

The Chinese of Sarawak: Thirty Years of Change

T' IEN Ju-K'ang*

Editor's Note

During the period 1948-1949, the author of this article visited Sarawak to study the social structure of the Chinese community in Kuching. After a lapse of 32 years, an investigation based on published materials has been made to assess social mobility within various dialect groups in Sarawak and to compare the present situation with that of 30 years ago. As a result of advances in communication and the extension of marketing, the successive layers of middlemen, in whom social and political power was invested, have been forced out and a new elite recruited from minor groups has emerged. The focus of the ethnic Chinese has gradually shifted from their traditionally narrow, localized interests to the welfare of the country in which they have settled. This trend can be seen in Chinese communities throughout the world.

Since Sarawak gained independence from Great Britain and became integrated into Malaysia in 1963, the Chinese community there has undergone profound social and economic change. In view of the striking complexity of the Chinese dialect groups who live there Sarawak is a good place to study social mobility within the various dialect groups and to compare the present situation with that of 30 years ago. It is hoped that this analysis may contribute to discussions on the future of Chinese communities of a similar nature in other Southeast Asian Countries.

Decline of the Traditional Power Structure

The most prominent change has been the

reshuffling of the power structure in the Chinese community. In the colonial period economic strength was the path to social power. A wealthy towkay who had once won the government's favour would automatically gain a high social position which, together with political privileges, would in turn bring increased wealth. There is no denying that the system of patronage still plays a decisive role in Sarawak's politics (as, for example, in the allocation of timber licences to certain merchants on a politically partisan basis) [Leigh 1974: 108]. Nevertheless, the stronghold of the erstwhile power monopoly has been broken in the course of economic development and a breach has been opened for new competitors.

It has been the common experience in Sarawak, and in Southeast Asia in general, that the struggle for power in any Chinese community occurs usually between two

* 田汝康; Department of History, Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

dialect groups—the Teochews (潮州) of Kwangtung (廣東) and the Hokiens (Fukien) (福建). The former have concentrated mainly on the grocery and rubber trades, as middlemen between the rural shops and the export firms in the large ports, whereas the latter, besides having a finger in the same pie as the Teochews, gradually gained a strong position in the financial world. It may be said that the power of the Hokiens lay in their monetary strength, while that of the Teochews was in their number of business units. Despite the weakening of their economic dominance,¹⁾ the Teochew leaders were still able to maintain an influential position in Kuching because no other dialect group leaders were powerful enough to compete with them.

In the colonial period, when the Western companies needed middlemen to collect raw materials and promote the sale of manufactured products, the Teochew grocers fitted in perfectly with the demands of the economy. However, following the rapid post-colonial economic development, and especially, in Sarawak, with advances in communication and the extension of marketing, the role of such middlemen, which is speculative in nature, has been forced out.²⁾

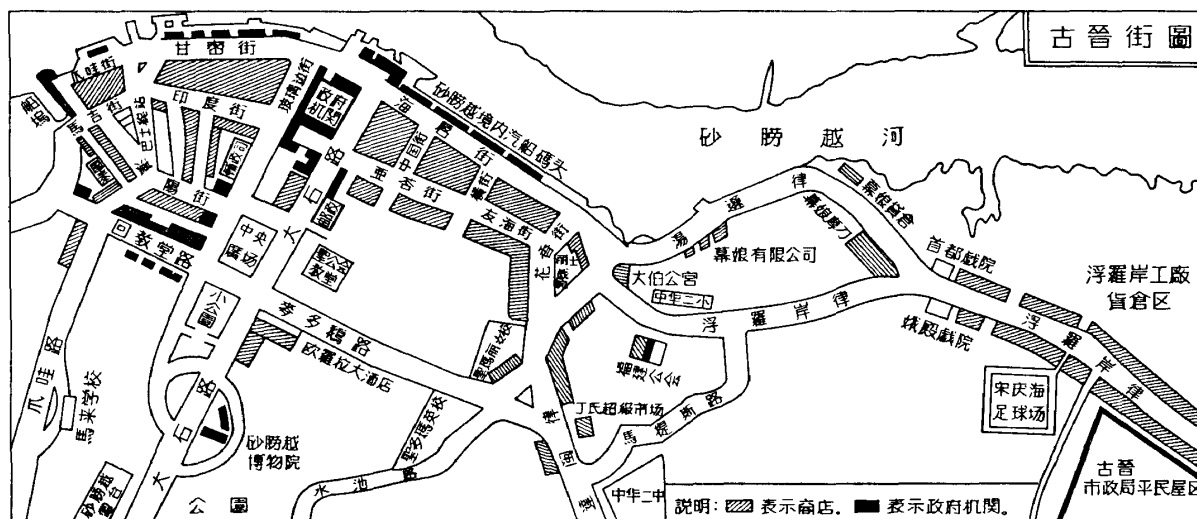
In Kuching 30 years ago, just as at present, the Teochew grocery shops were clustered in Gambier Road and Java Street. Of the 67 shops in these two streets at that time, 38 were Teochew grocery shops. Although urban Kuching has been greatly extended and rebuilt recently, the main streets, such as Main Bazaar, Carpenter

Street, Indian Street and so on, where the

- 1) There are many theories on the nature of the Chinese Associations, all emphasizing the aspect of internal co-operation. One tends to forget that there are a great many institutionalized ways of dealing with the various problems concerned with social relationships within a certain community without organizations being formed, if the specific aim is only internal co-operation. This is evident from the history of the Foochow Association in Sibü. At the beginning of this century, when Hwang Nai-Chung (黃乃裳), the pioneer of the Chinese communities of the Third Division, led 1,000 and 70 Foochow speaking immigrants to settle in Sibü, no association was formed, and even after 10 years, when the number of Foochow peasants had increased to 8,000, there was still no association. It is interesting to note that a rudimentary Foochow Association was finally initiated by a Foochow immigrant when he had accumulated ten thousand dollars from his labours. It seems incredible that a person with 10,000 dollars was able to initiate an association and to place himself at the head of it. Due to the shortage of financial resources in the Foochow community, the Foochow Association was not properly registered in Sibü until 1941, when the population of the Foochow community had increased to 23,000, and was only officially set up in 1946, when the number had reached 38,867, almost one quarter of the whole Chinese population of Sarawak. This delay was apparently due to lack of external competition in the Sibü area and inadequate financial backing from the Foochow community. See Liu Tze-Cheng [1979: 272–273], Hsu T'sung-Szu [1952: E65].
- 2) The decline of the Teochew grocery shops in Singapore started as early as after the First World War. Before that, the Teochew people almost monopolized the grocery business in Singapore and Malaya as well as the trade with Siam and Indo-China. Between 1905 and 1949, in 25 elections held by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, Teochews were elected as presidents nine times and as vice-presidents 10 times. Over a period of 30 years (about 1920–1950), half the Teochew cloth shops in Singapore closed down. See Pang Hsing-Nung [1950: 41–67; 1980: 230].

shops of the Hokien, Tapu (大埔), Hakka (客家) and other dialect groups are concentrated, remain the same. The one prominent contrast is the decline and near elimination of Teochew grocery shops everywhere. During the last 30 years, 17 of the 38 such shops in Gambier Road and Java Street have gone out of business. Even in Main Bazaar, which is the Hokien business centre, nine grocery shops have closed down, six of them being owned by Teochews [*Panduan Telefon* 1981; Yang Ch'ing-Nan 1963].

time, three of the minor dialect groups, previously excluded from the power structure, began to compete for leadership. In order to show this strong current of change, it is necessary to give a brief account of the former status of these three groups:



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(1) The Ch'aoan (詔安) group. Ch'aoan is a district in Fukien province near the Kwangtung border, where a dialect in several respects midway between Teochew and Hokien is spoken. People from this group came to Sarawak around 1846. Some of the earliest immigrants first settled at Sekama, on the southern bank of Sungai Sarawak, on the outskirts of Kuching. They were mainly wharf labourers (70% of the total number before World War II), pig-breeders, and poultrymen, whilst a number were masons and carpenters for the Kuching contractors (many of whom spoke the same dialect). The women, if employed, tended to be maidservants. On the whole, they were manual labourers.

(2) The Henghua (興化) group. Henghua is the historical name for a prefecture of southern Fukien covering the present districts of Put'ien (莆田) and Hsienyu (仙游). In Sarawak the Henghuas are often regarded as a small group because of the size of their population and the strength of their financial resources. According to the 1970 census they totalled 10,642, of whom 4,806 were in Kuching. Eighty percent of the Henghuas came from Hout'un (后墩) and Kianghsia (江下) villages in Put'ien district (hereafter called sub-group A), the rest (20%) from Shangt'ien (上店), Hsiangch'eng (象城) and several other small villages in the neighbourhood of Hout'un and Kianghsia (hereafter called sub-group B). They came to Sarawak as late as the beginning of this century. Owing to historical disputes over fishing rights and irrigation

facilities,³⁾ these two sub-groups had already been feuding for a long time when emigration began. They carried their deep-rooted hatred to Kuching and when they initially lived together in Blacksmith Road often exchanged blows. Eventually, sub-group B, with the colonial government's help, moved to Sungai Apong. Subsequently, sub-group A also moved, to Bintawa fishing village. Thus, the two groups lived quite far apart. Even now the older members of these groups are not on speaking terms, although the long-standing enmity has gradually been diminishing among the younger generation. Initially both groups engaged in fishing, as they had done in China, but the hardship and severe competition within the dialect group forced some of them to eke out a living by pulling rickshaws when they were unable to go to sea. As they gave up fishing, they came into contact with some of the simpler mechanical jobs and began to monopolize the trade in selling and repairing bicycles, thus making the Henghua dialect the indispensable medium for such transactions everywhere. After a long struggle, to be elaborated in a later section, the Henghuas have now gained control of 95% of this kind of business in Kuching.

(3) The Hakka group. This is the

3) In most parts of Fukien, where irrigation depends mainly on mountain streams, the villagers inhabiting the upper reaches of a stream always try their best to monopolize the water, while those on the lower reaches wish to share it on equal terms. A struggle over water conservancy facilities might be carried out for many years, even centuries. So might feuds between different parties for the fishing rights in ponds and coastal seas.

largest group of Chinese in Sarawak. The first big wave of settlers were miners coming from Pontianak, West Borneo, in about 1850. In the 1970 census they totalled 91,610 of whom 69,471 were living in the First Division, more than half the total of all the other dialect groups in that district.⁴⁾ Kuching Hakka can be roughly divided into four sub-groups. The largest and socially prominent group contains those from the Tapu district of Kwangtung and from Hoppo (河婆), a big town in western Kityang (揭陽) county, also in Kwangtung. The latter live mostly on the strip of territory along the roads from milestone 4.5 to the termini at Bau and Serian, comprising from 9% to 84% of the Hakka inhabitants in the various settlements along the way [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 30-33]. The former are scattered in the municipal area, mainly in Carpenter Street and India Street, managing shops and selling various manufactured household supplies.

A Case of Social Mobility

Formerly economic stagnation resulted in a limitation on the division of labour. The members of minor dialect groups were confined to professions often looked upon as degrading by the large dialect groups.

4) The Hakkas are said to have migrated from the north to the south of China, especially to Fukien and Kwangtung, in several waves since the beginning of the fourth century A.D., to escape foreign rulers. The name Hakka is the Cantonese pronunciation of the word pronounced 'K'o-chia', in Mandarin; it means guests or sojourners, and is used to distinguish them from the Pen-ti (本地) (local dwellers).

Not a single important elective, or so-called 'representative' post, had ever been held by these minor groups in 1946. Their social status was looked down upon. For example, intermarriage with people of Hainan (海南) origin was not favoured by the large wealthy groups and was generally tabooed by some of the conservative Teochew towkays. Except in the most unusual circumstances, social mobility was almost completely blocked.

The following life story of a Henghua towkay is a good example of the kind of hard endeavour that was required to break out of this "dialect-origin trap". Like some of the others, he has traveled a long route, starting by pulling rickshaws, advancing to the trishaw, introduced also by the Japanese, after the war, and finally became successful with the penetration of Japanese motorcars into Sarawak in the early '60s.

He was born in Put'ien in 1902 and went to Singapore when he was about 17 years old, hoping to make his fortune as a rickshaw puller. After two years he took his savings back to his home village to get married, but later, forced out by financial difficulties, he returned to Singapore a second time, also pulling rickshaws.⁵⁾ It took him five years of really hard labour to save enough money to come to Kuching to start a new career. From 1926 onwards he worked for more than 15 years as a shop

5) Rickshaw pulling still existed in Kuching as late as 1950. The pullers were Fuch'ing (福清) (a district near Foochow) and Henghua speaking. See Elizabeth Sollard [1972: 108]. In 1977 there were still five Henghua labourers driving trishaws in Miri; see T'ien Nung [1977: 72].

assistant, car and lorry driver and so on, until he was able to open a bicycle shop of his own. This rickshaw puller ultimately made his fortune during World War II (1941–1945) when the shortage of petroleum made bicycles the only means of transportation available. Thereafter, from dealing in motorcar spare parts and accessories to becoming the agent of petroleum service stations, he began to amass enough money to secure a respectable position in the Chinese community. In 1970 he organized a bus company. Through his financial influence he was elected Chairman of the Kuching Henghua Association and a member of the school board of Chunghsing Middle School (中興中學). His long cherished dream of becoming rich and respectable had at last been realized [Ts'eng Hsin-Ying 1970: 170].

The Impact of Road Development

Sarawak, being a sparsely populated land

of tropical forests and swamps, depended very much on communication by river. In 1948–1949 there were 112 launches (ranging from four to 56 tons) in Kuching but only 35 private bus owners on the registry, some of whom presumably had gone out of business [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 66]. The total length of passable roads linking Kuching with other big out-stations was about 50 miles. As late as 1953 the whole of Sarawak had only 95 miles of all-weather bituminous or concrete surfaced road [Jackson 1968: 164]. The speeding up of road construction from 1962–1967 was obviously a reflection of indigenous economic development. By 1965, about 1,000 miles of roads of all types had been completed. Early in 1967, the three chief towns, Kuching, Simanggang and Sibu, were linked by a new road 287 miles long [Lee Yong-Leng 1970: 128]. Road development greatly motivated the Henghua people to expand their control of the transport business, with which no other

dialect group was believed to be familiar. At the same time, drivers and bus owners of both Ch'aoan and Hakka origin began to compete, notwithstanding its cutthroat nature. When the big financial leaders of other dialect groups discovered the profitability of this new enterprise, it was too late for them to participate in it.

The boom in the motor

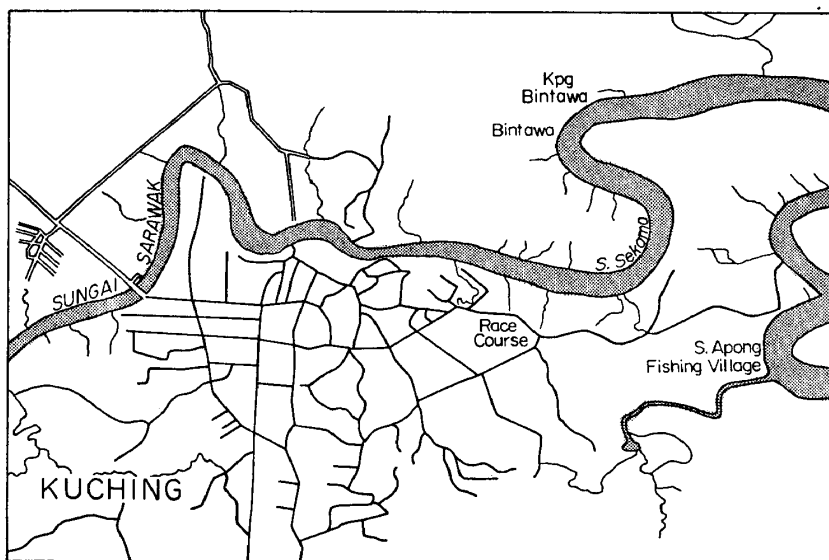


Fig. 3 General Map of Kuching, Sarawak

vehicle business started as early as the middle '50s. In 1956, the number of new cars registered in Kuching was 398, and in 1957, 301 [British Colonial Office 1957: 118], representing 70 percent of the whole of Sarawak. In the immediate post-war years, 84% of the bus drivers in Kuching came from the Henghua, Ch'aoan and Hakka groups [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 48-49]. With so many new models of European and Japanese cars racing around Kuching, some of the drivers managed to get ahead in the commercial competition, leaving the others far behind. A typical example is the rise of the following five members of the Kueh (郭) clan of the Henghua fishing group [Ts'eng Hsin-Ying 1970: 143-145, 151-153].

(1) KS, initially the owner of a shop selling incense sticks and candles to his fellow fishermen, caught the boom in the motorcar business and organized the Chin Liang Long Motor Vehicle Company (晉連隆汽車有限公司), which, at the beginning of 1952, was one of the small franchised bus companies in the Kuching area. Today he is chairman of the board of directors as well as general administrative manager of the company. Naturally, the Kueh clan association in Kuching elected him as their vice-president.

(2) KT had a career similar to that of KS. He is now a director of the same CLL Company and chairman of the Kuching Henghua Association.

(3) KH, another director and manager of the CLL Company, was also originally a fisherman and, omitting the rickshaw pulling stage, became an agent of a motor-

car company.

(4) KW, once the president of the Kuching Fishing Kotak Association and vice-president of the Kuching Henghua Association, was also originally a fisherman. He is at present concentrating on the timber export business, having accumulated his initial capital through motorcar dealings.

(5) KV is the most prominent leading figure of the Henghua dialect group. He too started as a fisherman, began his business in Miri as a motorcar agent and later became an authorized dealer for the Japanese Colt and Prince trade marks. His commercial success made him an elected member of the Council Negri at the end of 1957, when the colonial government started to include representatives of the minor Chinese groups in its legislative body. KV is at present the honourable President of the Kuching Henghua Association and President of the Association of the Kueh Clan in Kuching.

New Outlook for the Minor Groups

Amid all the hustle and bustle of the early days of trading in European and Japanese motorcars, some of the Henghua fishermen, mainly from the younger generation, left Bintawa fishing village and squeezed into other trades in which they had no previous experience. In 1947-1948, apart from fishing, there were only 35 Henghua businesses in the whole of Kuching [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 46] (not including those individual drivers who claimed to be running private or joint enterprises [*ibid.*: 49]. But by 1977 there were 91 Henghua

enterprises in Kuching. The detailed distribution was as follows [T'ien Nung 1977: 55]:

	1947-1948	1977
Fishing boats	253	315
Bicycle shops	27	52
Grocery shops	5	4
Barber shops	3	3
Tyre retreading business		6
Battery charging business		5
Fishing supply shops		3
Marine products shops		4
Building firms		3
Photo studios		2
Travel agencies		1
Timber companies		4
Petrol stations		1
Furniture stores		2
Coffee shops		1
Total	288	406

In 30 years Henghua bicycle shops, instead of decreasing, have increased, strengthening their monopolistic position from 84% to 95%. The new business of tyre retreading and battery charging are completely under their control [*loc. cit.*]. One must take into consideration that the bicycle shops of 1977 are quite different from those of 1947-1948. They now include the sale and repair not only of bicycles, but also of cars, taxi cabs, and so on. According to local usage however they are all still called Henghua bicycle shops.

The reorganized transport system also motivated the Ch'aoan group to abandon its traditional manual work and join the new trade. The achievement of this minor group is rather difficult to trace as its

members are to be found in almost every trade, not only in Kuching but in the whole of Sarawak, especially in Miri. The first prominent change that can be seen is in residence. In 1947-1948, the dominant Ch'an (田) clan of this group had 107 households living in Sekama, constituting 88% of the Ch'aoan people residing in that area [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 24]. In the old days, only the richer descendants of this clan could afford to live in the municipal area; the rest were mostly concentrated at Sekama. In 1981, there were 209 Ch'an family members from Ch'aoan living in the municipal area [*Panduan Telefon* 1981]. The diversification of their occupations in Kuching indicates the acceleration of their social mobility.

In the immediate post-war years, ordinary Ch'aoan folk ran only 11 of the 705 shops in Kuching [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 46]. There are no figures to help us assess the present situation of Ch'aoan shops, but no one can have any doubt as to the Ch'aoan achievement in entering trades of all kinds. In the early 1950s, three bus companies had franchises in the Kuching area, operating 63 buses in 1956 [British Colonial Office 1957: 119]. Henghua, Ch'aoan and Hakka all had the same opportunities, but after a period of severe competition, CS of Ch'aoan eventually won the race by establishing the Sarawak Transport Company. Starting with two small buses in poor condition, he gradually built up his company until, in the early 1970s, he owned more than a hundred large, air-conditioned coaches, running a distance of 120 miles between the First and Second Divisions,

where the greater part of the road development had taken place. The Henghua group dominated the Chin Liang Long Motor Vehicle Company, as mentioned above, covering municipal routes, while the Hakka group are, of course, still formidable competitors to the Ch'aoan buses in other Divisions, though they are not as powerful within the former wharf labourers' domain.

In spite of their large numbers, the Hakkas had to be content with manual work in the rural areas because of lack of capital. In the period 1947-1948, there were only 18 second grade Hakka grocery shops out of a total of 167 such shops owned by Teochew and Hokien merchants in the First Division [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 56]. Moreover, these 18 Hakka shops were situated in a rather remote area towards the end of the 32 mile Simmanggan Road. Owing to the Teochews' supremacy 30 years ago, no Hakka grocery shops could be found along the upper part of the Simmanggan Road (from Kuching to the 24th mile) nor was any Hakka appointed as headman in this densely populated Hakka region. Instead, the three headmen at that time were all Teochews [Hsu T'sung-Szu 1952: (Te) 23]. Judging by the writings of the old inhabitants, not even the Hokiens were powerful enough to set up business in the bazaar near the 10th mile. Actually one man did, but he was eventually squeezed out by the collective action of the Teochews [Chu Hung-Sheng 1966: 66, 104].

Consequences

The extension of the road transport service greatly improved the hitherto undeveloped exchange relations, limiting the roles of successive layers of middlemen and enabling traders of other dialect groups to share the economic advantages. At present there are 48 different kinds of shops operated by the Hakka clan named Chai (蔡) (all originally from Hoppo) in the Kuching rural area, of which 17 are in the bazaar near the 7th mile—the exclusive domain of the Teochews in the old days [*Panduan Telefon* 1981]. In 1966 a certain Mr. Chai from Hoppo was elected as an executive of the Kuching Chamber of Commerce because of his successful import and export business, an unprecedented event in the Chinese community.

The introduction of political parties in Sarawak has given further impetus to social mobility among these small Chinese dialect groups. Politics today are conducted on a Western model of popular voting which gives the opportunity to use propaganda and agitation. The old leaders of the Chinese community, who used to wield social power because of their financial resources and the political patronage of the colonial government, did not need to pay attention to the huge rural Chinese population—in the First Division the numerous Hakka living in outstations. Therefore, when elections were introduced, they were completely puzzled as to what should be done to influence the masses, especially the younger generation. There

is no denying that electioneering in Sarawak is still supported to some extent by political donations. However, elite control of the old type can no longer be maintained, for the previously degraded dialect groups, with a great number of long-dissatisfied people, have now severely circumscribed the leaders' ambitions to control the whole Chinese community at a single stroke. The former elite entirely misjudged the new situation.

For example, the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), which gained much popularity in Sarawak during the early period of party formation, challenged the old convention of elite control based on dialect differences and championed the new concept of electioneering on a mass basis. In the central committee election in 1966, SUPP adopted the principle of proportional representation. Of the 28 Chinese members elected, the proportions were as follows: Hakkas 13, Hokiens 9 (4 from Ch'aoan), Foochows 3, Hainanese 2, Cantonese 1 [Leigh 1974: 19]. It is worth noticing that the Hakkas were not only well represented but were also promoted to the leading rank, while not a single Teochew was elected.

The people of the various minor groups worked together, mobilizing all their means in an attempt to win the election. As Leigh points out, the Sarawak Transport Company operated by Ch'aoan proprietors "has played a very important role both as a source of funds and as a conduit for channelling SUPP influence through the first and the second divisions." The company's buses ply almost every route

between Kuching and the outstations in both of these Divisions and extend as far as Sarikei in the Third Division. A great majority of the drivers, conductors and ticket sellers come from the Henghua, Ch'aoan and Hakka groups and they are also enthusiastic members of the party. The bus company, therefore, not only supplies SUPP with money, but also helps the party workers to reach remote areas with information, propaganda materials and newspapers [*ibid.*: 20]. Noteworthy is the fact that in the fiscal year 1966–1967, the larger creditors to the party included the following enterprises and individuals [*ibid.*: 19].

- (1) Kwong Lee (廣利) Company—a Cantonese family bank.
- (2) Sarawak Transport Company—the proprietor is of the Ch'aoan group, engaging also in shipping and the sago business, and has been a public officer of the party for many years.
- (3) A certain Hainanese—the party's treasurer and the owner of the Southern Company which produces soft drinks in Kuching.

New Grouping of Associations

As a consequence of the weakening of the old structure, the leadership of the dialect associations inevitably had to be reshuffled. The creation of the post of Honourable President can be seen as an indication of the irresistible nature of this change. The former leaders, who owed their position to being either wealthy men

or original founders, were no longer able to maintain their importance among the members, so they were kicked upstairs (in most cases by being granted a seemingly prestigious title as compensation) and were forced to hand over their controlling power to the new elite.

For example, initially, the Henghua Association and the Fishing Kotak Association were controlled by the same man, and shared the same building and the same staff. This powerful towkay, originally a fisherman who later accumulated wealth by brokerage, had been their chairman since before the war. As a result of the fishermen splitting into two sub-groups (especially when some of them had made fortunes by shifting to motor vehicle dealing), it seems that the old associations failed to keep up with the new developments. This led to the separation of the two associations and they were thoroughly reorganized, electing the elite of the motor-car dealings to be their leaders.

Conspicuous changes have also occurred in the Ch'aoan Association. From its inception in 1946 onwards, its leader had always been elected neither for his wealth nor his political influence, but for his seniority. But the post-colonial upheaval in the community made leadership of this kind unacceptable to the members. Reorganization was inevitable. An analysis of the staff list of this minor association over a decade shows a surprising change occurring in the Chinese community as a whole. In the old days, it would have been unthinkable for any leading figure to condescend to take a minor post, even for

a noble purpose, but things are quite different now. At one time or another, all the successful politicians of this dialect group have served the Ch'aoan Association in minor offices quite inappropriate to their social status in the community at large. For example:

The treasurer—a deputy chief minister and state minister for communication of the Sarawak Barisan National Government.

In charge of general affairs—the general manager of Sarawak Transport Company, and the publicity officer of SUPP.

Chinese secretary—the executive of the central committee of SUPP [Ts'eng Hsin-Ying 1970: 147].

This new spirit of offering assistance to the welfare of one's fellow countrymen without considering the nature of the post never existed in the minds of the older generation.

At the same time, new associations have split off from the main ones to justify the localization and distinctiveness of their members. The establishment of the Hoppo Association can be cited as a good example. The Sarawak Hakka Association had long been considered a very loose organization because it covered a wide range of Hakkas originating from both Kwangtung and Hokien (Fukien), similar in dialect but distinct in profession. A special association representing the distinctive features of the numerous Hoppo Hakkas in the First Division had long been felt a necessity. In China, Hoppo, a market town in Kityang county, is under the administrative division of Ch'aochou (潮州) (Teochew),

Kwangtung, but, because of their small numbers and special agricultural identification, the Hoppo Hakkas in Malaysia have in some cases been rejected for membership of the Teochew Association [Pang Hsing-Nung 1950: 50]. Recently, and particularly since 1976, the Hoppo Hakkas in Western Malaysia have begun to set up a separate association to look after their own interests in agricultural products. They have also sent representatives to make contact with the well-known large group of their fellow countrymen in Sarawak. As a result, a Hoppo Association was set up in Miri [Mace Research Corporation 1980: 70-71], and a Sarawak Hoppo Association was established later in the same year. It would be wrong to view the emergence of these minor associations merely as adding extra numbers to the 100-odd associations registered. On the contrary, it provides clear evidence of social mobility in the rural Hakka community, especially in the dominant Chai clan along the main roads from Kuching to Bau and Serian. It is also interesting to note that among the 26 officers elected in Kuching, 12 have the surname 'Chai' [*ibid.*: 70], a fact which reveals how large a diversification and urbanization these once almost exclusively rural Hakkas have achieved.

Finally, there is the case of the re-organization of the Sarawak Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Since 1946, this leading body had held its annual election in accordance with the rule of allocating prestige according to the amount of financial resources accumulated and the number of protégés collected. The old faces had been

seen continuously for more than 10 years. In 1965, however, a new body, the Associated Sarawak Chinese Chamber of Commerce, was established and soon began to replace the conventional mouthpiece of the Chinese community.

Successive presidencies show that elections in this newly rising force are mostly politically inspired instead of economically motivated. For example, the most recent election (1980-1981) gives a completely new look to this leading Chinese body in Sarawak. The president is a powerful man, a local born Hokien, too wealthy to have any economic interest in Sarawak. One of the vice-presidents is the Ch'aoan proprietor of the Sarawak Transport Company, information about whom has been given in the above section. The other vice-president is a small Tapu Hakka businessman in Sibü. The secretary-general is a local born Ch'aoan lawyer, a graduate of Lincoln's Inn, who is secretary-general of SUPP as well. The treasurer is the president of the newly emerged Hoppo Hakka Association. The rest of the executive board represent other dialect groups. From the resolutions adopted during the past few years, it seems that stress has always been laid on the welfare of the whole community. Whatever shortcomings there may be, a correct orientation like this will assuredly lead to further improvement.

Summary and Conclusion

During the past 30 years, the Chinese community in Sarawak has undergone

a tremendous change. The whole process can be seen in the life stories of some of the leading towkays—from rickshaw pulling to motorcar dealings and from a very narrow localized interest to the welfare of the country in which they have settled. This initial analysis of the social development of the Chinese community in Sarawak, though inadequate in many respects, may perhaps serve as a starting point for consideration and further detailed analysis by social scientists and others. To the author it seems that the last two decades have indeed seen the realization of the earnest wish he had in 1948 when he wrote: "Only by giving the immigrants a chance to develop a stake in the country—can one begin to create a new set of circumstances which will make it possible for the immigrant community to develop a new set of sentiments towards the land of their adoption" [T'ien Ju-K'ang 1980: 88].

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