns, tendencies, or differences that are not merely unfounded beliefs of or about the Hakka. They propose that Hakka identity is not merely an ideological construct. While on the surface this position may seem to imply a return to an essentialist approach to ethnicity, the authors in this volume attempt to escape this pitfall through careful attention to history, the use of Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" (1977; see also Bentley 1987, 1991), and careful concern for the different settings, situations, and ways in which people define themselves and experience their identity. Hakka in different situations may share certain characteristics as a result of their common past—consciously or unconsciously transposed into the new setting—but, more often, new meanings take shape against the backdrop of a new cultural environment.

The challenge is to explain how these themes have come to be related to the Hakka, bearing in mind that common patterns do not imply a primordial identity; their persistence and reappearance during different times and in different places need to be explained and accounted for. We describe in this volume the genesis, persistence, and transformation of Hakka ethnic consciousness in China and other settings, and the reasons that Hakka identity in places such as Kwan Mun Hau and Pulai seems to be breaking down, why it has reemerged in Taiwan and mainland China, and why, in Shung Him Tong and Calcutta—for very different reasons—it persists. Much work remains to be done.

Although several of the authors in this volume have made a conscious attempt to include explicitly Hakka voices in their work, I must agree with Comaroff and Comaroff that we do not speak for the Hakka; rather, we speak about them (1992:9). In this regard we heed the Comaroffs' warning:

\begin{quote}
If we take our task to be an exercise in intersubjective translation, in speaking for others and their point of view, our hubris will cause us no end of difficulties, moral and philosophical.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} As Vincent Crapanzano has written, "One of the characteristics of stereotypic thinking is the reduction of movement through time to a symbolic instant that is perhaps psychologically satisfying to the thinker but is rarely sufficient to the subject of his thought" (1980:32). Such is also the case for stereotypes about the Hakka.
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And if we see it to lie in the formal analysis of social systems or cultural structures, statistically or logically conceived, we evade the issue of representation and experience altogether. But if, after an older European tradition, we seek to understand the making of collective worlds—the dialectics, in space and time, of societies and selves, persons and places, orders and events—then we open ourselves to conventions of criticism widely shared by the nonpositivist human sciences. Then, too, we may traffic in analytic constructions, not in unverifiable subjectivities, and can acknowledge the effects of history upon our discourses. (1992:12)

This volume necessarily presents only a "partial truth" (Clifford 1986) about the Hakka, and we are also, unavoidably, co-opting others' voices. Yet we do not claim to have the final word on Hakka identity. In keeping with current works in anthropology that argue against the imposition of essential categories, yet acknowledge the importance of their existence for those who live them, our hope is for the essays in this volume to become part of a growing and ongoing dialogue on the subject of Hakka identity.

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