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長汀城關傳統社會研究

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TRADITIONAL HAKKA SOCIETY SERIES VOLUME ⑳

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TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IN THE CHANGTING COUNTY SEAT

by Zhang HongXiang

INTERNATIONAL HAKKA STUDIES ASSOCIATION
ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT
OVERSEAS CHINESE ARCHIVES

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INTRODUCTION

What began as a chapter in *Lineages, the Economy, and Customs in Changting County* ① has become a book in its own right, and we may say that its very existence is testimony to the advantage of asking native sons to write their own history. Zhang Hongxiang, of course, is not your average native son: he is a graduate of Xiamen University who has spent a career in the study and organization of the cultural affairs of his native county. He is also someone of extraordinary enthusiasm, energy, and persistence, and it is these qualities which have enabled him to find and make use of county archives we did not dream existed. This book is largely based on those archives.

Archives and Fieldwork

The archival materials, all of which are supplied, reveal in incredible detail a county seat in the Republican era, when the government was doing its manful best to modernize an entire society. The documents discovered by Zhang show education to be among the first sectors to be completely reorganized, followed by trade and merchant organizations. Thus the Longshan Academy, originally founded by the imperial government in 1681, became the first new style middle school in 1904. In the same year, eighteen new primary schools were created, several of them also in

① Volumes 15 – 16 in the Traditional Hakka Society Series. Edited by Yang Yanjie, these two volumes were published in Hong Kong in the year 2002. In the first two chapters of volume 15 (pp. 1 – 79), both by Zhang Hongxiang, the reader will find accounts of the evolution of Changting county's population and of the central role played by the county and prefectural seat in the traditional economic network of the region. Built around the Tingjiang, this network underwent a major change when the river was opened up to traffic with Chaozhou in the year 1232.

traditional academies and one in the Wutong Temple, one of Changting's largest. A Chamber of Commerce was created in 1907, with its headquarters in the Ruyi Temple on East - of - the - River Street, the town's busiest. The formal, government - sponsored rules for election of the Chamber's committees, however, date to 1948. The 1911 Revolution led to the elimination of official worship of Confucius, but the local literati continued it down to 1941, albeit without the music and dancing of imperial times. As late as 1947, one group of literati, taking exception to the idea that all worship of the gods was superstitious, created a Society of Filial Piety and Justice for the worship of Wenchang and Guandi, the official Qing gods of literature and war.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the government was busy registering merchants, producing the priceless documents Zhang found in the archives. The earliest, for the lumber, and hostel trades, date to 1939. They are followed in 1942 by a list of merchants making and selling tobacco products and in 1943 by lists for the paper, rice, textiles, vegetable oil, candles and incense, specialty products, pharmaceutics, tinfoil, and hardware trades. These lists, provided in Appendix 2, give the name, place of origin, and amount of capital of each merchant. Documents from 1949 list contracts, account books, and rental income from shops and land of the popular associations for the maintenance of Changting's bridges. Appendix 1 provides another series of lists, drawn up in 1951, which give the names of every shop and its owner on every street and alley in Changting. In a town which then numbered some thirty thousand inhabitants, there was a staggering total of 1427 shops, 728 of which were run by locals.

To this basic information, which enables Zhang virtually to reconstruct the Changting of the early 1950s, Zhang adds the results of his in-

terviews with the elderly and his souvenirs of childhood. He recalls going himself on Sundays into the hills west of Changting to cut firewood and earn a few pennies. His elder sister did this work day in day out until the mid – 1970s, when Changting converted to coal. Cutters and gatherers of firewood, says Zhang, were the poorest of the poor: on 100 jin of wood, if they managed to rush back before 3 p. m. to sell it on one of Changting' s four firewood markets, they could make 80 cents, 20 cents less than a porter who carried the same weight of paper or rice. He recalls as well the devastating floods of 1964 and 1996 (the latter destroyed 300 houses), but also his mother making cooked sweet rice wine and deep-fried doufu in preparation for New Year' s (I have also heard him recount the triumphal entry of hunters carrying a slain tiger into town). The precision of his descriptions of local customs in the last chapter bears clearly the stamp of someone who has lived them throughout his life.

Among his many informants, the 88 – year old Zou Zibin occupies a special place. We meet him going to Chaozhou in 1935 to teach school, and this enables him to tell Zhang that there were many Changting paper, rice and lumber merchants in Chaozhou. There were also over twenty paper merchants from Tingzhou, of whom seven or eight were from Changting and the rest from Shanghang, Wuping, and Liancheng counties. Created in Chaozhou in the late Qing, a guild combining merchants from Changting and Longyan founded its own school after 1911. It is also Zou, together with the locally famous master of ceremonies Wang Leping, who describe for Zhang the last worship in the temple of Confucius in 1941. It is from Zou, again, that we hear the tale of the population of Changting learning in advance of the imminent Yuan attack, hastily worshiping their ancestors on the 14th of the seventh moon, and then absconding into the hills before the Tartars arrived the following day. Well – known through-

out the Hakka and Cantonese regions of southern China, this tale here serves to explain why, in Changting, the Ghost Festival is held a day early.

Concerning each of the major calendrical festivals – New Year's, Duanwu, Ghost, and Midautumn – we learn new and fascinating details. On the penultimate day of the year, no women are involved in the offering to Heaven and Earth of the New Year's together with items of complex symbolic meaning on a table in the family courtyard. It is the children who paste strips of red paper on the buckets, table and chair feet, sieves, and so on. This is called "annual sealing" and means that all work must come to a stop. The dragon lamp teams that danced in Changting came from the countryside, and the lion dance teams from Liancheng. The dragon boat race was preceded by a parade through town with a small dragon boat on the first day of the fifth moon. The people lining the streets passed their children's clothing over the head of the dragon, to capture some of its energy, and then dumped an offering of rice in the boat – rice which would be divided up at the end of the day by the five carriers of the boat. On the evening of the 15th of the seventh moon, a barefoot Taoist dressed in black trousers, a white, sleeveless shirt, and a red cotton belt, climbed a twenty – butcher knife ladder planted in front of the yamen, and on the next day he ran across a bed of hot coals in an open area along the river.

The Midautumn ritual of young girls going into trance to inquire about their marriage prospects was presided over by an "old child," one who had already succeeded in "entering the peach flower garden" in the past. If he did not help the novice medium, the latter would lose her way, and the story is told of one who ended up in a pig sty by the river instead of in the garden. When the girl has finished answering the ques-

tions of her peers and begins to tremble, weep, laugh, and sweat, if the old child does not burn paper money under the table and slap her on the back, she will continue to weep and laugh until she dies. Only those born in years of the rat and the serpent and who, preferably, were also born at the hour of the rat or serpent, are regularly successful at entering the peach garden: six of the horoscope animals are too big to enter the garden, and four of the six small animals would harm the peach trees and blossoms.

Several marriage – and death – related customs recounted by Zhang had to do with luck. Brides in Changting were transported to the groom's house in the dead of night in order to avoid an unlucky encounter with a "four – eyed" (pregnant) woman. The parents of the bride had to hide so as not to witness the departure of their daughter, but as soon as she was out the door, they rushed to shut it, lest the family's good fortune leave with her. The 28th day after a death being propitious for the spirit of the deceased person, if it fell on the 7th day of the ten – day week, it was dangerous for the people and animals alike of the bereaved family. To avoid trouble and even death, they had to abandon their house for the day and leave it to the ghost. Changting people liked to be present at the moment of death, for those present could get a share of the dying person's good luck. Helping out with a funeral, by contrast, could bring bad luck and had therefore to be compensated by a banquet called "eating wealth." It was not uncommon for graves with good geomancy to be secretly swept before Qingming by non – lineage members, who hoped in this way to gain a share of the good fortune flowing from the grave.

"Tying the knot of affinity" consists in preparing great piles of "smiling dumplings" and going from house to house to give them to one's neighbors when one moves into a new house (as Zhang did in 1996). A

family elder may also choose to report in this manner the arrival in his house of a new bride. Twenty days after the birth of a son, the mother's mother must be informed by sending red eggs and reddened dumplings of yam flour, and when a wife marrries in from a distant place and has no relatives in the town, smiling dumplings are given to a selected family which thenceforth stands in for her own maternal family. Thus do gifts of symbolic food serve to create and maintain social networks.

Changting's geomancy is at once like a boat on a river, with the Lying Dragon Hill at whose southern foot it lies serving as the mast, and a double axis of hills lined up north to south and a canal going east to west. Its back against the Lying Dragon Hill, Changting faces Dipper Audience Cliff to the south. These two hills are the sites of some of Changting's most frequented temples, including a Patriarch Lü temple on the northern hill, where people from far and near come to pray for a dream, and a Guanyin temple on the southern hill, where women go to ask for a son. By digging a west - to - east canal in 1066, the town planners kept the Ting River outside the wall, for a river which cuts through the heart of a city destroys its geomancy. The city wall, which climbs up over Lying Dragon Hill, is imagined as a Guanyin rosary of crenellated beads. Originally, the wall was to include the entire hill, but a corrupt official stole the money, and there was only enough to wall in half of the hill.

Traditional Society and Economy

If Zhang's work thus supplies us with fascinating new detail about customs, his chief contribution is without question his description of the physical substance of life in Changting. This he does by taking the archival lists referred to above and putting flesh on their bare bones. Of the 183 lineage halls on the 1951 list, for example, 151 are identified by surname, and these 151 are distributed among 59 surnames. The Wangs

and Luos had the most, with nine each, while 22 surnames had but one. The buildings of 46 of these halls have survived to the present, but not one of them functions any more as a hall – a fact which would seem to suggest that the destruction of the lineage has been even more thorough than that of popular religion, at least in Changting. In spite of the total disappearance of the lineage hall, by means of fieldwork Zhang manages to identify four kinds of hall, depending on how they were founded, whether jointly by several Tingzhou counties, separately by individual counties in Tingzhou, by a single lineage in Changting county, or by lineage segments. In the case of the third type, the initiative may have come from the countryside or from the town, or it may have involved only people from the town. Unlike the halls in the countryside, which depended on property in land, the halls in town relied heavily on shops. Unfortunately, the list of 264 such shops which Zhang found in the archives states for only 24 of them to which lineage they belonged, and some may well have belonged to temples. Of the 24, eight belonged to a single lineage and were located in a row on the same street.①

Details of this sort give us some sense of the economic power of lineage organizations. Zhang also goes into their social functions. According to the elders convened by Zhang, lineage halls in pre – 1949 Changting were extremely busy places, not because of the annual or bi – annual sacrifices held there, but as inns and places of meeting for lineage members coming from the countryside to town on business or to prepare for the exams. An 80 – year old from the Shangguan lineage in Hetian, returning

① Just as unfortunate is the fact that few genealogies have survived in Changting, and Zhang, for his brief foray into the lineage histories of several of the larger lineages, has had to rely on recently compiled genealogies whose accounts of lineage origins are all of the myth – history variety. The lack of such genealogies also makes it very difficult to link the archival materials to local lineage history and organization.

from Taiwan in 2001, recalled the six years he had spent in his lineage hall studying until he finished high school. There were seven or eight other Shangguan students living there at the same time, and an old lady who cooked for them. Some lineages (in some cases it was whole counties, not lineages) even founded separate " exam inns" for their students. A 1951 list in the archives identifies no fewer than 20 such halls. According to a Zhang lineage register of the year 2001, the Zhangs of five Tingzhou counties founded a joint hall in 1772 directly behind the prefectural school, at the foot and on the main artery of Lying Dragon Hill. By the end of the century, in front of the hall' s main entrance, they had also built a separate exam inn with 14 rooms for lineage students. Between 1801 and 1866 this inn made six purchases of property.

Zhang Hongxiang' s description of traditional trades and handicrafts is perhaps the most valuable part of the whole book. He begins with three categories for which there are no lists: the porters, firewood gatherers and stevedores. He estimates their numbers and describes, succinctly, their work. Of particular interest is the fact that many porters carried exclusively for a single boss, and stevedores, some of whom were hereditary, were always attached to a single wharf. Among laborers, stevedores were clearly privileged, as they could earn up to two or three dollars per day, in radical contrast to a porter who could earn but one dollar for carrying a 100 – jin load of paper or salt.

For each of the handicrafts Zhang goes into great detail about how the most important items were produced, from paper umbrellas to incense and candles. One of the more fascinating items is oil paper, used to protect both goods and persons. According to one Qiu, 64 years old at the time Zhang interviewed him and a fourth – generation producer who exported his goods to Guangdong, oil paper came in three sizes, the largest

of which were used like tarps. Right down into the 1960s many used the middle size sheets of oil paper instead of umbrellas. The basic raw material, cotton paper, was bought in the central Gannan county of Xingguo. A first layer of this paper having been laid out on a table, it was varnished (producers of persimmon oil varnish were numerous in the neighboring countryside). Next a layer of strings was woven and pressed onto the lacquer and then a second sheet of cotton paper spread out over the string network. These sheets were then laid out to dry, after which *tong* oil was applied. Preparing the *tong* oil was an art in itself, for overcooking it would cause it to turn black and harden. It was first brought to a boil, then simmered while stirring, poured out in a basin to cool, and finally applied to the paper. In 1951 there were 45 households involved in the production of such oil paper in Changting.

Similar lists end each of the accounts of the handicrafts and trades:

douli hats	48	rattan furniture	5
rain equipment	77	incense, candles, firecrackers	98
oil paper	45	doufu	118
bamboo baskets	39	carpenters	52
bamboo curtains	24	restaurants	81
tailors	124		
weavers	114		
metal goods	113		

Tailors, says Zhang, were considered low class, like barbers. Spinning and weaving, originally all individual, went through a brief capitalist phase beginning with the creation of a first factory in 1920 with 60 – 70 workers. By 1930 there were a dozen factories, but in 1934 the road to

Longyan led to the import of foreign cloth from Zhangzhou and the collapse of all the factories. Prosperity returned with the war, but in the pre – capitalist form. A local saying had it that a blacksmith earned as much as a bandit. For the making of the bamboo sticks inside incense and candles, Zhang has recourse to the account of an 83 – year old woman who had married into such a household at age 16 and learned the craft from her mother – in – law. Zhang himself remembers picking up crumbs of foreign wax on the floor in the specialty shops and smearing it on to sheets of paper from which he then made boats which floated well and long. A site along the river where bean paste, a side product of soy oil, was set out to dry came to be known as Bean Paste Bank. The largest of the 81 restaurants in 1951 Changting had space for ten – some banquet tables, by contrast with the 40 such tables that could be set up in the five – county Zhang lineage hall referred to above.

Zhang' s study of merchants reveals a remarkable fact: there were none from Ninghua or Guihua (Mingqi) and only three from Qingliu. He suggests this may be in part because these three counties of northern Tingzhou are quite different from Changting and southern Tingzhou in language and customs. He also notes they had small populations and no major river like the Ting. In fact, as Zhang himself points out, the three southern counties of Wuping, Liancheng, and Yongding also had very few merchants in Changting. The Ting crosses neither Wuping nor Liancheng and only a small corner of Yongding. Traders from Liancheng did play a role in the paper business, but only there: of 79 merchants in 1935, 17 came from Liancheng, 54 from Changting, and 3 each from Shanghang and Guangdong. The only Tingzhou county with a major merchant presence in Changting was Shanghang, which is traversed from one end to the other by the Ting River. Of 162 rice merchants, for example, 17 were

from Shanghang. But among the 26 with between ten and fifty thousand yuan of capital, ten were from Shanghang, and among the five with fifty thousand three were from Shanghang (the other two were from Longyan). Altogether, Shanghang merchants held about one – third of the total of 803, 450 yuan of capital reported by rice traders in 1943. Merchants from Shanghang were also involved in the restaurant, tobacco, and paper businesses. The next most numerous (and wealthy) group of merchants was that from Longyan, who had shops selling specialty products (60% of 97, 800 yuan of capital), cloth (one – third of 651, 600 yuan of capital), and salt. Jiangxi merchants dominated the drug trade, with 90% of its total capital (119, 300 yuan). Each of these groups, as well as merchants from Chaozhou and Guangdong, had its own local guild. The Jiangxi guild was also called Palace of Longevity, the standard name for temples dedicated to the Jiangxi patron saint, Xu Zhenjun, and like most such temples in Jiangxi it had a permanent stage, with an annual festival at the time of the saint's birthday.

Markets and market streets in Changting were also characterized by a considerable degree of specialization, with separate markets for many products. The East – of – the – River, Shop, and Wutong market streets were directly linked to docks. Boats carrying 5000 jin of lime from Xinqiao and Anjie were unloaded at Wutong Dock and carried through Wutong Gate for deposit in a series of houses rented by lime merchants. In their nearby shops the merchants sold the lime wholesale, all neatly packed in bamboo baskets. Cloth, paper, and rice wholesalers were concentrated on the kilometer – long East – of – the River Street, directly linked to a dock of the same name. Salt arriving from Chaozhou was landed at the Heavenly Audience Gate Dock and stored in warehouses on the Eastgate Street which led to the dock. Intersection Street, where the ya-

men and Confucius and City God temples were found, naturally attracted many of the shops catering to the literati. Bamboo and lumber were lashed into medium – sized rafts on the southern bank of the Ting at Changting and then into large rafts at Yanggu, near the border with Shanghang. The factories for wood – sawing, all done by hand, were also located along the riverbank. A secret " market language" enabled merchants to exchange insider information about prices and availability of merchandise.

Taken together, the details of markets, capital, production, and transport all reveal an economy which, if highly articulated, was still essentially traditional, focused on local agricultural products and handicrafts. The figures provided for merchant capital are perhaps most telling in this regard: of a total of nearly nine million yuan, approximately one – third each was concentrated in the paper (2, 953, 500 *yuan*) and plant oil (2, 750, 000 *yuan*) businesses. A distant third were the salt merchants (1, 031, 000 *yuan*), followed by the rice (803, 450 *yuan*), cloth (651, 600 *yuan*), metal implements (416, 900 *yuan*), pharmaceuticals (119, 300 *yuan*), and specialty product (97, 800 *yuan*) merchants. In addition to the handicrafts, quite naturally dominated by natives of Changting, merchandizing itself was also largely controlled by native sons. For example, of salt traders with 15, 000 *yuan* of capital – the highest amount – 7 were from Changting, 2 from Longyan, and 1 each from Shanghang and Liancheng; of those with 10, 000 *yuan*, 60 were from Changting, 7 from Longyan, 4 from Shanghang, and 1 from Liancheng. In the lucrative paper trade, the richest merchant, from Changting, had 140, 000 *yuan* in capital, followed by 6 merchants with 100, 000, of which 2 each from Changting and Liancheng and 1 each from Shanghang and Nanchang. At the 50, 000 *yuan* level, 4 of 7 were from Changting and, at the 30, 000 *yuan* level, 8 of 14. As regards