CULTURAL REIMAGINATIONS OF BEING *HUA REN*: SINGAPORE AND TAIWAN CASE STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

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Koh Sock Seah, Jaime
3 September 2013

DEDICATION

For Ah Gong

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SUMMARY

Through examining how *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan imagine their cultural identities via ancestor memorialisation practices, this thesis aims to locate a theoretical framework that could concretise the abstract notion of cultural identity. I argue that a material-based cultural landscape provides an analytically more helpful framework than a shapeless and abstract notion of cultural identities based on intangible "values". The aims of this study are twofold: first, to interrogate the narrative of the Chinese Diaspora; and second, to articulate a cultural space, grounded in practice, as a more stable platform to understand the abstract notion of cultural identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In *On Not Speaking Chinese*, cultural theorist Ien Ang recounted her embarrassment at a conference in a Chinese-speaking country where she, "a person with stereotypically Chinese physical characteristics", could not speak Chinese. She also recounted her experience of her first trip to China in 1989 during which she was regarded as one of the "others" – a Westerner. Though Ang looked Chinese, she could not relate to her Chinese guide. Born into a *peranakan*[1] Chinese family in postcolonial Indonesia, Ang grew up as an Indonesian citizen although the family "remained ethnically Chinese". Instead of speaking Chinese – which could mean either Mandarin or one of the numerous Chinese dialects – Ang spoke *bahasa Indonesia*. The family migrated to the Netherlands following increased ethnic tensions in Indonesia in 1966 in which the Chinese minority was targeted. That move did not remove the "inescapability of my notional Chineseness"; no amount of explanation could convince people she was Dutch even though she spent her formative teenage years living and studying in the Netherlands.[2] Ang's situation reflected a disconnect between one's cultural identifications and identity, which were not coterminous.

Author and editor Lynn Pan, who also lived most of her life outside China, felt no such disconnect. Born in Shanghai, China, her family – including herself – left the city following the communist revolution in 1949; they were "exiled like millions of other Chinese".[3] She spent much of her childhood in Malaya before eventually settling in England. Unlike Ang, whose family was localised, whether in Indonesia or

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[1] Local-born with Chinese and Malay (and sometimes Indian) parentage.
[2] Ien Ang, *On not speaking Chinese: living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[3] Lynn Pan, *Tracing it home: journeys around a Chinese family* (Singapore: Cultured Lotus, 2004), p 2.

the Netherlands, Pan's family continued to live in the world they knew even after they

left it:

> When my parents left Shanghai, they carried it with them to East
> Malaysia. They re-created the Shanghai of the heydays in this jungle…I
> lived in a completely insulated Chinese-Shanghainese world until I
> became an adult. My mother kept a Shanghainese kitchen in Sabah; I
> never discovered Nonya cuisine until I was a grown-up; I never ate at
> hawker stalls. We spoke Shanghainese. My parents had a clique of
> friends and they were all from Shanghai; they didn't mix with the local
> Chinese.[4]

Pan's pursuit of her ethnic and historical roots is evident in her works, most of

which centre on the subject of China, Chinese identity and Chinese culture.[5] She

identifies with the Chinese culture and history, even if she articulates it in a non-

Chinese language – English.

Ang and Pan are two examples of "Chinese" people with similar ethnic roots,

but vastly different outlooks. They illustrate, in Pan's words, the "varieties of

Chinese".[6] At the heart of this discourse, China remains the core reference for all

things Chinese, including the meaning of "Chinese-ness". Fundamentally, the use of

terms such as "overseas Chinese", "Chinese overseas", "mainland China" and even

"Greater China" in these narratives all point to the centrality of China – both the

geographic and cultural entity. This discourse seemingly fossilises the communities in

an amorphous fuzzy idea of "being Chinese".

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[4] Vikram Khanna, *Reviving a lost heritage: an interview with author Lynn Pan* , 1995,
http://www.sherryart.com/newstory/lynnpan.html (accessed September 7, 2012).
[5] Pan's works include *In search of old Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1982); *Old
Shanghai: gangsters in paradise* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Trade, 1984); *China's sorrow:
journeys around the Yellow River* (London: Century Pub, 1985); *The new Chinese revolution* (London:
H. Hamilton, 1987); *Sons of the yellow emperor: a history of the Chinese diaspora* (New York:
Kodansha Globe, 1994); and *Tracing it home: journeys around a Chinese family* (Singapore: Cultured
Lotus, 2004). Pan was also the editor of *The encyclopedia of Overseas Chinese* (Singapore: Editions
Didier Millet, 2006).
[6] Pan, *The encyclopedia*, p 15.

This thesis seeks to understand the phenomenon of how descendants of the "Chinese Diaspora", born and bred in their "host countries" imagine their cultural identities. I argue for the need to delink ethnic and cultural identities, and that the *hua ren* communities outside China have moved beyond the "Chinese Diaspora" narrative in terms of identity. I contend that one's cultural identity should be viewed as a multidirectional entity that is constantly changing and shaped by one's local context.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued that instead of perceiving identity as an essence or an accomplished fact,

> we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.[7]

Hall argued that this approach will undo the intellectual shackles of cultural identities to the idea of origins, of authenticity, which necessarily indicates that a cultural identity is a given, an unchanging end product. It is this very intellectual shackle that scholars such as Ien Ang and Rey Chow argued against in their critical studies of "Chinese-ness". It is in this spirit that this dissertation seeks to challenge the framework of understanding the cultural identity of *hua ren* outside China.

This dissertation addresses the issue of "being Chinese" within the framework of a practice-based definition of culture. I contend that this approach provides a more grounded and non-essentialist framework in which to understand and analyse

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[7] Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity and diaspora," in *Identity: community, culture, difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), at p 222.

contemporary *hua ren* cultural identities. Specifically, this study examines "being Chinese" through the cultural practice of memorialisation.

This thesis makes a case for the need to separate ethnic and cultural identities. Ethnicity and culture are two complex issues, widely used and fraught with vagueness. Scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the definitions of ethnicity and culture. It is not the intention of this thesis to launch into a debate of what ethnicity and culture are or are not. For the purpose of this thesis, I adopt broad definitions of ethnicity and culture. In this thesis, I follow Max Weber's definition of ethnicity or ethnic groups which he defined as

> human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration.[8]

Culture in this thesis refers to

> that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired (as a member of that group).[9]

Ethnic identity thus consists of a group's subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, usually to differentiate themselves from other groups. Culture, on the other hand, is a way of living which can be acquired and is independent of one's ethnic origins. Ethnicity is often imposed from outside or embraced from within by the group members.[10]

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[8] Max Weber, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p 389.

[9] *Sociological theory: a book of readings*, ed. Lewis A. Coser and Bernard Rosenberg (New York: MacMillan, 1976), p 18.

[10] George de Vos, "Ethnic pluralism: conflict and accommodation," in *Ethnic identity: cultural continuities and change*, ed. George de Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, 5-41 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), at pp 16-17.

The issue of "being Chinese" – ethnically and culturally – is of great importance especially among the "foreign Chinese"[11] outside China as Pan conceptualised and as Ang personified. The concern of the "foreign Chinese" with the issue of "being Chinese" is possibly because of a perceived "lack" – of being separated from the motherland, the source of culture and identity – which motivates a need for connection. Many of these latter generations of "Overseas Chinese" have little or no contact with China or their cultural heritage except by way of their elderly family members and traditional customs that are maintained, for example, celebrating Chinese New Year or observing Qing Ming. Despite their relative social distance from China, they are still often seen as part of the Chinese Diaspora – the wave of mass emigration from mainland China from the 19th century through to 1949. Removed from China, physically, emotionally and at times, culturally, how do these "Overseas Chinese" imagine their cultural identities and identifications?

This study examines this question, using the case studies of Singapore and Taiwan. The aims of this study are twofold: first, to interrogate the narrative of the Chinese Diaspora; and second, to articulate a cultural space, grounded in practice, as a more stable platform to understand the abstract notion of cultural identity. This approach follows Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the logic of practice which emphasised the importance of social performances and actions. Unlike rational choice theory which proposed that individuals operate based on continuous calculations according to explicit rational and economic criteria, Bourdieu argued that social agents operate according to an implicit practical sense and bodily dispositions. Inherent in the logic

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[11] Pan, *The encyclopedia*, p 15.

of practice is that practices – rites, rituals, and social performances – "have no other *raison d'être* than that they exist or are socially recognised as worthy of existing".[12]

The majority of the literature on "Chinese" identities and "Chineseness" has, so far, treated social practices as one of the features of what makes one "Chinese".[13] Many scholars have analysed the how and why of the practices, trying to interpret what the variations in forms and substance, and the underlying cultural values and beliefs – which may at times seem contradictory – mean. In so doing, it raises the problem of reification of the practices as objects, which have to have a meaning, a rationale, or a coherence to be understood. Clarity is assumed. The existing literature and narratives attempt to make sense of social practices and values, on the assumption that there is sense to be made.

This study will show that such a rationalised approach to cultural practices, as Bourdieu argued, strips the practices

> of everything that defines them distinctively as practices, that is, the uncertainty and "fuzziness" resulting from the fact that they have as their principle not a set of conscious, constant rules, but practical schemes, opaque to their possessors, varying according to the logic of the situation, the almost invariably partial viewpoint which it imposes.[14]

I argue that in attempting to understand the contemporary cultural identities of *hua ren*, one needs a new framework that does not undermine the logic of practice. I contend that cultural identity has to be viewed as a multidirectional concept, which is shaped by the temporal and geographic contexts of the individual. As cultural identity

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[12] Pierre Bourdieu, *The logic of practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p 18.
[13] The body of literature is vast. The following are just some of the key titles. See for example Pan, *The encyclopaedia*; Jennifer Cushman and Wang Gungwu, ed., *Changing identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988); Aihwa Ong, Nonini and Donald M., ed., *Ungrounded empires: the cultural politics of modern Chinese transnationalism*; Brandy Lien Worrall, ed., *Finding memories, tracing routes: Chinese Canadian family stories*, (Vancouver: Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia, 2007); Wei Djao, *Being Chinese: voices from the diaspora* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).
[14] Bourdieu, *The logic of practice*, p 12.

is a process of becoming, it is not a fixed given, but is shaped by multiple forces, including politics, education, class and even gender. In light of this, I argue that the ethnic identifications of the *hua ren* in contemporary Singapore and Taiwan may constitute what American sociologist Herbert Gans termed "symbolic ethnicity".[15] In Gan's conceptualisation, symbolic ethnicity is a feature of 3rd and 4th generation Americans who "perform" their ethnic identity – such as participating in festivals or rituals – rather than be anchored in a pre-conceived role of "being" that ethnicity. This, I contend, is the case of Singapore and Taiwan *hua ren*. While they may have taken on cultural elements that are not "ethnically Chinese", they nevertheless still see themselves as "Chinese" because it is just who their forefathers are.

In this thesis, I use the term *hua ren* in place of "Chinese" to refer to ethnic Chinese born outside China. The frameworks currently employed in the understanding of *hua ren* cultural identities are generally unsatisfactory because of the embedded assumptions. First, the overly broad use of the term "Chinese"; second, the use of the amorphous "Chinese-ness" in characterising all "Chinese" people; and third, the imprecise usage of the term "Chinese Diaspora" without delimiting the boundaries of who the term refers to. "Being Chinese", it seems, is used simultaneously to refer to an ethnic, cultural and political identity. This inflated notion of "Chineseness" is, to a large extent, colonising. Cultural dis-affinities – such as not using chopsticks and the inability to speak Mandarin – notwithstanding, one is "Chinese" by virtue of one's birth to "Chinese" parents. The "unalterable essence of Chineseness" may include norms that, according to historian Wang Gungwu, "Chinese consider binding on them as Chinese (even when they are unable to attain

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[15] Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1979): 1-20 at p 9.

them)".[16] Many of these "standards" are unachievable in the contemporary post-modern, post-colonial world of globalisation, and after decades – if not centuries – of localisation. These essentialist and somewhat chauvinistic views of the "Chinese" identity fundamentally tie all "Chinese" back to a historical and cultural entity. It denies them agency in their cultural identifications. For these reasons, I argue that this is an outdated and unsatisfactory frame with which to understand contemporary "Chinese" identities.

Most studies on the "Chinese Diaspora" fall into two categories. The first takes a historical approach, tracing the history of Chinese migration and the resulting development of "overseas Chinese" communities and their social features. The second category of studies adopts a sociological approach in examining the issues of cultures and identities. They focus on ideas such as the assimilation, acculturation or isolation and discrimination of "Chinese" communities from the "host" countries, as well as their search for roots and cultural identities. While each approach contributes to the understanding of a social phenomenon that marked the 20th century, the concept of "Chinese Diaspora" has been used too broadly. There is no delimiting when the diaspora ended and when an independent local identity began.

I argue for the need to unpack the definitions and concepts of "Chinese" and the "Chinese Diaspora". Thus, in this study I use the term "Chinese" only to refer to nationals of the People's Republic of China (PRC). When referring to ethnic "Chinese" citizens of Singapore and Taiwan (and any other countries with an ethnic Chinese population for that matter), I use the term *hua ren* (华人) to avoid conflation and confusion. I also argue that even though *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan can

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[16] Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), p 213.

trace their history and heritage to the "Chinese Diaspora", they should no longer be considered as part of the "Chinese Diaspora", but as citizens of their countries.

SCOPE

This study examines the issue of the cultural identifications of *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan. These sites were chosen because they are territories with a *hua ren* majority, and are politically separate from the PRC. Many studies on *hua ren* cultural identities centre on sites in which *hua ren* are a minority, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Europe and the United States. I want to move away from the minority studies angle and look at how *hua ren* negotiate and imagine their identity in a location and environment in which they are not the minority, struggling to make themselves visible. The few studies on *hua ren* majority territories tend to view the *hua ren* population as cultural extensions of China because of the ethnic connection.[17] Some studies have also tried to argue for the development of a distinctive local culture, most notably in the case of Hong Kong and Taiwan.[18]

The choice of the two sites also allows for comparison and contrast. Singapore is a former British colony dominated by *hua ren* – demographically, politically (post-1965), economically and socially. At the same time that the government and society operates on Western models of politics and economy, it promotes the retention of

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[17] See treatment of Singapore case, for example, in Pan's *Encyclopedia* and *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*. See also James Watson and Rubie Watson, *Village Life in Hong Kong: politics, gender, and ritual in the New Territories* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), among others.

[18] See for instance Jonathan Grant, "Cultural formation in postwar Hong Kong," in *Hong Kong reintegrating with China: political, cultural and social dimensions*, ed. Pui Tak Lee, 159-180 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001). in *Cultural, ethnic and political nationalism in contemporary Taiwan*, ed. John Makeham and A-Chin Hsiau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Michael Ingham, *Hong Kong: a cultural and literary history* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007); Melissa J Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?: the impact of culture, power, and migration on changing identities* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), among others.

"Chinese" culture. Yet it is conscious of reminding Singapore *hua ren* that their political loyalty lies with the island state. In this case, Singapore's approach considers cultural identification as that – cultural.

Although Taiwan also has a *hua ren* majority, its political status is more ambiguous. While a section of Taiwan society lobbies for independence from PRC, there are also groups who believe that Taiwan should rightfully re-unite with the PRC, given its history. Taiwan's historical baggage vis-à-vis China is much heavier and more complicated than that of Singapore's, whose relationship is more pragmatic and economic in nature. There are strong contesting tensions over its cultural identification, notably between "Chinese" and "Taiwanese" cultures. Implicit in this dichotomy is that "Taiwanese" culture is not "Chinese" culture. Though Taiwan has often sought to distance itself culturally from China and "Chinese" identity, ironically, in some sense, Taiwan is often regarded as the last vestige of "traditional Chinese" culture, which has been ruptured on the PRC.

This study explores the cultural identities of the *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan through the practice of memorialisation of ancestors. I have chosen memorialisation of ancestors – of which ancestor worship is a key practice – as a set of practices that transcend linguistic and regional differences. Ancestor worship, in particular, has also been perceived as a distinctively "Chinese" practice which has a long history and continues to be practiced, with variation, today. Analytically, the focus on practices also gives shape and visibility to the otherwise nebulous concept of cultural identity. Observation and study of the practices, the interactions of the practitioners and the acts, and the attitudes of the practitioners towards the acts provides a picture of how *hua ren* locate, define and express themselves culturally.

MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

This dissertation is primarily motivated by a failure of the current literature to address the issue of variable cultural imaginations of *hua ren.* Existing literature tends to pervade a homogenous *hua ren* identity through the constant use of the abstract and amorphous terms "Chinese" and "Chinese-ness". The research is also motivated by my personal experiences while studying aboard. My interest in the issue of cultural imagination was piqued by my acquaintances' constant insistence that I "ought to know" everything about China because I am ethnic "Chinese". Born in Singapore, I grew up with *hua ren* culture – my family practices ancestor worship, celebrates "Chinese" festivals and generally subscribes to "Chinese" values such as filial piety, respect for the elderly, subscription to social hierarchy and importance of the family. My identity card states my "race" as "Chinese" because my parents are "Chinese" with "Chinese" surnames. Although my studies and work brought me into contact with non *hua ren* in Singapore, my racial, ethnic and cultural identity as a Singapore *hua ren* was rarely questioned, precisely because the interaction was conducted in a Singapore *hua ren* dominated environment.

That changed when I went to live in Sydney, Australia for three years, between 2005 and 2008. During that time, I studied and worked with an international group of students and academics. Whenever the issue of "Chinese" ethnicity, culture and history (usually of China) cropped up, the questions and comments were inevitably directed towards me. I was expected to be able to answer their questions of all things China and "Chinese" because of my ethnic background. My attempts to explain to them the differences between the "Chinese" as cultural, ethnic and national identity were not always successful. These experiences heightened the consciousness of my cultural and ethnic identity vis-à-vis the non-Chinese.

Several other developments also prompted me to reflect on the issues of culture and ethnicity. On my return to Singapore, I noted an increase in the presence of Chinese Mainlanders – PRC citizens – here. Although also seen as "Chinese", daily interactions with them, and the responses of fellow Singaporea *hua ren* to the Mainlander presence highlighted the cultural distinctions between the two groups. Around the same time, there were political and cultural movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan to differentiate and distance these *hua ren* communities from "Chinese" identity. Since early 2000, Hong Kong citizens have at various intervals protested against the central government in Beijing's attempts to incorporate them further into the PRC political orbit. In 2004, I was in Hong Kong as a reporter to cover the protests against changes to the legislative council elections. The sense that Hong Kongers were culturally distinct from the Mainlanders came across strongly, even in the day-to-day interactions with the people on the street. In Taiwan, the localisation movement was strengthened with the election and re-election of Chen Shui-bian, a pro-independence "native Taiwanese" as president. The push for a "Taiwanese" identity, which started in the 1970s was growing stronger.

These encounters highlighted the reality of variable *hua ren* identities, which are closely intertwined with politics, history and family, which were not reflected in the literature. Nationality and citizenship aside, how can we explain the cultural gulf between the various groups which are deemed to be members of the same ethnic group? How can we appreciate the distinctions and differences without discrediting the processes of localisation? Cultural memories, as manifested in traditional and customary practices relating to language, education, religious and spiritual beliefs, folk festivals and historical events, is a potential approach in which to answer this question. Thus, I decided to explore these differing identities to understand what ties

hua ren (or a community) together, and what distinctions and differences may arise as a result of the respective local environments.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary approach. Most of the data used are from English and Mandarin published sources on "Chinese" practices, social conditions and community studies of both Singapore and Taiwan. This existing literature is augmented with contemporary data gathered through interviews, surveys and participant observation at the two sites.

The material forms of culture – scriptures, literature, dance, myths, songs, records, maps, films etc – are some of the most tangible representations and embodiments of the particular history and values of the culture. The performances of the culture – rites, rituals and habits – are also visible representations and embodiments of the culture, although it is methodologically more complex to analyse than the material forms. One of the key challenges in using practices as the object of analysis is the question of whether the individual performer or the culture itself is to be considered as a variable in accounting for differences. Practices are not static and unchanging. In fact, as will be argued throughout the dissertation, cultural practices adapt and change with not just the individuals performing them, but also as a result of the changing social milieu in which the practices are performed.

Writing about the construction of an "East Asian popular culture" as an object of analysis, sociologist Chua Beng Huat argued that the analytic interest should not be on the cultural products – films, television dramas, celebrities, music – "although they constitute the empirical material of the analysis". Instead,

the larger analytic interest should be oriented towards the structures and modalities through which the products partake in the social and economic material relations within the different locations where the products are produced, circulated and consumed.[19]

Similarly, I argue that in using cultural practices as the object of analysis, the analytic focus should be on the material environment in which the practices take place.

To this end, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach that utilises methodologies from history, sociology and anthropology. This enables a clearer construction of the process of cultural change or continuity as the analytical focus is not quantitative as it is qualitative. The historical approach, as reflected in the literature review, allows a contextual understanding of the origins of the practices and the ideas behind the practices. Sociological and anthropological methods such as surveys, interviews and participant observation allow for the gathering of contemporary data which provides a basis of comparison against the historical information. The interdisciplinary approach also allows for a clearer picture of the network of relations and the interactions between the individuals in their respective roles, as well as of ideas of the various generations.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation seeks to understand the phenomenon of *hua ren* cultural identities within the contexts of the family, community and nation. I argue for a rethink of how *hua ren* identity and identifications are considered. I contend that there is a need to

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[19] Chua Beng Huat, "Concpetualizing an East Asian popular culture," in *The inter-Asia cultural studies reader*, ed. Kuan-hsing Chen and Beng Huat Chua, 115-139 (London, Routledge, 2007), at p 120.

move beyond the "Chinese Diaspora" narrative when it comes to studies of *hua ren* communities.

Chapter 1 questions the effectiveness of the English term "Chinese" in *hua ren* studies and proposes the use of a more neutral and nuanced term, *hua ren* when referring to ethnic Chinese who are not China nationals. Here, I lay out the theoretical frameworks used in current studies relating to *hua ren* identities and argue for a paradigm shift in framing *hua ren* cultural identities. I argue for the need to articulate a *hua ren* cultural space that is neither culturally essentialist nor triumphalist. I propose the concept of the Sinoscape as an alternative platform to understand the abstract notion of cultural identity. The proposed Sinoscape is based on cultural practices, and in this dissertation, I focus on activities relating to the memorialisation of ancestors.

In Chapter 2, I explore the importance of family and kinship within the Sinoscape. I trace the development of these ideas and its significance as articulated through the practices of memorialisation of ancestors, and examine how these practices and values are idealised in the greater narrative of "being Chinese".

Chapter 3 spells out the methodological approaches used in this dissertation, including the limitations. In Chapters 4 and 5, I examine how these memorialisation practices and values operate in the contemporary everyday life of *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan. This discussion is based on information obtained through interviews, surveys and participant observation.

Chapter 6 offers an analysis of the contemporary situations in Singapore and Taiwan. It makes the case for a paradigm shift, discussed in Chapter 1, and emphasises the necessity of moving beyond the universal/particular paradigm. I argue

that there is a need to rethink the cultural identities of *hua ren* outside the contexts of the "Chinese diaspora" and of differences and similarities. I contend that the Sinoscape is a symbolic one that reflects the symbolic nature of *hua ren* cultural identities, which are not identities that are essentialised to just a few features. In rethinking the cultural position of *hua ren*, the historical and social processes of "how we got here" and "where we are at" should be considered, rather than letting "where we came from" overshadow the present. This, I argue, is possible if we consider cultural memory not as linear, static and privative, but as dynamic, productive and multidirectional.

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CHAPTER 1
CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In the past two decades, the notion of "Chineseness" has been extensively discussed,

analysed and investigated through various perspectives, including theoretical,

anthropological, historical, sociological, literary and cultural paradigms.[20] The

discussion has spilled from the academia to popular forums such as huaren.org, an

independent and non-partisan website set up in the late 1990s. It was set up in

response to the anti-Chinese movement in Indonesia, with the objective of being "a

forum for *huaren* around the world to discuss issues which concern them and address

those concerns where appropriate".[21] In Singapore, for example, the discursive space

for issues of "Chinese" identity has also been enlarged with the setting up of

institutions such as the Chinese Heritage Centre (in 1995) and the Confucius Institute

(in 2005), both based in Nanyang Technological University. Such high levels and

public expressiosn of interest in "Chinese" issues are in stark contrast to the period

between 1950s and early 1990s, where states and groups sought to distance

themselves from mainland China and communism. Today, mainland China is still

ruled by communism, but has lost the menacing edge. In place of ideological conflict

is a booming economy that is one of the world's largest. The rise of China as an

economic power partly explains the resurgence of interest in all things "Chinese".

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[20] Some of the key works often cited include Ien Ang, *On not speaking Chinese: living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001); Allen Chun, "Fuck Chineseness: on the ambiguities of ethnicity as culture as identity," *boundary 2* 23, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 111-138; Aihwa and Donald M Nonini Ong, ed., *Ungrounded empires: the cultural politics of modern Chinese transnationalism*, (New York: Routledge, 1997); Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: the periphery as the center," in *The living tree: the changing meaning of being Chinese today*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) and Vivienne Wee, "What does "Chinese" mean? An exploratory essay," Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore (1988). This list is not exhuastive.

[21] Ien Ang, *On not speaking Chinese: living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), p 57. See also *WHF Mission Statement* , http://www.huaren.org/home/mission-and-objectives (accessed December 10, 2012).

Yet, the existing academic frameworks in which "Chinese" identities are being analysed cannot be fully applied to the "Chinese" who are not nationals of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite the acknowledgement of the different developments of "Chinese" communities outside China, there is still a fundamental amorphousness in the terms "Chinese" and "Chinese-ness". This is most notably due to the limitations of the English terminology. The English term "Chinese" used to describe people with "Chinese" ethnicity and cultural heritage is an inflated term that simultaneously denotes ethnic, cultural and national identities. Furthermore, the continued usage of the term "Chinese Diaspora" without delimiting the historical boundaries is unhelpful in analysing contemporary "Chinese" societies.

This dissertation makes the argument for a theoretical rethink of the current paradigms used in analysing "Overseas Chinese" communities. I contend that there is a need to delink ethnic and cultural identities, which are not necessarily contiguous. The delinking of the two related but different concepts will assist in generating a more helpful framework in which to study cultural identities. In the case of "Overseas Chinese" communities, this approach is significant because the conflation of ethnic, cultural and national identities have muddied the waters, so to speak. This point will be elaborated later.

In place of the Chinese Diaspora framework, which has been dominant in the studies of "Overseas Chinese" communities, I propose a practice-based cultural space I term Sinoscape in which the cultural imaginations of "being Chinese" are constructed, negotiated and transmitted. A first step in defining the Sinoscape is to unpack the definitions of "Chinese" and "being Chinese". This chapter outlines the major conceptual frameworks that have been used to study the "Chinese" communities outside China and argues that they have reduced relevance in today's

context. There is a need to interrogate the taken-for-granted concepts and assumptions especially in an age where cultural distinctness is increasingly tied to nationalism. I argue for the need to use the term "Chinese" critically, instead of using it as an all-embracing term for people of "Chinese" cultural and ethnic heritage. To avoid confusion, I use the term "Chinese" to refer to PRC nationals and *hua ren* when referring to ethnic Chinese born overseas (or "Overseas Chinese) of other nationalities. Following that, I analyse possible frameworks in which to study *hua ren* communities. I conclude this chapter by proposing a practice-based conceptual framework through which *hua ren* communities can be analysed.

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

Ethnicity remains an elusive concept despite the massive body of literature dedicated to the subject. It is regarded as a classification of people and group relationships[22] with a distinctive set of claims. These include a claim to kinship, fictive or otherwise, based on a myth of common ancestry; a claim to a common history or shared memories of a common past; and a claim to a common set of cultural symbols, which can include religion, customs and language.[23] Other feature of an ethnic group may be a link to a common homeland, not necessarily in the physical occupation of the territory, but rather be a symbolic attachment, as in the case of diasporas.[24] German sociologist Max Weber offered a succinct definition of ethnic groups as

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[22] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and nationalism: anthropological perspectives* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p 4.
[23] Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartman, *Ethnicity and race: making identities in a changing world* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 1998), p 19; *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[24] Hutchinson and Smith (ed), *Ethnicity*.

human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration.[25]

A key feature of Weber's definition of ethnicity is the belief of a common origin or shared ancestry, factual or otherwise. This belief is "important for the propagation of group formation…whether or not an objective blood relationship exists".[26] During the course of the 20th century, Weber's definition has been enlarged to include shared culture – such as language, culture, customs and even race – as markers, of group identity. This understanding highlights two components of ethnicity – race or physical attributes, and cultural attributes.

Ethnicity can only make sense as a differentiating category against the "others":

> To claim an ethnic identity (or to attempt to assign one to someone else) is to distinguish ourselves from others; it is to draw a boundary between 'us' and 'them' on the basis of the claims we make about ourselves and them, that 'we' share something that 'they' do not. An ethnic group cannot exist in isolation. It has meaning only in a context that involves others…[27]

In short, ethnicity can be described as a "subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate…from other groups".[28] The emphasis on boundaries – marked by cultural beliefs and practices – enhances the group identity. It is the cultural similarities among the likes and cultural differences from others that cement the particular identity. The "authenticity" of any ethnic group is often determined by a list of cultural characteristics. The group's ethnic identity is

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[25] Max Weber, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p 389.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Cornell and Hartman, *Ethnicity and race*, p 20.
[28] George de Vos, "Ethnic pluralism: conflict and accommodation," in *Ethnic identity: cultural continuities and change*, ed. George de Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, 5-41 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) at p 16.

maintained through the continued performce of the cultural practices and belief in the cultural values. Any departures from these actions "are typically defined as a loss or abandonment of one's own culture and a betrayal of one's own people or group".[29] In the case of the "Chinese", inability to speak Mandarin, dialects or religious conversion, as well as inter-group marriages are often construed as forms of cultural erosion.

The overemphasis on ethnic authenticity has led to the equation of ethnicity with culture. This leads to the question: what is culture? From its original meaning of cultivation, honour and worship, the term "culture" has since evolved to a term that refers to several things: a general progress of spiritual and aesthetic development; a particular way of life of a group or period; and the material beings of intellectual and artistic development, including music, literature, art, theatre and film etc.[30] Whether "culture is tacit, lived, and physically felt rather than realised and verbalised",[31] it cannot be divorced from the society in which it is developed.[32] In this thesis, culture refers to "the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action" and reinforced by members of the particular group.[33] Hence one's cultural identity encompasses ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge.

While culture is implicated in ethnic identity and relations, the equation of ethnicity and culture downplays the social and material environment in which an individual lives. It also underplays the significance of the creation and use of cultural

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[29] Maykel Verkuyten, *The social psychology of ethnic identity* (Hove, East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2005), p 77.

[30] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana, 1976), pp 76 – 82.

[31] Verkuyten, *The social psychology of ethnic identity*, p 77.

[32] See Raymond Williams, *Culture and society, 1780-1950* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961).

[33] *Culture*. Dictionary.com. *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*. HarperCollins Publishers. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture (accessed: November 18, 2012).

meanings, undermining cultural production in place of a culturally deterministic way of viewing society. Instead of viewing identity as "becoming", a process that "takes place within a particular rhetorical context by mobilising and interpreting cultural discourses",[34] the ethnicity-as-culture approach views identity as "being". In "being" an identity, one is essentialised by a pre-determined framework, an essentialised and given identity.

This thesis argues that the cultural component of an identity is not necessarily congruent with one's ethnic identity, and that it is not a fixed given. Ethnicity is often manipulated by politics. As David Wu wrote in his study on the ethnic minority Bai group in China:

> Within China, official policies alone can label acculturated Chinese as non-Chinese. In the situation overseas, owing to the politics and conventional thinking about race and culture, many Chinese who have acculturated to the indigenous population are still labelled Chinese…[35]

Political manipulation of ethnicity and ethnic labels takes place everywhere, including in Singapore and Taiwan, as later chapters show. Hence, it is critical to distinguish between one's ethnic identity and cultural identity. This thesis follows the arguments of contemporary ethnic studies and identity studies which posit that identity is not as a static given, but highlights the multiple nature of identities, and the process of construction of identities.

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[34] Verkuyten, *The social psychology of ethnic identity*, p 81.
[35] David Yen-ho Wu, "The construction of Chinese and non-Chinese identities," in *The living tree: the changing meaning of being Chinese today*, ed. Wei-ming Tu, 159-180 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p 166.

BEING CHINESE

Before I go on to outline the practice-based framework of the Sinoscape, I want to address the conceptual problems of using the term "Chinese" and the "Chinese Diaspora" framework in the understanding of contemporary cultural identities among *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan. In this section, I argue for the use of the term *hua ren* instead of "Chinese" when referring to ethnic Chinese communities outside of the PRC.

In this study I found it problematic to use the term "Chinese" because it is an English term that is overly inflated. It is both a noun and an adjective that denotes many things, including the language, script, cuisines, people and practices associated with China – itself an expansive idea that can refer to the historical China, the cultural China and the political China (PRC), a situation rarely clarified. The broadness of the term makes it too imprecise and elastic to be analytically useful. Used without discretion, the resulting analysis can be potentially ambiguous.

Most critical of all is the term's conflation of nationality, ethnic and cultural identities, with little, if any, distinction between the three concepts. "Chinese" as nationality is perhaps the clearest idea to understand – it refers to citizens of the People's Republic of China (PRC) – *zhong guo ren* (中国人). At the same time, the term is also used to denote an ethnic identity, the "Chinese race" or "Han" (汉). When used to refer to PRC citizens, the term's reference to nationality and ethnic identity overlaps, since Han is the largest of the 56 officially recognised ethnic groups in PRC, comprising 91.51% of the total population.[36] As an ethnic label, "Han" is often used

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[36] National Bureau of Statistis of China, *2010年第六次全国人口普查主要数据公报 (Communiqué of the National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China on Major Figures of the 2010 Population Census[1] (No. 1))*,
http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents/t20110428_402722244.htm (accessed June 6, 2012).

interchangeably with "Chinese", especially in contexts where differentiation with other non-Han ethnic groups are required, such as in the case of the officially recognised minority groups in the PRC.

Being an ethnic "Chinese" is, to a certain extent, manifested in a person's physical traits such as appearance (black hair, yellow skin), speech (dialects or Mandarin) and ownership of a "Chinese" family name, which in turn links one to the common origins shared by other ethnic "Chinese" of a different family name. Being "Chinese" culturally is harder to pin down. For some, "being Chinese" is a primordial essence that transcends temporal and spatial limitations as highlighted by the following two quotations from Lynn Pan's seminal transnational history of the Chinese Diaspora, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*:

> The shop-girl that you see in the doorway, the one spooning rice into her mouth – *she may never eat with chopsticks, she may have difficulty forcing her thoughts into Mandarin, but she is pure Chinese*, with not a jot of Thai blood in her.[37]

<div align="center">*</div>

> To talk to Singaporeans is to realise that what qualifies one as Chinese in Singapore is not so much language, or religion, or any of the other markers of ethnicity, but some *primordial core or unalterable essence of Chineseness which one has by virtue of one's Chinese genes* – so that, as Clammer puts it, "one cannot become a Chinese unless one is born as such and nor strictly speaking can one cease to be a Chinese either, however much one deviates from the desired or expected cultural pattern…[38]

The first extract describes a Thai-Chinese girl in Thailand while the second excerpt refers to a "Chinese" Singaporean. Although the circumstances in which the two individuals lived and worked in would have been different, they can be considered members of a "Chinese" cultural group because they were born as

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[37] Pan, *Sons of the yellow emperor*, p 299. Emphasis added.
[38] Ibid. Emphasis added.

"Chinese", regardless of other external cultural influences, as the second quotation implies. In this narrative, "Chinese" are "Chinese" because there is an essence and a "desired or expected cultural pattern" which historian Wang Gungwu regards as those that "Chinese consider binding on them as Chinese (even when they are unable to attain them)".[39] These may include being an ethnic "Chinese" by descent – often the only "reason" needed to be considered "Chinese"; having the ability to speak the language (Mandarin) and/or the ancestral dialects; having the ability to understand and write the Mandarin script; practicing the "Chinese" code of ethics (notably Confucian values); participation in "Chinese" religions and its practices; observation of "Chinese" social practices such as customs relating to birth, death and marriage, and having an attachment to China as "home".

While the above quotes illustrate the belief that cultural dis-affinities notwithstanding, one is regarded as "Chinese" – ethnically and culturally – by dint of one's birth to "Chinese" parents. This primordial line of argument follows that anyone with remotely any "Chinese" blood can be and is considered "Chinese", regardless of how far removed they may be from the culture. There are several problems with this perspective. One, this argument fossilises an identity in a seemingly timeless and nebulous fashion that eschews change. Second, such a perception assumes a fixed cultural memory that is shared by all members of the collective. But this is not the case, especially in the case of *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan as the case studies will show.

In the first extract, Pan also highlighted another index of cultural identity, which she did not go on to elaborate – eating with chopsticks. The practice of eating with chopsticks is taken to measure the "Chineseness" of the Thai girl in question as

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[39] Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), p 213.

eating with chopsticks is perceived as a universal "Chinese" practice. Practices, hence, are also key indicators of one's cultural identity which forms the basis of this thesis. Before I elaborate on the issue of practice as cultural indicator, I explore the existing dominant theoretical frameworks used to study "Chinese" identity and culture.

THE MYTHSCAPE OF BEING CHINESE

This thesis argues that "being Chinese" is an ideological myth. It is not a canonical narrative with rules and guidelines on how "Chinese" have to behave or what rituals to go through to define one as "Chinese". Instead the narrative of "being Chinese" is constructed by a discursive Chinese mythscape. Here, I use the idea of mythscape articulated by British scholar Duncan Bell who defines it as

> a temporally and spatially extended discursive realm in which the myths of the [subject] are forged, transmitted, negotiated, and reconstructed constantly.[40]

Drawing on this concept and the theories of myth and ideology, I contend that the Chinese mythscape is one in which the representations and articulations of being "Chinese" are generated and perpetuated.

In many critical disciplines, myths are more than just stories; they are critical tools in imagining a community. In narration, myth becomes a representation and articulation of the values and beliefs of the community. It generates and takes on significance and meaning through which the world is understood. Myth is also, following Walter Benjamin's argument, a state of affairs in which human beings perceive reality as being regulated by forces too

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[40] Duncan Bell, "Mythscapes: memory, mythology and national identity," *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (March 2003): 63-81 at p 63.

immense for their understanding.[41] Literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes, in

analysing myth through a semiotic approach, further argued that myth is

"depoliticised speech" because it abolishes the complexities, nuances and

contradictions that abound in societies.[42] Even though myth "establishes a blissful

clarity",[43] it is not random but involves a calculated act of selection, which can be

a conscious effort or otherwise, by the crafters of the myth and its believers. At

this point, myth intersects with ideology. The construction of a myth is an

ideological act, one that is used to legitimise and order the actions and behaviours

of the society by decontesting and prioritising, for the society, an acceptable

paradigm for action through selective acts of inclusion and exclusion.[44]

      The Chinese mythscape is seemingly democratic: the group of players is

sizeable – scholars, literary writers, artistes and artists, the media, grassroots

organisations, as well as people who have published their memoirs,

autobiographies and essays, among others. The narratives generated seemingly

acknowledge the changing nature of "Chineseness" as well as the multiplicities of

"Chinese" identities. But the dominant narrative that emerges from this

mythscape is an essentialist and uncontested narrative of "being Chinese". This

narrative is essentialist and uncontested because it freezes perceived "Chinese"

cultural norms and values into an assumed set of guidelines that all "Chinese" are

expected to adhere to, in various degrees. It is a supranational ethnic myth,

transcending national boundaries, and built on the idea of "Chinese" as an

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[41] Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: the making of a modern historiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p 236.

[42] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p 143.

[43] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and political theory: a conceptual approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p 63.

[44] Ibid.

ascribed identity, "deeply rooted, given at birth and largely unchangeable".[45] This

is possibly because "Chinese" traditions have endured, uninterrupted, over

millennia.[46] They have become easily identifiable as "Chinese".

A major part of the Chinese mythscape that contributes to the fossilising

of "Chinese" identity and the perpetuation of the above-described "norms" is the

narrative of the "Chinese Diaspora". Like the term "Chinese", the concept of

"Chinese Diaspora" is a concept that transcends geographical, national and

cultural boundaries. Historically, the term diaspora was used specifically to refer

to the Jewish people in exile from their homeland in Palestine.[47] The term was

thus suggestive of the ideas of dispersal, fragmentation and exile. The term

"diaspora" subsequently came to be used to refer to several historically significant

waves of migrations – the Palestinians, Armenians, Africans. It was applied to the

Chinese in the 1990s after it gained currency in the study of African migration

history to the New World, now popularly known as the African Diaspora.[48]

While there is no exact definition of "diaspora", there are several features of

the diaspora as discerned from the scholarship. The first feature is that members of the

diaspora (or their ancestors) have been dispersed from an original homeland to two or

more foreign regions, either as a result of political oppression or social instability.

Second, the dispersal is not permanent, but temporary, given the reluctance to move.

Third, members of the diaspora entertain the possibility of an eventual return to the

homeland. As a result of the preceding features, the diasporic community has a

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[45] P L Van den Berghe, "Race and ethnicity: a sociological perspective," *Ethnic and racial studies* 1, no. 4 (1978): 401-411.

[46] Vera Schwarcz, *Bridge across broken time: Chinese and Jewish cultural memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p ix.

[47] Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, "Nation, migration, globalisation: points of contention in diasporic studies," in *Theorising diasporas*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, 1-22 (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p 1.

[48] Patrick Manning, *The African diaspora: a history through culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p 3.

tendency to retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland, which "acts to 'root' a diasporic consciousness and give it legitimacy".[49] Usually, the more ancient and venerable the myth, the more useful and stronger the bond becomes.

Because of these conditions, members of diasporas believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate. In such cases, even though they may live in a society, they are not of it. They continue, in various ways, to maintain their particular ethnic and cultural consciousness despite their geographic locations. They often continue with their religious practices, speaking their native tongue and eating their particular cuisine. Very often, they cluster in particular geographical regions or areas, forming ethnic and cultural enclaves which today are a feature in many cities. One can easily find a Little Italy, Little France, Chinatown, Little Arabia and the like in the major cities across the world. The formation of such ethnic enclaves is an attempt by these communities to reproduce the environment of the homeland, however limited. This reaching out to the familiar is a way for the members to respond to their new physical location: it provides some form of comforting familiarity in a strange place where one is a stranger. In addition to such self-ascriptions, the ethnic identities of groups are also externally imposed on the community by the host countries.

But the enclaves also causes a "generalising" of culture; it often flattens regional, dialect and even religious differences. Instead, the diasporic communities are frequently seen as fairly homogenous,[50] and that the bonds within the group are

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[49] Robin Cohen, *Global diasporas: an introduction* (London: University College of London Press, 1997), p 184.

[50] Ronald Skeldon, "The Chinese diaspora or the migration of Chinese peoples?," in *The Chinese diaspora: space, place, mobility and identity*, ed. Laurence J. C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, 51-66 (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p 53.

usually stronger than those with any other social relations outside of the community.

In short,

> a diaspora may said to exist where group migration has occurred, where
> acculturation has not taken place, where a people maintain themselves
> in accordance with the culture of their original homeland, and where
> there is at least an ideology or strong sentiment calling for an end to
> exile.[51]

Measured against these conditions, except for the temporality and the related
condition of maintaining separateness, the Chinese Diaspora is not really a diaspora in
the strictest sense. Historically, Chinese emigration has been largely voluntary in
nature, motivated by the unsatisfactory socio-economic in late imperial China and the
economic attraction of European colonies. It does not have the implication of exile as
is the case in the Jewish or Palestinian diasporas, for example. Chinese emigration
was also not political in the sense that it was not a deliberate policy on the part of
imperial China. The emigration was one that was largely economic in nature. If, as
Adam McKeown argues, the term "diaspora" has a moral and political dimension,[52]
the Chinese emigration lacks these dimensions to "qualify" as a diaspora.

Yet, the mass migration of the Chinese peoples since the 19th century has been
regarded as a diaspora largely because of the numbers and the geographic reach
involved. Generally, the "Chinese Diaspora" refers to the waves of migration from
China in the 19th and early 20th century to all parts of the world. It is estimated about
20 million Chinese left China between 1840 and 1940, mostly as labourers.[53] The
migration was economically motivated, coinciding with the capitalist expansion in

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[51] "The Chinese Diaspora in America, 1850-1943," in *The Asian in North America* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1977), p 13.
[52] "Chinese emigration in global context, 1850–1940," *Journal of Gloabl History* 5, no. 1 (2010): 95-124, p 100.
[53] Adam McKeown, "Chinese emigration in global context, 1850–1940," *Journal of Gloabl History* 5, no. 1 (2010): 95-124, p 98.

various colonies and the resultant insatiable need for a large body of cheap labour. Often, "push" factors, such as political, economic and social instability within China are also cited as motivations for the migration wave. The migration was meant to be temporary – the migrants would return home once they had made their fortunes. Although some Chinese did return to China after they had fulfilled their contracts (such as the labourers who were shipped to France and Europe during the First World War), by and large, most of the migrants stayed behind and settled in the host societies, often starting their own families in the process. Many of the subsequent generations of offspring took the citizenship of the "host" country. These offspring grew up in a cultural environment in which they retained their parents' cultural heritage while at the same time, taking on the culture of the "host" society. They, and their parents, became regarded as "Overseas Chinese", a part of the "Chinese Diaspora". This point is debatable.

While it is relatively easy to pinpoint the start of the historical Chinese Diaspora, when the phenomenon ended was not so clear-cut. Lyman and McKeown suggested that the Second World War marked the transition from Diaspora to citizenship when host countries of "Chinese" migrants granted them the right of naturalization, citizenship. At this time migration from China was also cut off and Chinese sojourners stayed on in their host countries instead of returning to the "homeland".[54] It was with the birth of subsequent generations of "local" Chinese that "a diasporic people" became "an ethnic group".[55] It can be also said that the 1955 Bandung Conference marked the end of the Chinese Diaspora. At the conference, PRC renounced citizenship claims on the "Overseas Chinese" when PRC Premier

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[54] Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas 1842 to 1949," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (May 1999): 306-337, p327; and Lyman, "The Chinese Diaspora in America", p 22.
[55] Lyman, "The Chinese Diaspora in America", p 22.

Zhou Enlai stated that the "overseas Chinese" owed their loyalty to their home nations, not to China.[56] Until then, *jus sanguinis* – a principle which holds that a person's right to citizenship and nationality is the same as that of his natural parents – was a significant thread that held the "Chinese" people to China, regardless of cultural affinity.

In recent years, the historical specificity of the term diaspora has been eroded. The concept has become a catch-all phrase to speak of all movements of people and for all dislocations, even symbolic ones, including exile groups, overseas communities, and even ethnic and racial minorities.[57] Recent scholarship on "Chinese" communities around the word has used the term "diaspora" interchangeably with "migration" when referring to post-1980 migration from PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong.[58] Included in the "diaspora" are also "ethnic Chinese" from Southeast Asia who have migrated to other parts of the world. Some scholars have named the recent trend of migration as "transmigration" and "transnationalism". In this sense, the migrants are no longer simply migrants or assimilated citizens of the host countries. Instead they are able to establish and maintain multiple relations as well as identities that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously;[59] they have multiple identities and are often comfortable juggling between what has been referred to as "flexible citizenship". Scholars also argue that these transmigrants no

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[56] Jamie Mackie, *Bandung 1955: non-alignment and Afro-Asian solidarity* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005); 唐灏, 《周恩来万隆会议之行 (北京: 中国工人出版社, 2003). [Tang Yin, *Chou En-lai's Bandung Conference Trip*, Bejing, 2003]

[57] Khachig Tololyan, "Rethinking diaspora(s): stateless power in the transnational movement," *Diaspora* 5, no. 1 (1996): 3-36.

[58] Kuah-Pearce Khung Eng and Andrew P. Davidson, *At home in the Chinese diaspora: memories, identities and belongings* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Aihwa and Donald M Nonini (eds) Ong, *Ungrounded empires: the cultural politics of modern Chinese transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[59] Laurence Ma, "Space, place and transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora," in *The Chinese Diaspora: space, place, mobility and identity*, ed. Laurence and Carolyn Cartier Ma, 1-49 (Lanham: Rowman & LIttlefield Publishers, Inc, 2003) at p4.

longer represent a simple connection between China and the host countries, but a complex web of multidirectional connections between multiple centres of origins and destinations. Furthermore, the negative connotations of diaspora – loss of homeland, collective memory of oppression, desire to return to homeland – have been replaced by more positive connotations such as supermobility, flexible identities, multiculturalism and transmigration.[60] Some scholars have proposed the idea of diaspora-as-diversity[61] as a counter to the nation-state driven narrative. Proponents of this perspective argue that

> a diasporic perspective would complement and expand upon nation-based perspectives by drawing attention to global connections, networks, activities and consciousness that bridge these more localised anchors of reference.[62]

Both the historical narrative and the current use of the Chinese Diaspora are unsatisfactory frameworks in which to study the *hua ren* communities. The historical approach locks the *hua ren* in a seemingly timeless and nebulous frame and does not take much consideration of the changes in historical and circumstantial conditions. Despite their relative social distance from China, the subsequent generations of *hua ren* are still often regarded as part of the Chinese Diaspora, and the issue of their identity as "Chinese" is, in the words of cultural theorist Ien Ang, "complicated entanglement".[63] Their "being Chinese" is constantly jostling with the "foreign" environment and culture in which they live. On the one hand, while they may often feel the pressure to "be Chinese" – through their actions and behaviours for example – they are also often expected to "be" the nationality of the country they are born in.

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[60] Ibid., p 5.
[61] McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas".
[62] Ibid., p 307.
[63] Ien Ang, *On not speaking Chinese: living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), p 1.

Often marked by the hyphens in their identities – Chinese-American, Chinese-Singaporean, Malaysian-Chinese, Thai-Chinese and so on – "Chinese" is often the main signifier of their identity rather than a component of, or an adjective. They are inevitably compared to the yardsticks set by the ideological myth of "being Chinese".

On the other hand, the contemporary usage of the concept is too expansive in its coverage and stretches the concept of diaspora far beyond what is analytically useful. In not differentiating the different groups of migrants – temporary, transient, permanent, forced, or voluntary – the contemporary usage of "diaspora" muddies the analysis and adds to the confusion in understanding "Chinese" identities and practices. Like the historical approach, the contemporary understanding of the "Chinese diaspora" fossilises the "Chinese" as a collective which undermines the dynamic process of changes in the cultural identities of the respective *hua ren* communities.

Several paradigms and concepts have been dominant in the analysis of the culture of *hua ren* communities and their identities. One of them is the core-periphery paradigm. The core refers to China, the motherland of all things "Chinese", and the periphery refers to the "overseas Chinese" communities. Two prime examples of this paradigm can be found in Sinologist Tu Wei-ming's "Cultural China" theory and Lynn Pan's "Chinese melon" analogy. Tu proposed the concept of a global "Cultural China" as "a community defined by participation in an intellectual discourse" to "understand and try to bring understanding to China and Chinese culture".[64] This community is made up of three symbolic universes, consisting of the cultural and ethnic Chinese dominated communities of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore

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[64] Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: the periphery as the center," in *The living tree: the changing meaning of being Chinese today*, ed. Wei-ming Tu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p 264, footnote 37.

in the first; the Chinese diaspora in the second; and non-Chinese who are trying "to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities" in the third.[65] The concept "transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic and religious boundaries that normally define Chineseness".[66]

On one level, Tu's privileging of the periphery challenges the traditional notion of the core – China – as the leader of the "Chinese" communities. He argues that the periphery – Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore –now leads the way as a result of their economic achievements vis-à-vis China (in the 1990s). But Tu's postulation is far too encompassing. His concept of "Cultural China" is one that "seems to be devised precisely to exalt and enlarge the global significance of Chineseness, raising its importance by imbuing it with new, modernised meanings and heightening its relevance by expanding its field of application far beyond the given spatial boundaries of geopolitical China".[67] This notion of "Cultural China" is an immensely sprawling one, so much so that even "non-Chinese" can "become Chinese", according to Tu's definition of his third symbolic universe, as long as they take "full participation in the economic, political, and social life of a Chinese community or civilisation".[68]

Alongside this notion of China as the cultural core is Tu's "living tree" analogy, first employed in the title of the 1991 edition of a special issue of *Daedalus*.[69] Used to indicate the "changing meaning of being Chinese", the metaphor nevertheless remains rooted in China as the cultural core of "being Chinese". With his inclusion of the Chinese-dominated communities of Hong Kong, Taiwan and

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[65] Ibid., pp13-14.
[66] Ibid., p v.
[67] Ang, *On not speaking Chinese*, p 43.
[68] Tu, "Cultural China", p 15.
[69] Ibid.

Singapore, as well as the other communities where there are Chinese, albeit in the

minority (Malaysia and the United States), Tu clearly regards all Chinese

communities as part of a living tree, even if they reside on the periphery. Hence,

regardless of where one is born, the living tree analogy encompasses all ethnic and

cultural Chinese as Chinese, a far more inclusive notion than of "Chinese" as merely

the citizens of China. Japan and South Korea were also included in the "periphery" of

Cultural China because of their economic positions and Confucian cultural base.

Sociologist Chua Beng Huat wrote of Tu's Cultural China concept as one which is

based on Confucianism, the perceived cultural denominator. He wrote:

> The desire behind the concept of "cultural China" was…the possibility of
> a resurrection of a neo-Confucianism that will unite not only the
> dispersed Chinese population, but by extension the large population of
> East Asia.[70]

Similarly, the China-as-the-cultural-and-historical-core argument also

underlies one of the seminal works on the Chinese diaspora, *The Encyclopedia of the*

Chinese Overseas edited by Lynn Pan.[71] While this text acknowledges "varieties" of

Chinese, Pan views China as the Chinese cultural core with "varieties of Chinese" as

different slices of the Chinese "melon". More significant is the positioning of the text,

which is aimed at the "foreign Chinese" – "people who are Chinese by descent but

whose non-Chinese citizenship and political allegiance collapse ancestral loyalty".[72]

This statement has several implications. First, it privileges cultural loyalty over other

identifications, including national citizenship. Secondly it underscores an urgency to

reconnect these "Chinese-yet-non-Chinese" back to their cultural and historical roots,

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[70] Chua Beng Huat, "Conceptualising an East Asian popular culture," in *The inter-Asia cultural studies reader*, ed. Kuan-hsing Chen and Chua Beng Huat, 115-139 (London: Routledge, 2007), p 116.
[71] Pan, *The encyclopedia of Overseas Chinese*, p 15.
[72] Ibid., p 16.

lest their development of an autonomous identity, independent of China and all things Chinese, becomes irreversible. For Pan, who "baulks at deracination",[73] the need to maintain the cultural connection is almost a "tribal feeling"[74] and the cultural distinction of one's ethnic identity is an important part of being.[75] Her sentiments are summed up thus:

> I have always respected Chinese who speak English or French or Dutch or Thai as their first language, but I would be a hypocrite to pretend that I do not sometimes see them as dispossessed beings, or think that there is something pallid and wistful about them.[76]

As mentioned in the Introduction, cultural theorist Ien Ang is one of these "dispossessed beings" that Pan talks about. Reflecting on her embarrassment at her inability to speak Mandarin even though she has been labelled a "Chinese", Ang wrote of being "haunted by Chineseness".[77] Ang quoted Malaysian writer Ruth Ho who wrote of being made to feel ashamed for not knowing the Chinese language or for not feeling "very Chinese":

> Must we know that language of our forefathers when we have lived in another country for many years? Are the descendants of German, Norwegian and Swedish emigrants to the USA, for instance, expected to know German or Norwegian or Swedish? Are the descendents of Italian and Greek emigrants to Australia expected to study Italian and Greek. Of course not, and yet overseas Chinese are always expected to know Chinese or else they are despised not only by their fellow Chinese but also by non-Chinese![78]

Ang argued that such "double standard" expectations and

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[73] Pan, *Sons of the yellow emperor*, p 387.
[74] Ibid., p 379.
[75] Ibid., p 385.
[76] Ibid., p 388.
[77] Ang, *On not speaking Chinese*, p 31.
[78] Quoted in ibid., p 33.

the idea of the diaspora serves as a ploy to keep non-white, non-Western elements from fully entering and therefore contaminating the centre of white, Western culture.[79]

In her case, and in many cases of Asians in Western contexts, "the question of 'where you're from' threatens to overwhelm the reality of 'where you're at'".[80] Many of Ang's reflections and the issues she raised are especially pertinent in the context of Chinese or Asians in Western settings. It seems almost natural that the Westerners would "expect" Chinese to "be Chinese" whatever that may be. The expectations of "being Chinese" is also apparent within the *hua ren* community, in which (generally) the older generation expect some demonstration of "being Chinese" either in the form of speaking Mandarin , or engagement in "Chinese" cultural practices such as ancestor worship.

RETHINKING DIASPORA, RETHINKING "CHINESE"

Contemporary scholars have put up counter arguments to these essentialist views of "Chinese" cultural identities.[81] Two oft-cited theorists who have called for a rethinking of these issues are Rey Chow and Ang. Chow suggested that "Chineseness" be examined as a theoretical problem since the ethnic is inevitably rationalised, produced and consolidated by discourse.[82] Chow argued that ethnic identification with Chineseness is a "myth of consanguinity, a myth that demands absolute submission because it is empty".[83] She calls for diasporic intellectuals

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[79] Ang, *On not speaking Chinese*, p 34.
[80] Ibid.
[81] See for example Susan D Blum and Lionel M Jensen, *China off center: mapping the margins of the middle kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).
[82] Rey Chow, "On Chineseness as a theroretical problem," in *Philosophies of race and ethnicity*, ed. Peter Osborne and Stella Sandford (London: Continuum, 2002), pp 132 – 149.
[83] Rey Chow, *Writing diaspora: tactics of intervention in contemporary cultural studies* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis University Press, 1993), p 24.

especially to resist succumbing to the submission to one's ethnicity – specifically "Chinese" in this case – as the ultimate signified. Transposing Walter Benjamin's idea of the mechanical reproduction of art onto humans, Chow argued that the fascination with the "authentic native" – in this case, the ideological myth of "being Chinese" – is

> a search for the equivalent of the aura even while our search processes themselves take us further and further away from that "original" point of identification.[84]

Chow argues for the need to unpack the meaning of "Chineseness" and of "being Chinese", to re-evaluate its signification and historical construction.[85] This unpacking of meaning can be achieved through a "tactic", borrowed from 20th century French Jesuit scholar Michel de Certeau. A tactic, according to de Certeau, is "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus".[86] For Chow, to avoid or "unlearn" one's submission to one's ethnicity, one needs to adopt a tactic of intervention where it is not an issue of one field taking over another – Chinese versus non-Chinese. Instead, a tactic of intervention is one where the borders between the two fields are eroded slowly.[87]

In her argument against the essentialist view of "Chineseness" Ang highlights her multiple identifications, describing herself as "an ethnic Chinese, Indonesian-born and European educated academic who now lives and works in Australia".[88] She further describes herself as

> suspended in-between: neither truly Western nor authentically Asian; embedded in the West yet always partially disengaged from it;

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[84] Ibid., p 36.
[85] Chow, "On Chineseness" p 149.
[86] Chow, *Writing diaspora*, p 16
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ang, *On not speaking Chinese*, p 3.

disembeddedi from Asia yet somehow enduringly attached to it emotionally and historically.[89]

Identification, for Ang, is clearly an issue of positionality. Drawing from the works of Homi Bhaba, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak and Paul Gilroy, Ang argued that hybridity should be utilised as a tool against "retreating into an essentialised Chinese identity – the diasporic solution".[90] She argued for the necessity of hybridity – an "in-between space" between two (or more) identities – as a more appropriate framework in which to understand the contemporary Chinese identity.[91] The notion of hybridity will, according to Ang, liberate the Chinese overseas from the mind-forged manacles of the master signified that is China and Chineseness,[92] for with "hybridity" China is no longer the norm[93] and the yardstick of authenticity. This, for Ang, should be seen as a result of a "productive, creative syncretism".[94] It should mark the emancipation of the diaspora from 'China' as the transparent master-signified of 'Chineseness': instead, 'Chineseness' becomes an open signifier invested with resource potential, the raw material for the construction of syncretic identities suitable for living 'where you're at'.[95]

In Ang's imagination, the identity for a diasporic person like herself is always unstable and it is in this instability that the dominant can be constantly interrogated and challenged. But for analytical purposes, instability cannot be the all and end all. I agree with Ang's argument that although the concept of diaspora has the potential to link the local and the global, the here and the there, the past and present, it has become a hindrance rather than an enabling and empowering principle when

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[89] Ibid., p 194
[90] Ibid., p 13
[91] Ibid., p 2.
[92] Ibid., p 35.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

discussing identity simply because of the over-emphasis on "origins" – "where you're from".

Given the "varieties" of Chinese and with the understanding that each community has had its own historical and social trajectories, how can we approach the studies of these communities without undermining their particularities yet provide a common denominator for comparison? Here I highlight two alternative approaches. The first is "pop culture China" conceived by sociologist Chua Beng Huat. Chua's framework is based on the consumption of "Chinese" popular culture – films, movies and pop songs – in Chinese communities in East Asia, including Singapore. Pop Culture China is a cultural terrain where "the dense flow of cultural-economic exchanges between geographically dispersed Chinese populations" takes place.[96] It is one without a substantive and symbolic centre, because of the usage of various Chinese languages – Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien. This approach allows for collaborative and comparative work without undermining the pluralities of these societies by tying them to a "shared past" and a "shared culture".

Similarly, Shih Chu Mei offers the concept of Sinophone to understand Chinese communities around the world. Sinophone as Shih conceptualised, is a heteroglossia of

> a network of places of cultural production outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness, where a historical process of heterogenising and localising of continent Chinese culture has been taking place for several centuries.[97]

In using this specifically to refer to visual art and language in the construction of Chinese identity, Shih argued that the conception of "Chinese" identity need to be

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[96] Chua Beng Huat, "Pop culture China," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 22, no. 2 (2001): 113-121, at p 114.
[97] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p 4.

reconceptualised in terms of communities of Sinitic language culture rather than

ethnicity and nationality. The Sinophone concept was meant to frustrate the

> flawless suturing…of either monolingual *putonghua* (Beijing standard),
> monological Chineseness, or a monolithic China and Chinese culture' by
> 'foregrounding the values of difficulty, difference, and heterogeneity.[98]

In her work, Shih used the examples of linguistic dissonance in film to

illustrate the heterogeneity of the Sinitic language and speakers. Shih argued that

"place matters as the grounding where the Sinophone acquires its valance and

relevance."[99] Sinophone articulation, by the acts and practices of cultural production –

naming, writing, making art, making film, and so forth – disrupts the symbolic totality

that is Chinese and instead projects the possibility of a new symbolisation beyond

reified Chinese and Chineseness.[100] But as Chua pointed out, Shih's conception of the

Chinese identity based on language is problematic. The term "Chinese" does not

reflect the "difficulty, difference, and heterogeneity" which are present in the

everyday life of ethnic Chinese communities from variations in food to language,

Chua argued:

> [N]o individual ethnic Chinese would ever presumed 'being Chinese'
> means a 'singular/mono' anything and a self-proclamation of 'being
> Chinese' is always a vague claim which is only substantiated
> contextually, depending on which among the array of possible cultural
> elements is called forth to substantial the claim.[101]

Then, to fruitfully analyse "Chinese" communities would require a non-

chauvinistic approach that is at the same time unencumbered by linguistic limitations.

Hence, I propose to use the Mandarin term *hua ren* in place of the term "Chinese" to

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[98] Ibid., p 5
[99] Ibid., p 34.
[100] Ibid., p35.
[101] Chua Beng Huat, *Structure, audience and soft power in East Asian pop culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p 35.

refer to non-PRC national ethnic "Chinese", or the so-called "Overseas Chinese". The term *hua ren* is a common term used throughout Malaysia and Singapore to refer to ethnic Chinese, regardless of nationality. In this thesis, I use *hua ren* as a generic term to refer to people of Chinese descent without regard to political or cultural affinity. It is also less restrictive than terms such as *hua qiao* (华侨) and *hua yi* (华裔) which have specific historical and geopolitical connotations. The main problem with these terms is their diasporic implications. The term *hua qiao* was used to refer to citizens of dynastic and Republican China who migrated overseas but retained Chinese citizenship. Theoretically, this term ceased to be useful in referring the *hua ren* communities outside China with the PRC renouncing their claims of the ethnic Chinese overseas at the 1955 Bandung Conference.[102] *Hua qiao* was then replaced with *hua yi* (华裔，descendents of a Chinese person) or *hai wai hua ren* (海外华人, overseas Chinese) notably in discourses by PRC scholars. Both the Taiwan and PRC governments define *hua yi* as descendents of *zhong guo ren* (citizens of PRC) who were born outside China.[103] They refer to their citizens residing overseas as *hua qiao*.[104]

The term *hua ren* does not have the implications of citizenship. The term *hua* (华) is derived from the term *hua xia* (华夏), a reference to the earliest civilisation in China. The term *hua ren* thus took its reference from the ancient civilisation to refer to people of China. According to the Chinese dictionary *Ci Hai* (词海), *hua ren* is

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[102] The term *hua qiao* can still be used to refer to PRC citizens outside the PRC today.
[103] 中華民國(台灣)僑務委員會 （Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission, *华侨经济文献*, http://www.ocac.gov.tw/public/dep3topicpublic.asp?selno=2476&no=2476 (accessed 6 11, 2012); 中华人民共和国国务院, 中华人民共和国国务院, www.gov.cn.
[104] 国务侨务办公室 （Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council), *中华人民共和国归侨侨眷权益保护法*, http://www.gqb.gov.cn/node2/node3/node5/node9/userobject7ai1272.html (accessed June 12, 2012); R.O.C.) 中華民國(台灣)僑務委員會 （Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission, *華僑身分證明條例*, http://www.ocac.gov.tw/law/LawContentDetails.aspx?id=FL021952&KeyWordHL=&StyleType=1 (accessed June 12, 2012).

defined as a collective noun referring to PRC citizens (*zhong guo ren* 中国人), and ethnic Chinese with citizenship of foreign countries, or "foreign Chinese" – *wai ji hua ren* (外籍华人).[105] In using the term *hua ren* in this thesis, I conceptualise it as a neutral term to refer to people with "Chinese" ethnicity. In using this term, I have dropped the pre-fixes of "overseas" and "foreign" – which denotes a centre/periphery relationship with China – and retained only the term *hua ren*. There are several reasons for this. First, the subjects of my study are "local" to their sites and are not "overseas" Chinese in relation to China. Second, it is a more nuanced term than the English word "Chinese", which flattens out the various levels of meanings and connotations as discussed earlier. "Chinese" is a general term that does not elucidate the nuances of the reference as *hua ren* does. Finally, in using the term *hua ren* in this dissertation, I avoid the confusion over nationality while retaining the significance of referring to people of "Chinese" descent. It also allows cultural identities to be separated from ethnicity.

THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE, PROSTHETIC MEMORIES AND SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY

As indicated earlier, this thesis uses practices as an index of culture. Practices are one of the manifestations of cultural identities; the very visible rites, rituals and customs, and ways of doing things reflect the intangible values and beliefs of the group. The importance of studying practices is not so much in what makes them culturally identifiable (for example, Chinese, French, English, Russian or whatever ethnicity/culture) or why people do what they do. Instead, as Pierre Bourdieu argued,

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[105] 《词海》， 6th edition, 2009. Vol 2, pp 932-934. The *Ci Hai* is a comprehensive dictionary of characters and expressions first published in 1936. It provides near-encyclopaedic coverage in fields of science, philosophy, history, and which has been frequently revised.

practices may "have no other *raison d'être* than that they exist or are socially

recognised as worthy of existing".[106] Practices are "ends in themselves" and are

> justified by their very performance: things that one does because they are
> "the done thing", "the right thing to do", but also because one cannot do
> otherwise, *without needing to know why or for whom one does them, or
> what they mean…*[107]

Indeed, the reading of and analysis of these practices

> which seeks to restore their meaning, to grasp their logic, makes one
> forget: they may have, strictly speaking, neither meaning nor function,
> other than the function implied in their very existence…[108]

This logic of practice, especially in the case of ancestor worship (which will

be discussed in the following chapter), is a common refrain from my *hua ren*

respondents in both Singapore and Taiwan. Even for those who may not understand

the meanings, the details and the nuances of the rituals, the act of performing these

practices are ends in themselves. Such "traditional" practices and customs are taken to

be such an integral part of the *hua ren* cultural identity that to not practice them or to

modify them is take to signify a cultural shift, and that in doing so, the social agent is

seen as less authentic – although the ideal is never fully concretised. Many of these

practices may not be purely cognitive, that is to say, there is no logical or rational

explanation for why the practice changed or is continued. Questions of this nature are

often answered with, "it's just how it has been done". Regardless, the

Enlightenment's promotion of reason, rationality, systematic acquisition of

knowledge over tradition and faith, "it's just how it's been done" is not good enough

explanation for the continued existence of practices for many tertiary educated

individuals.

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[106] Pierre Bourdieu, *The logic of practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p 18.
[107] Ibid, emphasis added.
[108] Ibid.

Following Bourdieu's argument that practice need not necessarily acquire meaning and explicit representation,[109] I contend that the continuation of "traditional" practices such as ancestor worship falls under the condition of practice "as is", rather than practice "because of". In understanding *hua ren* cultural identity within this framework of the logic of practice, it is then conceivable to recognise that practices do not pre-determine one's cultural identity and that practice is a culture that can be acquired cognitively or otherwise, such as a change in religious orientation. One of the components of one's cultural identity is cultural memory. German Egyptologist Jan Assmann defined cultural memory as

> a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation.[110]

He argued that collective memory, as conceptualised by French sociologist Maurice Halbawch, has a cultural bias because memory is not stored facts but

> the ongoing work of reconstructive imagination: which are processed and mediated by the social framework in which an individual exists in a given present.[111]

As such, cultural memory is an interaction of symbol and memory which bonds and connect individuals of a group with a shared past, rituals, which in themselves are "forms of memory that are designed to stabilise a common identity and a point of view that span several generations".[112]

Cultural identity and memory do not exist in spatial vacuums but are formed around specific places and network of relationships. They are embedded and

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[109] Ibid., p 95.

[110] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective memory and cultural identity," *New German Critique*, Spring-Summer 1995: 125-133 at p 126.

[111] Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: the memory of Egypt in Western monotheism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998), p14.

[112] Jan Assman, "What is cultural memory?," in *Religion and cultural memory: ten studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 1-30 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p 19.

transmitted in places and materials which French historian Pierre Nora called the sites of memory.[113] Cultural practices are one of these vessels of cultural memory. Yet, the process of cultural transmission does not take place in complete isolation and the contents are not transmitted "as is", that is, in their entirety without modifications and changes. Memory is not just lived experience, but also an acquisition of knowledge of people, events and ideas that one has not experienced personally. Such mediated knowledge – or vicarious memories – may "extend memories across generations and beyond individual lifespans"[114] and may constitute memories in their own right.[115]

Alison Landsberg aptly conceptualised such projected and vicarious memories as prosthetic memory,

> …a new form of memory (which) emerges at the interface of a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such a movie theatre or museum.[116]

Landsberg's concept is situated in the context of the impact of the mass media on how a society remembers the past. She posits that the moment of contact between the individual and the past through a mediated sited and channel produces an experience in which the individual places oneself within the larger history. In the process, Landsberg argued, one can sometimes

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[113] Pierre Nora, *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Vols. 1, Conflicts and divisions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
[114] Maria Cattell and Jacob Climo, "Introduction - meaning in social memory and history: anthropological perspectives," in *Social memory and history: anthropological perspectives*, ed. Jacob Climo and Maria Cattell, 1-52 (California: AltaMira Press, 2002), pp 12-13.
[115] Marianne Hirsch, "Projected memory: Holocaust photographs and personal and public fantasy," in *Acts of memory: cultural recall in the present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, 3-23 (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), p 8.
[116] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic memory: the transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p 2.

Take on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past even through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person's subjectivity and politics.[117]

The concept of prosthetic memory can be extended to how individuals construct their cultural identities in the society through practices. The practices create a space in which past traditions and present contexts interact. These interactions, I argue, generate cultural memory and shapes the cultural identity of the individual. Part of the cultural memory generated may be prosthetic but is no less important. In such situations, the individual's identification with his or her ethnic identity may be a symbolic one – that is, one of "nostalgic allegiance" underpinned by sentiments and surfaces at particular points in time, such as during festive celebrations. The term "symbolic ethnicity" was coined by American sociologist Herbert Gans to refer to an identification that is

characterised by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour.[118]

In Gans' conceptualisation, symbolic ethnicity is individualistic and has no real social cost for the individual, since the identification is neither intense nor frequent. Taking the form of leisure time activities and festive celebrations, for example, symbolic ethnicity is rooted in family traditions. It is also carried by symbols of ethnicity, which Gans argued, have to be visible, clear in meaning, easily expressed and felt "without requiring undue interference in other aspects of life".[119] The adherence to traditions is voluntary and, at times, superficial. Symbolic ethnicity

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[117] Ibid.,

[118] Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1979): 1-20, p 9

[119] Ibid.

is thus not about an essence of being, or orthopraxy, rather it is underpinned by sentiment. Gans argued that symbolic ethnicity is a feature of third or fourth generation Americans who, unlike their immigrant forebears, are not as anchored to preconceived groups and roles. While Gans used the term in the context of immigrants to the United States, I propose that this concept can be applied to *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan. In examining the practice of ancestor worship, this thesis has found that contemporary *hua ren* ancestral practices are largely symbolic.

SINOSCAPE: A PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the Chinese Diaspora and other existing frameworks used to study "Chinese" identity fail to account for the changes and adaptations in contemporary *hua ren* cultural identities. This is because even though the study of the Chinese Diaspora has tried to expand the parameters by emphasising on the local, the use of the term "Chinese" remains a blindspot. In this thesis, I propose that we break out of the rigid limitations in understanding *hua ren* cultural identities by articulating the latter through a practice-based cultural space I call the Sinoscape.

The Sinoscape is informed by the project of articulating a cultural space that is neither culturally essentialist nor triumphalist. Chua's "Pop culture China" is premised on a material product – popular culture – while Shih's notion of Sinophone is based on the foundation of language. Sinoscape is another platform to understand the abstract notion of cultural identity and is focused on cultural practices. In this study, the cultural practices involved are those related to the memorialisation of ancestors, which will be discussed in the following chapter. The Sinoscape is meant to be a space which grounds the discussion in a more defined framework. The prefix

"Sino" indicates the cultural tradition from which the practices discussed originate but does not lock it into the "Chinese" framework. This frees the discussion from the rigidity of the concepts of "China" and "Chinese" as Sino denotes a range rather than a singular meaning.

Similarly, in envisaging the cultural space as a "scape", the intention is to highlight the concrete-ness of the cultural space while allowing room for flexibility. As Arjun Apparduria succinctly explained:

> [The] terms with the common suffix -*scape* indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision, but rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actions…for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part from their own sense of what these landscapes offer.[120]

The original meaning of "scape" as a botanical term, referring to the stalk of a plant that emerges from the root or rhizome, is a useful idea to employ here: that the conceptual space does not exist in a vacuum but is grounded within a framework. Yet, the product is not fixed but determined by the various factors as noted in the quotation above. It is important to note that the usage of the Sinoscape as framework is not an attempt at rooting the discussion in Sinocentrism where "China" and "Chinese-ness", however defined, is the core. Instead, Sinoscape offers is an alternative where numerous possibilities are present.

In articulating the Sinoscape, two key points have to be kept in mind. First, following Chua and Shih's proposed frameworks for understanding the Chinese communities, the Sinoscape provides an analytically more helpful framework than a shapeless and abstract notion of cultural identities based on intangible values such as

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[120] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p 33.

Confucianism, which ironically has never really taken root in overseas Chinese communities. Second, and more importantly, this conceptual framework places the *hua ren* communities in their particular locations, with an emphasis on "where you're at", as Ien Ang argues, rather than the Chinese Diaspora's narrative focusing on "where you're from". This approach, too, allows us to understand "what you've become" this recognising that cultural identity is a process rather than an unchanging and fixed entity. This approach is an alternative to the core-periphery and centre-margin paradigms that have informed the approaches outlined in previous sections. In taking up this practice-based approach, I regard the sites of *hua ren* communities as legitimate sites of cultural production and not as residual elements of the "original" or the China-centric cultural map.

This study contextualises the Sinoscape vis-à-vis a framework of analysis that uses the notions of locale, network and memory. This approach is based on Peter Preston's study of political-cultural identity in the 1990s as a result of the global structural changes following the end of the Cold War.[121] His approach offers a clear schematic method of unpacking the various aspects of identity as the three concepts of locale, network and memory highlight the

> way in which we inhabit a particular place, which is a sphere of routine activity and interaction and is richly suffused with meanings, which in turn is the base for a dispersed series of networks of exchanges with others centered on particular interests, all of which are brought together in the sphere of continually reworked memory.[122]

Indeed, identity, culture and memory do not exist in spatial vacuums. One's identity – national, ethnic and cultural – is formed around the specific places in which one lives and work – home, school, workplace, neighbourhood, city and country –

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[121] Peter Preston, *Political/Cultural identity* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[122] Ibid., p 44.

through activities, rituals and interactions with other members at these locations – family members, neighbours, colleagues, friends. These places and interactions are networks of relationships – kinship, friendship, religion affinities, commercial exchange networks and even casual acquaintances. Over time and space, these interactions generate cultural memory, forming the basis on which one's cultural identity is formed. This, in turn, has a bearing on the individual's or community's relationship with and conception of the locales and networks in which they are situated.

CONCLUSION

The distinction between ethnic and cultural identities is important. Culture, however articulated and expressed, remains a potent element by which one is indentified. Because of the dominance of the ideas that link culture inextricably with ethnicity, *hua ren* are often expected to be well-versed in their culture, which should come "naturally". Contemporary ethnic studies argue that this is not always necessarily the case. On a fundamental level, we are born into our ethnicity however constructed. In that sense, it is almost inescapable. But culture is acquired rather than an innate given. People are multicultural selves, adding to and subtracting from the cultural equation of their multilayered identities (including elements related to nationality, gender, ethnic and the like) as they develop throughout their lives. A person does not necessarily identify with the culture of his or her own ethnicity. This is especially true in the contemporary social context of globalisation and cosmopolitanism given the ease of travel and movement across territories, and the proliferation of education, mass media and other cultural products. This makes it all the more obvious that ethnic labels are functions of the politics of identity.

The same can be said of other *hua ren* communities or any other ethnic and cultural communities as such. "Being", "becoming" or "unbecoming" is a result of acculturation, and at times, of political positioning and labelling. An important capital in the formation of one's identity is cultural memory constructed through stories heard and personal experiences, and passed on from one generation to another. In the process the cultural memory is re-modelled and reinterpreted according to the temporal, spatial and personal contexts. One of the most important sites of the creation and transmission of cultural memory remains the family, as the following chapter examines.

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CHAPTER 2
FAMILY & MEMORIALISATION

As indicated in Chapter 1, this study contextualises the Sinoscape through the schematic framework of locale, network and memory. The locales – Singapore and Taiwan – will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. This chapter considers the other two elements of network (family and kinship) and memory (memorialisation of ancestors). The kinship network in *hua ren* society encompasses not just immediate family relations, but also the broader social institutions, such as family temples and clan associations. Within the kinship network, the individuals are bound to the matrix of relations by "rights and duties" and exert an important effect on their political, religious and economic conduct at large.[123] The kinship network provides guidelines for the social order and behaviour of its member. The acquisition and formation of cultural identity, as well as the transmission of cultural memory, take place within this matrix of relations.

Within the kinship network, the immediate family is where an individual first learns his or her native language and comes into contact with the social-cultural norms of the larger ethnic group in which the family belongs. Beyond the family, the kinship network also includes social organisations such as clans, which are, in essence, the family writ large. Here, the individual is exposed to the larger cultural memory of the ethnic group.

The family is regarded as the cornerstone of *hua ren* society because of its centrality in the social life of the individual. The significance of the family is

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[123] Maurice Freedman, *The study of Chinese society: essays*, (Selected and introduced by G William Skinner), California: Stanford University Press, 1979, pp 140-141.

underscored by the ideas of kinship, ancestors and filial piety. Among kinship ties, none is more central than that between the ancestors and their descendents. The obligations that inform the ancestor-descendent relationship form an important part of *hua ren* cultural identity. It also highlights two fundamental principles: the imperative of continuing the family name and the importance of symbolic blood relations. These two principles are manifested through ancestor worship, a ritual practice still in currency in *hua ren* societies today. But increasingly, ancestor worship is no longer the sole memorialisation activity practiced by *hua ren*. Other forms of secular and personal memorialisation activities imported from the West and based on personal experiences, are also becoming common. While different in form and substance, the underlying principle of these activities is memorialisation – of the ancestors, of the family history and of one's cultural background. This thesis expands the boundary of memorialisation practices beyond rituals to include activities such as compiling of genealogy, family history, telling of family stories, and visiting ancestral villages.

This chapter thus reviews the historical and cultural significance of the family and ancestors in *hua ren* cultural identity. The review is followed by a discussion of the various memorialisation activities and the significance of the act of memorialisation.

THE HUA REN FAMILY

In this thesis, I use the terms as follows: family to refer to the social unit of parents and children; lineage to refer to a descent line with genealogical links; and clan to refer to a social group with a shared surname though not necessarily with genealogical links. The latter is also referred to as a clan association. In Singapore, clan associations are often known as *hui guan* (会馆) which literally refers to the building

of the association, whereas in Taiwan, similar social institutions are known as *tong xiang hui* (同乡会) or *zong qin hui* (宗亲会).

The family is often regarded as "one of the most representative of all Chinese social institutions",[124] but also a complex one.[125] The main feature of the *hua ren* family, regardless of how it is organised, is the subservience of the individuals to the group, for

> …it was not the family which existed in order to support the individual, but rather the individual who existed in order to continue the family.[126]

This highlights an important idea fundamental to the concept of the family – the continuum of descent. Baker wrote:

> …Descent is a unity, a rope which began somewhere back in the remote past, and which stretched on to the infinite future. The rope at any one time may be thicker or thinner according to the number of strands (families) or fibres (male individuals) which exist, but so long as one fibre remains the rope is there. The fibres…are the representatives of the rope as a whole. That is, the individual alive is the personification of all his forebears and of all his descendants yet unborn. He exists by virtue of his ancestors, and his descendents exist only through him…[127]

The family, as a representation of the continuum, takes on many forms: nuclear (or elementary), joint (or extended), or stem.[128] Significantly, although the joint or extended family – consisting of parents, unmarried children, and married

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[124] Olga Lang, *Chinese family and society* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1968), p xi.

[125] Among the most often cited references relating to Chinese families include: Hugh D. R. Baker, *Chinese family and kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). Olga Lang, *Chinese family and society* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1968). Maurice Freedman, *Chinese family and marriage in Singapore: Report to the Colonial Social Science Research Council* (London: HMSO, 1957). Maurice Freedman, *Lineage organization in Southeastern China* (London: Altone Press, 1958)Myron L Cohen, *House united, house divided: the Chinese family in Taiwan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

[126] Baker, *Chinese family*, p 26.

[127] Ibid., pp 26-27

[128] For a discussion of the family structure, see ibid and Olga Lang, *Chinese family and society* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1968).

children with their spouses and offspring – is often regarded as a feature of *hua ren*

society, scholars have argued that this is essentially a myth and an ideal, rather than a

reality.[129] It was believed that in an ideal family five generations lived under one roof.

This, in reality, was and is a very rare occurrence. Historically, the size of families in

China was related to political developments of the day. During the Tang Dynasty

(618-906 BC), family members were forbidden by law to register separately or divide

family property while their parents or grandparents were still alive. By the Sung

dynasty (960-1279 BC), some families took to registering fathers and sons separately

to avoid onerous service levy responsibilities or conscription, a practice which

continued till the mid-Ming period when the taxation policies and political situation

stabilised.[130] Following a period of political stability and economic development,

family sizes in late Ming and Qing period could expand by registering the family as

one unit and through adoption. Historian Zheng Zhenman argued that families

adopted male children for various reasons: to help fulfill the family's service levy

responsibilities, expand the family's opportunities to engage in maritime trade, and, of

course, to continue the descent line.[131]

　　While some scholars believed that extended or large families were only the

purview of the wealthy and elite,[132] Zheng argued that wealth was not a necessary

precondition for large families. Citing an example of a large family of five

generations living together but in poor socioeconomic standing, Zheng argued

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[129] Baker, *Chinese family and kinship*; Paul Chao, *Chinese kinship* (London: Keagan Paul International , 1983), p 11; Lang, *Chinese family and society*, p 16.
[130] See Zhenman Zheng, *Family lineage organization and social change in Ming and Qing Fujian*, trans. Michael Szonyi (with the assistance of Kenneth Dean and David Wakefield) (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), pp 31-70
[131] Ibid., pp 38-41.
[132] Baker, Chinese family and kinship, p 1-12.

It was precisely because the family was so impoverished and isolated that its members were forced into long-term economic cooperation in order to survive.[133]

In Zheng's analysis, the development of large families was a response to the economic condition of the times: it coincided with the expansion of the economy, both in agriculture and trade. Hence a larger family provided more labour to establish itself in various fields, hence ensuring a sufficient economic foundation.[134] Large families, thus, were not just "a cultural tradition that idealised filiality and fraternity"[135] but a pragmatic response to the existing socio-economic and political environment.

Regardless of size, the foundation of family relations laid in the father-son relationship; all other relations within the family "are regarded as extensions of the father-son relationship or subordinate or supplementary to it".[136] Under this patriliny, the authority resided with the father, the head of the household. A son was expected to show "reverence and support his parents",[137] as well as marry and produce legitimate sons of his own[138] in order to carry on the family name. To not have a son to carry on the family name was considered an act of filial impiety.[139] The patriliny underscored the continuum of descent: the continuity of the family was ensured through the production of male heirs who inherited the family name. The father-son relationship continued even after the death of the father. Mourning and the performance of rites of worship after the death of his father (and mother) was a son's responsibility and moral

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[133] Zheng, Family lineage organization, p 42.
[134] Ibid., pp 44-48.
[135] Ibid., p 44.
[136] Francis Hsu, *Under the ancestors' shadow: Chinese culture and personality* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul , 1949), p 59.
[137] Ibid., p 58.
[138] Chao, *Chinese kinship*, p 42.
[139] 不孝有三，无后为大 (*bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da*). This saying attributed to Mencius can be translated thus: "Of the three greatest acts of filial impiety, the biggest is not to have sons". The other two acts of filial impiety are disobedience to parents, and the inability to care for them in their old age.

obligation. The concept and practice of ancestor worship acts to keep the family and clan solidarity alive,[140] as shall be discussed in detail later.

The continuity of the family name and the big family ideal are further manifested in lineages and clans. These social organisations can be regarded as the family writ large: being built on a foundation of consanguinal relations, real or fictive.[141] In the traditional *hua ren* social structure, the clan or lineage is a significant institution representing kinship ties and is an important site of ancestor worship. A lineage is defined as

> a corporate, property-owning group which celebrates ritual unity through worship of common ancestors and which admits members on the basis of demonstrated descent from these ancestors.[142]

This kinship grouping, which varies in size and scale,[143] is built on the main principle of the family – patrilineal descent. There is often an accompanying lineage shrine or temple[144] hosting the spirit tablets of the lineage ancestors. The ancestral rites are financed through income from the lineage-owned assets and properties, usually land and buildings. Only male members descended from the progenitor can be included as members of the lineage. In imperial China, the lineage not only acted as a trust fund for the family, it performed the important function of social control and discipline, as well as the organisation of daily life.[145] It must be noted that not all lineages are strong lineages, that is, with elaborate segmentation, economic strength

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[140] Lang, *Chinese family and society*, p 19.
[141] Zheng, *Family lineage organization*, p 24.
[142] Patricia Ebrey, "Family and kinship in Chinese history," *Trends in History* 3, no. 3/4 (1985), p 156
[143] See Myron Cohen's discussion of the scale of Chinese lineage as originally analysed by Maurice Freedman in Myron Cohen, *Kinship, Contract, Community and State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp 154-156.
[144] These temples are variously referred to as 家庙 *jia miao*，祠堂 *ci tang* or 宗祠 *zong ci*, which means clan or lineage temple, and houses the ancestral tablets of deceased members.
[145] See Zheng, Family lineage organization.

and depth of agnatic relations,[146] compiled genealogies and built ancestral halls. Some are "small, weak lineages with neither halls nor genealogies and with little properties".[147] Yet others were just households of all manners – "small and large, whose members lived and owned property in common".[148] However organised and whatever forms they took, the lineage was a common feature of the southern Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong,[149] and rural Hong Kong[150] and Taiwan.[151] The lineage was, in fact, regarded as "the predominant order of rural society".[152] Maurice Freedman theorised that this was the result of the existence of "paddy rice, corporate ownership of land, weak government, and frontier society" in south-eastern China.[153]

Unlike the lineage which is defined by blood relations, the clan is based on symbolic relations and is of a more voluntary nature. It may be defined as

> an artificial kin group … consisted of a deliberate amalgamation into one loose federation of a number of lineages all of which bore the same surname.[154]

Such clans do not necessarily have one progenitor ancestor from which all its members descend, although members may worship one common founding ancestor of the clan's surname. Like lineages, clans may establish an ancestral hall to host the

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[146] Maurice Freedman, *Lineage organization in Southeastern China* (London: Altone Press, 1958).

[147] Zheng, Family lineage organization, p 23.

[148] Ibid., p 22.

[149] See for example, Freedman, *Lineage organization in Southeastern China*.

[150] Some key studies on lineages in Hong Kong include Hugh D. R. Baker, *A Chinese lineage village: Sheung Shui* (London: Cass, 1968); David Faure, *The structure of Chinese rural society lineage and village in the eastern New Territories, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986); James L Watson, *Emigration and the Chinese lineage: the Mans in Hong Kong and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); David Faure and Helen Siu, ed., *Down to earth: the territorial bond in South China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Pres).

[151] Burton Pasternak, *Kinship & community in two Chinese villages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).

[152] David Faure, *Emperor and ancestor: state and lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p 1.

[153] David Y. H. Wu, "The conditions of development and decline of Chinese lineages and the formation of ethnic groups," in *The Chinese Family and its ritual behaviour*, ed. Ji-chang Hsieh and Ying-chang Chuang, 192-209 (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1985), at p 192.

[154] Baker, *Chinese family and kinship*, p 68.

ancestral tablets of its members. In imperial China, clans were usually found in cities

to provide residence for its members taking the imperial exams.[155]

Although found in imperial China, surname-based and locality-based clans

were a more significant feature of *hua ren* communities outside China. While not

considered as lineage by some scholars such as Freedman, others argue that they

were.[156] Historian Yen Ching-hwang noted:

> Most overseas clans were localised lineages based on geographical and
> dialect origins; they retained many characteristics of their parental bodies
> in structure and function…But most important of all, they perpetuated
> Chinese descent lines, preserved Chinese tradition and Confucian values,
> maintained the identity of the Chinese communities and served as a
> important transmitter of Chinese culture and a whole. Although they
> existed physically overseas, they strove to mould a type of society
> similar to the one they knew in China.[157]

In migrant societies such as Singapore, the clan associations are key social institutions

for *hua ren* communities, especially during the British colonial period. In Taiwan,

where the instances of mobility are high, clan associations act as a family for those

working or studying outside their place of origin.

MEMORIALISATION PRACTICES

Among the most tangible manifestations of family relations, history and memory are

memorialisation practices: activities with the aim of remembering and honouring

individuals or the collective, and of events that form part of the family/collective.

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[155] Ibid., p 68.

[156] See for example, Chinben See, "Chinese clanship in the Philippine setting," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (1981): 224-247.

[157] Ching-hwang Yen, "Early Chinese clan organizations in Singapore and Malaya," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (1981): 92-92, p 87.

Before discussing these activities in detail, I will examine the concept of

memorialisation.

> The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to
> become memory. The fissure that opens us between experiencing an
> event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable….this split
> should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic
> creativity.[158]

The act of memorialising is what makes remembering possible. It makes

tangible the otherwise fuzzy notions of family ties, history and cultural identity. In the

process of remembering, to paraphrase Barbie Zelizer, one establishes a relationship

with an individual, event or entity in the past.[159] These practices and activities of

remembering may be longstanding and habitual, they may be ritualistic or

spontaneous. But at the heart of memorialisation is the construction of an internally

coherent narrative on which to build one's identity and maintain one's position vis-à-

vis the environment. Countries and groups remember their past through constructed

monuments, memorials, museums, plaques, ceremonies, books, television shows and

websites. In many cases, there are controversies over almost every aspect of the

conceptualisation, planning and execution of the project,[160] especially in cases of

national commemorations. Take for instance the case of the Vietnam Veterans

Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. Designed to honour American soldiers killed or

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[158] Andreas Huyssen, *Twiling memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p 3.

[159] Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the past against the grain," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 214-239, quoted in Barbara Misztal, *Theories of social remembering* (Maidenhead, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), p 70.

[160] The list of publications on this topic is massive. Listed here are just a sample of some major memorials: Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Preserving memory: the struggle to create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin, 1997); Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American memory: veterans, memorials, and the politics of healing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); Alan Rice, *Creating memorials, building identities: the politics of memory in the Black Atlantic* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010); and Michael Sorkin, *Starting from zero: reconstructing downtown New York* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See also *Contested histories in public space: memory, race, and nation*, ed. Walkowitz Daniel J. and Lisa Maya Knauer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).which covers issues of contestation of public memory and public history, using examples from various sites.

missing in action in the Vietnam War (1959-1975), the memorial had roused intense reactions even before it was completed. The Wall was designed by Maya Lin, then an architectural student at Yale University, and was chosen as the winning entry in a national contest. It was criticised for its lack of ornamentation and the choice of colour – black. The design was, at that time, considered unconventional for the commemoration of a national event. Many felt that the design was a snub instead of a proud commemoration of heroes; that it was about mourning (because of the colour black) and shame (the Wall was described as a "black gash of shame" because of its recess into the ground) rather than a celebration of heroism and patriotism (conventional memorials were often white in colour and rising triumphantly from the ground). The controversy that surrounded the Wall – the design, the designer, its meanings, representations – arose in part because of the controversial nature of the Vietnam War in US history and politics.[161] It also reflected the competing stakes and claims different groups may make on a national event because it is part of the construction of a narrative that defines one's national, ethnic and group identity.

The act of commemoration is a contested one, for embedded in the act of remembering is memory, a highly contested concept. Although memory is integral to one's sense of self, it is also highly social, highly selective and political. French sociologist Maurice Halbawchs argued that individuals

> preserve memories of each epoch of (their) lives, and these are
> continually reproduced; through them, as by continual relationship, a
> sense of (their) identity is perpetuated.[162]

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[161] See Marita Sturken, "The wall, the screen, and the image: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Representations* 35 (1991): 118-142; Robin Wagner-Pacific and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: commemorating a difficult past," *The American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1991): 376–420.

[162] Pierre Nora, *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Vols. 1, Conflicts and divisions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p 47.

Halbawchs further argued that memory is highly dependent on the social environment

and cannot be divorced from society, for

> it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in
> society that they recall, recognise and localise their memories.[163]

Following Halbwachs' argument, an individual's membership in a group provides the

material for memory, and can influence the individual's ability to recall or forget

particular events and details. Membership in a group may even "produce" memories

of events in individuals even if they did not experience the events personally. Thus,

memory becomes a highly contested entity within a framework where there are

multiple sources of influence competing for one's memory. This is exacerbated by the

continuous process of construction and reconstruction.

Among the biggest issues regarding memory are fabrication (false memories,

counter-memories) and variability. On one hand, these inconsistencies may be

regarded as

> resource(s) for revealing the relationship between what people remember
> and the ideological dilemmas of their past and present socio-economic and
> political circumstances.[164]

Although scholars have highlighted the potential danger of over-reification of

memory into an alternative discourse,[165] memory and nostalgia can be useful

analytically, especially if they are not divorced from the general social/historical

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[163] Maurice Halbawchs, *On collective memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p 38.
[164] David Middleton and Derek Edwards, "Introduction" in David Middleton and Derek Edwards (eds), *Collective Remembering*, London: Sage, 1990, pp 1-22 at p 3.
[165] See for example, Avishai Margalit, *The ethics of memory*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002; James Edward Young, *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993; David Cesarani, Tony Kushner and Milton Shain (eds) *Place and displacement in Jewish history and memory: zakor v'makor*, Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009.

contexts in which they were produced and consumed. As American historian David

Thelen noted:

> In a study of memory the important point is not how accurately a recollection fitted some piece of a past reality, but why historical actors constructed their memories in a particular way at a particular time.[166]

As noted in Chapter 1, collective memory and cultural memory are

interactions of symbol and memory which bonds and connects individuals of a group

with a shared past, and rituals. These rituals, are themselves, "forms of memory that

are designed to stabilise a common identity and a point of view that span several

generations".[167] Cultural memory is articulated through various material and tangible

forms: the written script, oral renditions of myths and folklore or everyday objects,

cultural practices, kinship ties, and "myths, songs, legends, proverbs, genealogies,

rituals and other forms of knowledge".[168] Edward Bruner holds that

> cultures…are better compared through their rituals, theatres, tales, ballads, epics, and operas than through their habits. For the former are the ways in which they try to articulate the meaning.[169]

These symbolic acts reflect human behaviours and the identities of the

performers and audience, and the meanings marked in circumscribed contexts. But

mingled with social performance – day-to-day interactions with people and social life

– the meanings of the cultural performance change. Performance scholar Diana

Taylor argued that embodied performances are channels of conserving memories and

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[166] David Thelen, Journal of American History
[167] Jan Assman, "What is cultural memory?," in *Religion and cultural memory: ten studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 1-30 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p19.
[168] Maria G Cattell and Jacob J. Climo, "Meaning in social memory and history: anthropological perspectives," in *Social memory and history: anthropological perspectives*, ed. Jacob J. Climo and Maria G Cattell, 1-36 (California: Altamira Press, 2002), pp12-13.
[169] The anthropology of experience cited in Soyini D. Madison, *Critical ethnography: method, ethics and performance* (London: Sage, 2005), p 152

consolidating identities,[170] through reiteration.[171] These performances make up the

repertoire, the embodiment of knowledge which has no stability:

> As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that
> are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and
> transforms choreographies of meaning.[172]

It is this fluid and dynamic nature of the repertoire that allows performers and those

who study them trace the traditions and influences of the performances.

As mentioned in the previous section, memorialisation practices are among the

most tangible manifestations of family relations, history and memory. In this thesis,

these family memorialisation practices include ancestor worship, compilation of

genealogies, writing of family histories – whether published or for private purposes,

and visits to ancestral villages for the purposes of engaging in family history or other

forms of genealogy. In some cases, the aim of the trips is to establish more regular

links with the ancestral village through participation in the social, economic and

infrastructural reconstruction of the village.[173] In this thesis, I study the various

memorialisation activities in order to account for the dynamics of practice and

identity.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The practice of ancestor worship has dominated *hua ren* society for centuries and

continues to do so. In fact, it is synonymous with *hua ren* cultural identity. Such

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[170] Diana Taylor, The archive and the repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas
(Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp xvii-xix.
[171] Ibid., pp 2-4.
[172] Ibid., p 20.
[173] An example is the heavy involvement of the Singapore Ke clan in the socio-economic
reconstruction of their ancestral village in Anxi, China. For a comprehensive account, see Kuah Khun
Eng, *Rebuilding the Ancestral Village: Singaporeans in China*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd,
2000.

veneration of ancestors is by no means unique to the *hua ren* culture,[174] but in the *hua ren* social order, ancestor worship is a key institution of memory and a vehicle of *hua ren* cultural identity as it incorporates the accepted markers of cultural identity – filial piety, kinship ties, religion and language. To participate in the practice of ancestor worship is to be bound up in the past of the family. The *Book of Rites*,[175] a Confucian classic often cited as the source authority of rites and rituals, had this to say of kinship bonds:

> The way of humanity is to treat the kin [with the sentiments appropriate to] kin. Because the kin are treated [with the sentiments appropriate to] kin, the ancestors are venerated. Because the ancestors are venerated, the descent-line is respected. Because the descent-line is respected, the lineage is united.[176]

In *hua ren* society, death does not spell the end of family ties. The ancestors, though dead, still participate in the social world of the living, although in a different mode.[177] The continuity of ties between the living and the dead is a significant concept that informs *hua ren* cultural memory. The notions of *yin shui si yuan* 饮水思源 – literally remembering the source of water that one drinks – and *shen zhong zui yuan* 慎终追远 – attending to the funeral rites of one's parents and offering due sacrifices, are important *hua ren* cultural values. These are manifestations of filial piety – *xiao* 孝，which dictates one's actions to one's parents. It is also associated

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[174] For an overview to the role and significance of ancestors and their veneration in the cosmologies of various societies, see *Ancestors in post-contact religion: roots, rupture and modernity's memory*, ed. Steven J Friesen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[175] 礼记，*li ji*. A classic Confucian text that described the social forms, governmental system, and ceremonial rites of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1050–256 BC)

[176] Quoted in Zheng, *Family lineage* organization, p 269.

[177] Meyer Fortes, "An introductory commentary," in *Ancestors*, ed. William H. Newell (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1976) pp 1-16 at p 5.

with the idea of loyalty to one's kin – family, clan, affined relations and the community.[178]

This belief in the continuity of ties between the living and the dead has existed since the Bronze Age,[179] and is maintained through a series of rites and rituals that were later institutionalised by the philosopher Confucius and his disciples. The *Book Of Rites* outlined rules and standards of conduct and ceremonies, including those relating to death and funerals. These and the teachings of Confucius (551 – 479 BC),[180] a thinker, political figure and educator that lived during the Warring States period (770 – 476 BC),[181] form the foundational principles of Confucianism which, in turn, informs *hua ren* cultural identity. Confucianism emphasises the importance of social relations, hierarchy and proper behaviour. It originated as a response to the political turbulence of Confucius' time, where civil wars were rampant.[182] The chief cause of the upheavals were attributed to a breakdown in human relationships – family quarrels, usurpation of power and/or disloyalty.[183] It was therefore natural for Confucius to advocate the careful regulation of human relationships[184] as a critical and necessary element in achieving harmony and social order.

In Confucianism, social harmony is expressed through a code of conduct embodied in the value of *ren* (benevolence, humaneness 仁), *yi* (righteousness, justice 义), *li* (proprieties, rites and rituals 礼) and *zhi* (wisdom 智), manifested in the principle of the Five Relations. These relations – "those between prince and minister;

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[178] For a comprehensive summary of the significance of filial piety and its manifestation in *hua ren* cultural behaviour, see Chao, *Chinese kinship*, pp 71-101.

[179] Evelyn S. Rawski, "A historian's approach to Chinese death rituals," in *Death ritual in late imperial and modern China*, ed. James L Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski, 20-34 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p 24

[180] *Confucius*, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/confucius/ (accessed September 2012, 2012).

[181] Yao Xinzhong (ed), *RoutledgeCurzon Encyclopedia of Confucianism*, vol 1, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p 6.

[182] D. Howard Smith, *Confucius*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973, pp 36 – 37.

[183] Ibid., p 64.

[184] Ibid., p 63.

between father and son; between husband and wife; between elder and younger brothers; and between friends"[185] – are seen to be "of utmost importance under Heaven". [186] The keys are order and obedience to authority – the ruler, the father, the husband, the elder brother and the wise friend. In this hierarchical social ideal, harmony and peace is maintained as everyone has their stated place, duties, obligations, and by extension, rights.[187] These rights are not the rights of the individual as rooted in the tradition of liberalism we have come to know. Instead they are derived from an individual's membership in society, for the Confucian concept of a human being is that he is a relational being.[188] A breakdown of peace is, to Confucius, a breakdown in the order of relationships.[189] Peace is preserved with the observation of these social regulations through the practice of *li*, which governs how the living treats both the living and the dead.

Until the Sung dynasty (960-1279 AD), ancestral rituals were the preserve of the rulers and the elite gentlemen-official class. Commoners were forbidden to build ancestral shrines, and could not make offerings to ancestors beyond their grandparents,[190] thereby resulting in a proliferation of non-standard practices and rituals. The late Sung period (circa the 11th and 12th centuries) a new Confucian officialdom backed by court support, "began to look closely at and correct popular

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[185] Quoted in William McNaughton (ed and trans), *The Confucian vision*, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1974, p 41.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Although these rights are not based on the autonomy of the individuals as understood in the West, but based on one's membership of a community. See Henry Rosemont, Jr, "Whose democracy? Which rights? A Confucian critique of modern western liberalism" in Kwong-Loi Shun and David B. Wong (eds), *Confucian ethics: a comparative study of self, autonomy and community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp 58 – 68.
[188] David B. Wong, "Rights and community in Confucianism," in *Confucian ethics: a comparative study of self, autonomy and community*, ed. Kwong-Loi Shun and David B. Wong, 31-48 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), at p 34.
[189] Judith A. Berling, "Confucianism and peacebuilding," in *Religion and peacebuilding*, ed. Harold Coward and Gordan S. Smith (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), p 103.
[190] Rawski, A historian's approach, pp 29-30.

mores through reform of marriage and mourning customs".[191] Many practices and

customs were normalised, and these norms became more widespread with the

development of printing and expansion of the scholar-official administration.[192]

Not all family members who pass away can be considered as ancestors; only

those who were married and had male heirs qualify for inclusion. This criterion thus

excludes single men and women, and children. Because of the significance of having

male heirs – to continue the family name and to carry out ancestor worship – those

without children would often foster or adopt sons for these purposes. With ancestors

and descendents embellished in a network of relationships based on descent, the

perpetuity of the lineage is ensured.

Scholars have referred to ancestor worship as the cult of the ancestors or "cult

of the dead" because the practice involves "something more than 'the ancestors' and

more than 'worship' is involved." [193] Emily Ahern argued that at the heart of ancestor

worship is reciprocity – the living are expected to care for the dead in payment of the

debts they owe them. In so doing, the living

> hope to inspire a further reciprocal response from the ancestors, to obtain
> through them the good life as they perceive it: wealth, rich harvests, and
> off spring who will unsure the undying memory and sustenance in the
> afterlife.[194]

In this perspective, ancestors are perceived to have divine power (much like gods and

ghosts) and are benign, especially to family members, to whom they manifest. In

return for the offerings made to them on a regular basis, the ancestors offer protection

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[191] Ibid., pp 30-31.
[192] Ibid., p 31.
[193] M. Emily Ahern, *The cult of the dead in a Chinese village* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1973), p 91.
[194] Ibid.

and blessings to their descendents. Unlike gods and ghosts in the *hua ren* cosmology, the ancestor's powers are only limited to the family.

American missionary Justus Doolittle recorded his observations of how ancestor worship was carried out by the Chinese in the southern China city of Foochow in the 1860s. Generally, the rites of ancestor worship include

> personal devotions, domestic rites, the ancestral rites of a kinship group such as a lineage, periodic rites on the death day of the deceased, and annual rites for the collectivity of ancestors.[195]

Much of the rites, rituals and practices that Doolittle described still resemble ancestral worship practices today, albeit with some simplification and modification.

There are two important aspects to ancestor worship – the private and the public. The private form of ancestor worship essentially includes domestic rites: daily offerings of joss sticks at the family altar where the ancestral tablets are installed, as well as more elaborate offerings during special occasions (such as birth and death anniversaries). Under this private form, I also include family visits to the graves, niches, or tablets hosted in temples and columbaria. Even though these sites are public, the motivation for such visits and the associated activities private, that is, participants are restricted to the family. Strangers are not included. This private practice can further be divided into two kinds – individual ancestor worship and general ancestor worship.[196] David K Jordan defines individual ancestor worship as that which is directed to a particular ancestor while the general worship is directed at the collective ancestors memorialised in one's family.

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[195] Mircea Eliade (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Volume 1, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1987, p 263
[196] David K. Jordan, *Gods, ghosts and ancestors: the folk religion of a Taiwanese village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p 100.

In contrast, the public form of ancestor worship refers to general ancestor worship writ large. Unlike the private practice, public ancestor worship is not restricted to the nuclear family but usually involves the entire clan or community in a *collective* worship of its founding ancestors. Participants may or may not be related by blood ties. The annual Spring and Autumn Sacrificial Rites[197] carried out by surname clans to commemorate the founding ancestor of the surname is one such example.

The practice of ancestor worship is often regarded as part of the "Chinese religion". This is possibly because ancestors are often grouped together with ghosts and gods, who make up the tripartite of supernatural beings that form the foundation of what is often referred to as "Chinese folk religion" or "Chinese religion". Scholars have described "Chinese religion" by various other names and description, including "Shenism",[198] "religion of the masses",[199] and an anonymous religion that is "an amorphous mass of beliefs and practices from various sources".[200] However described, Chinese religion is characterised as syncretic. It draws from various strands of greater religions and philosophies such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism as well as from *hua ren* history, mythologies and legends (as reflected in the expansive pantheon of deities, many of whom were characters from these narratives). Vivienne Wee pointed out that Chinese religion is "not a random hodge-podge but a systematic religion with a cultural logic of its own".[201] *Bai shen* (拜神) is a general term that defines *hua ren* religion in practice, and a person who *bai shen* is likely to practice ancestor worship.

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[197] 春秋二祭, chun qiu er ji.
[198] J. A. Elliot, *Chinese spirit-medium cults in Singapore* (London, 1955), pp 27-29
[199] Leon Comber, "Chinese temples in Singapore," in *Through the bamboo window: Chinese life and culture in 1950s Malaya and Singapore*, 189-278 (Singapore: Talisman Publishing & Singapore Heritage Society, 2009).
[200] Marjorie Topley, "Chinese relifion and religious institutions in Singapore," in *Cantonese society in Hong Kong and Singapore: gender, religion, medicine and money - Essays by Marjorie Topley*, ed. Jean DeBernadi, 125-174 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), p 131.
[201] Vivienne Wee, "Religion and ritual among the Chinese of Singapore: an ethnographic study," Masters of Social Sciences thesis, University of Singapore (Singapore, 1977), p 6.

Perhaps this is why it is hard to talk about ancestor worship, especially in the *hua ren* context, without referring to it as being religious.

This thesis regards ancestor worship as a form of cultural practice that is so embedded in the *hua ren* cultural system that many practitioners do not regard it as something separate from the rest of their culture. Ancestor worship, with all its rituals and meanings, is more like a ritual of kinship, "a function of descent"[202] since it is generally practiced by individuals. It is "an act of obeisance"[203] that reflects the social obligation of respecting one's elders in the family, although the acts may include religious elements – such as the offering of joss sticks, joss papers and food offerings, as are also offered to deities. Although some scholars have put forward a theological framework for ancestor worship,[204] many of the practitioners, including my informants, do not consciously consider these theological or cosmological elements when they engage in the act. To them, ancestors are simply family members who came before them and who should be accorded the respect in their death through the act of ancestor worship. The underlying principle of maintaining kinship ties takes precedence over the correctness or details of the rites and rituals which will be illustrated in the two case studies chapters.

GENEALOGY

The compilation of genealogy is another practice that is predicated on the importance of ancestry and descent. Today, genealogy is considered a part of family history (discussed below) although it is not family history per se. Rather, it is a technique of establishing family relations, ties and links through documentary evidence, notably

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[202] Arthur P. Wolf, "Gods, ghosts and ancestors," in *Religion in Chinese society*, ed. Arthur P. Wolf, 131-182 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1974). P146
[203] Ibid., p159
[204] See for example, Wee, "Religion and ritual among the Chinese of Singapore".

birth, death and marriage registrations. In many societies, including both Western and Asian, the original intent of genealogies was for the purpose of the inheritance of money, assets and titles, and to prove one's royal status. Today, it has become a popular activity as part of the family history obsession, especially in Western societies. The Chinese have a long tradition of compiling and maintaining genealogies. Genealogies were generally products of private enterprise, undertaken by a clan and drawn up by scholars, and were never a layman's activity. Like Western genealogies, the purpose of *hua ren* genealogies was closely related to inheritance and the protection of the lineage's corporate wealth.

A Chinese genealogy is an important record of patrilineal kinship relations, origins of the family name, family rules, family tree, members' achievements and biographies of prominent members of the family.[205] It is usually constructed after a lineage has settled in an area for a certain period of time and achieved financial and social stability.[206] The construction of a genealogy suggests the need to consolidate the lineage, root itself in an area vis-à-vis other lineages, and maintain social order within the lineage.[207] Each lineage keeps their genealogy under lock and key in the ancestral hall, and access to the book was limited to a few senior lineage elders. The genealogy was updated, generally at intervals of between 20 to 30 years, or when sons were born.[208] The compilation, maintenance and preservation of the genealogy was one of the main functions of the lineage. It was one that entailed rituals for the "opening" and "closing" of the genealogy book.

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[205] Hsiang-lin Lo, "The history and arrangement of Chinese genealogies," in *Studies in Asian genealogy* (Utan: Brigham Young University, 1972), p

[206] 周芳玲；阎明广，《中国宗谱》(北京: 中国社会出版社, 2008). (Zhou Fang Ling and Yan Ming Guang, *Genealogies of China*, Beijing: China Society Publishers, 2008)

[207] Ibid., pp 1, 5-6.

[208] Ibid., p 14.

As a formal structure, genealogy has been described as an intellectual

discipline whose

> concern is with recording and putting into systematic order the
> histories of families, differentiating them by rules of descent and
> allocating to each a share of those enduring human valuables that
> consist of privileges and honors, titles and powers.[209]

A simpler and more concise definition of genealogy is that it is "the construction of

family pedigrees: lists of ancestors and descendants".[210]

Chinese genealogies can be divided into different types, the most common

being *zong pu* 宗谱, *zu pu* 族谱 and *jia pu* 家谱. Although these terms are used

interchangeably to refer to a documentary record of pedigree,[211] there are differences

between them. In principle, *zong pu* is a genealogy that records the main descent line,

that is, it traces a single line of descent of eldest sons of eldest sons, going back to the

first progenitor. The *zu pu* is less restrictive in that it records the known male heirs of

all male heirs of the descent line. Girls were generally excluded, while the wives of

the heirs were sometimes recorded. This register of the common descent group is

sometimes constructed by compiling several *jia pu*, family genealogies.[212] The latter

records only the descent line within a particular family. In this thesis, I shall use the

English term of equivalence – genealogy – to refer to all these records.

Chinese genealogies are closely related to lineage. Generally, the genealogies

include the family's pedigree, tracing the clan's descent back to ancient times, if

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[209] Eliade, The encyclopedia of religion, p 502.
[210] Jeanne Kay Guelke and Dallen J. Timothy, "Location personal pasts: an introduction," in
Geography and genealogy: locating personal pasts, ed. Dallen J. Timothy and Jeanne Kay Guelke, 1-20 (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p1.
[211] 周芳玲, 中国宗谱.
[212] Information provided by Secretary General of the Genealogy Society of Singapore Tan Ngiap Hong.
GSS meeting 7 June 2002.

possible, and the achievements of clansmen. Included in the genealogies are also

eulogies to ancestors, especially the notable ones, encouragement to motivate

subsequent generations of clan member to great achievements and to uphold the

reputation and name of the clan.[213] More importantly, the genealogy offers a picture

of familial and kinship relations. The Chinese genealogy is typically based on a

format devised by Ou-yang Hsiu (欧阳修), a Sung dynasty politician scholar. Quoted

at length below is a description of the format, highlighting the importance of

hierarchy and order in the Chinese genealogies:

> one's family tree should begin with the primogenitor who first settled in
> or moved to a place and raised his family there; it should end with the
> contemporary generation which draws up the genealogy, and the
> intermediate ancestors are to be enumerated in between. The
> primogenitor and his great-great-great grandsons compose the first five
> generations and are tabulated on one form, which may consist of more
> than one sheet. Names of the primogenitor and his first-born son,
> grandson, and so on are listed vertically downward on the right-hand side
> of the sheet, but names of the brothers of the firstborn are listed laterally
> on the left. Descriptions of each generation are confined in relatively
> narrow, horizontal divisions of the form which contain the names of each
> person, but ordinals of generations are put on the right side of the
> primogenitor and his firstborns. Here the word description means each
> ancestor's name and aliases, dates of birth and death, academic degrees,
> official ranks, if any, and location of grave; his wife's dates of birth and
> death and location of grave; and the names of his sons and daughters and,
> sometimes, the daughter's husbands. The next five generations and the
> third and fourth and so on are recorded in a similar manner. So are the
> lateral branches. Thus one could grasp the filiations among them at first
> glance.[214]

Compiling or re-constructing existing genealogies was, and remains, a

specialist activity given the breadth and depth of work needed to trace and record

details. This job is made harder by the fact that not many Chinese keep up with

documentary evidence. Furthermore, because of its traditional function as a record of

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[213] Hsiang-lin Lo, "The history and arrangement of Chinese genealogies," in *Studies in Asian genealogy*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer, 13-26 (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1972), p 13.
[214] Ibid., p14.

the families and implications of inheritance, genealogies were inaccessible except to a few elders of the lineage. Only individuals with a deep knowledge of ancient China history, geography and language are able to decipher the information available in ancient materials. With the transition from an agricultural socio-economic setting to one of urban capitalism, the relevance of the genealogy has also been gradually eroded.

While the practical relevance of the genealogy may have been eroded, it remains a significant expression of *hua ren* cultural memory. Although the genealogy is a record of descent group membership, the act of compilation is also the construction of a selective collective memory. It produces the very social relationships that the genealogy seeks to cement and allows those who consult the genealogy to "construct knowledge about the nature of social relationships among relatives".[215] The passing down of the genealogy and the act of adding to it perpetuates the group identity and cements the members to a framework of social relations. The genealogy is not just an establishment of practical kinship relations; it also "establishes a pool of potentially useful local social relationships, only a few of which might ever be made real".[216] The genealogy, and the compilation of it even in contemporary times, remains a powerful force "in the production, reproduction, and reinvention of Chinese people, Chinese culture, and Chinese identity".[217]

CONSTRUCTING FAMILY HISTORY

Today, family history and genealogy is no longer reserved for the rich and aristocratic classes as an avenue to uphold and maintain their social status. In European and American societies, family history has become a leisure pursuit and a cultural

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[215] Frank N. Pieke, "The genealogical mentality in modern China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 1 (February 2003): 101-128.3336622
[216] Ibid., p 106.
[217] Ibid., pp 105-106.

practice.[218] Alex Haley's 1976 bestseller *Roots* and the television series it inspired is often cited as a landmark that sparked interest in genealogy and family history in America. The increased interest in family history is reflected and stimulated by the increasing number of family history related publications and even television shows such as the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) *Who Do You Think You Are*[219] which has since spawned similar series in the United States, Australia, Canada, South Africa and Sweden. Academically, with the development of fields of studies such as public history and cultural studies, everyday life and the ordinary have become a source of data and objects of analysis.

Unlike genealogy, family history is not necessarily dependent on documentary evidence as it is usually based on individuals' memories – stories and tales of family members and their experiences. Family history is as much about the social and historical contexts in which the family developed rather than simply an exercise in constructing one's family tree. As such, it is considered a subset of heritage and closely related to the realm of the personal and the domestic.[220] The family history of public figures has the added dimension of sitting at the nexus of the public and the private. The stories of the individuals are set within the framework of the greater societal and national narratives, building their personal stories into public accounts.

Family history enthusiasts give different reasons for their interests. One oft-heard reason for embarking on family history is to leave a legacy for one's

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[218] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The presence of the past: popular uses of history in American life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[219] The BBC series was first aired in 2004. Each episode features one celebrity and his/her search for one part of his/her family history. This includes searching through records offices, consultation with experts and interviews with individuals, either distant relatives or individuals who may have known the family member in questions. The process usually takes months, but in each episode, is presented through time compression as a process with little obstacles and in linear progression. "Who Do You Think You Are?," 24 September 2004, http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/09_september/24/who.shtml (accessed September 24, 2012).

[220] Guelke and Timothy, "Location personal pasts", p 2.

descendents so that they would know where they came from. Another reason is that the process of doing family history is an avenue to better self-understanding, to understand where one came from and family attributes and beliefs. For others, it is simply a mater of solving family mysteries or finding out about one's ancestors out of curiosity.[221]

Family history is a form of memory work, since it is based on archival memory (documents and records), oral history and personal recollections. Doing family history also creates a collective/shared history and memory for an immediate group of people. The individual memory is contextualised within a larger group of individual memories and forms a collective shared memory. These are then ordered into a narrative of the self and/or family, creating a sense of connection with a wider group and social contexts. Critics of family history have argued that one's identity is not constructed by blood quantum, imaginary ties to a remote ancestral land or of progenitors of two or three centuries previously. They argue that the over-emphasis on constructing family history can lead to unrealistic and romanticised beliefs about one's identity and past, and serve to reify essentialist concepts of self and identity, class, ethnicity and citizenships. But that has not stopped it from becoming a popular leisure activity for many laypersons.

Family histories have also become an invaluable source of texts and narratives – "human documents" – used in studying the histories of societies.[222] These documents form the basis of the family case history approach developed by French sociologist Daniel Bertaux to study intergenerational social mobility. He argued that the case histories can "function as small mirrors of general cultural and social

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[221] Ibid., pp 2-3.

[222] See for example, Brian Roberts, *Biographical research* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002); Ken Plummer, *Documents of life 2: an invitation to a critical humanism* (London: Sage Publications, 2001); Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, *Pathways to social class: a qualitative approach to social mobility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

patterns, of societal dynamics and change"[223] because of its emphasis on the various inter-connecting kinship ties and social relations. He argued that compared to collecting life stories of individuals, which tends to place the social relations at the periphery, family case histories explore the links between the individuals within the family – by birth or marriage – and offer a more complete view of the network of social relations.

VISITING ANCESTRAL VILLAGES

Related to the belief that the family is the basic unit of society, knowing one's origins is an important feature of *hua ren* cultural memory. The importance of one's origins is reflected in several sayings, such as *yin shui si yuan* 饮水思源,[224] *luo ye sheng gen* （落叶生根）[225] and *luo di gui gen* (落地归根)[226] among many others. This theme of origins is especially significant among the generation of the *hua ren* who did not have the intention of permanent exile or leave of absence from their home villages. The offspring of the diasporic generation often engaged in *xun gen* (寻根) activities – search for their roots – through returning to the ancestral, either as attempts to understand their own family members or as a personal mission to understand the meaning of "being Chinese" themselves.[227] Although many of them came to different conclusions about their experiences, many nevertheless felt the initial urge to return to the land of their cultural origins.[228]

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[223] Daniel Bertaux and Catherine Delcroix, "Case histories of families and social processes: enriching sociology," in *The turn to biographical methods in social science*, ed. Chamberlain. Prue, Joanna Bernat and Tom Wengraf, 71-89 (London: Routledge, 2000), p 71.
[224] The phrase literally translates to mean remembering the source of water one drinks. It is an admonition for one to remember one's provenance.
[225] Growing roots where the leaves fall.
[226] Returning to one's roots.
[227] See for example, Josephine M T Khu, *Cultural curiosity: thirteen stories about the search for Chinese roots*, California: University of California Press, 2001.
[228] Ibid.

Such trips back to ancestral villages are not unique to *hua ren* communities. In recent years, such trips, known as heritage tourism or cultural tourism, has also become popular in Western societies.[229] Generally these trips are made by members of "diasporic communities" who "return" to their "homelands" in search of their roots. These forms of secular pilgrimages are undertaken "in the vain hope of discovering more about themselves, their ancestry, their heritage, their families and their extended communities".[230] Some do it to retrace the steps of their ancestors, or to reaffirm kinship bonds with the "home country", while others undertake such travel for genealogical research purposes.[231] Though not a culturally exclusive activity, returning to one's ancestral homeland has an added significance for *hua ren*, given the importance of family, kinship and ancestral obligations as discussed earlier in the chapter.

CONCLUSION

Cultural practices are performances that articulate a group's underlying values and beliefs. In the case of *hua ren* society, activities that memorialise ancestors reflect the significance of kinship. Although ancestor worship dominates the understanding of *hua ren* memorialisation, it is by no means the only activity that *hua ren* conduct to call to remembrance their family members or family history. As the quote at the beginning of the section on "memorialisation" shows, the turn to memory can provide an opportunity for the re-examination of how we negotiate our identifications. Indeed

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[229] Dallen J. Timothy, "Genealogical mobility: tourism and the search for a personal past," in *Geography and genealogy: locating personal pasts*, ed. Dallen J. Timothy and Jeanne Kay Guelke, 115-135 (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

[230] Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy, "'My field is the world': conceptualising diasporas, travel and tourism," in *Tourism, diasporas and space*, ed. Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy, 1-29 (London: Routledge, 2004), p14.

[231] Ibid., pp14-15.

the reorganisation of temporality in the world has played a big part in how individuals and communities imagine themselves and negotiate between their multiple selves. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Chinese Diaspora is a particular feature of a particular time. While one's cultural heritage is an important part of an individual's identity, the identity is not an unchanging one. In addition to memory, one's locale and network can also affect one's identity and identifications. Religion, education and the structure of the socio-economic environment in which one resides play a large part in informing one's life and shaping one's cultural identifications. If identity, culture and memory do not exist in spatial vacuums, then it follows that the interactions between the factors informing one's identity, culture and memory will generate new elements that form the basis of oneself and one's sense of self, the longevity of cultural heritage notwithstanding. These points are elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5, where the case studies of Singapore and Taiwan respectively, are presented.

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CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for this comparative study was conducted in various stages between 2010 and 2011 in Singapore and Taiwan. Guided by the overarching historical comparative framework, the data for the study was collected through a combination of methods including interviews, participant observation, survey and a review of published materials. This chapter outlines the rationale for the choice of sites studied, the research framework and the various sources of data used.

RESEARCH SITES

Singapore and Taiwan were selected for this study as they are the only two territories outside the People's Republic of China (PRC) where the *hua ren* population forms an ethnic majority. In addition, Singapore and Taiwan are politically independent entities, the political limbo of Taiwan's sovereignty notwithstanding. Hong Kong was initially considered as a candidate for case study, but it was dropped from the final study as it is now politically part of the PRC, even though it may have some administrative autonomy. Although there are debates about the sovereignty of the island, it is, at the point of study, still a politically separate entity from the PRC.

The two sites, which share a common ethnic heritage, present interesting contrasts. Taiwan faces stronger contesting tensions over its cultural identity as it is strongly intertwined with politics. The "Han"/"Aborigine" dichotomy has given way to a Chinese/Taiwanese one. Although politically motivated to distance its cultural identity from "Chinese", it can be argued that Taiwan is the last vestige of "traditional

Chinese" culture – brought over to the island by the Republic of China government under Chiang Kai Shek in 1949 – which has since been ruptured on the PRC.[232] On the other hand, Singapore is an independent nation state in Southeast Asia with a strong British heritage, and a multicultural and multiracial population albeit one that is dominated by *hua ren*. Although it has developed its own identity with western influences (specifically in terms of politics, language and capitalist outlook), Singapore claims "Chinese" heritage by virtue of its *hua ren* majority population. Its government promotes the retention of "Chinese" culture, most notably language and moral values, while constantly reminding its *hua ren* population that their political loyalty should lie with the island state.

While both Singapore and Taiwan claim (some) *hua ren* cultural identity, Singapore and Taiwan have developed along separate historical and social trajectories. How has this changed the cultural identities and imaginations of the *hua ren* population? What does this mean? Thus the two case studies provide an interesting space to examine the issue of *hua ren* cultural identity.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND DATA COLLECTION

For this study, the research methodology was guided by the subject matter and objective, that is, to articulate a theoretical framework in which to understand and articulate contemporary *hua ren* cultural identity in Singapore and Taiwan. The primary aim of the research is not to generate a representative sample for each site, nor to prove or disprove a premise. Instead, I hope to use the case studies – grounded

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[232] Allen Chun, "From nationalism to nationalizing: cultural imagination and state formation in postwar Taiwan," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 31 (Jan 1994): 49-69.

in their respective contexts and observations – to make sense of the current state of how *hua ren* in these sites imagine their cultural identities.

With this in mind, I decided to use the historical comparative case study approach as I was more interested in how the social, historical and cultural contexts of the two sites affected the development of *hua ren* cultural identity rather than with the idea of cultural identity *per se*. This approach was appropriate given its emphasis on processes over time and contextualisation.[233] Furthermore, the approach is able to present the dynamic process in which cultural identities are constructed through locale, network and memory. Additionally, there are several advantages to the approach. First, the case study approach allows for the utilisation of information from multiple sources that enable a more holistic study of complex social phenomena. Second, the approach enables the grounding of observations and concepts in natural settings. Third, and most critically, the case study provides a socio-historical context in which to situate the phenomenon studied. I contend that an understanding of the historical dimension of a social phenomenon is just as important as studying the phenomenon itself as it reveals patterns and developments which provide insights to the phenomenon studied.

This study utilises two case studies. The comparative framework is a research method employed in the social sciences to identify, analyse and explain similarities and differences across societies and is thus well suited to illustrate the various processes and factors at work in the production of cultural identities of *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan. A comparison between Singapore and Taiwan provides the contextual framework for examining and addressing the issue of cultural identities in

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[233] James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Comparative historical analysis: Achievements and agendas," in *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, pp 3-38 at p 10. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2003).

different environments. At the same time, the cross-national comparison places emphasis on contextualisation, providing a better understanding of societies that are considered culturally similar but have developed under different circumstances.

There are several limitations and criticisms of the comparative approach. Some of the issues most often discussed include case sampling, what unit, level and scale of analysis to use, and whether to take a variable-oriented or case-oriented approach, among others.[234] In comparative studies of countries, societies and communities of different cultures, problems of adequate understanding of the cultures being studied, appropriateness and equivalence are also critical concerns[235] as they relate to the understanding of the cultural context of the research sites. Questions that arise relate to whether the methods employed are suitable for the stated conceptualisation and research questions, and whether the research samples correspond (for example, age range and population characteristics) across the various sites. All these variables influence the validity of the results.

Nevertheless, the comparative approach has the potential to reveal possibilities – of similarities and differences over time and space – taking into consideration the particular contexts of the research sites. It is also a suitable approach for the study of relationships – with all its complexities and dynamism – between groups of people or between the social, economic and political systems at work.[236]

The data for this research was collected in various stages and through various means. The main bulk of my data was collected mainly through interviews,

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[234] For a summary of the debates surrounding methodologies in comparative research, see for example, Melinda Mills, Gerald G. van de Bunt and Jeanne de Bruijn, "Comparative research: persistent problems and promising solutions," *International Sociology* 21, no. 5 (September 2006): 619-631.
[235] Tim May, *Social research: issues, methods and process*, 3rd edition (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001)., pp 212-217.
[236] Ibid., pp 208-212.

participant observation and a survey. Published materials were also consulted. My

approach was inspired by what has been termed "biographical methods" in which

materials such as memoirs, oral accounts, letters, diaries and other personal artefacts

form the basis for analysis. Although I had originally intended to draw on all these

biographical materials, due to time constraints and the scope of this research, I have

concentrated on oral accounts – interviews in this case – on the topic of the specific

cultural practices in question and *hua ren* attitudes towards these practices. Where

possible, I also spoke to family members or other associates of the interviewees in

order to get a clearer picture of the practices in questions.

Data collection was conducted in various stages in both Singapore and Taiwan

between 2010 and 2011 over several phases. In the initial stage, I asked *hua ren*

participants in Singapore and Taiwan about their participation in memorialisation

activities and reasons for their participation. The information was gathered through a

survey (see Appendix A). The survey was distributed via the email through known

contacts. This was especially important for me to recruit Taiwanese participants, as I

have no direct connections in Taiwan. In Singapore, I also conducted the survey with

random students at the National University of Singapore (discussed in "Singapore

data" section). As indicated earlier, the purpose of the study was not to generate a

statistically representative sample but to complement the data collected from

interviews and participant observation. My main aim was to have an outline of current

attitudes towards memorialisation practices and activities from which I could then

obtain an idea of how respondents viewed themselves in terms of cultural identity.

In the second stage, I approached respondents to the survey for a follow-up

interview. The interview sessions were based on the same questions listed in the

questionnaire but the sessions were not overly structured. In addition to personal

contacts, students at NUS and two universities in Taiwan, I also managed to recruit

several respondents from Singapore Khoh Clan Association (SKCA) and the

Singapore Geneological Society (SGS).

On many occasions, thesessions were almost conversational, especially as the

session progressed. The informants, especially the senior interviewees, were often

interested in my experiences and why I was interested in the topic. For them,

memorialisation of ancestors was not something young people were keen on.[237]

Furthermore, in Singapore, the senior interviewees often assumed I was an "Overseas

Chinese" – or *hua qiao* as they put it – from Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong or China

when I broached the subject with them. They were surprised that a young

Singaporean would be interested in such a topic. In addition, they were impressed

with my fluency in Mandarin and several Chinese dialects. The Taiwanese informants

were curious about my cultural experience as a "Chinese from Singapore" and often

compared their experiences and mine.

On several occasions, the interview sessions evolved into group discussions.

This usually happened during interviews with members of the clan and the SGS. In

the case of the clan, the interviews were usually conducted at the clan building and

usually during a clan activity. Even though there was a clear informant, who would

usually be the one to explain the activities, other members would often mill around or

flit in and out of the interview, adding their comments and sharing their experiences.

At times, the informant would engage with the other members in a conversation that

rose out of the interview. Again, I initially saw these as distractions and disruptions.

But I found the experience illuminating as it gave a better idea of how others of the

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[237] This perception is an interesting indication of how the older generation of respondents viewed the cultural identification of the younger generation. This point will be further elaborated in the respective sections in the next two chapters.

"same group" may think, either affirming the opinions or attitude of the informant or disagreeing with them, in which case were alternative views and propositions.

I experienced similar situations in Taiwan. With interviews conducted in the homes of the informants, there were often interjections and clarifications of the informants' expressed views from other members of the family, and peers as was the case in interviews with university students. This proved to be an interesting situation as such interactions reflected the idea of a joint construction of cultural memory and demonstrated how different individuals – some from the same family or from the same generation of different families – negotiated the cultural memories of a similar set of practices.

The third phase of the data collection process, which ran concurrently with the survey and interviews, consisted mainly of participant observation. In Singapore, I attended several meetings of the SGS and events organised by the SKCA over two years. On these occasions, I was able to interact with members and observe the proceedings, many of which have not been documented in any publications. While I did not have the access to similar associations and groups in Taiwan, I was able to visit some of my informants at their homes and offices. A large part of the observation in Taiwan comes from my visits to temples, columbaria and cemeteries in Taipei, Hsinchu, Taichung and Tainan.

In constructing the survey (see Appendix 1) and structuring the interviews, I was inspired by the biographical approach. The biographical approach encompasses a wide range of research types and data, such as life history, biography and autobiography, oral history and memory, among others. These materials are generated by the life of the individual, and at the same time, is a form of knowledge production.

Embedded in these materials are an individual's networks, life experiences and memories. In collecting data relating to cultural identity and memories, I found the biographical approach a suitable method to guide data collection, in this instance information given through interviews. In this way, the materials gathered revealed a respondent's sense of identification with a specific site at a specific time, rather than set out an absolute definition of identities, which risks being fossilised into a timeless representation of an ideal. Biographical methods – with its focus on the individual life[238] – is appealing for many cultural studies researchers because

> it is exploring, in diverse methodological and interpretive ways, how individual accounts of life experience can be understood within the contemporary cultural and structural settings and is thereby helping to chart the major societal changes that are underway, but not merely at some broad social level.[239]

Initially, I planned to adopt the family case history approach developed by French sociologist Daniel Bertaux for his study on intergenerational social mobility. His family case histories start with the ego (a student) who traces his or her family tree up two generations. Once the family tree is constructed, biographical data of each member will be collected. This includes gender, year of birth, place of birth, level of education and occupation – information which serves Bertaux's research purposes. Then, stories about the respondent's family members are collected, usually through interviews.[240] Bertaux's method is an interesting take on the usual interview, which generally focuses on an individual only. Bertaux argued that case histories can

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[238] For a comprehensive overview of the methods of and debates surrounding biographical research, see Brian Roberts, *Biographical research* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002). For a sense of the application of biographical research in various contexts, see Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf, *The turn to biographical methods in social science: comparative issues and examples*, ed. Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengraf (New York: Routledge, 2000).
[239] Roberts, Biographical research, p 5.
[240] Daniel Bertaux and Catherine Delcroix, "Case histories of families and social processes: enriching sociology," in *The turn to biographical methods in social science*, ed. Prue Chamberlain, Joanna Bernat and Tom Wengraf, 71-89 (London: Routledge, 2000), p 71.

"function as small mirrors of general cultural and social patterns of societal dynamics and change"[241] because of their emphasis on the various interconnecting kinship ties and social relations. Compared to collecting the life stories of one individual, which tends to place the social relations at the periphery, family case histories explore the links between the individuals within the family and offer a more complete view of the social relations.

Although I was keen to replicate Bertaux's research method, it became clear in the course of data collection that it was not possible to do so. The main difficulty lay with the limited ability of a single researcher, myself in this case, to reproduce the rigorous and extensive methodology given the limited time frame and funds. Furthermore, the difficulty was compounded by the problem of recruiting a representative sample of participants. Most of the participants who responded to the survey were unwilling to participate in a follow-up interview, nor did they want to involve their families in the endeavour. Bertaux developed this approach as a university lecturer and the data collection was implemented as part of his curriculum, in which his students undertook the data collection for their respective families. Unfortunately I did not have the network and the reach of the lecturer-student relationship to be able to replicate the scale and scope of Bertaux's study. When I first started on my fieldwork, I found it a struggle to recruit candidates for my survey and interview. Furthermore, most of the people who responded to my survey either turned down my request for a follow-up interview and/or for their family members to be involved. In addition, my relationship with my informants was decidedly shallower and had not reached the level of reciprocity where they felt comfortable sharing their personal information freely with me. In contrast, Bertaux's students had conducted

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[241] Ibid.

the interviews with their own family, and they were able to elicit a richer data set given their intimate knowledge and access to the information source.

As such, I modified the Bertaux's method to suit this research. For each research site, efforts were made to include informants of a range of ages and gender. In the case of Taiwan, I also tried to include respondents from various regions, as shall be discussed later. My aim was to interview several family members, including the informants, where possible. When this was not impossible, I tried to solicit as much information as I could from the informants about their families and their memorialisation practices. I also tried to obtain information about the informant's familial situation by interviewing him or her at their home. Not only did it give me the opportunity to witness the interactions between the family members, it also allowed the informants to be more comfortable and open as they were in a familiar setting. In addition to families, I also included clan associations, lineages and other related social groups in the study. In Singapore, I conducted interviews and participant observations with the Singapore Khoh Clan Association[242](SKCA) and the Singapore Genealogy Society.[243] Besides conducting formal interviews with informants, I also attended their meetings and activities which allowed me to observe the interaction and practices at close quarters. In Taiwan, I interviewed several members of the various Hsu[244] clan associations in three cities and visited several clan temples, based on recommendations and introductions by the SKCA.

For this study, I have concentrated on oral accounts – interviews in this case – of the specific cultural practices and the respondents' attitudes to these practices. The

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[242] The Chinese name of the association is 新加坡许氏总会.
[243] The Chinese name of the association is 新加坡族谱学会.
[244] Same surname group as the SKCA. Different transliteration of the surname Xu.

interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin and Hokkien, a dialect most of my

respondents – especially the older interviewees in Taiwan – spoke.

Although the individual forms the key unit of analysis in this study, the

informants were also placed in both the macro socio-historical contexts and the more

immediate networks in which they were embedded. These networks included, most

notably, the family, and the lineage and clan. The family was selected as a unit of

analysis since it is

> the main channel for the transmission of language, names, land and
> housing, local social standing, and religion; and beyond that also of
> moral values and aspirations, fears, world views, domestic skills, taken-
> for-granted ways of behaving, attitudes to the body, models of parenting
> and marriage – resulting in the condensation of experiences.[245]

Many studies have discussed the significance of the family as a social

unit in "Chinese" societies. The perpetuation of the family line is a mark of filial

piety and attests to its importance. That the family is a "cultural image

constructed out of real individuals, and also, sometimes, mythical ancestry"[246] is

as true in "Chinese" societies as it is in non-Chinese societies. This definition of

the family can be applied to groups such as lineage, clans, and related

associations that draw on such networks of relations, which are also included in

this study as sources of information and units of analysis. Lineages were

considered as one's extended families. Clan associations are also considered

families, for conceptually, they provide the same sort of support and functions

as a family especially to a migrant community, such as Singapore during

colonial times.

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[245] Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, "Introduction," in *Between generations: family models, myths and memories*, ed. Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p 1
[246] Ibid., p 2.

As a *hua ren* with an understanding of Mandarin (and related Chinese dialects), culture and customs, I have an embedded knowledge of the research contexts. This is especially true in the case of Singapore since I am Singaporean. In Taiwan, I was able to draw on my cultural knowledge to build an adequate picture of the social historical contexts. The "controls" for this comparative study is the set of activities related to ancestor memorialisation discussed in Chapter Two. Although the resultant group of informants may not square up exactly in terms of statistical equivalence, the data – in this case the narratives of self, family and cultural practices – can be compared based on the cultural equivalence.

Like any methodology, there are limitations to biographical research. Some of the key criticisms include the reliability and validity of the materials and information, a critique often made of memory-related studies. There are also issues regarding the adequacy of the information on the final analysis, and the applicability or generalisability of the material to other situations and sites. Critics have argued that the biographical approach gives too much emphasis to an individual and that it privileges the experiential as authentic.[247] This failing can be ameliorated by not using biographical research as the sole method, unless studying, for example, a particular prominent personality. Biographical research, in the case of this study, is taken as a starting point and complementary approach to other methods, not as the only means of data collection. This approach was chosen in order to capture the dynamism and flow, rather than a statistical and scientific picture. of the social space and identity change process. This is significant because individuals and communities are

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[247] Roberts, Biographical research, p 6.

embedded in a network of family, occupational and social ties. Any study on a community is as much a study on the network praxis and individual agency.

STRANGER INSIDER, INSIDE STRANGER

Before I present the data collected from Singapore and Taiwan, I would like to make an observation of my role as a researcher. As with most social science researchers, the issue of distance to the research topic and subjects is an interesting subject. Throughout the course of the research, I experienced the classic case of the sociological "stranger"/"insider" dichotomy in both sites. On several levels, I am an "insider" to the research topic and subject – I am a *hua ren* who speaks the language, understands the script and was brought up with knowledge of the various associated cultural values and practices. As a history student, researcher and Singapore citizen, I am an "insider" to the Singapore site. To some extent, I am part of the history and society of the very site of my research.

Being an "insider" in Singapore – being Singaporean and of Chinese heritage – has provided me with several advantages where data collection is concerned. I was able to gain access to informants more easily than in Taiwan. I was also able to follow up more immediately with any leads and informants in Singapore, unlike in Taiwan, where I was constrained by my limited stay there. There were also disadvantages of my being an "insider" in Singapore. Very often, the informants would assume and expect me to know about what I was researching since I am a Singaporean and *hua ren*, like them. I am often asked "why are you studying this topic, shouldn't you know". This reaction belies the assumption of a common cultural practice and knowledge shared by all *hua ren*. Furthermore, unlike the Taiwanese informants,

many of the local Singapore informants were quite cryptic and brief in their explanations, often punctuating their responses with "you should know" or "as you know".

This insider/outsider dichotomy further complicated my position as a researcher, especially in Singapore. In two cases in Singapore, I was enlisted as a member of the groups from which I had drawn my informants, source of information and conducted observations. One was the Singapore Khoh Clan Association and the other was the Singapore Genealogy Society. A senior member of the Khoh Clan teased me about joining the clan as a member if I wanted them to share information with me. I was unable to refuse as he had made the statement in front of a group of senior members, who also agreed I should become a member, not least because of our shared surname. They also urged me to join the clan as a means of continuing the "tradition", since my late grandfather was a member of the clan. For them, my interest in the subject and my needing their help was an ideal opportunity to oblige me to join the clan membership. In the case of the Singapore Genealogy Society, the secretary included me as a member of one of their research committees on hearing that I was a postgraduate researcher. I had arranged to meet with him for an interview, but the session turned out to be a committee meeting with other Society members. He did not ask if I would like to join the society but assumed my participation since I turned up at the initial meeting. In both cases, I was enlisted because of my position as a researcher, which they saw as adding academic credibility to their respective groups.

At the same time, I am also a stranger, not one with prejudice or the marginal man,[248] but one with prestige. In Taiwan, I am a stranger because I am not local but a

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[248] During the 1920s, American sociologist Robert Park conceptualised the "marginal man" as a product increased migration and interaction with people from other cultures. Park drew on Georg

foreigner. Associated with my stranger status is the prestige of being able to speak

and understand their language and at the same time having some sort of cultural

affiliation. The prestige is enhanced by my fluency in English and Mandarin, and that

I come from a "modern" country, and am a postgraduate researcher. This status of a

stranger-insider has benefitted my research to some extent. Because of my ability to

understand their language and culture, my informants were open to speaking with me

on issues of *hua ren* culture and identity, often candidly expressing their attitudes and

beliefs. An informant once mentioned that it was easier for me to speak to the

Taiwanese about such issues and get more out of them because I was a stranger. It

would not be the case if I were a local. Furthermore, because I was not local, my

informants felt the need to "fill me in" on much of the local history and social

developments. As a stranger, the interviewees were less likely to presume knowledge

about their culture and experiences on my part. This worked to my advantage as they

were willing to explain details and contexts to me. They were also more open to

answering my probing questions. This gave me insights on how the interviewees

understood themselves and their cultural practices so that I did not have to extrapolate

them from stereotypes or published materials.

While my "insider" status made the conversation easier, it also made the

information subject to their interpretation, hence the information received was shaped

by their bias and experience. But this was generally not an issue because the intention

of the study was to solicit personal experiences rather than "objective truth". Because

of my identity as a stranger, the Taiwanese informants were similarly very interested

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Simmel's "stranger", one who "lives in intimate association with the world about him but never so
completely identifies with it that he is unable to look at it with a certain critical detachment". Park's
marginal man is "a man living and sharing in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples;
never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions and not
quite accepted in the new society in which he now sought to find a place." See Robert E. Park, "Human
migration and the marginal man," *American Journal of Sociology* 5 (1928); Georg Simmel, *The
sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff (Illinois: Free Press , 1950).

in my situation and experiences which they assumed was different from theirs. As such, quite often during the Taiwanese interviews, the informants would often turn around and ask me questions about my family and my cultural experiences. Initially this seemed like an interruption to the flow of events and I worried that I spoke more than my informants. But I also viewed it as being advantageous, because it provided for more genuine conversations.

SINGAPORE DATA

The fieldwork in Singapore was conducted between 2008 and 2011, using a combination of survey,[249] interviews and participant observation. In total, I had 57 respondents for both interviews and surveys. Of the 57 respondents, 35 responded to the survey only, 9 responded via face-to-face interviews only and 13 responded to both the interviews and the survey. Thirty-four of the 57 respondents were female while 24 were male.

By chain referral, I was able to gather interviews from a range of individuals, which can be loosely grouped into four categories: (1) general individuals – friends and their associates who were not affiliated to cultural or academic organisations, (2) Singapore Khoh Clan Association (SKCA) members, (3) Singapore Genealogy Society (SGS) members and (4) National University of Singapore (NUS) students. I had begun with the first group through my contacts, hoping to get a cross section of society so that the results would be as diverse as possible. The latter three groups of respondents were introduced to me via chain referral, and although I had not deliberately chosen the specific groups, they provided the control groups and

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[249] See Appendix 1 for survey

increased the possibility of a diversity of data. The SKCA and SGS groups also provided me with the sites for participant observation.

Initially, I attempted to use the random sampling approach but was unable to make much headway: returns were low and the possibility of following up with an interview was even lower as many respondents chose not to include their contact details. With chain referral, I was able to access a pool of respondents who were more open to being interviewed within the limited time frame I had. It was a more fruitful attempt than random sampling. While it was easy to administer the questionnaire to general individuals and NUS students, it was more difficult to do so with SKCA and SGS members. Fortunately, these individuals were open in interviews and conversation. In contrast, the general individuals and NUS students were not as willing to be interviewed, although they were willing to fill out the questionnaires.

Generally, those who participated in interviews only were older members of the clan association and Genealogy Society. Younger respondents aged between 12 and 81 years old tended to favour the survey. There were 34 female respondents and 24 male. Twenty-one respondents claimed to have no religious beliefs, while 8 indicated Buddhism and 7, Taoism. Only one respondent indicated "a mix of Buddhism and Taoism" as his religious beliefs. Six others said they were "bai shen de". There were also 12 Christians and 2 Catholics.

Among the memorialisation practices, the most common activities which the respondents participated in was visiting ancestral graves during Qing Ming (25), followed by visiting temples, columbaria and niches where the cremated remains and/or ancestral tablets are hosted (20). Of the ritual practices, the domestic rite of offering joss sticks daily at the ancestral tablet ranks fourth, in terms of frequency,

among all the activities surveyed (10). Of the informal memorialisation practices, the telling of family stories was most common, with 19 respondents saying that they participated in this form of practice. The other forms of memorialisation practices respondents said they participated in included clan activities (6), the compiling of genealogy (7), the compiling of family history (3), collecting photographs (6) and visiting ancestral villages in China (5).

At the end of the interviews, I asked the informants if I could speak to their family members. Some agreed to ask their family members but most of them said it was inconvenient for me to do so or that they did not want to involve their family members. I was able to interview and/or administer the survey with the family members of three of my informants. Of the three families, data was gathered via survey (1 family), face-to-face interview (1 family) and over the phone (1 family).

The participant observation in Singapore was largely carried out with the SKCA and the SGS, at times running concurrently with scheduled interviews. The SKCA is a surname-based clan established in 1954. It was an amalgamation of two mutual aid associations, both founded in 1936 by different groups of people with the surname Khoh.[250] The amalgamated association was registered as the SKCA in 1953.[251] A former senior colleague who was active in the clan associations first introduced me to his contact, who happened to be a member of the SKCA. This member then invited me to a clan activity and introduced me to the other members, who subsequently invited me to several activities where I was able to observe the proceedings and talk to various members.

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[250] Also spelled Koh, Ko, Khor, Khaw depending on the various dialect transliterations. But these transliterations could be for surnames such as Gao (高) or Ke (柯) which sound similar to Xu (许), which is Khoh in this case, in dialects.

[251] 新加坡许氏总会，《世界许氏宗亲第五届恳亲大会特刊》 [Singapore Khoh Clan Association, *The 5th World Convention of Khoh Clan Representatives* souvenir magazine, Singapore: 1990], p58.

Similarly by the chain referral system, I was introduced to members of the Singapore Genealogy Society (新加坡族谱学会). The SGS was set up in 2010 with the aim of promoting the development of Chinese genealogies originating in Singapore. The main champion of the Society is its Secretary, Tan Ngap Hong (陈业雄), a retired physical education teacher from Catholic High School. He appears to be the main person coordinating Society meetings and pushing for things to get done. The SGS chairman is Ng Yew Kang, a former civil servant and Consul General to Xiamen (2002 – 2004). The main objective of the SGS is to promote genealogy work among Singaporeans and encourage them to start constructing their genealogies with a Singapore perspective, starting from the ancestor who first came to Singapore. The membership of the Society was, as I observed, rather fluid. It consisted of mostly Tan's former students and associates. Academics, such as Professor Wang Gungwu, were listed as academic consultants for the Society's main project of compiling a master genealogy of the *hua ren* in Singapore.[252]

I also surveyed and interviewed a group of National University of Singapore undergraduates from various faculties to gather information about the attitudes of the younger generation to memorialisation activities. This came about after an initial review of the interviews and surveys collected when I realised that most of the respondents and informants were aged 30 and above. Those under 30 were clearly under represented. I do not consider this group of under-30 respondents and informants as representative of the cohort, since they have clearly a distinct viewpoint because of their education level. But they do provide insight into a segment of the youth population, which I had been unable to access up to this point. Among the 30 students surveyed, I conducted follow-up interviews with nine of them.

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[252] See Chapter 4 – Singapore case study for details.

TAIWAN DATA

As with the fieldwork in Singapore, research in Taiwan was conducted between 2010

and 2011, using a combination of surveys, interviews and observation. The method of

soliciting information and respondents was similar to that used in Singapore. I first

contacted friends and associates who connected me to their Taiwan contacts. During

the initial phase, I emailed the Taiwan respondents with the survey form. I then

followed up with those who returned the form to arrange for a face-to-face interview.

I spent a total of 12 weeks in Taiwan conducting interviews in Taipei, Hsinchu,

Taichung and Tainan. For 5 weeks in November and December 2010, I was hosted by

the Graduate Institute for Social Research and Cultural Studies[253] (SCRS) at

Hsinchu's National Chiao Tung University.[254] During my stay, I interviewed several

groups of people: (1) SCRS graduate students and their families, (2) members of the

Xu clans, (3) families and friends of contacts made during the August trip. The

interviews were conducted in Hsinchu, Taipei and Taichung. For four weeks in April

2011, I was hosted by the National Cheng Kung University[255] in Tainan where I was

able to conduct interviews with respondents in Tainan.

In total, I had 41 respondents for both interviews and surveys. Of the

respondents, 7 responded to the survey only, 14 responded via face-to-face interviews

only and 20 responded to both the interviews and the survey. There were 12 male and

29 female respondents. The age range of the respondents was between 19 and 85

years old, with those in their 20s making up the largest group of the respondents (15).

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[253] 社会与文化研究所
[254] 国立交通大学
[255] 国立成功大学

Among my Taiwan respondents, a large proportion of them claimed either no particular religious beliefs (8) or Taoism (8). I had 7 Christian informants, 5 of whom weremembers of the Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints). This disproportionately high number of Christians was a result of chain referral, with one contact referring another of their associates to me. Six of my informants were Buddhists while only one described his religious beliefs as a "mixture", probably a reference to Chinese folk religion.

The Taiwan respondents were drawn from different parts of Taiwan – Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, Hsinchu, Lugang, Nantou, and Jiayi among them. I had not deliberately chosen respondents based on their place of birth/origin. My initial idea was to conduct the survey and interviews in some of the major regions of Taiwan – Taipei, Taichung and Tainan – to take into account the regional differences in Taiwan. During my fieldwork in Taiwan, I based myself in Taipei, Hsinchu and Tainan, three of the major cities in Taiwan. Because of the high mobility of Taiwanese, who travel for work and study outside their place of birth, I was able to recruit respondents from different areas. But, by far, the largest number of respondents came from Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan (19), followed by Taichung (9), Tainan (3), Kaohsiung (2), Hsinchu (2), Lugang (1), Nantou (1) and Jiayi (1). Three of the respondents did not indicate their place of birth.

It must be noted that the place of birth of the respondents did not necessarily correspond to the site of interview. This was due to the mobility of the Taiwanese population, many of whom do not work or study in the city or county they were born in. I did not intentionally select informants based on their regional origins as most of the informants were introduced to me by the referral system. I had not specified any

regional or religious requirements, except that the informants be *hua ren*, not Taiwanese Aborigines.

Like Singapore, the most common memorialisation practices were the visiting of ancestral graves (30), or columbaria, temples and niches where the remains and tablets are housed (20). These visits usually took place during Qing Ming. One clear difference with the Singapore data was the high incidence of the domestic rites, with 23 respondents indicating that they or their family participated in this form of memorialisation. The most common informal memorialisation activity undertaken was the telling of family stories (17). Respondents also indicated that they participated in clan activities (4), compiled genealogy (6) and family history (3), as well as visited their ancestral villages in China (4).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I did not have the same level of access to clan associations and groups in Taiwan as I did in Singapore. Hence, my observations were limited to visits to temples, columbaria and cemeteries in Taipei, Hsinchu and Tainan. I was also able to visit some of my informants at their homes and offices. A large part of the information gathered in Taiwan came from such meetings, and in the (more) prolonged interactions with the students of the two universities at which I was hosted during my fieldwork.

The following two chapters will discuss the research findings at the respective sites in greater detail. Where individual respondents are quoted, they are given notations denoting their initials, gender, age and location. For example: JK/F35/SP indicates that the informant's initials are JK, she is a female aged 35 and located in Singapore. Similarly, TB/M42/TW will indicate a respondent with the initial TB, he is a male, aged 42 and located in Taiwan.

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CHAPTER 4
SINGAPORE HUA REN:
A CASE OF EMOTIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

Map 1: Singapore in Southeast Asia[256]

Singapore is often considered a "Chinese" society because of its *hua ren* majority

citizenry. Neo-Confucian Sinologist Tu Weiming placed Singapore in the first

symbolic universe of his conceptual "Cultural China" together with Hong Kong and

Taiwan by virtue of their overwhelmingly Han Chinese population.[257] Such a

perception is largely the result of historical developments. The majority of *hua ren* in

Singapore descended from the Chinese migrants who came from the southern

provinces of Guangdong and Fujian during the 19th and early 20th centuries. By the

time of the first official census in 1871, the Chinese population constituted the largest

ethnic group in Singapore, comprising 56.2% of the population.[258] Since 1901, the

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[256] Map adapted from http://math.nie.edu.sg/atcm/map01.htm, accessed 26 September 2012.
[257] Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: the periphery as the center," in *The living tree: the changing meaning of being Chinese today*, ed. Wei-ming Tu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
[258] J.F.A. McNair, Miscellaneous numerical returns [and] Straits Settlements population [for the year] 1871 (Singapore , 1871).

Chinese population constituted just over 70% of the total population.[259] As such,

Singapore is often featured as a case study in "overseas Chinese" studies, and is

positioned as a regional centre for "overseas Chinese" studies.[260]

But Singapore is not a purely "Chinese" society due to the presence of a

substantial "non-Chinese" population. The Malays and Indians comprise 13.1% and

9.2% of the Singapore population respectively.[261] The "Chineseness" of Singapore

society is highlighted mainly because it is geographically located in the Malay

Archipelago, a Malay/Muslim dominant region. Sociologist Kwok Kian Woon argued

that Singapore is not a Chinese society like Hong Kong, Taiwan and China because of

its long history as a British colony and its being part of the geopolitical Malay

world.[262] These factors, Kwok argued, have "indelibly shaped the socio-cultural life"

of Singapore *hua ren* that renders it incomparable to the other "Chinese" societies.[263]

He further contended that generations of localisation, diverging political allegiances

and identifications have added to the complexity of the Chinese community in

Singapore. He argued that there is

> no single historical definition of "Chineseness" in the course of the
> social transformation of the Chinese community in Singapore. The
> vicissitudes of some of the key qualifying terms used by members of

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[259] See Lynn Pan, ed., *The encyclopedia of Overseas Chinese*, (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006), Table 5.14 – Distribution of Singapore's total population by ethnic group, p 200.

[260] Singapore has been lauded as a pioneer in the study of the Chinese overseas, dating back to 1955 when *hua qiao shi* (overseas Chinese history) and *Nanyang yan jiu* (research on Nanyang) at the Nanyang University (Nantah). See Weng Kam Leong, "Study of Chinese diaspora no longer like 'an orphan'," *The Straits Times* (Singapore, May 30, 2010). The Chinese Heritage Centre, located at the Nanyang Technological University (former Nantah site), was founded in 1995 with the mission "to be a leading research and resource centre on the Chinese outside China", with a strong focus on the "Chinese diaspora". See CHC website, *The Chinese Heritage Centre*, http://chc.ntu.edu.sg/AboutUs/Pages/Home.aspx (accessed November 23, 2012) and Elgin Toh, "New NTU library focuses on Chinese diaspora," *The Straits Times* (September 15, 2010).

[261] 3.3% of Singapore's population is categorised as "Others". Department of Statistics, "Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion," Census, Department of Statistics (Singapore).

[262] Kian Woon Kwok, "Social transformation and the problem of social coherence: Chinese Singaporeans at century's end," Working paper No. 124, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore (Singapore, 1994), p 3.

[263] Ibid.

the community … offer one way of exploring the historical problem of Chinese identity in Singapore.[264]

But it is not just the vicissitudes of historical terms that define Singapore's *hua ren* cultural identity; cultural identity is also reflected in practices and cultural outlook. This chapter examines the cultural identity of Singapore *hua ren* as reflected through the memorialisation practices they participate in. Through a discussion of the findings of my fieldwork, I argue that one of the major features of the Singapore *hua ren* society is the manifestation of its cultural beliefs and identities via practices rather than through a scriptural framework. I also contend that the material basis for *hua ren* cultural identity in Singapore is weak, which may explain the shift to a more emotional basis of cultural identifications. That is to say, while Singapore *hua ren* may continue to practice some of the "Chinese" acts of memorialisation, their cultural identity is one of symbolic ethnicity. Yet, this has, by no means, diminished their self-perception as "being Chinese".

THE HUA REN FAMILY IN SINGAPORE

Although regarded as the cornerstone of *hua ren* society, the family – defined in this study as the social unit of parents and children[265] – is a relatively new social structure in Singapore that only became a social norm in the second half of the 20th century. Prior to 1933, the colonial Chinese community was largely "monosexual" – one made up of male migrants, most of whom were single.[266] The married men usually did not bring their wives and children. The ratio of men to women in colonial Singapore was

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[264] Ibid., p 5.
[265] See Chapter 2.
[266] Thomas John Bellows, "The Singapore party system: the first two decades," PhD Thesis, Yale University (Michigan, 1968), p 6.

as high as 14:1 (1860 figures).[267] It was only after the introduction of the Aliens

Ordinance of 1933 which restricted the number of male migrants, that the sex balance

improved as the restrictions did not apply to female immigrants. Control was only

imposed on female immigration after 1938 because of the large numbers of females

who were pouring in as a result of the loophole. As a result, the Ordinance, which

addressed the sexual imbalance, had the effect of

> establish(ing) marital relationships as the norm, and made Singapore less
> a way station for transients and more a permanent domicile.[268]

Year	Males as percentage of Chinese migrant population
1860	93.5%
1901	79.6%
1921	74.1%
1947	53.1%
1957	51%

Table 1: Males as percentage of Chinese migrant population[269]

The improved sex ratio meant that "for the first time marriage and families

become possible for large number of men", making the two institutions of marriage

and family normative for a hitherto transient society. That the family became a feature

of Singapore society was also reflected in the increase in children born to the

"Chinese" families during the first half of the 20th century – 18% in 1911, 26% in

1931, 36% in 1947 and 43% in 1957. This trend "solidified the position of the family

as an institution capable of transmitting an ethnic heritage".[270]

One of the elements of ethnic heritage for *hua ren* families is ancestor

worship, as discussed in Chapter 2. The most common form of ancestor worship is the

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[267] James Francis Warren, *Ah ku and karayuki-san: prostitution in Singapore, 1870-1940* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), p 34.
[268] Bellows, "The Singapore party system", p 7
[269] Ibid., p 8.
[270] Sock Foon Chew, *Ethnicity and nationality in Singapore* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1987)., p 117

"domestic cult"[271] which is focussed is the ancestral tablet. The tablet is usually a small piece of wooden board inscribed with the names and the death dates of the deceased. It can be elaborately carved, with the words painted in gold, or it can simply consist of a piece of red paper, with the details (names, dates of death) written in ink and pasted on the block. The ancestral tablet is typically hosted on an altar in the home of the eldest son. On his death, the tablet is passed on to his eldest son. Historically, in cases where the son has no male offspring of his own, he may adopt the children of his siblings or from within the clan, to carry on the family name and continue the practice of ancestor worship. The domestic rituals of ancestor worship includes daily offerings of joss sticks to the tablet, and on specific occasions such as festivals and anniversaries, a more elaborate ritual that includes formal prayers, food offerings and the burning of joss papers.

The transient nature of the Chinese society in colonial Singapore and the subsequent shallow family line of led scholars to argue that the lack of ancestral tablets in the home reflected the mentality that "the house in which people live in the Nan-yang" are not genuine homes".[272] That the family is not as institutionally entrenched in Singapore is reflected in the practice of the domestic cult. Although theoretically, only sons can lead the formal worship rites, daughters and daughters-in-law carry out the actual practice of the domestic rites.[273] Another significant difference in ancestor worship practices in southern China and Singapore is the number of generations of ancestors memorialised. Freedman and Topley who studied *Chinese* society in Singapore in the 1950s noted that the tradition of maintaining an

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[271] Maurice Freedman, *Family and kinship in Chinese society* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1970), p 164.

[272] Maurice Freedman, "Chinese family and marraige in Singapore," Report to the Colonial Social Science Research Council, Colonial Social Science Research Council (Singapore, 1953), p 204.

[273] See for example, Huan Chie Leong, "Ancestor worship in Singapore: Intergenerational narratives of Chinese women," B.A. Thesis, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore (Singapore, 2006/2007), which shows that domestic ancestor worship is largely the work of women.

ancestral tablet for "three to five generations away from the oldest living generation was not observed strictly". They found that "once the tablet reaches the fourth or sixth generation, it was destroyed or buried near the grave of the individual for whom it stood". In some cases, the earlier generations were then "promoted" to be worshipped in the lineage ancestral halls,[274] or enshrined in "public shrines" – clan associations, temples and cemeteries.[275]

If the individual household, and not the lineage hall, was "the only regular ancestor-worshipping unit"[276] as Freedman and Topley noted, the ancestral practice was a shallow one. In the early 1960s, a scholar researching ancestor worship practices in Singapore found that none of the 104 households he interviewed hosted any ancestral tablets at home.[277] By the 1970s, research found that ancestor tablets were not necessarily hosted at home, but in various other places such as clan associations and temples.[278] Sometimes, the deceased

> is not even given a permanent spirit tablet; instead, a temporary spirit
> tablet is set up on such occasions as the Seventh month.[279]

This simplicity reflected the sojourner mentality that many first generation migrants maintained: they felt that everything was transient and nothing was permanent. Compared to the stability of village life in China, the family in Singapore experienced high mobility, with people being apt to move houses. Hence, family members had little faith that the ancestral tablets would be taken care of, making it logical to not install ancestral tablets at home.

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[274] Maurice Freedman and Margaret Topley, "Religion and social realignment among the Chinese in Singapore," in *South and Southeast Asia*, ed. J. A. Harrison, 41-61 (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1972), p 44
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid., p 45.
[277] Ban Seng Hoe, "Ancestor worship in Singapore," Diploma thesis, Department of Social Studies, University of Singapore (Singapore, 1963).
[278] Vivienne Wee, "Religion and ritual among the Chinese of Singapore: an ethnographic study," M.Soc.Sci thesis, University of Singapore (Singapore, 1977), p 414.
[279] Ibid., p 415

Among my 52 Singapore respondents, only 10 indicated that their families hostrf ancestral tablets at the homes. Of the 10, only one personally made daily offerings. The other nine did not participate in the daily offering of joss sticks, a task usually undertaken by their mothers or grandmothers. Instead, in terms of ancestral worship, the participation of most of my respondents was limited to special occasions such as Qing Ming, birth and death anniversaries, or festivals when they offered joss sticks, helped to lay out food offerings and/or helped with the burning of the paper offerings. Furthermore, most of my respondents, especially those under 40 years old, relied on senior family members such as parents and grandparents to remember and remind them of the dates and time for these activities. They did not keep track of the details themselves.

This point agrees with Freedman's earlier description of ancestor worship in Singapore as being one of "memorialism",[280] that is the symbolic nature of commemoration. Indeed, the cosmic consequences associated with ancestor worship are no longer an issue.[281] The belief that misfortune will fall on the living family if one does not participate in ancestor worship no longer stands. None of my respondents raised this point. Respondents who practiced ancestor worship said they were continuing a family tradition. Respondents who did not practice ancestor worship said their actions, or rather inaction, was an adaptation to modern conditions.

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[280] Freedman, "Chinese family and marraige in Singapore," p 209.

[281] See the following works for a detailed description of the perceived cause-and-effect of honouring (or not) of one's ancestors: M. Emily Ahern, *The cult of the dead in a Chinese village* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1973), Maurice Freedman, *Family and kinship in Chinese society* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1970). David K. Jordan, *Gods, ghosts and ancestors: the folk religion of a Taiwanese village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).Vivienne Wee, "Religion and ritual among the Chinese of Singapore: an ethnographic study," M.Soc.Sci thesis, University of Singapore (Singapore, 1977).

THE CLAN IN SINGAPORE

Until the family became a norm in Singapore *hua ren* society in the second half of the 20th century, the extended family of clan associations was the leading feature of the colonial Chinese society. As discussed in Chapter 2, the clan or lineage is a significant institution representing kinship ties, and an important site of ancestor worship in traditional Chinese society. The Chinese migrants in colonial Singapore did not totally replicate the customs, traditions and practices of their village, nor did they construct clan or lineage halls. The lineage, as found in China, did not take root in Singapore for several reasons. First, most of the migrants to Singapore were not of the literati class but of peasant stock.[282] They would not have had the necessary knowledge or funds to replicate the lineage organisation with its appended organisations of the genealogy and ancestral worship hall. Second, most of the first generation migrants were unlikely to have come to Singapore with the idea of a permanent migration. Hence the establishment of the lineage – a symbol and representation of permanence and continuity – was unnecessary. Third, most of the migrants who came to Singapore were not necessarily related by descent but from different counties and villages.[283] The "highly individualistic" nature of the migrant society did not necessitate the establishment of lineages.[284] In Singapore, the institution closest to a lineage is the clan association (会馆, *hui guan*), which resembled a mutual aid society.

Most of the clan associations were built around dialect and/or regional origins. One did not have to prove blood descent to join the clan associations. Often, sharing the same surname or coming from the same region was enough. These associations

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[282] Freedman, "Chinese family and marriage", p 6.
[283] Such as the case of the Mans of Hong Kong. See James L Watson, *Emigration and the Chinese lineage: the Mans in Hong Kong and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
[284] Maurice Freedman, "Chinese family and marraige in Singapore," Report to the Colonial Social Science Research Council, Colonial Social Science Research Council (Singapore, 1953), p 57.

took care of the social and welfare needs of its members. Some of the wealthier clans such as Ngee Ann Kongsi[285] purchased burial sites for their fellow clansmen. These were the closest attempts at replicating the function of the ancestral halls.[286] The hosting of ancestral tablets and performance of ancestor worship rituals were the next closest effort to replicate the lineage hall in China. Traditional lineage halls have stringent criteria for the inclusion of ancestral tablets. In the most general sense, only lineage members – namely, those from the same line of descent – could have their ancestral tablets installed at the hall. The few lineage halls registered in Singapore had less stringent criteria: as long as one has the same surname, regardless of lineage, one's tablets may be hosted in these lineage halls.

The hosting of ancestral tablets in the clan associations is also a recent phenomenon. According to one respondent, the clan association, of which he was a member, only started hosting the ancestral tablets of fellow clansmen after the Second World War in the 1950s after they purchased their own building and were granted permission to operate a clan temple. For the halls, hosting the ancestral tablet is more than just an obligation; it is also a way to generate revenue. Members have to pay either an annual fee or a one-off fee to the clan to have the tablets hosted. The amount paid will depend on several factors: the number of tablets to be installed, the design of the tablet (elaborate or simple) and the location of the tablet. The closer the tablet is to the front of the altar, the more expensive it is. Many people prefer to have the tablets located to the front because it is more visible.

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[285] 义安公司 （yi an gong si). This organisation was established by a group of Teochew merchants in 1830 as a charitable organisation to cater to the needs of migrants of Teochew origins. National Library Board Singapore, *Ngee Ann Kongsi 义安公司*, http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_1877_2012-03-29.html (accessed June 26, 2012).
[286] Tham, Religion and modernization, p 94.

One such lineage hall in Singapore is the Singapore Lim See Tai Chong Soo Kiu Liong Tong Self-Management Association, established in 1928.[287] The ancestral tablets hosted there are all Lims from different dialect groups and lineages.[288] The Kheng Jai Wee Tee Soo, on the other hand, limits its membership to only Hainanese people with the surname Wee.[289] Some surname-based clans also host ancestral tablets, space permitting. The Singapore Khoh Clan Association, for example, has under its aegis a temple hosting several patron deities and several ancestral tablets of people with the surname Koh.[290] Any one with the surname may place their ancestral tablets at the temple, regardless of dialect or regional origins, or clan membership. This is to accommodate to members from the broader society, an effort that stems partly from the self-help objective of the clan and partly as an attempt to attract more members.

With modernisation and urbanisation, many of the rites and rituals related to ancestor worship have been simplified or relegated to secondary importance.[291] Today, ancestor worship at the collective level is no longer a demonstration of the lineage's pedigree and strength as a social group. For instance, although most surname-based clans continue to perform the Spring and Autumn sacrificial rites,[292] which originated in agricultural China, to pay ritual respects to the founder of the

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[287] 新加坡林氏大宗祠九龙堂家族自治会. According to the listing on the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, the Association has 900 registered members. Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, 会员团体组织类别 (*Classification of member organisations*), http://www.sfcca.org.sg/member/classes?c=2&s=209#sch (accessed December 11, 2012).

[288] 林，Lin in *hanyu pinyin* rendition.

[289] 王, Wang in *hanyu pinyin* rendition. Information gathered from interview.

[290] 许, Xu in *hanyu pinyin* rendition. Because of dialect differences, the surname may be spelt Koh, Ko, Kaw or Khor，which are some of the more common spelling found in Singapore. Information gathered from interview.

[291] Chee Kiong Tong, Kong Chong Ho and Ting Kwong Lin, "Traditional Chinese customs in modern Singapore," in *Asian traditions and modernization: perspectives from Singapore*, ed. Mun Cheong Yong, 67-88 (Singapore: Easterm Universities Press, 2004) and Chee Kiong Tong and Lily Kong, "Religion and modernity: ritual transformations and the reconstruction of space and time," *Social & Cultural Geography* 1, no. 1 (2000): 29-44.

[292] 春秋二祭, *chun qiu er ji*.

clan's surname, this ceremony has little relevance in urban Singapore. Instead, it has become another item on the clans' calendar of activities. Attendance at such events is relatively small; often limited to the core committee members who are also in charge of organising the events.

Because of the nature of Singapore's migrant society, the clans function less as as lineage hall than a community centre where members can mingle and network. Some of the larger clans, such as the Hokkien Huay Kuan[293] or the Hainan Hwee Kuan,[294] run educational and cultural courses covering a wide range of topics from Chinese history to language and customs for the general public, in addition to organising social functions such as excursions and festival celebrations for their members. Some clans also organise biannual conferences with clans from other parts of the world for networking and research purposes. The smaller clans, with comparatively less human and financial resources, conduct more recreational activities, such as *mahjong* playing and karaoke singing sessions, with the simple aim of keeping the clan operational and generating revenue.

Clan membership in Singapore is on the decline, with many clans struggling to attract new and younger members.[295] One respondent who is a member of a locality-based clan[296] said his clan has been recruiting students from China studying in Singapore for its youth section. This is partly due to the difficulty of recruiting local members. Respondents said that neither their children nor grandchildren are interested in attending clan activities. Except for the six respondents from SKCA and one 22-year old respondent, none of the other 56 respondents attended clan activities or were

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[293] 新加坡福建会馆. *Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan*, http://www.shhk.com.sg/.

[294] 海南会馆. *Singapore Hainan Hwee Kuan*, http://www.hainan.org.sg/.

[295] Elgin Toh, "Chinese immigrants boost 100-year-old clan group ," *Straits Times* (Singapore, 18 August 2010); personal interviews with individuals active in clans.

[296] Clan associations in Singapore can be categorized into two groups: surname-based clans and locality-based clans. The latter is generally a congregation of people who originate from the same geographical area, and are not necessarily bound by blood ties.

members of any clans. The 22-year old respondent, VL/F22/SP, attended activities of the clan her mother belonged to, but her reason was pragmatic: the clan distributes bursaries for children of members. Since her mother is a member and has asked her to apply for a bursary, she usually attends the clan event when the bursary is handed out.

Many older members of the clan associations I spoke to opined that the cultural dilution – as reflected in the dwindling membership numbers – needed to be arrested. Respondent XJC/M81/SP, who managed a clan temple, had on several occasions expressed his disappointment over the lack of knowledge on the part of the younger clan members. He said that he was usually the only one who attended to the placement of offerings and oversaw the worship procedure on occasions where worship rituals, either for ancestors or related deities, took place. He claimed that the executive committee members of the clan association did not know the "proper procedures". During one particular ceremony, when the team leading the ancestor worship fumbled with the items that were supposed to be presented to the ancestors, XJC had to point the men to the right item. After each offering, he had to adjust the position of the joss sticks and the items.

XJC was disappointed that the members were so reliant on him and uninterested in learning the ropes. His disappointment was tinged with anxiety about the potential break in knowledge transmission:

> What should be done where, what should be placed where, they did not want to learn…When I want to teach them, they said they are not free. I tell them, how are you going to do this when I die?

For him, a break in the transmission marks a break in the cultural knowledge. Declining clan membership worsens the situation. "The young ones stop coming (to the clan) when the older ones (parents, grandparents) die," said XJC. "We have one less member when one dies."

Many of the older respondents regarded a break in cultural transmission and continuity of tradition (in the form of clan membership) as a form cultural dilution. They believed that the idea of kinship was losing traction with the younger generation, citing their lack of interest in joining the clan, their non-participation in ancestor worship, and their ignorance about the significance of such practices. One clan member said the clan management was trying to encourage clan members to bring their children and grandchildren into the clan so that the knowledge and cultural memory could be passed on to subsequent generations. But they were doubtful that the younger generation was interested: "But are they willing? Do they have the time?"

More significantly, this criticism of cultural dilution reflects the decreasing material dependency of belonging. Historically, the clan associations were families writ large who took care of the social welfare of its members, living or dead. It provided basic food and shelter, employment, medical and educational needs for its members, functioned as an arbitrator in disputes and provided a social network for its members. In today's urban context, the clan associations are no longer the sole providers of these services, many of their function have been taken over by the government. Those who continued with clan membership tended to do so for sentimental reasons. Several members said that they were just following the footsteps of their fathers or uncles, who were clan members. But most of these existing clan members did not expect their children to continue with this "tradition" as they claimed their children were not interested. Another respondent, whose father and paternal uncle were members of a clan, discontinued membership after his mother passed away. The respondent said he had kept the membership while his mother was still alive because she insisted on it; seeing it as a form of continuation of kinship ties. But in the 26 years between his parents' death, the respondent said he did not attend

any clan activities: "I don't know anybody there. Go for what?" was his pragmatic answer.

In addition to disinterest on the part of the younger generation, the older respondents also said that the dominance of the English language and religious conversion to Christianity also contributed to cultural dilution. The latter two reasons, as shall be further discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 6, are seen to undermine the cultural identity – and hence the ethnic identity – of young Singapore *hua ren* because of the differences in cultural values.

RELIGION AND THE PRACTICE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Within a generation or two, a substantial paradigm shift has taken place among *hua ren* in Singapore: one's cultural identity is no longer equated with one's ethnic identity. The change is most apparent in the attitudes towards ancestor worship, with very different belief systems often existing within the same family, usually between parents and their children. One of the major factors that account for this change in attitude is religious conversion. Religious conversion often marks a rupture in the ethnic identity,[297] and is a major break in tradition in *hua ren* community. Convention obliges *hua ren* to perform ancestor worship rites and rituals for, at least, their deceased parents and grandparents. But this custom is no longer a given, especially in families where conversion to Christianity has taken place. The break is even more acute if the parents have also converted to Christianity as a result of (sub)conscious pressure that their Christian children might treat them as outsiders (in relation to the

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[297] George de Vos, "Ethnic pluralism: conflict and accommodation" in George de Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (eds), *Ethnic identity: cultural continuities and change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp 5-41 at p 13.

religious family) and excluded them from the family life.[298] As outlined in Chapter 2, ancestor worship is a mainstay of *hua ren* ethnic and cultural identity.

CHRISTIANS AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Conversion to Christianity undermines the believer's *hua ren* cultural identity. This is because Christianity stems from another cultural system – that of the Western Anglo-Saxon world. The inherent values and beliefs of the Christian ideology are diametrically opposed to ancestor worship: it prescribes worship to only one supreme God. In this understanding, ancestor worship is viewed as incompatible with Christianity as the ancestors in being the object of worship, are being elevated to the position of gods, rivalling the centrality of the Christian God. Thus, ancestor worship is viewed as idolatrous because the object of worship is not God but ancestors. Ancestor worship is thus placed on the same footing as idol worship. Furthermore, Christianity is said to undermine the cultural institution of the family as ancestor worship is the core of the *hua ren* family. For ideological reasons, many *hua ren* Christians do not practice or participate in ancestor worship.

Among my Christian respondents is a group that eschews ancestor worship altogether.[299] They do not participate in any form of ancestor worship, be it the domestic cult or visiting of ancestral graves during Qing Ming, as they feel that these activities conflict with their religious beliefs. This group believes ancestor worship to be coterminous with religion, placing the emphasis on the "worship", which as indicated above, threatens the centrality of the Christian God. Many older non-Christian respondents who practice ancestor worship dispute this view. They argue

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[298] Kristina Goransson, The binding tie: Chinese intergenerational relations in modern Singapore (Honolulu: University of Hawai'l Press, 2009).

[299] I did not set out to conduct the research with one or the other as the control group. This situation was a natural occurrence. The Christians in this study includes those of various denominations, including Mormonism.

that ancestor worship is not a religious activity and that equating ancestor worship to religion is merely an excuse for not participating. Ancestors, they argue, do not replace the Christian God as the focus of worship; instead they are family members who should be honoured and remembered regardless of religious beliefs. In this respect, the non-Christian respondents emphasised the "ancestor" element in "ancestor worship". These non-Christian *hua ren* believe that conversion to Christianity leads to the dilution of the idea of family and clan. One clan association respondent said the young Christians do not even hold joss sticks anymore even though, in his mind, there is nothing wrong with holding joss sticks.

The *hua ren* Christians who do not participate in the ancestor worship contend that while they recognise and respect ancestors, they do not accord the latter any special spiritual status or treatment.[300] For them, the act of ancestor worship is only an act, which to them has become meaningless; they argue that respecting the deceased and holding their memories dear (without the respect being manifested in ancestor worship) is good enough. They argue that non- participation in ancestor worship does not mean a lack of respect for ancestors. Some of the Christian respondents argue that they show respect for the deceased in other ways, as shall be elaborated later.

A number of respondents who were new converts, and whose family members were non-Christians said they felt obliged to participate in ancestor worship. Although reluctant, they felt compelled by family pressure to participate. AL/F19/SP, a recent convert to Christianity said she continued to visit the columbarium with her parents and hold the joss sticks as she did before her conversion. While she felt that the practice of offering joss sticks was a "pointless" act that was incompatible with Christianity, she continued to do so due to family pressure. Being the only Christian

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[300] John Clammer, The sociology of Singapore religion: studies in Christianity and Chinese culture (Singapore: Chopmen, 1991), pp 84-85.

in the family, she did not want her reluctance to participate in ancestor worship to be fodder for her parents to "bash up Christianity". They had previously made it clear that she was expected to turn up for these events even though she was now a Christian. In these families, Christianity is often viewed as an ideological threat to accepted traditions and customs. Parents fear that the family ties would be broken if the young converts did not continue to participate in events such as ancestor worship, which are occasions when the family got together.

This case appears to lend credence to the argument that one's cultural practices reflects one's cultural identity, which is not necessarily the same as one's ethnic identity. Yet it is not often so straightforward. While some *hua ren* Christians may cite ideological reasons for not participating in ancestor worship, there are also *hua ren* Christians who continue to practice some form of ancestor worship voluntarily. Some of my *hua ren* Christian respondents were able to rationalise, according to their value system, that ancestor worship is a cultural practice and not a religious one. These respondents were typically older and appeared better able to cast a psychological distance between the meaning and the act in order to inject their own interpretation of the symbolism of the act. For them, ancestor worship provided occasions for family gatherings, which overrode the "religious" atmosphere of such occasions. Before her conversion to Mormonism[301] in 1969, HH/F68/SP used to participate in ancestor worship activities with her family, including visiting the graves of their ancestors during Qing Ming at the Pek San Theng cemetery:

> We usually hire a big lorry, and we prepare the offerings: Chicken,
> pork, roast pork, *bao*s (steamed buns), fruits and a lot of paper money.
> There'll be about … 10 graves we have to pay respect to…So it's a

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[301] Mormonism is a strain of the Christian faith which emerged in America in the 19th century. The official title of the church is Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. See the church's official website, www.lds.org

whole day affair. We go early in the morning and finish (at) about 1 or 2 pm…

When the cemetery was slated for urban redevelopment in the 1980s, all the graves belonging to her grandparents and grand-aunts were exhumed:

> I think nobody thought of putting them anywhere so (the family just left it) to the government. I don't know what happened to (them).[302]

While HH has converted to Mormonism she no longer practiced ancestor worship in the traditional sense, but she continued to visit the graves of her deceased parents with her siblings and their families during Qing Ming. Since all her siblings have converted to Christianity (HH is the only Mormon among her siblings), they typically bring fresh flowers to the graves instead of food and paper offerings. HH and her husband also continue with the practice of visiting the niches of his deceased parents at the columbarium. Unlike HH, the extended family of ACH/M68/SP are not Christians. As such, they still practice ancestor worship as most Chinese religionists, with the offering of joss sticks, food and paper offerings. HH and ACH still attend these events as a sign of respect, and they also pay for their share of the offerings. "His sisters insisted on having all those things, we let it be," said HH. Of their participation, ACH explained:

> Even as Christians, we see it as a respect for elders because we don't think (just because) we are Christians excludes (us) from showing (our) loyalty and respect. So when we go to the columbarium, my sisters (who are not Christians) would do all the preparation, they'd buy the stuff and all that. They'd offer me the joss sticks (to offer to the deceased parents) I always take it. I never refuse. To me, that is a sign of unity in the family, that although they do not share my faith in Christianity, you know, we are no different in paying respect to our parents."

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[302] The land occupied by the Pek San Theng cemetery has since been transformed into a housing estate, which takes after the name, Bishan. The unclaimed graves were exhumed by the government and collectively cremated, and the ashes were scattered at sea. Today, there's a plaque at the PST temple, which also houses a columbarium, to commemorate this group of people.

Some Roman Catholics also adopt a more flexible attitude towards such ancestral worship practices which they regard as being more about memorialisation than religion. Some Catholic families are known to set up altars where the deceased family members, including spouses and children, are remembered. In the case of MC/F21/SP, her family has an altar where the photographs of the deceased are set up. This altar was specially set up with the photographs of family members used during their funerals and a daily ritual akin to offering joss sticks was performed faily:

> We have an altar for Jesus and Mary and stuff, and the altar for the deceased is somewhere else separately (in the house)…We have a habit of lighting candles. The altar for Jesus and Mary (has) oil candles, (and) for the deceased, long white candles.

The family members memorialised are MC's maternal grandparents and her older sister who passed away in an accident. MC explained that because her sister's death was still relatively recent, her mother continued to hold her close in her memory:

> my mother still, on special occasions like Christmas, Chinese New Year, cook…and set up food in front of her altar (at home). Her ashes are still in the house, it hasn't been moved to a niche yet.

NON-CHRISTIANS AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The cultural paradigm shift is not just limited to *hua ren* Christians. Some parents whose children have converted to Christianity believe that death and its aftermath should not be a contentious issue for the living. YLC/F57/SP said she and her husband have instructed their children to cremate them and scatter their ashes at sea when they die. "I don't want to trouble my children and make things difficult for them," she said. She explained that her son is a Christian (and would not practice ancestor worship) and her non-Christian daughter, as tradition dictates, would not be able to host their ancestral tablets regardless of her marital status. The only thing they

were adamant about was that they did not want to have a Christian funeral, which some Christian children organise in a final bid to "save their parents' souls for Christ".

While ancestor worship is identified as a "Chinese" cultural practice, not all non-Christian *hua ren* participate in the practice. Convenience is the recurring reason cited by my non-Christian respondents' for their non-participation in ancestor worship. Informant RS/F38/SP said her mother moved her late father and paternal grandparents' tablets to the temple many years ago for convenience. RS explained that it was possibly because the maintenance of the tablets had become a burden for her mother, who was a single parent:

> My mother began to find it a hassle every time we have to *bai*[303] (especially on special occasions)…(so) she said just consolidate (the tablets and place them) at the temple.

REASONING CULTURAL IDENTITY

The cases discussed of *hua ren* with different religious inclinations and their practice or non-practice of ancestor worship highlights the possibility offered by the Sinoscape: there is no singular practice that defines one's cultural identity. A practice is open to various meanings and symbolism, which is determined by the practitioner. There is a strong case of reasoning that underlies one's cultural identity.

In the case of my respondents, the younger generation of *hua ren* (those aged 50 and under) generally did not regard the practice of ancestor worship as mandatory, as their parents or grandparents did. Their participation in ancestor worship activities appeared to be perfunctory. As mentioned earlier, many of them neither kept track of the dates of the occasions for ancestor worship nor did they take an active role in the

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[303] 拜, worship.

rites and rituals. Generally their participation was limited by the extent of immediate family obligation on the insistence of their participation. They cited parental pressure, family tradition and filial piety obligations as the reasons for their participation. Many under-30 respondents who used to visit family graves during Qing Ming as children usually stopped going once they reached their teenage years. Various reasons were given for this. As such visits often took place extremely early – usually at dawn to avoid crowds and traffic at the cemeteries – some respondents said they found it hard to wake up in time. Others also cited school and work as their reasons for not going on these visits.

While older respondents (aged 50 and above) lamented the younger generation's lack of interest in such events, responses from my under -30 respondents suggested a relatively *laissez faire* attitude on the part of the senior family members in "enforcing" their participation. The younger respondents also suggested that the senior family members did not insist on their presence, despite the significance of Qing Ming. Interestingly, some respondents who were parents revealed that they were not keen for young children (such as those under 10 years old) to go to cemeteries and columbaria. They believed that the young would be susceptible to threats from the spirits or the negative energy field of these sites. These responses revealed another facet of *hua ren* cultural outlook: while paying tribute to ancestors was important, it should not go against folk beliefs. In this case, ancestor worship should not be conducted at the expense of the well-being of young children. It was believed that children had to be protected so that they could safely grow into adulthood. Although there are no spoken "rules" about the appropriate age for children to go to cemeteries and columbaria, generally children under 10 years old are not encouraged to go to such places or participate in funerals of non-relatives, for example. This protection of

young children is perhaps linked to the continuation of the family name. Especially in the case of the boys, many *hua ren* families believe that it is important that they are able to grow into adults in order to perpetuate the family name through marriage and having children of their own.

The above discussion demonstrates how reasoning has already overshadowed the traditional practice of ancestor worship, privileging the living over the dead in contrast to what has been regarded as customary. From another perspective, the underlying explanation for the paradigm shift is a result of the dominance of rationality. Reasoning has been evident in the responses from the younger generation of informant who said that they were generally ignorant about the tenets, symbolism and rationale for ancestral worship activities because "nobody explained" or taught them. Informant TWY/M22/SP, who accompanied his parents to the temples and columbarium, helps with the laying out of food and the burning of joss sticks and papers. But he was "not exactly sure what to do"; his participation was largely to please his grandmother. Even for informants who continued the practice of ancestor worship, many of them cited parental examples as the reason: "My parents did it, so I do it too". This is an apt example of Bourdieu's logic of practice. While younger generation informants generally expected some form of reason and explanation for actions, the older generation regarded explanations as unnecessary as "it has always been done this way". Yet, when no reasoning is forthcoming, the younger generation falls back on two courses of action: they either eschew it altogether or they continue practicing according to the logic of practice.

That the older generation does not specifically and actively explain the ancestral rites and rituals and their accompanying symbolism and significance to the younger generation is an oft-heard reason why the younger generation does not

continue with the practice of ancestor worship. There could be several reasons for such passivity on the part of the older generation in transmitting the knowledge. First, Chinese religion as we know it is a syncretic blend of Taoism, Buddhism and folk practices. Without canonised teachings, the practices are modified and changed to suit the context and environment in which they are carried out. With such a fuzzy foundation, it is hard to clarify the information when transmitting it to the younger generation. Second, and related to the first reason, the older generation may have had inherited such practices and beliefs in similar fashion from their family elders, hence the transmission of such knowledge and memories would just be as fuzzy. Thus when faced with questions of why particular rituals and practices are carried out, the response is almost always "it's always been done this way", "it's tradition" and the like. This is the logic of "it is what it is".

The third reason for the lack of explanation is perhaps the older generation's realisation that the younger generation is living in a world different from theirs, one that is not bound by traditions and customs and is characterised by individualisation and modernity, however defined.[304] It is one in which the English language and western culture – literary and popular – dominates, and one that emphasises economic skills rather than the possession of traditional values. Because of this, the older generation adopts a form of self-censorship in the belief that the knowledge they pass on would not be continued anyway. Such attitudes are indicative of the changes in Singapore *hua ren's* attitude towards the idea of perpetuating the continuity of the family. While family remains an important aspect of their lives, my *hua ren* respondents generally do not see the need to have children to carry on the family name, as the traditional Chinese family believes. Not only are single *hua ren*

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[304] See also Chee Kiong Tong, Kong Chong Ho and Ting Kwong Lin, "Traditional Chinese customs in modern Singapore," in *Asian traditions and modernization: perspectives from Singapore*, ed. Mun Cheong Yong, 67-88 (Singapore: Easterm Universities Press, 2004).

"substantially less positive" about the desirability of marriage, *hua ren* are also less likely to agree that having children is a top priority in their lives, compared to their Malay and Indian counterparts.[305]

The basis of such reasoning critically assumes that there is a body of knowledge to be transmitted. It also assumes that there is an explanation to accompany every action, and that the explanation must be clarified. Yet, as the responses from my respondents indicate, this is not necessarily the case. While there is a general idea of "cultural value" and "what should be done", there are variations between families and even between generations within the same family. This reflects a very different mode of knowledge that is, in large part, due to the general change as a result of education, and in part, a change in religious beliefs among Singapore *hua ren*. The Enlightenment mode of knowledge, one that privileges the scientific, the rational and explanation, is strongly evident in Singapore. Sociologist Tong Chee Kiong argued that there is a process of rationalisation and intellectualisation of religion in Singapore.[306] He argued that over the past few decades, the *hua ren* in Singapore have undergone a process where

> individuals shift from an unthinking and passive acceptance of religion to one where there is a tendency to search for a religion that they regard as systematic, logical and relevant.[307]

Tong's study of religious change in Singapore found that younger and English-educated Singapore *hua ren* perceived Christianity to be a rational, modern religion with an organised structure (Sunday School, Bible Study, Cell Groups for instance). This perception is juxtaposed with the seemingly unorganised and

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[305] David Chan, *Attitudes on family: survey on social attitudes of Singaporeans (SAS) 2001* , Social survey, Ministry of Community Development and Sports (Singapore: Ministry of Community Development and Sports, 2002), p 13 and p 19.
[306] Chee Kiong Tong, Rationalizing religion: religious conversion, revivalism and competition in Singapore society (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
[307] Ibid., p 4.

unexplainable tenets and practices related to Chinese religion, which made

Christianity a more attractive religious option. Tong argued that this process of

rationalisation of religion - "clarification, specification and systemisation of the ideas

which men have concerning their reason for being"[308] – explains the religious shift

among Singapore *hua ren* from traditional Chinese religion to Christianity and

Buddhism. Citing Max Weber, Tong argued that this process of rationalisation and

intellectualisation which was an important aspect of modern society, was taking place

in Singapore. It was made easier by the socio-cultural milieu which

> Emphasises voluntarism in the decision-making processes regarding
> religious affiliation, exposure to a plurality of religious options, and an
> educational system that emphasises scientific and critical thinking.[309]

This argument is most clearly illustrated by the responses of the younger

generation of respondents, as well as those who are English-educated, and/or of the

Christian and Catholic faith. Those who turned away from traditional Chinese religion

attributed their decision to the apparent meaningless of the rituals. Although they still

occasionally participated in some of these rituals, such as during Qing Ming, they did

not attach much religious meaning to these rituals; their participation wass to please

their parents.[310] For these non-religionists, they considered such rituals as customs

and part of tradition, not necessarily religious. Most of my non-religionist informants

indicated the reason for their participation in ancestor worship rites and rituals as

"respect for the ancestors" or feeling obligated to attend such events.

In the following pages, I shall use the terms "reason" and "reasoning" in place

of Tong's "rationalisation". Although Tong's study did not claim Christianity as a

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[308] Ibid., p 5.
[309] Ibid.
[310] Eddie C Y Kuo, Jon S T Quah Quah and Chee Kiong Tong, "Religion and religious revivalism in Singapore ," Report prepared for the Ministry of Community Development (Singapore, 1988), p 21.

"rational" religion, using the term "rationalisaion" could potentially be misread as an assessment of the rationality of Christianity. Like Chinese religion, Christianity is also a religion based on faith, which by biblical definition is "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see".[311] Christians are told to "live by faith, not by sight".[312] In this regard, rationalisation on the part of the *hua ren* Christians is just a replacement of Chinese religion with Christianity. One of the reasons why Christianity is viewed as a more rational religion is possibly because of its association with the Western culture and the English language, both of which have been accorded privileged status in Asia. A second reason, as many of my *hua ren* Christian informants indicated is that the Bible is held up as proof of rationality – every commandment and principle Christians adhere to are written down. By this reasoning, Chinese religion is superstitious because it is not based on a text. This highlights the misplaced logic of privileging the word over the oral, where the written has more authority than the oral. This point shall be discussed further in Chapter 6.

RECULTURALISATION AND DECULTURALISATION: ROLE OF THE STATE

The strong streak of rationalisation in Singapore could be the result of a highly rational system of education. The education system has, since the 1960s, emphasised at various points in time, technical skills, science and economics, all of which privilege rationality and explainable reason. In the 1960s, following independence in 1965, the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) government sought to underscore the equality of the various ethnic groups by stressing multiracialism and multiculturalism as the basis of its cultural policy. To maintain a semblance of neutrality, the PAP

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[311] Hebrews 11:1
[312] 2 Corinthians 5:7

privileged the economic over the cultural.[313] English was made the lingua franca of

education, commerce and government since it was an international language, and one

that could transcend the ethnic differences. The *hua ren* without formal education and

the exclusively Mandarin-speaking who had been marginalised since the 1950s,

continued to occupy the periphery.[314] Chinese-stream education took a back seat to

the English medium. Conceding the economic advantage of English education, many

hua ren sent their children to English medium schools despite their belief that their

children should receive their education in the Chinese medium and its values. The

falling enrolment in Chinese-medium schools vis-à-vis rising enrolment in English

schools attested to that trend.[315] By 1987, all primary schools had to use English as the

medium of instruction, marking the end of Chinese-medium schools, although a few

Chinese-medium schools were able to retain the teaching of Mandarin at the first

language level, together with English.[316] For most other schools, Mandarin (and the

other state-recognised Mother Tongues – Tamil and Malay) was taught as a second

language. Even Nanyang University (Nantah), the first Chinese language university in

Southeast Asia, had to replace Mandarin with English as the medium of instruction in

1976.[317]

The PAP government embarked on a re-culturalisation project in the late

1970s in the face of fear of deculturation as a result of the rapid Westernisation. With

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[313] Chua Beng Huat, *Communitarian ideology and democracy in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1995), p 59.

[314] See Kwok Kian Woon, "Chinese-Educated Intellectuals in Singapore: Marginality, Memory and Modernity" in *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 29, 3, 2001.

[315] See Beng Chaoo Ang, "The reform of Chinese language teaching in Singapore primary schools, 1974-1984," PhD Thesis, National University of Singapore (Singapore, 1991), p 35 and p 40; and Ministry of Education, "Report on the Ministry of Education 1978," (1979).

[316] Ang, "The reform of Chinese language teaching", pp 40-41.

[317] For a history of Nanyang University, see Eng-Leong Tan, "The establishment of Nanyang University 1953-1956," Academic exercise, Department of History, University of Singapore (Singapore, 1973). Teck Hui Ong, "Nanyang University, 1956-1968: the question of official recognition," Academic exercise, Department of History, National University of Singapore (Singapore, 1985) deals with the university's efforts to defend its curriculum.

the lack of a true "Singaporean culture", the government fell back on ethnic culture as a logical base on which to establish the cultural identities of Singaporeans. The Mandarin re-cultralisation project included the introduction of Mandarin to replace Chinese dialects as the lingua franca of Singapore *hua ren*, and the introduction of Confucian Studies to serve to buttress the cultural foundation of Singapore *hua ren*. But the re-culturalisation project was unsuccessful. The Western system of education and dominance of the English language was by then too entrenched in the social foundation of Singapore. With a new generation of Singapore-born *hua ren* exposed to the critical thinking based Western education, traditional customs and practices that without scientific explainations appeared to be too irrational and impractical to merit continuation. In addition, by replacing dialects with Mandarin as the lingua franca of *hua ren*, the government truncated the transmission of values and knowledge of practices within families. Perhaps the failure of the re-culturalisation project was also due to the "type" of culture that Singapore *hua ren* was suppose to identify with: instead of the folk culture as exemplified by dialects, Singapore *hua ren* were encouraged to identify with Chinese "high culture" as embodied in Mandarin, and "fine arts" such as cultural dances and calligraphy. This re-reculturalisation failed to take into account that most Singapore *hua ren* traced their ancestry to the peasantry in the south of China rather than to the court culture of northern China.

Among Singapore *hua ren*, Mandarin was not necessarily a tool of instruction or of cultural transmission; many of the informants viewed Mandarin as just another subject to master in order to pass examinations or a more practical language. CFT/M22/SP said English was the only language his is comfortable with. Although his parents were not English educated and spoke dialect among themselves, they only communicated with their children in English.

> They believed that English is the more profitable language, so they just focussed on that. Of course, they had to try Chinese once in a while, that's why they got me tuition because they couldn't do it themselves.

For TWL/M22/SP, Mandarin was a struggle. Even though his parents nagged at him to brush up his Mandarin, he could not do it. "All my brothers also have difficulty with their Chinese," he said.

> Something must have happened…although my mum, especially, always speaks Mandarin at home, we watch the news in Chinese, our newspapers (we read) are in Chinese, but it never really grew on us to read and write Chinese.

TWL said he was relieved when he no longer had to do Mandarin as a school subject at university. He believes his parents' pressure on him and his brothers to do well in the language was a matter of practicality:

> Honestly, I think it's just for the exams…I don't think that they want me to learn Chinese just because I am Chinese…there's a bit of Chinese pride, but I think they are more practical than this. It's all about the exams, so that's why they have stopped nagging me about it (since TWL no longer needs to do Chinese in university). My brother who's in JC now gets quite a lot of it. They kept saying that the Chinese exams are coming and he's not prepared…

In the 1980s, the government began its efforts to build a cultural foundation for *hua ren* by introducing Confucian Ethics to secondary school students, "with the explicit aim of strengthening family ties in a rapidly modernizing world".[318] Confucian Ethics was selected as being "representative" of the "Chinese" culture and was thus included in the Religious Knowledge courses that were offered from 1982.[319] The government argued that Confucianism, not Buddhism, was what most

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[318] Eddie C. Y. Kuo, "Confucianism and the Chinese family in Singapore: continuities and changes," Working Paper No. 83, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore (Singapore, 1987), p 10.
[319] The other courses offered were Buddhist Studies, Hindu Studies, Islamic Religious Knowledge and Sikh Studies. See Eddie C Y Kuo, "Confucianism as political discourse in Singapore: the case of an

parents wanted their children to study.[320] It also wanted to bring Confucianism

beyond the classroom, such that it should be "reinterpreted as a code of personal

conduct for modern Singapore".[321] The politically motivated cultural imposition of

Confucianism on the *hua ren* population failed. Enrolment numbers were too low to

justify the amount of resources and efforts devoted to the promotion of Confucian

Ethics. The Religious Knowledge curriculum was later rescinded. One reason cited

for this was that the religious classes promoted the popularity of Christianity rather

than Confucianism.[322] Secondly, in addition to low enrolment numbers forthe

Confucian Ethics classes, the government feared that the Religious Knowledge

classes were intensifying religiosity.[323] Finally, the third reason, if unarticulated, was

the realisation that the cultural foundation of *hua ren* was Singapore was not as rooted

in Confucian culture as the government argued.[324]

Besides education, urban redevelopment and housing policies had a direct

impact on the practice of ancestor worship. The relocation of families to Housing and

Development Board (HDB) flats, for example, broke up communities and extended

families into individual nuclear units. This undermined the traditional notion of

lineage and ancestral worship on the lineage level as the members were scattered. In

the past two decades, the Singapore government has actively promoted the cremation

of the dead rather than the more traditional practice of land burials. Cemeteries such

as the Pek San Theng and Bidadari, among others, have been demolished over the

past decades to make way for redevelopment. Today Choa Chu Kang Cemetery is the

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incomplete revitalisation movement," Working Papers No 113, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore (Singapore, 1992), p 23, footnote 1.

[320] Ibid., p 23, footnote 7.

[321] Ibid., p 7.

[322] Joseph B Tamney, the struggle over Singapore's soul: western modernization and Asian culture (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1996).

[323] Kuo, "Confucianism as political discourse", pp 18 – 19.

[324] See Kuo, "Confucianism and the Chinese family", which highlighted the changing nature of Singapore society, the Chinese family and the impact on Confucianism.

only cemetery in Singapore that is available for traditional soil burial. The new burial period, effective from 1998, is only 15 years. After that the remains will be exhumed and put into a columbarium (following cremation) or reburied. According to the National Environment Agency, which oversees the state-operated burial and cremation facilities, the new policy "will allow the cemetery land to last beyond 2130".[325] In place of burial and cemetaries, cremation is now encouraged and and columbaria have been established to house the remains of the deceased. This reflects the weakening hold of traditional practices and beliefs on the population.[326]

Traditionally a permanent resting place for the dead, the grave is now considered a luxury. Many *hua ren* are choosing to be cremated giving the temporary nature of the graves in Singapore. The home is also no longer where the ancestral tablets of the deceased are hosted. The small size of HDB flats, where most *hua ren* reside, limits the performance of traditional large-scale worship ceremonies. Of the 43 non-Christian informants, 36 did not host any ancestral tablets at home. They cited reasons ranging from lack of space to it being a chore to maintain the tablets. One 19-year old informant indicated that there was no space at home and that the tablets were "aesthetically unappealing". Even though her father was the eldest child and son, the decision was made to host the tablets at a temple rather than at home, as tradition dictates. Several informants also indicated that the ancestral tablets of their ancestors – mostly parents and grandparents – were hosted in temples, their reason confirming the perception that the ancestors were "better taken care" of in the temples because the monks or the temple staff would pray and make offerings more regularly than the family members were likely to do.

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[325] National Environment Agency, http://app2.nea.gov.sg/topics_burialsystem.aspx, accessed 12 January 2012.
[326] Seong Chee Tham, Religion and modernization: a study of changing rituals among Singapore's Chinese, Malays and Indians (Singapore: Graham Brash (Pte) Ltd, 1985), p 63.

Some of the family elders even went to the extent of "booking" their own spots at the temple while they were still alive, in preparation for the eventuality that their own children will not continue with the practice of ancestor worship. In one example, YLC/F58/SP's late mother-in-law booked two spots in a temple when her husband died in the 1970s; one was for him and the other one for herself. She had made the arrangement as a safety net to ensure that she and her husband would not be forgotten after their death, despite her having eight children, three of whom were sons. The informant said her mother-in-law was not confident that her children would continue with the practice as several had converted to Christianity and Catholicism, and her daughters are either married out – traditions dictated they could host the parents' ancestral tablets – or unmarried. The "safest" way to ensure that they were taken care of in their afterlife was by "placing themselves" in the temples where the monks would make daily prayers and offerings.

THE LOGIC OF CULTURAL PRACTICE

From the discussion above, the logic of reason appears to be at odds with the "traditional" worldview of how things are, or the logic of practice. While conversion to Christianity was one of the major reasons for such reasoning, as discussed in the previous section, there remains a logic of practice, as Pierre Bourdieu theorised, that cannot be rationalised. When asked why they practice what they do, it is common to hear this response from my respondents of all age groups: "It's always been done this way". That is the reason and explanation for their practice. For some Christians, the Christian doctrine explains their outlook and non-practice of ancestor worship, for example. For those who continue to practice ancestor worship, they infuse the traditionally non-Christian act with their own personal meanings. For the non-

Christians, the logic of practice – because it has always been done this way – is an adequate reason for continuing with the practice. There is no need for explicit explanation or justification.

There is no written scripture outlining the details of the rites and rituals of ancestor worship. Many of my respondents said they learned about it through observation. "I always make it a point to look at how others do it," said XJC/M81/SP who added that as a child, he always observed how the family and clan elders in Fujian, China, did things. "Whenever there are major festivals, we make offerings," he explained. He said no one actively taught him how to do or what to do, and that he had learned about the practice through observations: "In the past, I just look and follow what others are doing. From there, I learned." When asked if he taught his sons the rituals, he replied that they would do it on their own accord on any occasions that require the offering of joss sticks.

> They'd pick up the joss sticks and pray. You don't have to tell them what to do, they'd do it automatically, following traditions.

His sons, XJC said, had observed how he did things over the years and have picked up the habit as a matter of course. He himself had done likewise and, for him, it is natural that his sons do likewise. For him, "there is no need to teach" these acts.

Another informant in her 60s said she did not actively teach her children the rites and procedures of ancestor worship. She said they had watched her and her husband do it since they were children and would follow accordingly. Even then, "they would not know what to do" after she passes on, she said. "Just offering joss sticks would do. It's better than nothing," she added.

This rather laissez faire attitude is in line with the spirit of "Chinese" religious practice. Except for Buddhism and orthodox Taoism which has a scriptural basis,

most practices that are described as "Chinese" folk or religious practices do not have canonical texts. Instead, individual practitioners are able to adjust the rites and rituals according to their own situation. While the basic reason for ancestor worship – to honour the deceased as a matter of respect – is easily understood by all, the minutiae of the rites and rituals are harder to explain. Furthermore, because ancestor worship is so closely associated with Chinese religion, it is often perceived as a religious act. A common response among *hua ren* in Singapore, especially among the older generation, to their religious beliefs is that they are *bai shen de* 拜神的，which literally translates to mean "praying to gods". "*Bai shen*" is a general term used to refer to Chinese religion (rather than Taoism or Buddhism), and a person who *bai shen* is likely to practice ancestor worship, which explains the inevitability of regarding ancestor worship as a religious act. Scholars have described such "Chinese religion" by various other names and description, including "Shenism",[327] "religion of the masses",[328] and an anonymous religion that is "an amorphous mass of beliefs and practices from various sources".[329] However described, Chinese religion is characterised as a syncretic religion, drawing from religions and philosophies such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism as well as from history, mythologies and legends as reflected in the expansive pantheon of deities, many of whom were characters from these narratives.

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[327] J. A. Elliot, *Chinese spirit-medium cults in Singapore* (London, 1955), pp27-29

[328] Leon Comber, "Chinese temples in Singapore," in *Through the bamboo window: Chinese life and culture in 1950s Malaya and Singapore*, 189-278 (Singapore: Talisman Publishing & Singapore Heritage Society, 2009).

[329] Marjorie Topley, "Chinese relifion and religious institutions in Singapore," in *Cantonese society in Hong Kong and Singapore: gender, religion, medicine and money - Essays by Marjorie Topley*, ed. Jean DeBernadi, 125-174 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), p131.

FROM MATERIAL TO EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY

While the older generation of my respondents perceive the cultural shift negatively as a form of cultural dilution, the younger informants generally view it more positively. For them, cultural change is a natural product of social change. The younger generation of respondents did not see memorialisation as necessarily connected to rites and rituals of ancestor worship. Instead, they believed it could take other forms, including the telling of family stories and collecting old photographs. While these memorialisation practices are nothing new, they have in the case of my respondents become vehicles for personalisation and individualisation as we shall see below. Even more formal forms of memorialisation such as the compiling of genealogy and family histories, and visiting the ancestral villages in China have also taken on more personalised tones in modern Singapore. Significantly, the form and rationale for the adoption of certain memorialisation practices underscores a trend of personalisation based on sentimental intimacy.

The compilation and construction of the genealogy is a significant element in memorialisation of ancestors in traditional Chinese culture. As discussed in Chapter 2, genealogy is a significant document of the Chinese social network, but the formality and the rule-bound nature of classic genealogy has meant that it has not taken root in Singapore. First, the *hua ren* society in Singapore originated as a transient society rather than a permanent one in which ties to the land and place were emphasised. Furthermore, the *hua ren* society was comprised of migrants originating from different areas in China, which meant that there was rarely one lineage that lived together as might have been the case in China. Instead, the closest form of lineage in Singapore is the surname-based clan association open to persons sharing the same surname. Sharing the same surname is not the same as sharing the same bloodline;

considerations of area of origins, dialect groups and braches of the surname have to be considered. Most of the genealogies in the collection of Singapore clan associations were collected from lineages in China. Third, as discussed earlier, the nature and role of clan associations in Singapore differs vastly from those in China. The function that closely replicates that of the lineage in China is ritual calendrical ancestor worship. It did not take on the role of compiling and maintaining genealogies.

The compilation of genealogy is neither a common nor popular activity in among my Singapore *hua ren* respondents not least because of the difficulty of the task. None of my respondents actively participated in this activity, including the older generation and clan members. A couple of respondents in their 20s indicated that they vaguely remembered seeing "some sort of family book" before, although they could not confirm if the family book was indeed the genealogy book, since it was not in the possession of their immediate family. Most of the respondents cited various reasons for not compiling family genealogy with the most common being the perception that the task was too difficult and that they did not know where to begin. While several respondents in their 20s recalled undertaking some form of such research for their school assignments, the effort and interest was not sustained beyond that. This was usually because of limited access to information and the lack of time to pursue it in depth. While several indicated it would be "interesting to know where (we) came from", the interest did not materialise any further beyond the occasional discussion about the events and people in the family during social gatherings. For one respondent who was not keen on family history, there was little value in projecting the family memory beyond the immediate relations:

> I never thought about (doing family history)…maybe because I don't know anyone past my grandparents, you see. And I don't really expect my children to know my great grandmother, for example.

The transmission of cultural knowledge, in this case, was limited to the current generation and the existing relationships, rather than extended to include those beyond.

In 2010, the Singapore Genealogy Society[330] (SGS) was set up with the aim of popularising *hua ren* genealogies, specifically genealogies originating from Singapore. This is a departure from traditional *hua ren* genealogies which inevitably starts with the progenitor in China. The Society has the ambition of completing the Founding Genealogy of Singapore[331], a grand genealogy compiled from the various individual family and clan genealogies, in time for the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence in 2015. Through the popularisation of genealogies and the project of constructing the founding genealogy, the Society wants to root the *hua ren* population in Singapore while at the same time acknowledging their cultural heritage. This move appears to be in response to the fear of cultural dilution commonly expressed by the older generation of *hua ren*. The Society takes the clear position that the *hua ren* in Singapore are no longer *hua qiao*:

> *Qiao* refers to temporary sojourn, temporary resident. There is no sense of belonging. Singapore is now an independent country. As citizens, Singapore is where we belong. As Singapore *hua ren*, ideologically, we must absolutely abide by our pledge, to be loyal to Singapore's multicultural and religious freedom principles on which a harmonious society is built. We should do our duties as citizens. But we are still *hua yi* descendents; we inherited the *hua* blood, as well as the spiritual values and cultural traditions. Spiritually, we cannot give up this blood ties or deny the deep-rooted cultural legacy.[332]

SGS Secretary Tan Ngap Yong[333] believes that Singapore *hua ren* have to come into their own, and their identity should not be one that is deculturalised from *hua* culture but that it has to be "de-China-fied" ("去中国化"). While Tan's

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[330] 新加坡族谱学会
[331] 《开国创世大宗谱》
[332] Unpublished Singapore Genealogy Society paper. Translated from Mandarin.
[333] Personal interview and interaction during Society meetings, 2010-2012.

argument suggests a consciousness about the separation of cultural and socio-political identifications, and the recognition of the need to localise *hua ren* identifications, the underlying motivation remains cultural. In promoting the construction of genealogy, the SGS emphasises the importance of leaving traces and records for the future generations. This is seen as important as it allows the future generation be able to trace their ancestry. A sense of urgency is pushing forward this project due to the perception that many of the young people today do not even know the names of their grandparents and where they came from. Genealogy, Tan believes, can create the necessary moral suasion, based on perceived kinship ties, to bind a social group and to link what was lost. Tan sees the Singapore-based genealogies as a way to integrate new immigrants from the People's Republic of China and the Peranakans with the *hua ren* communities, as the genealogies would explain how the different groups might be linked.

While most of the *hua ren* respondents I interviewed were not interested or equipped with the knowledge to construct or contribute to their genealogies, a group of *hua ren* Christian respondents were actively involved in tracing their ancestry. As mentioned in preceding discussion, non-Christians generally do not expect Christians to participate in any ancestral worship activities and by virtue of this, they eschew traditional values such as filial piety. But a small group of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, more commonly known as the Mormon Church, undertake the compilation of genealogies. While Christianity in general does not encourage its believers to continue with the ancestor worship, the Mormon Church encourages its members, regardless of ethnicity and cultural inclinations, to actively trace their ancestry as part of their religious obligations. The significance of genealogical records for the Mormons is highlighted by the practice of proxy baptism,

in which Church members can baptise their deceased family members who were not believers in their lifetime, after their death. Such practice is built on the foundation of the Church doctrine that marriage and families can continue beyond this life. But to be united for all eternity, they need to be "sealed" – bound by a ritual blessing – in one of the Church's temples.[334] Hence, genealogy features prominently in the Mormon faith, with the Church being one of the world's most active proponents of genealogy and developer of genealogy technology.[335]

HH/F68/SP joined the Church in 1970 and started work on her family genealogy in the late 1970s. Juggling work as a teacher and wife, HH only began work on her geneology "very diligently" after her retirement. As of 2011, HH had traced five generations preceding her. She had interviewed a paternal aunt to learn about her family history and planned to visit her ancestral village to see if she could trace the genealogy any further. In contrast, HH's husband has not been very successful in his efforts; he did not have any information about his family beyond his grandfather:

> I am stuck, unless there's a breakthrough or any relative (who might) know…I still have some distant relatives in Malaysia, but I have not found the connection. I think I should try to do it.

Although his personal project of tracing his ancestry has been thwarted by the lack of information, ACH believes in the importance of leaving a legacy for the younger generation:

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[334] A building used for rituals – such as proxy baptism, marriages – rather than for regular worship, which is held at non-temple buildings. For a list of Mormon temples, see http://www.lds.org/church/temples/gallery?lang=eng, accessed 17 February 2012.

[335] FamilySearch is considered the largest genealogy organisation in the world. It is the non-religious arm of the Mormon Church which collects, preserves and stores genealogical records from all over the world. The information is shared via the website - https://www.familysearch.org/ - and also through Family History Centres, located in various countries. The website provides a comprehensive overview and step-by-step guide to compiling genealogy and family history, although it is heavily focussed on the Western world. The Church also developed the Personal Ancestral File (PAF) which can produce pedigree charts, family group records, and family histories, which can then be printed.

> The whole idea is to leave behind your belief and the reasons why you did the things you did so that … posterity may understand you and your values.

PERSONALISED MEMORIALISATION

Although the younger Singapore *hua ren* respondents appear to be moving away from the ritualistic memorialisation activities, this by no means indicates that they do not participate in any memorialisation activities or that they find memorialisation unnecessary. My research suggests that memorialising activities have moved from the ritual to the personal: memorialisation activities are more motivated by personal sentiments. One such highly personal way of memorialisation is by telling of family stories. Studies have shown that family stories, albeit informal, have shaped individuals' beliefs, outlooks, as well as intergenerational relationships.[336] Family stories are also a legitimate form of memorialisation, although it remains informal.

The telling of family stories is not a new practice. Story telling is an important method of transmitting knowledge and constructing cultural identities in many cultures and societies. Story telling is a perpetual practice that does not register in the public realm and has no fixed structure, thus allowing for meanings to be embedded and re-interpreted with every telling. It is also one that requires the least skills, unlike compiling genealogy or family history. It must also be noted that story telling is a process that lacks historical depth, for unlike traditional genealogy and lineage, story telling usually does not extend beyond three generations. But it is also one of the most easily accessible channels to acquire family and cultural memory. Nineteen of my 52

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[336] See for example, Family stories and the life course: across time and generations, ed. Michael W. Pratt and Barbara H. Fiese (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004); Judith E. Smith, Visions of belonging: family stories, popular culture, and postwar democracy, 1940-1960 (New York : Columbia University Press, 2004).

respondents said they participated in the telling of family stories from time to time.

These stories are often told during family events when the extended family is around.

Often the stories are triggered by a comment or an occasion which revolves around

family members and places. AL/F19/SP said her family often traded stories about

their old family house in Geylang:

> There is this house, where, it's quite a huge house; a lot of my relatives,
> even from beyond the extended family would stay there. That means
> the extended, extended family, like my mum's cousins. They would all
> live in one house. So they used to talk about that house because…it
> lasted (till about 15 years ago).

The family's extended stay in the house has become a rallying point for

reminisces. A specific spatial and geographical location can provide the foundation of

a collective memory specific to the family. "(T)alking about that house, like how nice

it was at that point of time and stuff like that" provided fertile memories in which to

locate the identifications of the family members.

As with delving into the past, the telling of family stories generally takes place

in families that are close-knit or have good relations with one another. VL/F22/SP's

maternal side of the family meets for breakfast every alternate Sunday, and VL would

go along occasionally:

> The last time they were sitting together and they were talking about –
> because my grandmother wants to go to Taiwan but she has asthma, so
> my mother started talking about how she (grandmother) got asthma.
> She had my youngest uncle, which was her ninth child and she wanted
> to abort, then she kept taking a lot of medicines and all of that…but the
> baby didn't die and she got asthma in the end.

These stories about past exploits of family members would generally be

insignificant to non-family members but they hold meaning for the teller and the

listeners. The stories act as a bridge between the individuals, time and space and

connect them in the collective experience of being part of the family. For the younger

people who have not had experienced the event personally, the telling and retelling of

these stories allow the creation of prosthetic memories relating to their families and their own past which provides a foundation for their family connection.

Sentimental value and intimacy are important elements in creating a bond with a specific identification, informed by relations or location. Many of my respondents who expressed disinterest in family history or did not participate in the telling of family stories indicated that their families were not tight-knit or that there were sensitive issues within the family. One respondent added that the reluctance to delve into the past was due to bad experiences. RS/F39/SP said

> I don't think my mother is keen (to do family history or talk about it)….she was not given the education. My grandmother was a gambler, so she (mother) doesn't like to talk about the family.

It is the meaning the individual ascribes to the family stories that make them significant.

Another personal and private memorialisation practice is the visiting of the ancestral village in China. Among the practices surveyed, visiting the ancestral village in China is the least common activity, with only five respondents indicating that they or their families had visited the ancestral villages. Two of the five respondents were in the 20 to 40 years old age group. RF/F31/SP described her one visit to Hainan Island in China as an interesting, albeit superficial, experience:

> I have been back once (my dad and aunt goes back to Hainan island on average once a year, sometimes with other distant relatives, sometimes on their own). In the late '80s or early '90s, our extended family chipped together money to build a house there which is now occupied by our long distance relatives (they act as "guardian" of our homes too). This effort was conducted with another extended family in Singapore (the grandpa who's still alive in his 90s now is the second cousin of my paternal grandma). The houses are adjourning to each other. We are not wealthy but have at least some money to travel. It is less meaningful to me or my cousins as we do not speak the dialect well, and we also do not know the relatives there. So when we visit, it is rather superficial for us and more like an interesting visit where firecrackers and

fireworks can be let off in our own backyard. However, it is interesting to my dad since he has always been active in our local Hainanese clans and associations, and my aunts etc speak the dialect fluently and can communicate with those folks there. We also try to contribute to improve the wellbeing and standard of living for the relatives there, by building a bathroom and toilet (with flush) – a big thing in rural countryside!

The superficiality of the respondent's experience can be related to the lack of knowledge and experience with the village or the relations there, as the quote above shows. For older respondents who have direct connections with the villages – either having immediate family members or being born there – the significance is far deeper. Three respondents, aged between 60s and 80s, indicated that they go back to the ancestral village more regularly, sometimes annually. These respondents were either born in China or have close relatives there who provide some emotional pull. Such emotional pull may be strong enough to overcome the common perceptions that "China relatives" are only interested in the financial benefits of having "Singapore relatives".

But familial and kinship ties, especially those separated by time and space, may not be strong enough for the continued maintenance of ties in the current milieu. Some respondents recounted stories of gold-digging China relatives. A respondent in his 60s said he stopped sending money back to his home village after a brief visit in 1979. At that time, China was still closed to the world and he had secretly and illegally returned to his village via Hong Kong. He had been sending money regularly and wanted to see the ancestral village his father came from. Once there, he discovered that despite the money he and his Singapore kin had sent at the requests of the China relatives, nothing was done to the old ancestral house, which was dilapidated. It was used as a barnyard for the animals. Instead new houses were built

next to the ancestral house. He said the villagers were all lazy and not doing anything, and that their lives were not as hard as they made it out to be in the letters.[337]

In modern Singapore, respondents suggested that kinship ties, like any relationship, has to be built on a foundation of sentiment based on knowledge. This is a significant change from earlier thinking that Singapore *hua ren* feel that blood ties alone are enough to warrant help from one's kin. Today, there needs to be a personal relationship for that to take place, blood ties notwithstanding. This is a common view especially among the younger generation. Older respondents reported having a hard time trying to interest their children and grandchildren in the ancestral village. One respondent who returns to his ancestral village annually told his son, who was to visit China for a business trip to meet with his cousin from China. The son was not convinced that he should since he did not know the cousin all. The respondent argued that they should meet simply because of the fact that they are related. Respondent KP/F33/SP said her ancestral village was in Poon Yu in the Guangdong province in China. Neither she nor her parents had any interest in going back.

> My parents are not interested in China. Even if we were to go back, it's
> so commercialised, and we have no relatives.

CT/F33/SP echoed the same sentiment:

> The nearest "ancestral village" the third generation (of the family) went
> to was my maternal grandparents' town in Malaysia (not) all the way
> back to China… The thought of going all the way to the original
> ancestral village didn't interest me. I doubt my mum even know where
> exactly is the village!

The reluctance to return to the ancestral village was also tied up with the perceptions of China as being unhygenic and backward. An respondent in her 30s was

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[337] Personal interview 30 September 2010.

interested in going back to her ancestral village ("somewhere in China"), but said it was difficult to persuade her mother, who is "a very fussy person" and "is not interested because it's dirty and the food is too oily".

> Anyway, she's not close (to her husband's side of the family). Her family also…all passed away already, so she's not so keen.

The respondent's interest in returning to the ancestral village lay less in seeking out her roots than her interest in food. "There's a lot of food which (have already) lost their original flavour here, only in China can we find (the original taste)" hence her interest in visiting the place.

HUA REN IMAGINATION IN SINGAPORE

For many *hua ren* respondents who are non-Christian, speak Mandarin and practice ancestor worship, their cultural identity as *hua ren* is obvious, and a given. This is reflected in how they punctuate explanations about rites, rituals, customs and practices with the phrase, "us *hua ren*". For the younger generation and those who neither practice ancestor worship nor are fluent in Mandarin, their cultural identification is less straightforward. While most of my young respondents have no problem identifying themselves as *hua ren* in one way or another, they are able to separate their *hua ren* ethnic identity and their cultural identity, even if they cannot fully articulate the latter fully. One case in point was TWL/M22/SP who was very conscious of the multiple layers of his identity, which he labelled as "conflicting". Born into a Christian family, TWL attended several schools that emphasised the "Chinese heritage:

> I come from a fiercely Hokkien Huay Kuan school (Ai Tong Primary School), then I went to a mission school with a fierce emphasis on

>> Chinese language (Catholic High School), then I went to a very mixed
>> environment (Anderson Junior College).

The mixed exposure resulted in what TWL described as "a very weird mix like me".

TWL says that while his family continued with "Chinese" practices such as

celebrating festivals, he was conscious of the incongruence between his religion and

his ethnic/cultural identity as *hua ren*. The exposure to his Anglicised church friends

and family who were aware of their "Chinese heritage" for TWL was an example of

how the interactions between the different elements could lead to the emergence of

the consciousness of cultural differences.

>> The situation also arose during instances when my *hua ren* respondents came

into contact with "other Chinese" such as those from PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

AL/F19/SP said she felt the difference when she meets the "other Chinese", "maybe

because of the way they speak…or perhaps because of the way they act." JT/F29/SP

felt likewise. On being asked how she identified herself as *hua ren*, JT recounted her

difficulties when she travelled to China and Taiwan. In both instances she "felt very

out of place", primarily because of communication problems. She related her

experience with her Taiwanese hosts:

>> …I had huge problems communicating with them. They were trying to
>> tell me about their culture and about their education system and all that
>> (in Mandarin). I can understand but I had a hard time trying to answer,
>> trying to sound intelligent. There are a lot of words I cannot (articulate)
>> in Mandarin. It's very difficult. Trying to order (food) was also
>> difficult. I could only point…

Despite finding China and Taiwan "still very, very Chinese", JT had no

problem seeing herself as "Chinese", even though she's Peranakan:

>> I think if you ask most of my family, they will tell you that we see
>> ourselves as Chinese… If anybody were to ask me what am I, I'd say

Chinese. I might say Chinese first before Peranakan (because) Peranakan is Chinese.

In JT's mind, there was no doubt that she is "Chinese". JT related that her family still followed "Chinese festivals" and customs, such as holding the tea ceremony at weddings, and addressing family elders by the proper kinship terms in dialect. The only obstacle, according to JT was language: "Once they open their mouth, they cannot (pass off as Chinese). You'll know instantly that they are trying to speak Hokkien. But they just look Chinese."

Like JT, many of my younger respondents had no trouble saying that they were "Chinese" because they followed certain "Chinese" practices, spoke the language, was interested in some aspects of the culture and history or simply because they have been identified as such. Many hastened to add a disclaimer that they are "Singaporean Chinese"

AL/F19/SP:
I wouldn't say … I'm Chinese and I came from some village from China because my ancestors came from there. I don't mean it in a derogatory sense, I just don't see myself as that because, after all, I grew up here, that's why I see myself as Singaporean Chinese.

SZS/M22/SP:
I feel…proud to be a Singaporean Chinese, (it's) like we have our own identity…separate from the China Chinese. Sometimes, it's different…

DT/F21/SP:
If I choose (to be identified as) Chinese, for example, people might think I am from China. Which is not … necessarily a bad thing, but, I'm from Singapore. I don't know how to explain it, but you can tell a Singaporean Chinese from China Chinese right? I mean even when I speak in Chinese, some taxi uncle thinks I'm from China…I mean it sounds totally nationalistic, but disclaimer needed.

CONCLUSION

If Singapore is a "Chinese" society, it is one by dint of its ethnic composition. Yet in practice, the *hua ren* in Singapore have developed cultural identities that are not with the same as their ethnic identities. As the cases of my Christian *hua ren* respondents demonstrate, ancestor worship is an act, a performance which can be accorded different meanings. For them, the participation or non-participation is not as important as what the action signifies for them.

The material basis for Singapore *hua ren*'s ethnic identity is relative weak. English has replaced Mandarin and dialects as the *lingua franca*. While temples and clan associations still exist, they have evolved into community social networking places from places where ethnic identities were consolidated. The weak material basis of Singapore *hua ren* identity allows for a corresponding shift to a more emotional level of cultural identification – or symbolic ethnicity – which is then prominently displayed during festive occasions such as Chinese New Year and Qing Ming. Such symbolic ethnicity is sometimes perceived as an apparent cultural dilution because of the decreased participation in ritualistic memorialisation activities. On the other hand, such change is perceived by some in more positive light. These respondents argue that change is inevitable, and instead of it being cultural dilution, the direction in which memorialisation activities is headed reflects an increasing personalisation that is more meaningful than blind participation for the sake of "tradition".

This chapter has shown that memorialisation activities are not restricted merely to the ritualistic and the religious. Practices and meanings change in tandem with structural social and cultural changes. In contemporary Singapore, identification is no longer only bound to traditional ritualistic practices; it is also influenced by the social-cultural milieu. The changes in what it means to be *hua ren* point to a more

fundamental change – a shift in cultural identifications. Modernisation and urbanisation pit two competing sets of identifications against each other: the modern urban identity based on cultural flexibility and the traditional identity based on fixed rituals and values. The adoption of personalised forms of memorialisation or the injection of personal sentiment and significance to existing forms of memorialisation suggests that *hua ren* identifications are not necessarily dictated by their inherited ethnic heritage. This reflects a separation of culture and ethnicity.

There are several indications of cultural changes that have taken place among *hua ren* in Singapore. The first and most obvious is cultural change as a result of religious conversion to Christianity, which marks a fundamental shift in one's belief and value system. For these Christian respondents, ethnic markers such as the practice of ancestor worship and its corresponding beliefs are no longer a fundamental marker of their identity, which is now marked not by ethnicity or cultural heritage but by religion. But they may still regard themselves as *hua ren* by other markers, such as the celebration of "Chinese" festivals such as Chinese New Year, and the culinary heritage. Although individuals may impose their own meanings to ancestral practices, there is still a fundamental cultural shift. For those who practice ancestor worhip with a psychological and mental distance, it is just like any other cultural practice – such as going to church or celebrating Christmas. The practice no longer informs the fundamental cultural system, but is an act that can be modified, acquired or discarded. This is also the case among the non-Christians.

A related cultural change that informs the trend is the use of language. Even though Mandarin is the mother tongue of *hua ren*, many of the younger respondents struggle with the language, especially as an examinable subject in school. Most of the younger generation respondents speak English at home, and they barely have a fluent

command of dialect or Mandarin. In contrast, most of the older respondents do not speak English and/or Mandarin. The differing language abilities across the generations posse a significant barrier to the transmission of cultural memory and knowledge, which is even more significant given the oral-based tradition of *hua ren* cultural practices. The lack of knowledge and tools to acquire the knowledge weakens the cultural identifications of the young respondents. The widespread use of English as a medium of instruction and communication also undermines the acceptance of the Chinese value system, the foundation of Chinese traditions, which is at odds with western thought based on critical thinking and rationality.

This chapter has shown that cultural identity as reflected through practices and ethnic identity are not necessarily coterminous. Some of my respondents, especially the older generation, have no problem identifying themselves as *hua ren* because of their *hua ren* practices, many of the younger respondents are more conscious of the disconnect between their practices and religions (cultural identity), and their ethnic identity. The research also suggests that respondents recognise that rituals are not only means of memorialisation and that these rituals are losing social currency in today's urban Singapore. The next chapter discusses the case of Taiwan, another *hua ren* majority site with a different socio-cultural milieu.

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CHAPTER 5
TAIWAN: LOCALISING CULTURAL IDENTITY

Taiwan's uncertain political status makes it a complex case study for issues of identity. Like Singapore, Taiwan has a *hua ren* majority population with significant historical connection to China. Yet, unlike Singapore, Taiwan is neither an independent country nor a colony of another state power, although the PRC claims the island of Taiwan as a renegade province. Taiwan, though an "overseas Chinese" community, was never included as a case study in the framework of the "Chinese diaspora" precisely because of its political and cultural association with mainland China. With some 95% of its 23 million population comprising "Han Chinese"[338] – the remaining being indigenous aboriginal tribes – Taiwan is inevitably described as "Chinese", although some scholars have argued that the various groups in Taiwan have developed a separate Taiwanese culture and identity, even if they had originated elsewhere.[339]

This chapter will show that although modernisation and urbanisation has affected memorialisation practices and attitudes, the material basis for such practices is far more visible and stronger than in Singapore. This, and the political desire to establish Taiwan as an independent entity, motivates a strong sense of localisation, which comes across strongly in the Taiwanese imagination of its cultural identity. After a brief historical sketch of Taiwan, I discuss the impact of family and clan organisation on Taiwan *hua ren*'s memorialisation practices. I argue that although the younger generation of Taiwan *hua ren* is affected by the ideas of rationalisation, like my younger respondents in Singapore, their participation in memorialisation practices

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[338] Government Information Office, "People and Language," http://www.gio.gov.tw (accessed November 3, 2011).
[339] Keelung Hong and Stephen O. Murray, *Looking through Taiwan: American anthropologists' colussion with ethnic domination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); 林美容, 台湾人的社会与信仰 (台北: 自立晚报, 1983). (Lin Mei Rong, *Taiwanese society and beliefs*)

appears to be more grounded in practice. This is because the material environment in

Taiwan is more evident than in Singapore.

Map 2: Taiwan[340]

TAIWAN: A CHINESE SOCIETY?

Taiwan's history and culture are closely tied to that of China and Japan, two countries

that had colonised the island at different times. Although Taiwan now seeks to assert

itself as a distinctive entity, it is impossible to discuss Taiwanese identity, culture and

history without reference to China and Japan. This is due to the complexity of

Taiwan's status as a "(redoubled) colonial subject" of China and Japan.[341] In order to

assert itself, Taiwan alternately positioned itself

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[340] http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/taiwan.html, accessed 27 September 2012.
[341] Carlos Rojas, "Introduction," in *Writing Taiwan: a new literary history*, ed. David Der-Wei Wang and Carlos Rojas, 1-16 (Durjam: Duke University Press, 2007), p 1.

in opposition to China and Japan – with the result …that 'Taiwan' is in a supplemental, parasitic position with respect to its more hegemonic neighbours…[342]

China – imperial, republican and communist – looms large in Taiwan's history and cultural psyche. Imperial China claimed Taiwan as part of its territory, Republican China established its alternative power base on the island, and communist China sought to re-claim Taiwan as its own. In fighting against such overtures, Taiwan sought to establish its own identity through Japan and eventually, on its own merits. Still, Taiwan has not entirely shaken off the shadows of China. In the post-1945 period, Taiwan has been variously regarded politically as "the other China" and "surrogate China", subjectivities conceived during the Cold War in opposition to communist China on the mainland.[343] Taiwan was thus what China "could have been" without Communism. This "two Chinas" paradigm, which persisted for decades, place Taiwan as the emblem of "traditional China" or "traditional Chinese culture", an image the Kuomintang (KMT) government also cultivated.[344] Anthropologists and ethnographers looked to Taiwan as an alternative site of fieldwork for their studies on "Chinese" societies and customs when Communist China was closed off to the world between the 1950s and the 1970s. These studies, which have since remained the foundation of Chinese Studies, took Taiwan as "part" of a "whole" that was China.[345]

Taiwan developed its "Chinese-ness" as a result of its historical associations with the mainland. Records of Chinese settlers on Taiwan predate the arrival of the

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[342] Ibid., p 2.
[343] Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, "Representing Taiwan: shifting geopolitical frameworks," in *Writing Taiwan: a new literary history*, 17-25 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p 18.
[344] Keelung Hong and Stephen O. Murray, *Looking through Taiwan: American anthropologists' colussion with ethnic domination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p 4.
[345] See for example the works of Emily Ahern, Arthur P Wolf and William Skinner, among others.

Dutch in the 16th century.[346] Fishermen and traders from the Fujian prefectures of

Zhang Zhou[347] and Chuan Zhou,[348] plied their trade in the waters off Taiwan as did

Chinese and Japanese traders and pirates.[349] When the Dutch landed in today's Tainan

in 1620, they reported an existing network of Chinese village traders,[350] whom the

Dutch later enlisted as middlemen in enacting transactions with the aborigines. In the

1630s, the Dutch recruited farmers from Fujian for their rice and sugarcane farms,[351]

and left them to be governed by their own headmen.

When Ming loyalist Zheng Cheng Gong, also known as Koxinga,[352]

successfully captured Taiwan from the Dutch in 1661, it marked the beginning of the

island's formal sinicisation. Taiwan "had a Chinese ruler for the first time".[353]

Following Koxinga's successful establishment of his stronghold on Taiwan came the

first wave of migration from Fujian, consisting mainly of Koxinga's followers and

supporters.[354] These migrants came "in vast numbers", constituting what scholar Ng

Chin Keong described as the "Fukienese colonisation of Taiwan".[355] More significant

was the imposition of a "Chinese world order" which included the establishment of a

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[346] For an overview of the state of Chinese influence and settlers in Taiwan before Koxinga, see Chien-Chao Hung, "Taiwan under the Cheng family 1662-1683: Sinicization after Dutch rule," PhD Thesis, Georgetown University (Washington, D. C, 1981), pp 22-82. The chapter covers the early history of Taiwan, as well as the period of Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch rule.

[347] 漳州

[348] 泉州

[349] Tonio Andrade, How Taiwan became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han colonization in the seventeenth century (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp 22-27.

[350] John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and political economy on the Taiwan frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p 83.

[351] Ibid., pp 85-86.

[352] 郑成功. Koxinga is an appellation derived from the title Guo Xing Ye (国姓爷), Lord of the Imperial Surname, bestowed on him by Emperor Longwu of the Southern Ming dynasty.

[353] Jr Wills and John E., "The seventeenth-century transformation: Taiwan under the Dutch and the Cheng regime," in *Taiwan: a new history (expanded edition)*, ed. Murray Rubinstein, 84-105 (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), at p 95. Even though history books hailed Koxinga as the first "Chinese" ruler of Taiwan, Koxinga was actually born in Japan to a Japanese mother.

[354] John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and political economy on the Taiwan frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p 96.

[355] Chin-Keong Ng, *Trade and society: the Amoy network on the China coast, 1683–1735.* (Singapore: Singapore National University , 1983), p 39.

civil administration based on the Han Chinese model of the deposed Ming dynasty.[356]

This included the imperial examination system, "the transplantation of the Chinese

ideographic writing system, the Confucian classical teachings about family and social

order".[357]

Koxinga's attempt to establish Taiwan as an anti-Manchu base was short-lived.

In 1684, his grandson surrendered to the Qing Court; Taiwan was brought under Qing

administrative control and made a prefecture of Fujian province.[358] For the first time,

Taiwan had a formal state authority. The Qing dynasty consolidated the sinicisation

process on Taiwan by maintaining the system of government and administration

established by the Koxinga dynasty, bringing the island " into the pale of Chinese

civilization".[359] Although Qing immigration policy was inconsistent, fluctuating

between legalising family migration to Taiwan and rescinding on the policies,

immigrants began arriving on Taiwan.[360] By the 19th century, immigrants from Fujian

and Guangdong comprised the majority of the Han Chinese population on Taiwan.[361]

When Qing China ceded Taiwan to the Japanese after the later defeated China

in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War[362] it marked the first sustained separation of

Taiwan from China. Politically, the Japanese instituted a new administrative system

and was credited for industralising Taiwan's economy, building up the island's

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[356] Shepherd, *Statecraft and political economy*, p 469, footnote 32.
[357] Hung, "Taiwan under the Cheng family", p 20.
[358] John R. Shepherd, "The island frontier of the Ch'ing, 1684-1780," in *Taiwan: a new history (expanded edition)*, ed. Murray Rubinstein, 107-132 (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), at p109.
[359] Hung, "Taiwan under the Cheng family", pp 292 - 293.
[360] Ibid., p124. See also Shepherd, *Statecraft and political economy*, pp 145.
[361] Hung, "Taiwan under the Cheng family", p 11.
[362] Under the treaty, in addition to paying indemnity to Japan, China also had to 1) recognised the independence of Korea, its tribute state (which later paved way for Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910), 2) cede Taiwan, the Pescadores (Penghu islands), the Liaotung Peninsula (in northeast China, bordering Korea) to Japan, 3) open the ports of Chungking, Soochow, Hanchow and Sha-shih to Japanese trade, 4) grant rights to Japanese to open factories and manufacturing in China. Emmanuel Hsu, *The rise of modern China*, 5th (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p 342.

infrastructure, introducing urbanisation, and improving the state of sanitation, healthcare and education on the island.[363] Japan's colonisation of Taiwan also severed the island's cultural affiliations to China. Chinese-language newspapers were abolished, classical Chinese was removed from elementary school curriculum, and the speaking of Mandarin was discouraged. Many Taiwanese especially those living in urban areas were "fast becoming Japanned" – educated and modern – two facets more commonly associated with the Japanese than with the Chinese.[364]

The extent of "Japanisation" of Taiwan was extensive; by 1943, more than 80% of Taiwanese could understand and speak Japanese.[365] The Japanese state religion of Shintoism was imposed as part of an effort to replace the existing folk religions. Japanese customs for weddings and funerals were introduced in an effort to replace Chinese ones, as were dressing and food. The Japanese authorities even sought to replace Chinese names with Japanese ones in a bid to detach the Han Taiwanese from their descent groups and links with China, although only about 1.7% of the population opted to do that.[366] Politically, the Taiwanese population was encouraged to pledge their loyalty to the Japanese Emperor. By the late 1930s, assimilation intensified into imperialisation (*kominka*). This was an effort to cultivate the Taiwanese into Japanese subjects who would be committed to the Japanese war efforts.[367] By the early 1940s, Taiwanese were recruited for the Japanese military.[368]

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[363] Steven E Phillips, *Between assimilation and independence: the Taiwanese encournter nationalist China, 1945-1950* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p 18; 葉蕭科, *日落臺北城: 日治時代臺北都市發展與臺人日常生活, 1895-1945* (台北: 自立晚報社文化出版部, 1993), pp 20-31, 31-42, 53-62; Gary Marvin Davison, *A short history of Taiwan: the case for independence* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), pp 57-63.

[364] Harry J Lamley, "Taiwan under Japanese rule, 1895-1945: the vicissitudes of colonialism," in *Taiwan: a new history (expanded edition)*, 201-260 (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), p 218.

[365] Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *Maritime Taiwan: historical encounters with the East and the West* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2009)., p 154

[366] Ibid., pp 154 – 155.

[367] Lamley, "Taiwan under Japanese rule", p 240.

In the midst of the government's Japanisation efforts, a group of writers and intellectuals sought to define a distinct, local Taiwanese identity that was neither Japanese nor Chinese. The anti-feudal and anti-Confucian Taiwanese New Culture Movement emerged in the 1920s with the intention of encouraging the use of the vernacular Chinese language (*bai hua wen* 白话文) rather than the classic *wen yan wen* (文言文). The Taiwanese movement was influenced by the May Fourth Movement of 1919 in Republican China. Its the main objective was to focus on Taiwanese issues, Taiwanese consciousness and to examine the local (colonial) context, and what that meant for the Taiwanese, not Chinese.[369] The movement was short-lived because it was largely limited to the intellectual circle, which restricted its reach and impact. Furthermore there was little cohesion: some in the group pursued equality with the Japanese, while others wanted autonomous home rule through representation.[370] Some scholars have argued that the movement was an ideological retort against the restrictive Japanese colonial rule; that it was about self-determination, and legal and social equality as colonial subjects rather than reunification with China.[371] In contrast to the "heavy Japanese influence on Formosan political movements, the influence of China was negligible" because there few little deliberate actions on the part of China in motivating the movement.[372] Regardless of its success or failure, the Taiwanese New Culture Movement was the beginning of the nativist movement (*xiang tu yun dong* 乡土运动) that was to gain greater traction in the 1970s and 1980s.

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[368] Tsai, *Maritime Taiwan*, pp 164-167

[369] Gary Marvin Davison, *A short history of Taiwan: the case for independence* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), pp 66-69.

[370] See Edward I-Te Chen, "Formosan Political Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914-1937," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (May 1972): 477-497.

[371] Ibid., p 495. See also Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[372] Chen, "Formosan Political Movements", p 496.

THE LINEAGE AND FAMILY

The social institutions of the lineage and family appear to be far more entrenched in Taiwan than it is in Singapore largely because they have been established for longer in Taiwan than in Singapore. Furthermore, the conditions for the establishment of the lineage and the family were more conducive in Taiwan. Even though the family structure was largely an unstable throughout the Qing period (17th through to 19th century) because of the fluctuating immigration policies, by the 19th century, the family has become a key feature of Taiwan *hua ren* society. On another level, the lineage also has a strong presence in Taiwan, evident from the number of lineages formed in various parts of the islands.[373] It must be noted that these lineages were not a direct duplication of that found in China. Taiwan "was neither a simple transplantation of traditional Chinese society nor a completely different society from that of the mainland," wrote Chinese historian Chen Kongli.[374] Because of how land was granted to settlers and the nature of landlord-tenant relationships, the early lineages formed in Taiwan were contractual lineages based on mutual socio-economic interests rather than purely on blood relations.[375]

Taiwan lineages are categorised according to the orientation of ancestor worship. Those oriented around one of its ancestors in China are known as *tang shan zu* (唐山祖, literally meaning China ancestor). This type of lineage was formed by

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[373] See 王念湘;沈讠䍿鹤;郭百超;李丽菁;蹒丰富,《南瀛宗祠誌》(台南: 台南县政府, 2009). *The family temples of Nan Ying* (Nan Ying is an ancient term for Taiwan).

[374] Quoted in Zhenman Zheng, *Family lineage organization and social change in Ming and Qing Fujian*, trans. Michael Szonyi (with the assistance of Kenneth Dean and David Wakefield) (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p 57.

[375] Ibid., p 25 and p 243. For details of land grants and transfers, see T. Fricke, J. S. Chang and L. S. Yang, "Historical and ethnographical perspectives on the Chinese family," in *Social change and the family in Taiwan*, ed. Arland Thornton and Hui-sheng Lin, 22-48 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p 23.

migrants who came from a specific area in China and established around the worship

of an ancestor from China. The other type of lineage is known as the *kai tai zu* (开台

祖) commemorating the first ancestor who came to Taiwan. Both types of lineages are

generally known as *ji si gong ye* (祭祀工业) in Taiwan, especially if the lineages own

properties. *Ji si gong ye* is loosely translated to mean property-owning ancestral

worship associations. This is a corporate entity, with assets and properties to its name,

set up with the objective of memorialising the family ancestors. There is often an

accompanying lineage shrine or temple[376] hosting the tablets of the lineage ancestors.

Any ancestral rites are financed through income from the assets and properties in the

name of the clan – usually land and buildings. This is akin to a family trust fund. Only

family members and direct descendents from the branch of the family can participate

in the ancestral rites.[377] These family shrines and the lineage organisations are still

common in small towns and villages in Taiwan, especially in the southern part of the

island, although the level of activity varies. The ownership and operation of these

properties owned by the associations are now regulated by law.[378]

Rapid industrialisation in the 1950s and 1970s put economic pressure on the

sustainability of farm families. To cope, families began to encourage their children to

attain higher education so that they could compete for better jobs in the cities.

Industrialisation drew labour from the farms as cities attracted the rural young with

education and employment opportunities. Family planning also contributed to smaller

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[376] These temples are variously referred to as 家庙 *jia miao*, 祠堂 *ci tang* or 宗祠 *zong ci*, which means clan or lineage temple, and houses the ancestral tablets of deceased members.
[377] 台灣祭祀公業協會, http://www.ceremony.com.tw/c/c2/c23/c231/c231_06_01.asp (accessed April 17, 2012).
[378] See 端 林, "台灣祭祀公業的社會學分析," 行政院國家科學委員會補助專題研究計畫成果報告 (Taipei, 2000). (Lin Duan, *A sociological analysis of Taiwan's ji si gong ye*)

family sizes, which affected farm families.[379] Extended families gave way to nuclear families.[380]

The significance and power of lineages were also perceived to be declining. An important reason for the reduction of lineages' power was the consequences of the Land Reforms of 1949. The reforms changed the rural power structure by transferring authority from landlords and lineage organisations to individual farmers. In doing so, it demolished the landlord-as-patriarch paradigm and effectively removed one of the main raison d'état and power sources of lineages – corporate land ownership.[381]

The accompanying social changes as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation led some to deduce a weakening of family links in Taiwan's families. This is based on their findings that the significance of what were once considered key family values in Chinese families have gradually declined. Scholars have argued that filial piety in Taiwan has been transformed from being oriented to the collective (family, clan) to being individually oriented.[382] Filial piety is no longer unquestioning loyalty to the "family", but a sentiment that is dependent on the depth of relations between family members.[383] Furthermore, the expression of filial piety can take on many forms instead of blind obedience to the wishes of the family elders.[384] Some scholars point to the declining significance of what were once considered key family values, such as the continuation of the family name and line. The emphasis has shifted

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[379] A. Hermalin, P. K. C. Liu and D. Freedman, "The social and economic transformation of Taiwan," in *Social change and the family in Taiwan*, ed. Arland Thornton and Hui-sheng Lin, 49-87 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[380] An-Chi Tung, Chaonan Chen and Paul Ke-Chih Liu, "The emergence of the neo-extended family in contemporary Taiwan ," *Journal of Population Studies*, June 2006: 123-152, p 131.

[381] A. Hermalin, P. K. C. Liu and D. Freedman, "The social and economic transformation of Taiwan," in *Social change and the family in Taiwan*, ed. Arland Thornton and Hui-sheng Lin, 49-87 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p 63.

[382] Te-Hsiung Sun and Yin-Hsing Liu, "Changes in intergenerational relations in the Chinese family: Taiwan's experience," in *Tradition and change in the Asian family*, ed. Lee-Jay Cho and Moto Yada, 319-361 (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1994), p 320.

[383] 国枢 杨, "现代社会的新孝道," *中华文化复兴月刊* 19, no. 1 (1986): 51-67, pp 59-62.

[384] 国枢 杨, "现代社会的新孝道," *中华文化复兴月刊* 19, no. 1 (1986): 51-67, pp 62-63.

to immediate family ties rather than extended ones; continuing family line is no longer the main reason for having children, and finally, not many people expect to be remembered/cherished after death.[385]

Despite this, the family and clan remain a source of for the cultural identities of Taiwan *hua ren* as evident from several features in Taiwan society. The most obvious change in family structure in Taiwan is the breaking down of the extended family into nuclear families. But besides that, changes to the family structure and function have not been drastic. Despite the nuclearisation process, family ties in Taiwan remain strong. Many families are likely to live in close proximity to their relatives, maintain frequent contact with extended family members and engage in informal social support exchanges.[386] This has also been borne out in my research. Lineages remain part of Taiwan's rural social landscape even though their significance has been reduced. Vibrant religious and traditional rituals are still being practiced in many cities and regions throughout the year, and are well documented.[387]

Ancestor worship remains one of the most vibrant cultural practices, much of which is still carried out away from the public eye in the private sphere of the home. All 41 of my Taiwan informants said they regularly participated in at least one of the three practices that constituted ancestor worship: worshipping of ancestral tablets at home, visiting ancestor graves, and visiting ancestral tablets in columbaria, temples or niches. Twenty-three informants (56%) indicated that they or their family members (usually mothers) make daily offerings at the ancestral tablets at home, a far higher

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[385] A. Thornton, L. S. Yang and T. Fricke, "Weakening the linkage between the ancestors, the living and future generations," in *Social change and the family in Taiwan*, ed. Arland Thornton and Hui-sheng Lin, 359-395 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[386] An-Chi Tung, Chaonan Chen and Paul Ke-Chih Liu, "The emergence of the neo-extended family in contemporary Taiwan ," *Journal of Population Studies*, June 2006: 123-152

[387] See for example Mark Caltonhill, *Private prayers and public parades - exploring the religious life of Taipei* (Taipei: Department of Information, Taipei City Government, 2002) and 王乙芳, 台湾的祭祀文化与节庆礼俗 (台北: 台湾书房出版有限公司, 2010).

number than in Singapore (19%). This typically involves the offering of joss sticks every morning and/or evening.

Of the 23 informants who indicated that they or their family members participated in daily worshipping of ancestral tablets at home, only 6 have the tablets hosted in the house where they live. The rest said the tablets were hosted in their ancestral house, where their parents or grandparents lived, or at other relatives' houses. The notion of the ancestral house is a common one in Taiwan and non-existent in Singapore. The ancestral house generally refers to the house where the family in Taiwan began. It is usually in the rural areas and is often referred to as *lao jia* （老家）, which literally means "old house" or *zu wu* (祖屋). It is customary for the ancestral tablet to be hosted in the ancestral home, which is the venue for all major ancestor worship rituals. Family members who live away from the ancestral home would usually return for these events, usually during Lunar New Year and Qing Ming. When the sons marry and move out of the ancestral home, they can set up their own set of ancestral tablets in their new home. This practice is known as *fen xiang huo* (分香火) or *ge xiang* (割香) - the distributing of the joss fire. The new family will set up a new urn at the altar with some ashes taken from the urn of the "original" urn for ancestral worship. This symbolic act represents the continuation of the family lineage as the ancestors are not forgotten but continually honoured by subsequent generations of the family.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE

While Taiwan still retains a large agricultural and rural sector, it also has a number of major cities where the impact of modernisation and urbanisation on ancestor worship

practices is pronounced. The urban environment invariably has bearings on how *hua ren* memorialise their ancestors.

Similar to the situation in Singapore, one of the most visible impacts is seen in the gradual replacement of land burial with cremation and the placement of the remains of the dead in columbaria. According to 1997 figures, the cremation rate in Taipei was between 80 to 90% while the national figure was about 50%.[388] Since the mid 1980s, burials have been increasingly regulated by the state. Instead of unregulated land burial, the Taipei city government runs several columbaria and one graveyard. At the graveyard, burial is for a stipulated time period after which the remains are exhumed and prepared for reburial or cremation. The vacated spot is re-used for the next deceased.[389] Old burial grounds are also gradually removed and the land converted to other functions. Burials that do not take up valuable land are also encouraged. These include tree burial, flower burial or sea burial.[390] As a result of these social changes, the likelihood of those who passed away in the past 20 years having a grave is low. Informants who said they visited graves of their ancestors did so some time ago, and/or that the graves were in rural areas. It was also not unusual for their ancestors' remains and/or ancestral tablets to be placed in a columbaria or temple, instead of being hosted in the family home.

Like in the case of Singapore, memorialisation practices in Taiwan are situated between rationality and the logic of practice. Many of the younger Taiwan

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[388] 杨，国柱, *台灣當前的埋葬文化與改革方向*, http://www.thinkerstar.com/newidea/fengshui/yang-05.html (accessed April 20, 2012).

[389] Paul-François Tremlett, "Death-scapes in Taipei and Manila: a postmodern necrography," *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 1 (November 2007): 23-36., p 29.

[390] Paul-François Tremlett, "Death-scapes in Taipei and Manila: a postmodern necrography," *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 1 (November 2007): 23-36., p 30. See Taipei Mortuary Services Office website, 多元環保葬介紹 *(Introduction to envrionmentally friendly burials)*, http://www.mso.taipei.gov.tw/np.asp?ctNode=24329&mp=107011 (accessed April 25, 2012) for details of sea burial and flower-bed burial.

respondents take a more laissez faire approach to memorialisation practices. They are able to rationalise it according to their personal situations. The older generation continues to maintain their own logic of practice that may seem "illogical" to the younger generation, who nevertheless continue to participate in such practices out of respect for the family members. I illustrate the rationality-logic of practice balancing act with the following example of the H family.

I interviewed three members of the H family on two separate occasions. I first met the eldest son AH/M52/TW at his workplace in Taipei, who then arranged for me to interview his mother HBLX/F78/TW. I interviewed the latter and her second son, ABH/M40s/TW, on another occasion at her Taipei residence. The mother was the main practitioner of domestic ancestor worship since the ancestral tablet was at her home. She had inherited the tablet, which honours the collective H family ancestors, and several individuals, when she married into the family more than 50 years ago. Although she was not the eldest daughter-in-law, she had to shoulder the responsibility of the household, which included ancestral worship duties, when her eldest sister-in-law moved overseas. It was then that she learned the rules and rites, which until then she had never performed.

While age had slowed her down, HBLX continued to carry out the ancestral worship rites on designated days: first and 15th day of the lunar new year, second day of the lunar second month (Earth God's birthday), Qing Ming, Dragon Boat Festival, Zhong Yuan Festival, Mid Autumn Festival, Chong Yang Festival[391] and on the death anniversaries of her parents-in-law. The other ancestors were collectively honoured

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[391] Chong Yang festival falls on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, as such it is also known colloquially as the Double Ninth Festival. Traditionally, ancestor worship is carried out on Chong Yang festival, which is akin to Qing Ming. In Hong Kong for instance, many families still visit the graves on this day. Today in Taiwan, Chong Yang is dedicated as "Senior Citizens' Day".

on Chong Yang. She said these were the "stipulated" occasions on which to perform ancestor worship. HBLX felt obligated to honour her parents-in-law on their death anniversaries, "I cannot not do it". This is because they are the closest in terms of seniority to her.

On almost every occasion, HBLX would prepare feasts that included dishes of chicken, meat (pork), fish, various type of steamed cakes (糕点 *gao dian*, or *kueh* in Hokkien), vegetables such as radish and various types of fruits to be offered to the ancestors. Each dish has inscribed meanings. For instance, chicken was seen as an essential offering item, for the offering of chicken means a home will be established (有鸡才会起家)[392] because in Hokkien, the "chicken" and "house" sound alike. Radish is believed to represent good luck.[393]

Her sons have told her to simplify the processes since she was getting old and they felt it was too much work for her. Her son AHB explained:

> If she knew more, if she were to do this for every generation of our ancestors that has passed on, no number of tables will be enough to hold the offerings.

HBLX's sons told her there was no need for such a spread at every offering. They had a practical explanation: there were not enough people to eat the offerings afterwards. Both brothers and their families would try to turn up at their mother's home on major festive days when offerings are made in order to consume the food after they are offered to the ancestors.

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[392] In Hokkien, the phrase is rendered as *wu geh jia eh ki geh*.
[393] In Mandarin, radish is known as 萝卜, in Hokkien, 菜头 which is sounds like 彩头， meaning good luck.

The brothers were able to separate the meaning from the act of making offerings. Although they usually followed their mother's instructions regarding these practices, both did not ascribe the same level of importance to the practice. AHB, who would most likely inherit the ancestral tablet and ancestor worship, said he was carrying out his mother's wishes now. But he also said that times have changed and so would the practices. He hinted that he would simplify the current ancestor worship practices even further should the responsibility be left to him. His brother, AH, felt likewise:

> For my mother, it is something she has to do. But my siblings, no one feel that they have to do these things. So we don't know what we are going to do in the future.

AH explained that his children did not really understand the rationale for these practices and were likely to "get rid of all these things" if they had the chance, although "they will still follow us to visit the graves (but) that's about it."

This case also highlights the myth of universality in traditions. Although there are variations in the actual practice of the rites and rituals, many individuals assume that their own repertoire is the universally accepted one. In actuality, what individuals and families think is "universal" is actually specific to them. HBLX, for example, was surprised when told that different families have different practices. When AHB pointed out a plausible explanation for her particular practice of placing seven sets of cutlery (cups and bowls) when making offerings to the ancestors, she rejected his explanation. To AHB's mind, the numbers represent the number of ancestors being memorialised, being one set for each individual, although it is unclear who the seven ancestors are. His mother, on the other hand, maintained that there was no specific

reason for the number as "this is how it's done". She latter admitted that some families used 5 or 10, the latter being a representation of the phrase 十全十美 *shi quan shi mei*, meaning perfection. It did not mean that the family was honouring 10 ancestors. She said she had been using seven sets of cutlery since she married into the H family and took over the responsibility. She explained that she had been told by the family elders to use seven sets of cutlery when making offering to the ancestors. "That was how I was taught, it's not about seven people."

AHB interjected to say that this was how she was taught but added a possible rationale for the practice. Examining the ancestral tablet on the altar (See Photo 1), he pointed to the names of seven individuals written in script on the tablet; 3 to the left and 3 to the right. A name was carved in freehand near the edge of the tablet. The entry was almost invisible and appeared to be a late addition. It was unclear who the inscribed name belonged to. When AHB's father died, his name was not added to the front of the tablet but on a piece of paper that was stuck at the back of the tablet. AHB explained that her mother inherited the practice of using seven sets of cutlery; she did not question the rationale but accepted it as the norm.

Interestingly, despite her insistence on keeping to traditions regarding how to make the offerings, HBLX said that there are no restrictions on what can be offered:

> Times have changed. The offerings made can be anything the living descendents (making the offerings) want to eat, or it can be the deceased's favourite food.

Photo 1: H family ancestral tablet

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND THE LINEAGE

Unlike Singapore where traditional lineage organisations are few and far between, the lineage is still a presence in Taiwan especially in the rural areas. In the cities, there is another type of social organisation, the general surname clan (宗亲会 zong qin hui). This is similar to the clan associations in Singapore which is a social grouping of people sharing the same surname and who are not necessarily related by blood. Some of these clans may have assets, usually a building bought in the name of the clan to house the clan offices or clan temples. The funds are raised from clan members, either in the form of fees or donations. Generally, many of these city clans organised themselves as a group with the purpose of remembering and paying respect to their ancestors. While they attempt to replicate the objective of a lineage, the rules of membership to the clans are not as stringent as that of a lineage, which is only limited to direct descendents. For the clans, membership is not restricted by either regional or

dialect origins; anyone with the same surname is eligible to join the clan. Once the

clan is established with enough members and funds, it would build an ancestral

shrine, akin to a lineage family temple to honour the memory of their ancestors. One

of the memorialisation activities commemorated by both the lineage temple and the

surname clans is the Spring and Autumn Sacrificial Rites 春秋二祭, deemed one of

the most significant ancestral worship dates. In addition, lineages and clans would

also conduct ancestor worship rites during major festivities such as Qing Ming,

Dragon Boat Festival (端午Duan Wu), Zhong Yuan (中元, lunar seventh month),

Winter Solstice (冬至, dong zhi) and Chinese New Year eve (岁末 sui mo).

Whether it is the clan or the lineage, there are indications that these traditions

are disappearing along with its members. The majority of the members in lineages

and clans are aged 50 years an above. Even though all family members born into a

lineage are automatically members, only the older generation continues to be active

participants in lineage activities. Informants attribute the lack of young members to

several reasons: the younger generation have less time for such activities as most of

them have to work or study. In addition, many of the young people have moved away

to the bigger cities or other counties for work or study. There is also a general

consensus that most of the young today have little tolerance for what they see as

outdated traditions with little relevance for their lives.

In response to the dwindling membership, some local clans have adopted new

approaches to sustain the financial viability of their clan. The Taichung City Hsu Clan

adopted a practice common among temples – the *lu zhu* 炉主 system.[394] It allows for

a person to bid for a statue of the progenitor, 许真人 Xu Zhen Ren, which he will host

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[394] 头家炉主 *Local chiefs and incense heads*, http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=1789
(accessed April 30, 2012).

at his home or office for a year. This person, known as the *lu zhu* 炉主, is obligated to host a dinner for the clan members once a year, capped at NT$30,000. The deputy *lu zhu* will foot the bill for the drinks at the dinner and the *tou jia* 头家, literally meaning head of the house, but in this case the assistant to the *lu zhu* with the ancestral rites, will donate NT$1,000 towards the expense of the dinner. This is an important source of funds that helps offset the expenditure of the clan. Such practice is akin to the system in Singapore during *zhong yuan* (or the Hungry Ghost Festival), where each temple has a *lu zhu* who bids to host the incense urn for a year. His bid is the donation to the temple which funds the temple's activities or the following year's seventh month dinner expenditure. In this case, the Taichung clan has taken on a practice modelled on the folk practices not only in utilising the practice but also in casting the statue of the progenitor as a deity to be worshipped.

RELIGION AND THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE

Religious change is a factor that has affected cultural practices. Christians and Catholics make up about 2.5% of Taiwan's 23 million population (579,640).[395] This relatively small proportion is not reflected accurately in my fieldwork. Of my 41 informants, seven are Christian. The disproportionate number of Christian informants is partially a result of the chain referral system, with Christian informants introducing me to their friends.

The Christian informants, while generally agreeing that the practices of offering joss sticks and burning of joss papers conflict with their religious teachings, all participate in ancestor worship acts, in one form or another. This reflects the

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[395] 2010 figures. Ministry of Interior, "Population by age" and "General Conditions of Religions" in "Statistical Yearbook of the Interior," http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/year/elist.htm (accessed April 23, 2012).

dominance of the family and clan in cultural practice in Taiwan. Most of my Christian informants are the only Christians in their family, who may be Buddhist, Taoist or non-religious but still practice ancestor worship in the traditional sense. Hence, the informants rationalised their participation in ancestor worship as an act of respect for the family. CC/F42/TW converted to Christianity, more specifically Mormonism, about 20 years ago. She recounted that shortly after her conversion, she still felt pressured to participate in ancestral worship activities. On these occasions, she would "hold the joss sticks in my hand, (and) when praying, I pray to the Christian God. So (the family) didn't know," she explained. As time passed, although she would still help her family with the arrangements and logistics for ancestor worship, she no longer held the joss sticks, an act her family has come to accept. CC likened helping with the burning of the joss paper as just another thing one does – "it's "just like putting paper in a bin" – without any religious significance.

Other informants take a more active interpretation of their participation in ancestor worship. Some saw it as a testimony of their Christian faith; that they do not eschew respect for their ancestors simply because they are of a different religion. GZF/F20s/TW converted to Christianity when she was 7 years old. After her conversion, she initially did not participate in Qing Ming activities because she saw these practices as conflicting with her religious beliefs, especially the act of holding joss sticks and burning of joss papers. At the same time, she did not like being criticised for being disrespectful to the ancestors because of her refusal to hold joss sticks. At 13, GZF changed her attitude and began to join in her family's Qing Ming observations. GZF represented her parents who had to work at the annual Qing Ming visits to the graves. While she did not hold joss sticks, she put her palm together and made a praying gesture instead. She explained the reason for her change in attitude:

> I heard from people that actually Christians ought to attend such events even more, to let people know that Christians also have respect for ancestors. So I started going to Qing Ming at 13.

GZF saw her participation in Qing Ming events as demonstration that Christians are not "unfillial" as non-Christians perceived them to be. GZF said her church was one of several churches in Taiwan that encouraged members to participate in memorialising ancestors. Instead of offering joss sticks, joss papers and food, members are encouraged to offer flowers. Alternatively, church members can also conduct a family worship session during Qing Ming to pray for the departed ancestors. To affirm her decision, GZF related an incident at the most recent Qing Ming visit to the ancestral grave. She observed a Christian grave next to her family grave. The area around the grave was tiled, which meant there was no overgrown grass and weeds to clear, thus eliminating one of the most laborious tasks at Qing Ming (see Photo **2**). The Christian grave was clean and there were fresh flowers placed at an urn in front of the grave. GZF said her relatives expressed envy at the simplicity and convenience of the memorialisation effort, a direct contrast to the laborious *hua ren* tradition of preparing of food, joss offerings and the like. GZF said that on seeing the flowers at the graves, her relatives expressed surprise that Christians also "*bai bai*". "I told them we do. It's just that we do it with flowers," she said.

Photo 2: A Taiwanese family clearing the area around the family grave on Qing Ming.

GZF is an example of how *hua ren* Christians reason their participation in ancestor worship; that they can still practice *hua ren* memorialisation acts without regard for the original religious meanings. Cultural traditions can be and have been, adapted and blended into another form of practice. I illustrate this point with the following observation taken at a Catholic cemetery I visited in Tainan during Qing Ming in 2010.

The Catholic cemetery was located in a cemetery district about half an hour's drive out of Tainan city. It was a small walled off section, separate from the main "Chinese" cemetery that had been cut into two by a highway. The Catholic cemetery housed both graves and niches. An interesting feature of the cemetery was the presence of urns at the graves (see Photo **3** and *Photo 4*). The urns were built into the grave, not temporary structures, and were similar to those used for holding incense sticks found on many Chinese altars in front of statues of deities and ancestral tablets.

Two smaller urns were built into the sides for the holding of fresh flowers. Many of the urns contained joss sticks and cigarettes recently lit for the deceased. The rows of niches had no urns. Instead there were holes in front of each urn specifically bored in for the purpose of holding the joss sticks. Individuals offered joss sticks at the graves of the people they knew (see *Photo 5*). A Catholic priest made his round of the cemetery, praying for the deceased and sprinkling holy water over the graves and the niches. Members from the same diocese were at the cemetery to pay their respects to their deceased friends and family, several of them holding joss sticks.

Photo 3: Graves at the Catholic cemetery. Note the joss sticks in the urns.

Photo 4: A close-up of a tombstone at the Catholic cemetery. The names of the couple were Abraham and Maria. Note the urn and joss sticks.

Photo 5: Two church members offering joss sticks.

OF SENTIMENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Many informants argued that ancestor worship was not a religious rite but one that was symbolic of the living's sentiments for the deceased and for the family in general. They regarded ancestor worship as a form of remembrance for their deceased family members rather than an act of religious belief. But there was a tighter circle of who is regarded as family worth remembering. Many informants said they did not see the necessity of making offerings to ancestors whom they had not seen or interacted with. This was because, even though they were related by blood, these people were like strangers to them. What they felt was important was for them is to make offering to people that they knew, i.e. had a personal relationship with. These family members usually included their parents and grandparents. As AH/M52/TW explained:

> If the ancestors are your parents or someone you've seen before, I believe (the younger generations) will continue the tradition (of memorialising them). My daughter is now 20 years old. If you tell her, let's go see *ah gong*, clear his grave, she'd follow, although she doesn't know why but she knows where she came from.

He added:

> In the past, traditions dictate that you go to the graves/tablets during specific periods of time. But now, for convenience, like us, I sometimes go and visit my father during father's day. I go when I miss him. Sometimes I even go during holidays or Chinese new year. It's not fixed. I think these can be flexible…(but) the action has to be meaningful.

This comment suggests that relationship between the deceased and the living is just as critical a basis for memorialisation as blood ties are. This point is also reflected in uxorilocal marriages where males marry into the female family. In some instances, the males are known to take the wife's surname, although more commonly, the first-born son will take the mother's surname as a means of continuing the descent

line. The adoption of sons, within and beyond the family and clan were also common. In cases like these, the memorialisation of ancestors, especially on the family level, was a case of filial obligation. Several informants related their own histories of having been adopted by another family or have older siblings adopted into the family. In all the cases, the ancestors honoured were of the family that brought them up not their "original" ancestors. MF/M50s/TW said his family made offerings to several ancestors of different surnames. Although he did not know who they were or how they were related, he continued with the ancestor worship because a relationship between the families must have had been established to account for the practice. In this case, he said there was an obligation to be honoured.

For many of my informants (41%), the expression of sentiments was not just limited to ritualistic practice. Many believed that telling and exchanging family stories was also a legitimate way of memorialising their ancestors. It was also more meaningful because of the private and personal nature of the form: the stories were told by family members about people and events that had personal meaning to them. In articulating these stories, the tellers and the listeners become incorporated into a sentimental and emotional network of relationships localised in the geography of the family. Except for one informant – a literature student – who indicated that she was actively writing down her family history, the others relied on the oral tradition of story telling. Many informants indicated that writing or searching of family history was a daunting task that was time consuming and laborious. They said it was difficult for them to proceed even if they had wanted to because they had no resources as the older family members had the information had already passed away. They also felt that there was "nothing spectacular" about their family history that warranted for it to

be written down. They felt they were neither prominent personalities nor academics whose stories would be interesting to the public.

THE PLACE IN CULTURAL IDENTITY

Besides religion, place also plays a part in determining and influencing attitudes towards cultural practices and their involvement. To locate one's identity and history in Taiwan is an important aspect for cultural imagination among my informants because it individualises the memorialised rather than treats the ancestor as part of a nebulous collective. This is, for my informants, more personally meaningful. One example was AH/M52/TW. Inspired by classical Mandarin eulogies, AH wrote elegiac prose for his late father and aunt. In each of these pieces, AH personalised the memories by writing about his personal experiences with the deceased individuals rather than composing a generic eulogy. In the piece about his father, titled *Food and Bicycle*, AH included not just the biographical sketch of his father's life – how others saw him, but detailed their relationship through a narrative of father and son traipsing the streets of Taipei city on bicycle in search of good food. The piece thus located AH and his father's memories and experiences in the local geography and the personal. AH explained his rationale for writing the piece:

> The stories gives meaning to my relationship with my father…it was a way of remembering (my father who loves to eat), where we ate when and what. Many of my father's friends came to me (after the funeral) and said I missed out some places and food he liked. It's something you know, not something that has no meaning for you.

The stories localised the relationship in local geography, history and personal acts (going for meals together). They give a greater sense of being rooted in a particular time and space, which in turn create a deeper sense of belonging.

During my time in Taiwan, people would tell me to visit the south (南部, *nan bu*) on learning my research topic. Generally, they did not direct me to visit a particular city, but purported that the south – the area south of Taichung – was a stronghold of tradition. They said the north, represented by Taipei, was too modern and urban. Informants would highlight the presence of numerous temples, shrines and vibrant religious activities in the south. That was where I would find answers to my questions, informants told me. This was because the south was (seen as) the embodiment of tradition.

WCJ/M20/TW was born in the southern Taiwanese city of Kaohsiung. He explained that his family practiced traditional folk religion, and that ancestor worship was also part and parcel of his family life.

> In an environment where (such practices) is the norm, it will appear strange if one does not do it…There are many temples in the area where I was born, so it becomes part of my life, unconsciously. In that sense, my parents did not have to specially bring me into the religious and ritual environment.

Although most of my informants had ancestors that originated from mainland China, for many of them, the China origins are "too long ago to matter now". Of the 41 Taiwanese informants, four indicated that they had visited their ancestral villages. Of the four, three referred to the village in Taiwan where their ancestors originated while only one referred to the one in China where his forebears came from. When asked about their family history, many informants said their families have been in

Taiwan for "several hundred years" or "many generations", and that it has been too long to be verified. They saw themselves as authentic local Taiwanese.

MW/F41/TW' s case was an interesting one. She was one of two informants who indicated that their parents were 外省人 *wai sheng ren*. The term literally translates to mean people from an outside province. *Wai sheng ren* refers to Mainlanders who came over to Taiwan with the retreating KMT in the 1940s. The label was also used on the offspring of the first generation Mainlanders, who were identified by their political affiliation (mostly pro-KMT), their use of Mandarin (even if it was not necessarily their first language) and their cultural affinity to China. MW's father was born in China and came to Taiwan with his father during the 1940s. MW's mother was born in Taiwan to Mainland Chinese parents. MW said she was considered a *wai sheng ren* when she was a schoolgirl in the 1970s because her parents were *wai sheng ren*. She disputed this categorization "because we were born in Taiwan".

> How can you say I am *wai sheng ren* when I am born in Taiwan and does not relate to China?

She went on to buttress her identification in the local by saying that it was hard to differentiate between the so-called *wai sheng ren* and *ben sheng ren* because of ethnic integration and intermarriage. To consolidate her argument, she pointed to her mother and siblings being born in Taiwan, adding that her two sisters married Taiwanese, "really true blue Taiwanese…from southern Taiwan".

SL/F34/TW, whose father came from Mainland China during the 1950s, said that while her father would consider their family as *wai sheng ren*, she saw herself as Taiwanese:

> I used to think I was Chinese, as in *zhong guo ren* (person from China) because of all the indoctrination in school…but as I grew up, I begin to think of myself as Taiwan *ren*.

The change in attitude came about as a result of a change in the political climate in Taiwan, and as a result of personal experience:

> The key for me was after I went to Mainland China, I begin to see myself as Taiwan *ren*…I feel we are so different…every time I went, it reinforces that feeling of difference. It's not just the accent, but the way of thinking.

Growing up in 1970s and 1980s Taiwan, the informant's experience was divorced from the reality of the previous generation:

> (We) no longer care where the ancestral village (老家， *lao jia*) is … for me, my identification is with the land in which I was born. Now, I feel I am Taiwanese. My ancestor may come from mainland China or from Taiwan, it doesn't make much difference to me now.

The strong sense of localisation among the Taiwanese was further illustrated by conversations with two informants who were active in lineage work. Both were from different parts of Taiwan, belonging to different lineages. HWH/M70s/TW belonged to a clan based in Taipei while MF/M50s/TW was a lineage member in Xinpu town in Hsinchu county. The discussions centered on the issue of genealogy and lineage. As discussed in Chapter 2, genealogy gives legitimacy to the clan and lineage. But the significance of genealogy has been gradually eroded over time as it

loses relevance in an urban and industrialised society, and as questions of its authenticity arose. While clans and lineages take the genealogy as an important proof of their origins and reputation, some members attributed a more symbolic rather than absolute significance to the genealogy. Both informants said that their members did not deny the significance of genealogy but some were sceptical of the plausibility of an unbroken line of descent. They cited factors such as literary rates during the early periods and socio-political conditions – such as war and migration – that affected the accuracy of the records.

HWH/M70s/TW related his experience of seeing a genealogy that was traced back to the progenitor of the surname dated to the ancient Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BC):

> There is not one generation missing. They trace it all the way to Wen Shu Gong 文叔公 （the progenitor of the clan). I am suspicious of this. How can this sort of genealogy exist? …I feel that they may have pieced the genealogy together, but from what sources, I do not know.

He expressed scepticism because of the unbroken line of descent dating several thousand years. Implied in his scepticism was the possibility that the genealogy was constructed artificially to boost the reputation of the village, which was the ancestral village of the grandfather of the former Philippines president, Corazon Aquino. Following Aquino's visit to the village in 1988, it was revitalised with extra funds and investment. The informant explained that because of the village's association with Aquino, many people asked for the genealogy. It was for this reason that the village began constructing the genealogy, he said. In this way, the genealogy becomes a symbol and "proof" of the "celebrity" status of the lineage.

HWH pointed out that there were in fact disputes over which ancestor should be revered as the progenitor. He said that the Taipei clan claimed Wen Shu Gong 文叔公 as the founding ancestor of the surname, while the Taichung branch of the clan claimed another candidate, Xu Zhen Ren 许真人 . HWH said that Xu Zhen Ren was consecrated as the representative figure as a result of "politics": he was given a title by a Sung dynasty emperor because of his good works as a medical doctor. He implied that the title made it sensible for Xu Zhen Ren to be honoured since he was bestowed with an imperial title, which subsequently led to the legend that the Xu and some 40 members of his family, including the pigs and the dogs, ascended to heaven. HWX dismissed this legend as preposterous and impossible. HWH argued that that chronologically, Xu Zhen Ren was a descendent of Wen Shu Gong, who was bestowed the kingdom of Xu. Wen, therefore, was the rightful candidate. When I asked the Taichung clan member, on another occasion, about the differences, he brushed it aside, likening it to differences in denomination in Christianity.

The issue of authenticity of the line of descent has an impact on the current generation. MF/M50s/TW spoke of the difficulty in ascertaining the accuracy of information of the clan's ancestors. He said that their branch of the family could only trace back five generations of their descent with certainty. While they knew who the ancestor who first came to Taiwan from China was, there was little or no information of the subsequent five generations:

> We were researching the individuals who had tablets in our lineage temple. (Of the 600 or so tablets), we found out about 60 had come from China to Taiwan during different periods. We went through all the genealogies we can get, but can only find 20 or so of them (mentioned in the genealogies). Of the 20, only 3 are accurate (that is, correctly recorded in the genealogies and tablets)!

The informant said the possibility of honouring the wrong ancestor was high,

but surely we can't tell them (the descendents) that, can we?...We don't
know for sure if the mistake is generated because of different accents,
pronunciation or faulty memory. So we've stopped the research, we
don't dare go any further.

This break in the transmission of information has motivated some to take up the

practice of compiling the genealogy from all available information so that the future

generations can know the history of the clan. But what is clear is that such cultural

truncation has aided in localising the lineage in Taiwan:

Many of the genealogies we have in Taiwan were started with the
ancestor who first came over from China. There are some who
back-trace to China, but most of us took Taiwan as the starting
point because, at the end of the day, we are all born here, it's more
real (to us) and it is more accurate.

The strong sense of localisation or Taiwanisation of the Taiwanese' cultural

identity is also evident in the government's policy of registering historical family

shrines and lineage halls as national monuments.[396] Some have even gone as far as to

enlist medical science to its course, arguing that the majority of Taiwanese have local

aboriginal blood and that the so-called "Chinese" blood is not that of the authentic

Han Chinese.[397] Among the many forces that shape the narratives of, identifications

and identities of groups and communities, is religion. Not only does religion shape

identities and roles, belonging to a particular religion and/or participating in such

religious events provides a sense of belonging to a social group and affects one's

outlook. Besides the pantheon of deities in the Taoist and folk religion matrix, as well

as the other mainstream religions, there are two cults of deities that have emerged

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[396] See for example the list of family shrines in the Hsinchu area that have been listed as national
monuments, available from the website of the Cultural Affairs of Hsinchu County Government,
http://www.hchcc.gov.tw/, accessed 26 November 2010.
[397] 妈利 林, *我们流着不同的血液* (Taipei: Avanguard Publishing House, 2010).

198

from the realm of ancestors. These two cults – of Koxinga and Yi Min Ye 义民爷 一

are particular to Taiwan. Both began as ancestors of their respective clans but have

since become "national" deities that transcend the familial boundaries. The

development of a cultural industry around these cult figures is considered to be

uniquely Taiwan and reflects an attempt to create a Taiwan culture and identity rooted

in the history and development of the island.

In Taiwan, especially in the south, Koxinga is hailed as national hero who

fought off the invading Qing dynasty and founded modern Taiwan. Although of

Japanese and Han heritage and born in Japan, the Taiwanese have claimed him as a

local. The keeper of the Zheng Family Shrine in Tainan City proclaimed: Zheng was

the first person in Taiwan to be consecrated and deified. The other deities, such as

Mazu and *Bao Sheng Da Di* were all "imported" from mainland China. The family

shrine, first built by Koxinga's son Zheng Jing in 1663, is today a national public

monument. It is a museum dedicated to the life and deeds of Koxinga as well as a

functioning family shrine that hosts the tablets of Koxinga and a few of his other

family members.[398] The clan, although small, still conducts the Spring and Autumn

Sacrificial rites annually, and on Qing Ming, visits the tombs of two of Koxinga's

sons, the only two left in Taiwan.[399]

Besides being revered as an illustrious ancestor of the Zheng clan, Koxinga

has been deified. His statue takes centre stage in the Zheng family shrine and Koxinga

is memorialised and worshiped as a deity (one among the pantheon of folk figures) in

several other state-erected temples dedicated to the figure. These include the Anping

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[398] Their remains have been moved back to mainland China when the Qing government conquered Taiwan in the 17th century.
[399] According to this blogger, http://blog.xuite.net/tropicofcancer/2327/1492483, accessed 3 April 2011, the tombs are located at a site near the old Tainan airport.

Mazu Temple,[400] where Koxinga is one of the several deities worshipped. At the Guoxingye's Shrine (延平郡王祠 Yanping Junwang Temple) built in 1662, his life and works are honoured.[401] The reverence for Koxinga lies in the Taiwanese view that he was the founder of Taiwan, and thus Taiwan's original first ancestor. Hence Koxinga is also known as the "Sage King who founded Taiwan" 开台圣王 （or 开基始祖 the ancestor who opened the land).

The other cult particular to Taiwan is that of the Yi Min Ye. The Yi Min culture is a belief system unique to Taiwan. It does not exist in Mainland China. Specifically, it is unique to Hsinchu although its influence has spread across the Hakka groups in Taiwan, possibly due to the increasing indigenization of the Hakka culture. It reflects the movement of returning to one's Hakka roots. The focus of the Yi Min (义民 righteous citizen) culture is the Yi Min Ye 义民爷, loosely translated to mean Lord Yi Min or Lord of the Righteous Citizen. But this deity was not an individual but rather a group of people who were members of the Yi Min troops that rallied to help the Qing Court suppress a local rebellion (in Taiwan) in 1788. In place of a statue of the deity, as is common in many temples, is an ancestral tablet to represent the troops who died during the rebellion. The Yi Min were considered martyrs and have since been elevated into deities. The Yi Min temple in Hsinchu was built from donations from two main families in the area, and has since become a rallying point for the neighbouring villages in the area. The proponents and believers of the Yi Min culture are the Hakka people. The Yi Min culture has evolved into a

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[400] 安平开台天后宫
[401] 傅朝卿 和 詹伯望,《图说郑成功与台湾文化：国姓爷，延平郡王，开台圣王》(台南：台湾建筑与文化资产出版社, 2006).

local feature of the Hsinchu county and has been written into the greater Taiwan Hakka culture.[402]

TAIWAN REN OR HUA REN?

Unlike in Singapore where *hua ren* appear more ready to accept the cultural identification imposed by the state, the Taiwanese are less compliant. For them, the *hua* culture is an imposed one. Although the term *hua ren* is widely used in Southeast Asia to refer to people of "Chinese" ethnicity, the term is not as commonly used in Taiwan. While many of my informants said they understood the term, they did not use it to refer to themselves. When asked to identify themselves, most of them indicated that they were Taiwan *ren*, the people of Taiwan. They said that while they had "Chinese" ethnicity, they did not refer to themselves as "Chinese" or *zhong guo ren* because they were not the citizens of China. Han, another common term usedto refer to Chinese ethnicity, was seen as an arcane term that no longer had currency, except in some academic publications. My informants were very clear in their identification – they were Taiwan *ren*, a reflection of the current political-cultural sentiments.

The cultural imagination of the Taiwanese has to be considered within the framework of political imagination in Taiwan. Between 1945 and the 1990s, the political and cultural chasm in Taiwan society was largely between the Mainlander *wai sheng ren* (literally meaning people from another province) and the *ben sheng ren* (本省人, people of Taiwan, excluding the aborigines). As the *wai sheng ren* were identified by their connections to China, the *ben sheng* Taiwanese were identified by their connections with their local community, their anti-China, pro-independence stance, and their use of the Hokla (or Hokkien) and Hakka languages. By the 1970s,

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[402] 新竹县政府交通旅游处, http://travel.hsinchu.gov.tw/page.aspx?wtp=2&wnd=107&id=4 (accessed April 20, 2012).

as part of the political and cultural opposition to the Mandarinisation efforts, ethnic distinctions began to emerge. By the 1990s, there was a revival of the ethnic heritage of the Hoklo （*fu lao*, 福佬) and Hakka（*ke jia*， 客家）, which were used to construct the Taiwan *ren* identity.

When the Kuomintang (KMT) retreated from the mainland to Taiwan in 1949, it was felt that the Taiwanese, especially the *hua ren*, had been "enslaved" and "contaminated" by Japanese culture; it was a situation that needed to be rectified.[403] The KMT sought to imprint its mark on the Taiwanese people through what Allen Chuan called "cultural reunification".[404]

The KMT turned to Chinese culture as a resource for nation building: Taiwan was to be marked as a nation built on the traditional ideals of Confucianism, albeit one that was antithetical to the "modern" Chinese nation that the new cultural movement sought to establish, and one that the Republic of China was to be. The KMT approach was based on the New Life Movement it launched on Mainland China in 1934. The New Life Movement was "designed as a massive, all-encompassing movement to restore Confucianism as the basis for Chinese civilisation". It was a social movement that drew on the Confucian ideas of filial piety, morality and ethics to transform the people of China and build the latter into a modern nation.[405]

The period between the 1960s and 1970s was one in which Taiwan was constructed as being "more Chinese" than China. The KMT positioned Taiwan as the fortress for reviving the Chinese nation (*min zu fu xing bao lei* 民族复兴堡垒). The

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[403] 王甫昌， 《当代台湾社会的族群想像》， 台北：群学出版有限公司， 2003, p74.
[404] Allen Chun, From nationalism to nationalizing: cultural imagination and state formation in postwar Taiwan, Vol. 1, in The politics of modern Taiwan, ed. Dafydd Fell, 104125 (London: Routledge, 2008), p109.
[405] Jennifer Lee Oldstone-Moore, "The new life movement of nationalist China: Confucianism, state authority and moral formation," PhD Thesis, Faulty of the Divinity School, University of Chicago (Chicago, 2000).

KMT government saw itself as the defender of "authentic" Chinese culture. In 1966, it launched the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement (中华文化复兴运动) in Taiwan as the CCP on the mainland launched the iconoclastic Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The aims were to "show the world community that the Chinese culture was well preserved in Taiwan" and to "restore (the Taiwanese) people's confidence in the superiority of their cultural inheritance".[406] Standard Mandarin was implemented as the official language and medium of every day communication in place of the dialects.[407] The content of school subjects such as history, geography and literature were heavily geared towards China. Artefacts of high culture, including classical texts, were upheld as national treasures (none of the indigenous cultural practices and material artefacts were included). The KMT also sought recourse to Confucianism as part of its attempt to create a "Chinese" national character.[408] The attempt to "invoke, resuscitate and reinvent tradition" was part of the KMT's attempt to re-imagine and redefine a national identity for Taiwan.[409] The reaching back to "traditional values" was a way to cultivate a "national" solidarity that was absent.

By the late 1970s and into the 1980s, there was a strong movement to indigenise the Taiwanese identity. Politically, the pro-independence movement gained traction, seeking greater local representation in politics. By then, the KMT was also seeking to localise itself by recruiting more Taiwanese to join its rank and file in a move to shed its image as a foreign exile political force. The most significant development was the rise of Lee Teng Hui, a native Taiwanese, to political leadership of Taiwan. Lee has been credited for the acceleration of the indigenisation

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[406] Fu-chang Wang, "Why bother about school textbooks? An analysis of the origin of the disputes over the renshi Taiwan textbooks in 1997" in John Makeham and A-Chin Hsiau (eds), *Cultural Ethnic And Political Nationalism In Contemporary Taiwan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp55 – 99 at p 61.
[407] Ibid.
[408] Chun, "From nationalism to Nationalising", pp 112-119.
[409] Ibid., p 106.

programme, moving Taiwan from the narrative periphery to the centre, and encouraging the articulation of a Taiwanese consciousness based on a community of shared fate.[410] During Lee's presidency, a Community Construction Movement was launched as a mechanism to build Taiwanese consciousness and a Taiwan-centred identity, through the promotion of studying the local.[411] Lee promoted the idea of Taiwan as a "living community" and the cultivation of communal sentiments where every Taiwanese would identify with and feel rooted to Taiwan.[412]

At the same time, there was a corresponding cultural movement towards de-sinicisation by anchoring the Taiwanese identity in the local. Education, which had hitherto been China-focussed, was revised to place greater emphasis on Taiwanese issues.[413] Students were encouraged to go into the grassroots to experience and unearth the "real Taiwan".[414] A localisation movement, or *ben tu hua* (本土化) took root in the literary, music and film realms, leading to the emergence of *xiang tu wen xue* (乡土文学, nativist literature), Taiwan *min yao* (台湾民谣, Taiwanese folk song movement) and the so-called New Wave cinema. The portrayal of Taiwanese perspectives, use of the Taiwanese languages (Hokkien, Hakka) and the recognition of the aboriginal influences and origins took centre stage. By the 1980s, the Taiwanisation movement had gained enough momentum for the government under President Chiang Ching-kuo, who succeeded his father Chiang Kai-Shek, to portray

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[410] Bi-yu Chang, "From Taiwanisation to de-sinification: culture construction in Taiwan since the 1990s," *China perpectives [Online]* 56 (November-December 2004).

[411] Ibid.

[412] Hsin-yi Lu, *The politics of locality: making a nation of communities in Taiwan* (New York: Routledge, 2002)., p 41. See pp 33-58 for an overview of the programmes and developments of the localisation programme.

[413] A new series of history, geography and social studies textbooks, under the theme of *Ren shi Taiwan* (认识台湾, Getting to know Taiwan) to be added to the curriculum of first year junior high school was introduced in 1989. See Fu-chang Wang, "Why bother about school textbooks?", p 61. See J. Bruce Jacobs, *Democratizing Taiwan* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). pp 219-226 for a summary of the contents of several ministry-approved history textbooks for tenth graders.

[414] Lu, The politics of locality, p 5.

"Taiwan as a nation of successive waves of immigrants consisting of people with various cultural inheritances, one of which is Chinese" rather than to regard Han Chineseness as "the core element in Taiwanese cultural identity".[415]

The localisation of Taiwan's cultural identity intensified in the 1990s, when the DPP constructed another discourse of ethnicity which has come to be part of the cultural imagination – that of the four ethnicities (*si da zu qun* 四大族群)[416] – the Aborigines[417] （*yuan zu min* 原住民）, the Hakkas, the Hoklos and the Mainlanders.[418] In this framework of cultural imagination, the *ben sheng* population was categorised according to their dialect origins, and the categorisation of the population into the four ethnicities overshadowed the *ben sheng ren – wai sheng ren* dichotomy. The newly articulated classification pushed the cultural element, rather than the political, to the forefront. This grouping was part of a more complex web of distinctions: the Aborigines vis-à-vis the Han Chinese (Hakka, Hoklo and Mainlander), the Hakkas and Hoklos vis-à-vis the Mainlanders, and the Hakkas vis-à-vis the Hoklos. These ethnic distinctions, which began to take root in the 1970s as part of the emergence of political and cultural opposition to the KMT government, had by now become part of the social ontology of contemporary Taiwanese society and culture.[419] The once important representation of "authentic Chinese" culture gradually giving way to representations of local Taiwanese culture, as represented by the "multicultural" nature of Taiwanese society and of the distinct Hoklo, Hakka and Aboriginal identities. These "are all part of Taiwan culture, whether they are local

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[415] Wang, "Why bother about school textbooks?", 56.
[416] 王甫昌，当代台湾社会的族群想像， pp 54-100.
[417] The Aborigines population is categorised into 14 officially recognised groups, with the three largest being the Amis 阿美, the Paiwan 排灣 and the Atayal 泰雅. The three groups account for about 70% of the Aborigines population, which stood at about half a million in 2010, or about 2% of Taiwan's population. Government Information Office, *The Republic of China Yearbook 2011* (Taipei, 2011).
[418] A-chin Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese cultural nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p 105.
[419] 王甫昌，当代台湾社会的族群想像， pp 54-100.

cultures, mass cultures or high cultures", Chen Shui-bian declared in his presidential

inauguration speech in 2000.[420] He admitted that "the people across the Taiwan Strait

share the same ancestral, cultural, and historical background", but the different

historical trajectories have led to the development of "vastly different political

systems and lifestyles". [421] Chen called for the creation of an environment in which

"our diverse ethnic groups and different regional cultures communicate with each

other, and so that Taiwan's local cultures connect with the cultures of Chinese-

speaking communities and other world cultures, and create a new milieu of "a cultural

Taiwan in a modern century."[422] In so doing, he called for the identification with a

Taiwan culture.

The Taiwan culture in question was not a unitary one. Rather it was a culture

that celebrated plurality. Instead of being a culture such as the "Chinese" culture in

Singapore which is superimposed on different dialect groups, the Taiwan culture that

is being promoted was one that celebrated the diverse ethnicities such as the Hokkien

and the Hakka. In contrast to the suppression of non-Mandarin cultures during the

1950s and 1960s, there was a revival of Hokkien and Hakka cultures in the 1990s. In

1993, Taiwan implemented the teaching of Hokkien in schools, reversing the

historical trend where Hokkien was considered uncouth, vulgar and backward and not

on the same level as Mandarin, the national language (*guo yu* 国语).[423] In 2001,

Hokkien was made one of the compulsory local Taiwanese languages to be learned in

schools. The language was also used widely in government agencies. The once

languishing Hokkien entertainment industry flourished from the 1990s and has since

become a significant cultural hub. The marginalised Hakka language was also

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[420] Shui-bian Chen, *Dawn of a rising era*, May 21, 2000,
http://www.taipeitimes.com/news/editorials/archives/2000/05/21/36938 (accessed April 9, 2012).
[421] Ibid.
[422] Ibid.
[423][423] Hsiau, Contemporary Taiwanese cultural nationalism, p 130

elevated to one of the "heritage languages" to be taught in schools.[424] A Hakka

Affairs Council was established as a cabinet-level unit in 2001 to promote Hakka

culture, including language and traditions.[425] As a symbolic gesture to highlight the

importance of Taiwanisation, Chen had Aboriginal and Hokkien songs sung at the

morning ceremony and Taiwanese food served at the evening banquet at the

presidential inauguration in May 2001. Pop singer Chang Huei-mei, who is of

aboriginal descent, was invited to sing the island's anthem at the inauguration.[426]

       This trend of localisation plays an important role in constructing the cultural

identity of Taiwan *hua ren*. The issues of cultural identity and national identity in

Taiwan are politically charged as highlighted. In anchoring their memorialisation

practices to local practices, traditions and evolution, Taiwan *hua ren* are seeking to

construct a *hua ren* identity that is Taiwanese, not Chinese. Most of the informants do

not deny they are culturally *hua*, but emphasised that it is a *hua* identity formed in the

particular locale and network of Taiwan. While the highly ritualised memorialisation

practices reflect the cultural heritage of Taiwan *hua ren*, the personalisation of some

of these practices and the increasing practice of personalised memorialisation

practices, such as the writing of family history or in the forms of memorial essays for

deceased family members, point to the significance of localisation in Taiwan hua ren

cultural identity.

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[424] T. M Fok, "Hakka language rises from the ashes," *The China Post* (Septem 11, 2011).

[425] *Hakka Affairs Council*, http://www.hakka.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=11 (accessed April 9, 2012).

[426] Following her appearance at the Taiwan president inauguration, A-mei, as the singer is popularly known, was banned from performing in China. Her songs, advertisements and programmes were all canned. Beijing interpreted her performance as political support for the pro-independence DPP. For China, it was "a political issue. She went too far on such a big occasion". *China bans Taiwan's Madonna*, May 24, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/761908.stm (accessed April 9, 2012).

CONCLUSION

In many ways, certain parts of Taiwan remain "traditional" in that the older ways of doing things, especially the ritualistic practices of ancestor worship, remain. But in many ways, Taiwan has not escaped the effects of modernisation and urbanisation. The trend of personalisation and simplification of cultural practices is a feature of contemporary society. The high mobility of the Taiwanese youth is a factor that accounts for this development. With many studying and working outside the counties and towns they were born in, these Taiwanese are unable to continue with the traditions they may have been brought up with. An alternative way of honouring the memory of their ancestors is to personalise the ways of doing it. Many of the rites and processes have been simplified by *hua ren* living in the city areas, due to restrictions of space and limited knowledge among the young. Many of the young Taiwanese today have limited knowledge of these rites and rituals. Yet, unlike Singapore, the material basis for *hua ren* cultural identification is stronger. Family and clans, though said to be in decline, still exert considerable influence on the cultural practices of the individuals. Through rationality may influence some of the younger generation in their attitudes towards the cultural practices, to a large extent, the logic of practice is still dominant.

As discussed in the chapter, there is a strong political and cultural contest over the nature of *hua ren* culture and cultural identity in Taiwan. The debate is inevitably tied to politics. In seeking to define a national identity to counter the PRC, the KMT reached back, ironically, to the pre-modern "traditional values". In defying the KMT's Mandarinisation of Taiwan, the opposition sought to construct local narratives of Taiwan's cultural identities, most notably through language and literature. Significantly, they did not disavow the cultural practices of its people. In Taiwan, the

cultural identity is constructed and rooted in the local. Regional differences are also cultural differences as people tend to distinguish their practices and their traditions by their ethnic origins, such as Hakka and Hokkien. More significantly, the research suggests that the identification with the local traditional and cultural frameworks is stronger than with a general idea of "being Chinese", no doubt influenced by politics.

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CHAPTER 6
HUA REN IDENTITY AS A SYMBOLIC CULTURAL SPACE

The main objective of this thesis was to establish a practice-based framework in which to understand and analyse the cultural identities of *hua ren*. I argued that *hua ren* identity has moved beyond the "Chinese Diaspora" narrative, and that there is a need to delink ethnic and cultural identities. In doing so, I challenged the notion of a singular supranational "Chinese" cultural identity through the examination of memorialisation practices among *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan. The previous two chapters on Singapore and Taiwan have demonstrated the impact of historical and social changes on the cultural imaginations of the *hua ren* at these two sites. How *hua ren* at each site remember their ancestors is a complex process of negotiation and navigation, reflecting the different socio-cultural environments in which the society and community developed. I contend that one's cultural identity should be viewed as a multidirectional entity that is constantly changing and shaped by one's local context.

This chapter reviews the main research findings in the Singapore and Taiwan case studies and synthesises these findings with the conceptual frameworks laid out in Chapters 1 and 2. In Chapter 1, I proposed an alternative discursive framework known as the Sinoscape which is a practice-based cultural space in which *hua ren* identity is not regarded as an essentialised given. I also explored how different cultural memories have resulted in different *hua ren* identities. In the second part of the chapter, I explored why *hua ren* cultural identities in Taiwan and Singapore were forms of symbolic ethnicity. I argued that such a conception of ethnicity and cultural identity is valid and relevant in contemporary society. I also contended that while *hua ren* identities in Singapore and Taiwan share similar cultural roots, they differ due to

different socio-political environments. These identities are the products of the specific locale, network and cultural memories in the respective sites. While recognising these differences, I proposed that the cultural identities of *hua ren* in contemporary Singapore and Taiwan are similar in the sense that they can be regarded as forms of symbolic ethnicity which allows identity to be viewed as a multidirectional concept rather than a singular, universal one.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Many *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan are still, to borrow a phrase from Francis Hsu, living under the shadow of the ancestors. [427] Despite studies and surveys that point to its decline, ancestor worship remains a visible and essential practice through which *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan memorialise their ancestors. While the domestic cult of ancestor worship shows sign of decline (only a handful of older respondents continue to practice the domestic cult), many of the respondents still periodically participate in occasions of ancestor worship, such as visiting grave and niches at columbaria and temples during Qing Ming and/or death anniversaries. Except at clan associations where ancestral worship rites and rituals are more formalised, the rites and rituals at the family and individual levels are more informal, with variations made over the years to suit existing conditions. Very often, these practices are passed down from the previous generations with no clear instructions on the whys and the hows. The meanings and the rationales of these practices are thus often open to interpretation.

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[427] Francis Hsu, *Under the ancestors' shadow: Chinese culture and personality* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1949).

At both sites, the domestic cult of ancestor worship is considerably less common. In Singapore, fewer of my *hua ren* respondents participated in the daily offering of joss sticks at the altar compared to my Taiwanese respondents. Generally, it was the older respondents who are involved in this practice than the younger respondents. The latter said that their involvement was usually limited to special occasions such as Qing Ming or Chinese New Year when the family elders insisted they make an offering at the altar. Many respondents at both sites said they did not host the ancestral tablet at home for various reasons. For most respondents in Taiwan, the tablets are still hosted at the ancestral home, that is, the family's original home belonging to either their grandparents or parents. These are usually located in the rural areas. There were also many respondents who indicated that the tablets were either hosted at a temple or a columbarium. As such the domestic cult of worship cannot take place in such situations.

Among the memorialistion practices surveyed, visiting ancestral graves was the most commonly cited ancestor worship practice among my Singapore and Taiwan respondents. This was usually undertaken once a year during the Qing Ming festival. Most respondents of the younger generation saw their participation as part of their familial obligations with little or no religious implications. And as Qing Ming has been traditionally observed as an annual day to remember one's ancestors, Christian *hua ren* tended to more readily participate in ancestor memorialisation on this day rather than in the daily rituals of the domestic cult of ancestor worship. Many of my Christian respondents in both Singapore and Taiwan indicated that they would visit the graves of their ancestors during Qing Ming. But in place of the traditional joss sticks and food offerings non-Christians bring, the Christians would bring flowers to be placed at the graves. Some Christians would neither hold joss sticks nor participate

in the burning of joss papers, they believed that they were paying respects to the dead most notably by their presence or by saying a prayer for the deceased.

But there were some Christian respondents who were able to cast a psychological distance between the rites and activities, and their religious beliefs such that both could co-exist without conflict. These were the ones who said they continued to offer joss sticks to the dead and helped with the burning of joss papers. For this group of Christian *hua ren*, the perceived tension between ancestor worship as a cultural practice and religious belief was resolved by them positioning ancestor worship as a memorialisation practice that was part of their individual cultural ecology rather than a religious practice of a specific religious ecology. The Mormons are a case in point. Although the Mormon Church views ancestors and genealogies differently from the non-believers, in both cases, the underlying principle is similar: that the family is an important institution to be preserved. In light of this doctrine, Mormon *hua ren* feel they can participate in ancestor worship activities as a way to respect the family and preserve its unity. At the same time, several other Christian respondents said they eschewed any participation in ancestral worship activities. They saw ancestral worship activities within a religious narrative, and believed that that narrative contradicted their own religious beliefs.

Ritualised forms of ancestor worship rituals are not the only memorialisation practices carried out among my respondents. The younger respondents at both sites appearred to be more involved in informal forms of memorialisation such as the telling of family stories than in ritualistic activities. Many have also personalised how they remembered their deceased family members beyond the ritualistic. For instance, those who were interested in literature and history were more inclined to attempt constructing their family histories or writing essays to commemorate the deceased

family members at their funerals or anniversaries. This trend suggests that younger respondents no longer located their cultural identities in the ritualistic, instead memorialisation is located in acts that are more culturally natural to them. Their participation in the "traditional" forms of ancestor memorialization can be said to be symbolic of their ethnic identity.

HUA REN: A SYMBOLIC ETHNICITY?

My research suggests that there are differences in terms of cultural identities in *hua ren* communities in Singapore and Taiwan largely as a result of historical developments and local conditions. These examples support other studies of "overseas Chinese" communities that found variations in identifications and practices in different *hua ren* communities.[428] Despite the differences, my research of these *hua ren* communities has highlighted a common feature of the contemporary *hua ren* cultural identities, that is, contemporary *hua ren* cultural identity is a form of "symbolic ethnicity". As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, symbolic ethnicity is a term coined by American sociologist Herbert Gans to refer to an identification that is

> characterised by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour.[429]

In Gans' conceptualisation, symbolic ethnicity is individualistic and has no real social cost for the individual, since the identifications are neither intense nor frequent.

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[428] *The Encyclopaedia of the Overseas Chinese* edited by Lynn Pan presents a comprehensive overview of the various communities of *hua ren* in different countries. *The encyclopedia of Overseas Chinese*, ed. Lynn Pan (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006).
[429] Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1979): 1-20 at p 9.

Symbolic ethnicity is rooted in family traditions, usually taking the form of leisure time activities and festive celebrations. In the case of symbolic ethnicity, the symbols are visible, clear in meaning and easily expressed and felt "without requiring undue interference in other aspects of life".[430] In the case of *hua ren*, one prime example of symbolic ethnicity is demonstrated during Qing Ming, with the visitations to the graves. The graves, offering of joss sticks and paper offerings, are clear symbols of ethnicity. There is no ambiguity to the meaning of Qing Ming: to honour one's ancestors and deceased family members. As indicated earlier, in symbolic ethnicity, the adherence to traditions is voluntary and, at times, superficial. It is often dictated by existing social conditions and the outlook and lifestyle of the younger generation. With symbolic ethnicity, identity is no longer about an essence of being or orthopraxy but one that is underpinned by sentiment.

Gans argued that symbolic ethnicity is a feature of t third or fourth generation Americans who, unlike their immigrant forebears, are not as anchored to preconceived groups and roles. For this generation, ethnic identity is a matter of choice and is no longer taken for granted. In the case of *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan, the case of symbolic ethnicity is also obvious. In examining the practice of ancestor worship, this thesis has found that contemporary *hua ren* ancestral practices are largely symbolic. As illustrated in previous chapters, the *hua ren* family ideal and its associated values of obedience, filial piety and the like, are no longer the only factors that shape the outlook of *hua ren* in an urban and industrial society. In addition involvement in ancestral practices among younger *hua ren* tends to be irregular and limited. In my interviews, a common response from both Singapore and Taiwan respondents was that they only participated in ancestor worship when asked

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[430] Ibid.,

to, usually by senior members of their family. They were usually not the ones who initiate or lead the rites, but were followers. Very often, the acts of memorialisation were also not incorporated into their daily lives. Younger respondents also tended to participate in memorialisation activities only during particular points in the year such as Qing Ming or death anniversaries. These respondents cited the reason for their continued practice as simply adherence to family traditions; they did not have any intellectual or spiritual understanding of the rites and rituals. It was simply something that they "did". Furthermore, their participation in such practices was easily curtailed when other aspects of their lives intervened, such as study or work commitments.

There are perhaps two main reasons for this. The first relates to changes in the nature of the society and the economy. As we have discussed in the chapters on Singapore and Taiwan, contemporary studies indicate that family structures and values have changed as a result of societal changes. Urbanisation, modernisation and industrialisation are the three key processes that have impacted the structure and nature of the family. In an industrial and urban economy, the family is no longer the core social organisation needed for production as in an agricultural society. This reduces the need for the family to stay together on a piece of land. Especially in the case of Taiwan, urbanisation and industralisation have greatly increased the mobility of family members, many of whom have moved away from the family home for study or work. This engineered a splitting of the family unit, however temporal, and opened individuals and their families to competing influences that could shape their perspectives in life.

The second reason for the development of the symbolic ethnic identities can be attributed to the state who plays a major role as an institution involved in the social construction and articulation of identities – cultural and national – of its citizens. This

is done mainly through policies related to citizenship, education and religion. In both Singapore and Taiwan, the state has been a key player in the shaping the cultural imaginations of its people. The two case studies highlight that *hua ren* cultural identities and identifications in both locations are open to political and cultural manipulation and positioning by the various state authorities during various times in their history. How the state views its "Chinese" population, what it considers to constitute its "Chinese" population and how they are allowed to articulate their "Chinese" identity influences the formulation and implementation of policies. This is most notable in the fields of education, housing, and land use among others, which affect the cultural identity and the practices of its population.

Hua ren in both sites have changed and modified their cultural practices in response to changes in their environments. In Singapore, the state has removed the material basis of much *hua ren* cultural organisation by taking over the social and material functions of the clans and even the extended family by providing housing, jobs and social services. These roles were traditionally undertaken by the clan associations, which are family writ large. When these major functions are removed from the clans, they no longer have much moral and social authority over its members, who now do not need to rely on the clans for their social needs. The clans' functions have been largely relegated to being a venue for social networking and cultural education. With the dominance of English and Western education, as discussed below, the cultural identity of Singapore *hua ren* is no longer one that is anchored in belonging to a social "Chinese" community, as it was during the colonial period.

The material basis of *hua ren* cultural identity in Singapore is further mediated by religious conversions and linguistic limitations. In contemporary Singapore, religion and religious activities are no longer important markers of identity. *Hua ren*

experienced a bigger shift in religious affiliations than other ethnic groups in

Singapore. The 2010 census revealed that the percentage of *hua ren* who identified

themselves as Buddhist or Taoist had decreased from 64% in 2000 to 57% in 2010.

During the same period, there was a corresponding increase in the proportion of

Christians from 17% to 20% and persons with no religion from 19% to 22%.[431] This

is drastically different from early 20th century Singapore where 98% of *hua ren*

claimed to practice Chinese religion.[432] The growth of Christianity has had a major

impact on *hua ren* cultural identity. Sociologist Tong Chee Kiong's studies of religion

in Singapore has shown that it is common for the younger generation of Christian

believers and converts to view traditional "Chinese" practices as "irrational" and

"superstitious". In addition, a growing number of Singapore *hua ren*, even those

without religious affiliations shared similar perceptions of ancestor worship.[433]

One of the reasons for this trend can be attributed to Singapore's English-

language and scientific system of education which renders the inexplicable and the

non-text-based practices as "irrational" and "superstitious".[434] As discussed in

Chapter 4, the education system in Singapore is based largely on the Enlightenment

influenced scientific school where phenomenon has to be explicable to be believable.

Visible and tangible evidence is touted as proof of existence. The exposure to the

English language as the primary learning and working language encourages the

understanding and acceptance of the Western way of thinking. Yet the evidence-based

mode of learning stands in contradiction to any religion including Christianity. Yet

Christians perceive their religion as a more "rational" and less "superstitious" religion

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[431] Department of Statistics, *Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: demographic characteristics, education, language and religion* (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2011.).
[432] Chee Kiong Tong, *Identity and ethnic relations in Southeast Asia: racialising Chineseness* (Springer, 2010), p 64.
[433] Chee Kiong Tong, *Rationalizing religion: religious conversion, revivalism and competition in Singapore society* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
[434] Ibid.

compared to the Chinese religion, even though both are based on faith — belief in things unseen. Associated with Western culture, Christianity is accordingly viewed as part of a "superior" culture possibly because of the success of European colonialism and capitalism. Christians also argue that their religion is superior as it has a written text and trained clergymen, unlike Chinese religions.

Language, one of the major material bases of *hua ren* cultural identity, has also been eroded. Up until the 1970s, the Anglo-influenced and Communist-fearing Singapore government were suspicious of Mandarin-speaking *hua ren* because of their perceived affinity with China. As a result, there was discrimination against Mandarin-speakers. From the late 1970s, the government did an about turn. To foster a sense of *hua ren* ethnic identity, the Singapore government decided to make Mandarin the "mother tongue" of all *hua ren* regardless of their dialect groups. All *hua ren* children had to learn Mandarin as a compulsory subject in schools. By the 1990s, the ability to speak Mandarin and understand "Chinese" culture were seen as invaluable tools for doing business with mainland China, the world's largest economy. But this was to be considered within the frameworks of bilingualism and biculturalism. Singapore *hua ren* were expected to be fluent in both English and Mandarin, so as to easily traverse between spheres of Western and Chinese cultures. Singaporean *hua ren* were now urged to speak Mandarin simply because they were *hua ren* and because their ancestors came from China. In 1980, 81.4% of the *hua ren* population spoke dialect while only 10.2% spoke Mandarin at home.[435] By 2010, 47.7% of *hua ren* spoke Mandarin at home, compared to 19.2% who spoke dialect.[436]

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[435] Seen Kong Chiew, "Chinese Singaporeans: three decades of progress and changes," in *Ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia: a dialogue between tradition and modernity*, ed. Leo Suryadinata, 11-44 (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), at p 24.
[436] Department of Statistics, *Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: demographic characteristics, education, language and religion* (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2011.).

Still, with English being used widely at school, work and home, the cultural identities of young Singapore *hua ren* are not based on language. The 2010 figures showed that English was the home language of 52% of *hua ren* aged 5 to14 years.[437]

Compared to Singapore, Taiwan has a stronger material basis for *hua ren* cultural identity. The cultural markers such as lineages, temples and festivals are far more visible and ingrained in the everyday lives of the Taiwanese including the young, compared to Singapore. Unlike Singapore, Christians and Catholics make up only a very small proportion of Taiwan's population. The overall cultural ecology is still one that is based heavily on Buddhism, Taoism and Chinese folk religion which place strong emphasis on the practice of ancestor worship. Like most young people in contemporary urban societies, many young Taiwanese respondents are not as well versed in cultural traditions as the older generation. Yet, the cultural dislocation in Taiwan is not as strong as it is in Singapore because of the KMT's government policies over the years that have ensured the visibility of "Chinese" culture. The localisation movement in Taiwan has also played an instrumental role in defining the Taiwanese cultural identity by emphasising the local elements native to the island, such as regional developments and characteristics. This allows Taiwan *hua ren* to acknowledge the cultural elements of being Taiwanese *hua ren* without subscribing to the political position of identifying with China, the political entity.

Like in Singapore, Mandarin was an imposed language on the *hua ren* population. The KMT instituted Mandarin as the lingua franca when they governed the island between the 1950s and 1990s. Mandarin was used as a language of instruction and business in place of Hokkien and Hakka – the languages of the

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[437] Ibid.

locals.[438] But unlike in Singapore where the language and education policies were

driven by economic considerations, the language and education policies in Taiwan

were largely motivated by politics. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the KMT's language

policies were part of its deliberate efforts to set KMT-ruled Taiwan as being "more

Chinese" than communist-ruled Mainland China and as the "authentic" vestige of

Chinese culture. By so doing, the KMT wanted to cement its position as the sole,

legitimate government of China and guardian of Chinese culture. For many

Taiwanese born in the 1970s and after, Mandarin became their first language used in

school and at work, although some were still able to speak dialects with their older

family members. Although the Taiwan government has, since the 1990s, began to

place emphasis on English fluency of its population, English has not reached the same

level of prevalence in the everyday life of Taiwan *hua ren*. These policies nurtured a

generation of *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan that were linguistically dislocated

from their "native" cultural identities. In Singapore, it was more common to find

young respondents more fluent in English than Mandarin or *hua ren* dialects, while in

Taiwan, most young respondents were more comfortable in Mandarin than in

Hokkien or Hakka. While some of the young respondents expressed embarrassment at

their lack of fluency in dialect, many of them are aware that they are the products of

their times. Their ability to speak Mandarin/English and inability to speak the family

dialect was not something that they consciously worked at.

The eroded material basis for the cultural identity of the younger *hua ren*

respondents meant that much of the cultural knowledge they have could possibly be

prosthetic rather than deeply embedded in their daily life. Take for instance ancestor

worship. Although in both Singapore and Taiwan, ancestor worship is still practiced

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[438] Besides the Aborigines who has their own dialects. But many of the Aboriginies also had to learn Mandarin if they wanted to be economically and socially engaged in the Taiwanese society.

among the *hua ren*, many young respondents do not ascribe much meaning to these practices. It was just something they did because their families did it. For these young people, their cultural identities are maintained through the logic of practice. This is especially the case in Singapore where the *hua ren* material environment – physical manifestations of culture such as temples, architecture and practices – is weaker than in Taiwan. As such, *hua ren* cultural identity for the older group of respondents generally resides on a more emotional plane. Their *hua ren* identity is asserted by an affinity to the amorphous "Chinese" culture and history, or even just the ability to speak Mandarin or *hua ren* dialects. In such cases, the rites and rituals associated with ancestor worship are ascribed an even greater significance as a marker of *hua ren* identity in what the older respondents consider to be a "westernised" society.

My fieldwork suggests a cultural gap between the older and younger generation of *hua ren*, a gap that is present in both Singapore and Taiwan. Although the younger respondents appear to be more mindful of the cultural practices related to ancestor worship than their counterparts in Singapore, they are also exhibiting a trend of increasingly personalising various memorialisation practices. Even though the material environment for ethnic and cultural identity is far stronger in Taiwan than in Singapore, the older generation of respondents – like their counterparts in Singapore – perceive the younger generation to be more culturally diluted as a result of growing influence of non-*hua ren* culture. As such, I argue that *hua ren* identification in Singapore and Taiwan, especially among the younger respondents (those aged 40 and below) qualifies as symbolic ethnicity. While they continue to practice certain cultural acts, such as ancestor worship, the act does not emanate from the essence of "being Chinese", but is rather a symbolic one; they continue to do so as part of the family

tradition and obligation as a member of the family, and not so much as a result of deep-seated belief.

In addition, my fieldwork also suggests that the cultural knowledge of *hua ren* respondents in Singapore and Taiwan tends towards the pedestrian and pragmatic, that they are in direct relation to family life rather than lofty cultural values. Although most of the younger respondents understand the concept of filial piety and its cultural significance, they do not associate it with filial piety or the lack of it.[439] As mentioned earlier, ancestral worship is seen as just a family activity among the young. Older practitioners may lament the declining interest of the young in such traditional practices, but they are also able to reason the situation – times have changed, so will customs and traditions. While my *hua ren* respondents did not claim understanding of the finer details and meanings of the ancestral rites, they fully understood the significance of the act: to remember and pay respect to their ancestors. This has allowed them to locate their cultural identity in the performance of the memorialisation practice. In this way, it did not matter if the form of practice has changed from the past. What was important was that the continuance of the practice at different times and places allowed them to continue to mark themselves as *hua ren*.

My research suggests that the memorialisation of ancestors has become increasingly individualised and built on an established personal relationship between the living and the dead. This is unlike the more traditional relationship between ancestors and their descendents built almost solely on the foundation of blood ties instead of personal relationships. The relationship has moved from a collective approach to an individualised one. My respondents highlighted to me individual

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[439] In Singapore, the government and media tends to define filial piety as the care and maintenance of elderly parents.

memorialisation practices, such as writing essays about one's departed relatives or visiting their graves whenever one wishes, which were modifications of traditional practices. They made such modifications based on an intimate knowledge of the dead and the relationship with them. The nostalgia for the family's past in some cases further motivates a need to individualise the ancestors and events in order to make them personally meaningful to the individual rather than see the family as a collective whole. Such an approach places individuals within the larger contexts of society and family and acknowledges their individual contributions. Unlike ancestral worship rites and rituals, these activities do not visibly or particularly mark the individuals who perform these practices as *hua ren*. It is precisely the lack of an ethnic marker such as religious rites that make these cultural identities symbolic as Gans' conceptualised.

For some individuals, one's cultural origins continues to influence the "where we are at now" or "who we are now". But the degree to which it influences individuals depends on the individual's experiences and the social context in which he or she lives. My research indicates that ancestors and place of origins are not necessarily an important part of *hua ren* identity. As one Taiwan respondent explained:

> If insisting I have to trace my origins, (I'd say) my ancestors were *zhang zhou ren* (people from Zhangzhou), but I have no concept or understanding of *zhang zhou* people. When talking about ancestor, I will first think of my paternal grandfather in Yunlin,[440] at least it's a place I've been before. Possibly because of the break in Taiwan history, it's very difficult and complicated to seek identification from ancestors."

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[440] Yunlin county is located in the south-central part of western Taiwan.

For this respondent, personal knowledge and the existence of a relationship with people and places are necessary requirements for her to connect with her ancestors and community. The identification comes from frequent interaction and hence the intimate knowledge and experience built up over time. Identification with a more remote generation and place is only symbolic.

As has been argued in much of the literature on globalisation, cultural boundaries have become more porous than before, making it harder to maintain the authenticity of one's cultural practices, if authenticity can ever be ascertained. Retaining the symbolism of the cultural practices and individualising that symbolic meaning to fit in with one's lifestyle and perspective is a way in which *hua ren*, in societies that are open to multi-cultural and social influences, are able to negotiate the various demands of identifications.

THE PERFORMANCE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

My research suggests that for some, the ancestor worship is a marker of their ethnic and cultural identity as *hua ren*: they are *hua ren*, therefore they practice the acts that mark them as such. This group generally consists of the older respondents and *hua ren* Christians who continue to practice ancestor worship. For others, the practice of certain acts is not necessarily culturally meaningful other than it being a symbolic act of obligation. This is obvious in the case of the younger respondents who display symbolic ethnicity, which I argue, has increased in part due to ancestral memorialisation activities being inherently a "performance" of culture. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor aptly pointed out that "not everyone comes to 'culture' or modernity through writing", and thus it was "imperative to keep re-examining the

relationships between embodied performance and the production of knowledge".[441] Indeed, most of the ancestral worship activities in the cultural repertoire of *hua ren* are acts of imagination not based on canonical texts. Like performance-based activities that include gestures, orality, movement, dance and singing, memorialisation practices such as ancestor worship, telling family stories and visiting the ancestral villages are ephemeral, non-producible knowledge.[442] These practices are rarely written down or recorded. Furthermore the performance of the practice may vary from the previous time. As Peggy Phelan noted:

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations… Performance's being…becomes itself through disappearance.[443]

This means that the performance exists only in the present – its lifespan extends only for the time of the performance. Once the performance is completed, it disappears and "becomes something other than performance".[444] In the case of memorialisation activities, the performance of a specific act of memorialisation – offering joss sticks, visiting an ancestral village, or telling of a family stories – is only for the present. The experience cannot be exactly reproduced at another site or another time. Such reproduction is not the performance, but a representation of that performance. Viewed from another perspective, every act of memorialisation in different times and places can be considered as separate and individual performances. Edward Bruner holds that

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[441] Diana Taylor, *The archive and the repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp xviii – xix.
[442] Ibid., p 20.
[443] Quoted in ibid., p 5.
[444] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (London: Routlegde, 1993), p 146.

> cultures…are better compared through their rituals, theatres, tales,
> ballads, epics, and operas than through their habits. For the former are
> the ways in which they try to articulate the meaning.[445]

The rituals and performances cited by Bruner are symbolic acts that reflect human behaviour and identities of the performers and audience, and the meanings marked in circumscribed contexts. But mingled with social performance – day-to-day interactions with people and social life – the meanings of each cultural performance changes. As explored in the case studies, *hua ren* in Singapore and Taiwan, while sharing the same cultural roots, have not kept up with the idealised version of practices. Each location has its own developmental trajectory – politics, local development, urbanisation and industrialisation – which has affected and shaped the cultural identities and identifications of its *hua ren* population. Furthermore each generation of *hua ren* has rationalised the meaning and form of its cultural practices in the Sinoscape in order to make sense of its continuity – or in some cases, discontinuity – in their lives.

One major influence on the performance of the respondents' cultural identity is the state's management of ethnic and cultural identities. Sociologist Bauman Zygmunt coined the term "liquid modernity" to refer to the state of the contemporary society in which social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify before they are modified, undermining their functions as frames of reference for human actions. Our modernity, Zygmunt argued, is an individualised and privatised one.[446] Given this fluid nature of contemporary society in which the constant changes

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[445] The anthropology of experience cited in Soyini D. Madison, *Critical ethnography: method, ethics and performance* (London: Sage, 2005), p 152.

[446] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

and splicing of cultures and practices are perceived as threats to many cultures, Singapore and Taiwan have adopted different approaches.

I argued in Chapter 4, that Singapore's management of *hua ren* culture and identity has to be considered in the context of its population policies, notably within the framework of multiculturalism and multiracialism. Ethnicity is highly institutionalised in Singapore, manifested in what is generally known as the CMIO framework – Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others – determined by the major census categories.[447] Within this framework, the heterogeneous character of each group is de-emphasised and simplified to a few essential characteristics. Being "Chinese" in Singapore means that one has a "Chinese" surname, speaks the language and writes the script. Because of the increased marginalisation of "Chinese" culture, the older generation of *hua ren* fear that there has been cultural erosion among the younger generation. This fear stems from the anxiety in times of fluid modernity, and one in which English – and other non-"Chinese" influences – dominate.

In Taiwan, the anxiety regarding cultural identity is not as great as in Singapore. Among my respondents, there appeared to be no question about them being *hua ren* enough. Instead, the question was how Taiwanese were they? In Singapore, *hua ren* appear to shape their cultural imagination and identification to prove and maintain their cultural links to China, albeit for economic reasons than cultural. In Taiwan, the opposite seems to be true. The Taiwanese anxiety over their cultural identity relates to them wanting to carve out an identity that is separate from political and cultural China - a Taiwanese culture. In the initial years that KMT established itself on Taiwan, it made a political decision to distance itself from China culturally.

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[447] Sharon Siddique, "The Phenomenology of Ethnicity: A Singapore Case Study" in Ong Jin Hui, Tong Chee Kiong, Tan Ern Ser (eds), *Understanding Singapore Society*, (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1997.)

But as we discussed in Chapter 5, in wanting to distance itself and Taiwan from China, the KMT reached back to the pre-modern Chinese "traditional values", advocating Confucianism and the use of Mandarin. In defying the KMT's Mandarinisation of Taiwan, the opposition sought to construct local narratives of Taiwan's cultural identities, most notably through language and literature. In doing so, they called for a return to the local and an emphasis on the regional.

Defined as a legal and political entity with a distinct territorial boundary, the state has the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens within its demarcated territory.[448] Traditionally, the state is seen as prone to reification and essentialism in order to maintain the status quo. Given its power over its citizens, the state has often been viewed as an inconvenient and unwelcomed player that is restrictive, oppressive, and diametrically opposed to the notions of multiplicity and flexibility associated within a globalised and cosmopolitan world.[449] Unwelcome and inconvenient as it may be, the state remains a dominant political, social and organisational structure through which identities are generated and articulated. The state provides "an undeniable point of reference for thinking about belonging".[450] This is especially true in the globalised and cosmopolitan environment where increased migration and the ease of crossing national boundaries – physical and otherwise – have brought issues of "us" and "them", "insiders" and "outsiders" into sharp contrast. Populations have turned to the state to respond to these issues, not just rhetorically, but also in terms of policy decisions.[451] The two case studies in this

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[448] Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and states: an enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), p 1.
[449] Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward and Zlatko Skrbis, *The sociology of cosmopolitanism: globalisation, identity, culture and government* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[450] Ibid., p 41.
[451] One of the most prominent issues in the recent 2011 general elections in Singapore is the large number of foreign workers who are perceived to have taken up jobs, pushed up local housing prices, and linked to a host of other social issues, such as congested public transport. The issue fuelled the

dissertation highlighted the inevitability of the state in articulating the identities of its peoples. At times, these identities may be at odds with the cultural identities and the memories these groups hold.

LOGIC OF PRACTICE VS RATIONALISATION

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Pierre Bourdieu argued that practices may "have no other *raison d'être* than that they exist or are socially recognised as worthy of existing".[452] According to Bourdieu's argument, "rites are practices that are ends in themselves" which need no other interpretation. Making a similar argument, many of my respondents in Singapore and Taiwan – both old and young – remarked that they did not understand the rationale or reason for the ancestral rites and rituals they practiced. Despite the lack of understanding, the respondents carried out the practices anyway because "that's how things have been done" and because doing it was "a sign of respect" for both the living and the dead. Others assigned their own meanings to the rituals to make it more personally relevant for them.

In both Singapore and Taiwan, the younger *hua ren* respondents were able to give reasons for their symbolic *hua ren* cultural identity and token participation in ancestral practices, while older respondents tended to locate their cultural identity in the logic of practice. The heart of the gap between these two conditions is not so much the question of modernity versus traditions, but rather it is a juxtaposition of different modes of knowledge production and acquisition. In Western thought, "writing has become the guarantor of existence itself" which makes it difficult to

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opposition and the public's call for the government to put Singaporeans first, with the ruling PAP assuring that Singaporeans are not sacrificed for economic gains. In the aftermath of the elections, immigration policies have been tightened to stem the numbers of foreigners who may qualify for working permit and permanent residency in Singapore.

[452] Pierre Bourdieu, *The logic of practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p 18.

accept and understand embodied practices, such as ancestor worship.[453] The *hua ren* cultural repertoire accepts the "how" of the practices as they are, without the need for explanation or knowledge of its significance and meaning. Its raison d'état is not based on scriptural texts; it is what it is because it is how it is done. In contrast to the written culture, a practice-based culture is less controllable because "the actions of the repertoire do not remain the same".[454] Unlike writing whose authority stems from its apparent stable and unchanging nature, repertoire is more fluid. It

> requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there' being part of the transmission....The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning...[455]

Such is the case with traditional "Chinese" religious ritual practices, which are transmitted through observation and imitation rather than through texts or formal instruction. Where ancestor worship is concerned, there is a high degree of flexibility and malleability. Many of the rites and rituals have been simplified and adapted to make them more applicable to modern life. This malleability and flexibility of practice is in part due to the nature of ancestor worship – it is not a text-based practice but one that is passed down orally. In the process of transmission, personal preferences may be consciously or otherwise included. Furthermore, "the traditional Chinese religion is one that is highly pragmatic, problem-oriented and this-worldly rather than philosophical," which allows a high degree of adaptation by the practitioner. [456]

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[453] Ibid., p xix.
[454] Taylor, *The archive*, p 20.
[455] Ibid.
[456] See Tong, *Rationalizing religion*.

This is in opposition to the text-based mode of knowledge production and acquisition that is derived from the scientific and systematic form of learning. This mode challenges ideas grounded in tradition and faith, seeking to anchor the world in empiricism, scientific rigour, reductionism, and the questioning of religious and cultural orthodoxy. Viewed from this perspective, cultural traditions such as ancestor worship appear to be irrational and illogical because they are not based on written texts, which are taken as evidence of being grounded in the intellectual tradition of critical thinking.

Rationalisation is a central theme in German sociologist Max Weber's analysis of modernity. Weber saw rationalisation as a process of disenchantment in which the "intrinsic meanings of values or actions are subordinated increasingly to a 'rational' quest for efficiency and control."[457] Instead of being bound to a religious narrative, rationalisation places cultural values within the narrative of secularisation and the enlightenment concept of infinite progress. The process of rationalisation underlies the shift from a traditional world ordered by religious values to one that is ordered on rationality and efficiency.[458] Based on Weber's idea of rationalisation, Singapore sociologist Tong Chee Kiong argued that rationalisation was what caused

> individuals (to) shift from an unthinking and passive acceptance of religion to one where there is a tendency to search for a religion that they regard as systematic, logical and relevant.[459]

While the process of rationalisation as Weber conceptualised can be applied to the case of those who have moved away from religion – such as *hua ren* who profess no religious affiliations, it is problematic when applying the term "rationalisation" to

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[457] Nicholas Gane, *Max Weber and postmodern theory: rationalisation versus re-enchantment* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p 15.
[458] Ibid., p 23.
[459] Tong, *Rationalizing religion*, p 4.

hua ren who converted from Chinese religions to Christianity. This is because it is a case of replacing one religion with another, and not a case of replacing a religious narrative with a secular one, as Weber conceived. While Tong did not argue that Christianity was a more rational religion than Chinese religion, the use of the term rationalisation in the case of *hua ren* Christians' explanation for their conversion may be confusing. It could be mistakenly understood that Christianity is a more rational religion than Chinese religions because, as mentioned in Chapter 4, Tong took rationalisation to mean a "clarification, specification and systemisation of the ideas which men have concerning their reason for being".[460] As I also argued in Chapter 4, Christianity, like most religions, is based on faith, despite the fact that its adherents believe that their faith is more rational than other faiths.

But if we were to take rationalisation to mean the interpretation of the written word (the Bible) to bring one's religious beliefs in line with one's thinking, then rationalisation may be used to describe Christian *hua ren*'s justifications of their participation or non-participation in ancestor worship activities. In this sense, rationalisation is a way for individuals to negotiate between traditional beliefs and a modern lifestyle. By rationalising and explaining their actions in ways that can fit into their cultural and religious outlooks, respondents are better able to make sense of the practice and integrate it into their everyday lives. Through rationalisation, respondents are able to select cultural elements to include in their practical repertoire. In the case of ancestor worship, rationalisation is a way of convincing practitioners that the constant simplification and adaption of practices is a logical and reasonable response to a changing environment (such as burial and cremation, for example) and not a form of disrespect to the dead and its traditions. What mattered was not the details but the

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[460] Ibid., p 5.

symbolic meaning of the rituals. Changes could be made to practices as long as the practice was informed by the same principle: that the dead are still respected and remembered as part of the family. Rationalisation also helps explain how some *hua ren* are able to reconcile traditional practices with modern lifestyles.

REIMAGINATIONS OF BEING HUA REN

In this thesis, I have used the framework of the Sinoscape to analyse cultural identity. The Sinoscape comprises of cultural practices, memory and the various ways in which *hua ren* imagine themselves, their communities, and their worlds. It is shaped by the imagination of generations of *hua ren* in different locations under different social circumstances, and subjected to the forces of localisation and modification. As a framework, the Sinoscape is spacious enough to accommodate the various cultural imaginations, creating possibilities.

Cultural imagination is important because it is "no longer mere fantasy…no longer simple escape…no longer elite pastime…and no longer mere contemplation".[461] Instead

> the imagination has become an organised field of social practices, a form of work…and a form of negotiation between sites of agency…and globally defined fields of possibility… The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.[462]

The thesis has demonstrated that the Sinoscape is expansive enough to accommodate the cultural imaginations of generations and different groups of *hua ren*. The

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[461] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minneasota Press, 1996), p 31.
[462] Ibid.

symbolic nature of *hua ren* cultural identity has provided the cultural space that

engenders the cultural reproduction of its practices. Examining components of the

Sinoscape such as cultural memory reveals the differences between *hua ren*

experiences and reflects the localisation and indiginisation of *hua ren*. Taiwanese

author and filmmaker Wu Nien-Jen succinctly made this point while reflecting on his

inspiration for his directorial debut, *A Borrowed Life*:

> In Taiwan, there is an entire generation of people who are orphans of
> history. They were born during the Japanese occupation and received a
> Japanese education; then, virtually overnight, they had to transform
> themselves into Chinese. But it isn't easy to completely change your entire
> value system just like that. Just like Lee Teng-hui…so many people curse
> him as a Japan lover and tell him to pack up and head back to Japan. I
> think these people really need to re-read the history of Taiwan…What
> happened to this whole generation born under the Japanese occupation is
> so very tragic. It is not they who did not want to embrace China, Taiwan
> was ceded to Japan and they received a Japanese education – that is all that
> they knew…Why can't people understand this problem?[463]

Although the traditional imagined world of *hua ren* – replete with historical

and cultural values, norms and expectations – forms a part of the cultural identity, it is

not the only component of *hua ren* identity. As Wu's quotation above highlighted, the

"traditional" imagined world is not the only world in which *hua ren* inhabit. There are

alternative, imagined worlds that compete for and are imposed on *hua ren*. Although

the traditional imagined world of *hua ren* has provided some form of stability and a

common narrative thread for *hua ren* cultural memory, the reproduction of this world

is not immune to changes. Trans-generational stability of knowledge[464] can no longer

be assumed to be constant, unwavering and secure. In many cases, as we have seen

modifications to the content and form of knowledge have been made. In other cases,

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[463] "Wu Nien-jen: writing Taiwan in the shadows of cultural colonialism," in *Speaking in images: Interviews with contemporary Chinese filmmakers*, 297-323 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp 309-310.
[464] Appadurai, *Modernity at large*, p 43.

there is a complete break of the reproduction process when there is a break in the transmission. Traditional practices such as ancestor worship are no longer a steady point of cultural reference for *hua ren* in light of values, outlook, and lifestyles being recalibrated according to a different set of conventions and standards. New experiences have influenced that repertoire of cultural knowledge and practices.

As discussed in Chapter 1, memory becomes knowledge as it is transmitted. In transmission, the knowledge can be mediated by an individual's external environment. This mediated knowledge, in turn, is transmitted as memory, which can often be categorised as vicarious memory or prosthetic memory, as the individual takes on these knowledge as his or her own memory even though he or she has never personally experienced the event. Through these prosthetic cultural memories, the individuals may embrace identities and identifications that are more symbolic.

The substance of *hua ren* cultural memory, and hence identity, is not just knowledge about Confucian ethics or fluency in the complicated religious rites and rituals. In fact, more often than not, memories passed down in and through the family are more mundane and pedestrian matters that relate specifically to the family, rather than to the "Chinese" civilization and culture as a whole. Among the most active agents of generating and transmission of memory and experiences are family members. In performing the rites and rituals of memory, however modified, the participants actualise the abstract concepts of respect, kinship and blood ties. The latter are also actualised in the day-to-day family interactions. The cultural knowledge and memory is neither transmitted in its entirety nor actively. It is common for elderly family members to "censure" or modify practices they were taught or have learnt, before (and if) they pass it on to their children. These elders had already reasoned that

the rites and rituals, being complicated and developed in a distant time, might not be

totally relevant to the modern society in which their descendents live in.

Ultimately, the case of cultural identity is a case of positioning and

representation. In examining the notion of "Chinese" identity for Chinese American

university students, Andrea Louie[465] argues that

> the political changes that have occurred in China, especially since 1949,
> have politicised the concept of 'Chineseness' so that Chinese identity is no
> longer only a question of the inheritance of the preservation of tradition
> but also of political ideology and self-definition.[466]

Most Chinese studies place China at the centre of "being Chinese" and/or

"Chineseness". But the Chineseness of China is not necessarily congruent with the

Chineseness of *hua ren* elsewhere.[467] As Caroline Hau argues, "in practice, no single

political entity/regime embodies or exercises ultimate authority on "China",

"Chinese" and "Chineseness".[468] Although the mainland's importance in economic

and political terms have increased significantly in the past 30 years, it is not the

preeminent cultural arbiter of "Chineseness", whatever it may entail.[469] Unlike the

United States or Japan, China's soft power on the world and on communities of *hua*

ren around the world is relatively weak. Furthermore, what soft power it has is

challenged by rival centres of *hua ren* cultural influence – Hong Kong and Taiwan

during much of the post Second World War years. The various communities of

"ethnic Chinese" in Southeast Asia have also successfully claimed their versions of

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[465] Andrea Louie, "Chineseness across borders: renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States", Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
[466] Ibid., pp 52-53.
[467] Wang Gungwu, "The Chineseness of China: Selected Essays", Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1991, p7.
[468] Caroline S. Hau, *Japan Focus*, 2012, http://japanfocus.org/-Caroline_S_-Hau/3777 (accessed June 26, 2012).
[469] Ibid.

"Chineseness".[470] The product "would be distinctively and recognisably Chinese and that may be all the matters".[471]

In a notion of symbolic ethnicity, cultural identity has to be viewed as a multidirectional concept. While practice reflects identity, identity itself is informed largely by memory which has been shown to be multifaceted. In his study of the relationship between memory of the Holocaust and decolonisation, Rothberg argued for a rethink of the nature and presentation of memory. The current framework addressing the relationship between memory and identity is flawed, he argued. Instead of seeing memory as competitive and privative, it should be regarded as open to influences and productive. Memory should not be a zero-sum game in which one group's memory or one memory gains ascendency at the expense of another. Rothberg writes:

> The concept of multidirectional memory…is meant to draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance….The model of multidirectional memory posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal and cultural sites.[472]

The concept of multidirectional memory takes into account the multilayered nature of collective memory, which is highly mediated through how it is remembered, presented and articulated. Even though Rothberg was addressing the case of the Holocaust specifically, his concept of multidirectional memory is an important framework in the study of the relationship between memory and identity. This productive and intercultural dynamic that Rothberg

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[470] Ibid.
[471] Wang, "The Chineseness of China", p 7.
[472] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory: remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p 1.

called multidirectional memory provides an interesting framework for the case of *hua ren* cultural identity in Singapore and Taiwan.

The two case studies in this thesis highlighted the multidirectional nature of cultural identity. The identity is a multilayered in that it comprises "Chinese" traditions and customs and "Chinese" history – both of which transcend national boundaries. It also comprises the "national" collective – the Singapore Story, and the narratives of Taiwan's history – in addition to the local, regional history. Finally, the cultural identity of the *hua ren* is also moulded and shaped by their individual families' and personal experiences. While similar in certain aspects, the cultural identity of *hua ren* in both sites differs in other areas as a result of the different socio-historical developments. Although both sites underwent a phase of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the 60 years since the end of the Second World War, and both have become economically successful and technologically advanced, Singapore and Taiwan's societies are molded by different experiences. Japanese, Nationalist and American influences feature strongly in Taiwan society, while British and American cultural influences have an impact on Singapore's society.

The Sinoscape, as this study has demonstrated, is a space in which various possibilities of cultural permutations can take place. It neither essentialises nor is it so extensive and shapeless as to render any analysis of *hua ren* cultural identity ambiguous. This study has taken cultural practices as an index of cultural identity. While an important index, practices are by no means the only indicator of cultural identity. As the research has shown, the Sinoscape is a realm of possibility. Taken together with other analytical frameworks, such as Shih Shu Mei's Sinophone and Chua Beng Huat's "Pop culture China",

which were discussed in Chapter 1, the Sinoscape demonstrates the range of

possibilities where *hua ren* cultural identities are concerned. While practices

may mark one's cultural identity, and state authorities may impose ethnic labels

on a group, one's cultural identification may also well be a matter of

imagination.

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to concretise the abstract notion of *hua ren* identity by

examining the changing cultural identities of two *hua ren* communities through

material cultural practices relating to ancestor memorialisation, possibly one of the

most "distinctively and recognisably Chinese" set of cultural practices.

Chapter 1 argued for the importance of distinguishing between ethnicity as

race and ethnicity as culture. While race has been debunked as a basis of social

categorisation, culture, however articulated and expressed, remains a potent element

by which one is indentified. While it is expected that a *hua ren* (or any individual) to

be well-versed in his culture, which should come "naturally", it is not necessarily the

case. At the most fundamental level, we are born into our ethnicity; it is almost

inescapable. On another level, individuals acquire culture. Biographically, people are

multicultural selves, adding to and subtracting from the cultural equation of their

multilayered identities (including elements related to nationality, gender, ethnic and

the like) as they develop throughout their lives. A person does not necessarily identify

with the culture of his or her own ethnicity. This is especially true in the

contemporary social context of globalisation and cosmopolitanism given the ease of

travel and movement across territories, and the proliferation of education, mass media

and other cultural products. This makes it all the more obvious that ethnic labels are a function of the politics of identity. The same can be said of *hua ren* communities or any other ethnic and cultural communities. "Being", "becoming" or "unbecoming" an identity is a result of acculturation, and at times, of political positioning and labelling. An important source capital in the formation of one's identity is cultural memory constructed through stories heard and personal experiences, and passed on from one generation to another. In the process the cultural memory is remodelled and reinterpreted according to the temporal, spatial and personal contexts.

This study is a first attempt at trying to anchor the large and complicated issue of cultural change in *hua ren* communities within a broader theoretical field. Given the ambition of the task, the study does have several limitations. This research was not meant to generate a comprehensive statistical map of the research sites. Instead, it intended to establish an indicative map of the current social situation. While the data may not be generalisable for the whole research sites, which is too diverse and the variables too many, it provides a preliminary overview of the contemporary cultural configuration of the *hua ren* at both sites. Significantly, the research would benefit from a larger scale and more systematic implementation of Daniel Bertaux's family case history methodology as initially proposed.

Several potential areas of study for future work could include a study of the similarities and differences between family memorialisation practices and national commemorations of an ethnic and cultural group, and what sort of cultural identity the practices may reveal. The study could also be extended to other ethnic and cultural groups, such as a comparative study between the ancestor memorialisation practices between two different groups in order to study what that reveals about the culture and

character of the respective groups. A larger question may be, what is the role of the ancestor in shaping the cultural identities of these groups.

This research has a practical significance in the ways in which *hua ren* in this region are perceived, academically and popularly. Especially in the face of a politically, economically and culturally resurgent China, will these *hua ren* be overshadowed and their identities co-opted (once again) into the larger all-encapsulating ethnic identity of "Chinese" and their other identities (nationalities) eclipsed? These "rival claims" of Chineseness that may yet one day converge "into a new mainstream that all will acknowledge as unmistakably Chinese", as scholar Wang Gungwu hopes.[473] Conceptually, it also raises the question of whether there is a need for an ethnic/cultural reference in this day and age of globalisation and transationalism?

The research also highlighted the importance of recognising the different modes of knowledge in operation, and the dominance of the rational mode of knowledge. With this in mind, we may have to reconsider some of the intellectual paradigms in use. These are pertinent issues that could provide a springboard for further research and analysis.

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[473] Wang, "The Chineseness of China", p 7.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire for Singapore and Taiwan respondents

Survey on how Singapore Chinese remember their ancestors

I am a PhD student in the Cultural Studies in Asia Programme at the National University of Singapore researching on how people remember their ancestors.

As part of my research, I am carrying out a survey to find out about how Singapore's Chinese relate to their ancestors, family and Chinese culture. I would appreciate if you can spare about 15 minutes to help complete this questionnaire.

This is not a test on how much you know. There is no right or wrong answer. Instead I am interested in your personal opinions and experiences.

The findings from this survey will form the basis of my PhD thesis. Your responses and the information you provide will be confidential. It will only be used for the purpose of this research and may be included in the thesis and/or related publications in academic journals and conference papers.

If you have any queries about this survey, please feel free to contact me at (+65) 98782511 or jaime.koh@nus.edu.sg.

Thank you for your help.

Jaime Koh
PhD Candidate, Cultural Studies in Asia Programme
National University of Singapore

新加坡华人如何纪念祖先调查研究

您好，我是新加坡国立大学的博士生，正在研究新加坡华人如何通过各种活动来纪念他们的祖先。

我的研究工作包括施行一项调查，以了解新加坡华人对祖先和有关的活动及观念的概况。我希望您能抽出大概十五分钟的时间帮我完成这份问卷。这不是一项测试，所以没有对与错。我感兴趣的是您个人的观点、经历和体验。

这项调查所得的资料将仅用于我的论文，和相关的学术学报或研讨会报告里。您所提供的资料将会被保密。

如果您对这项调查有任何疑问，您可以随时与我联络。

谢谢。

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Survey on how Singapore Chinese remember their ancestors
新加坡华人如何纪念祖先问卷

I. Activities on remembering your ancestors
纪念祖先的活动

1. Please circle the activities that your family participate in. Please fill in the corresponding columns with your answers.
   请把您家庭有参与的活动圈起来，然后在对应的格子里填写答案。

Activity 活动	Occasions these activities are carried out 些活动在什么时候进行？	Do you participate? Why or why not? 你有参与吗？ 原因？
Worship of ancestral tablet at home 在家中的祖先牌位祭拜		
Visiting ancestral graves 到祖坟扫墓		
Visiting ancestral tablets in temples, niches or columbarium 到庙里、祠堂、灵骨塔祭拜祖先		
Compiling genealogy (tracing family tree or adding details to your clan's records of ancestry and descent) 编辑家谱或族谱		
Compiling family history (e.g. writing down or recording family stories, collecting photographs etc) 编辑家庭历史，例如把家庭故事纪录下来、收集旧照片等。		

Telling stories about events or persons in your family's past 讲述有关家庭的故事		
Visiting ancestral village 回祖乡探访或寻根		

2. In addition to those activities listed above, do you think there are other ways with which you can remember your ancestors?
   除了以上的活动，您认为有什么其它的活动是可以纪念祖先的?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. How many generations of ancestors are remembered in your family?
   您家里纪念的祖先有几代?

   _____

4. Do you think it is important to remember your ancestors? Please give your reason(s) below.
   您认为纪念祖先重要吗? 请简约的解释你的答案。

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Do you feel that remembering one's ancestors is a central feature of Chinese culture? Please explain your answer briefly.
   您认为纪念祖先是华人文化的重要特征吗? 请简约的解释你的答案。

   _____

   _____

II. Religion and identity
宗教与身份认同

1. Please indicate the religious beliefs of your family.
   请注明您家庭成员的宗教信仰。

Religious beliefs 宗教信仰	Which family member 哪一个家庭成员
Buddhism 佛教	
Catholicism 天主教	
Christianity 基督教	
Islam 伊斯兰教	
Taoism 道教	
No particular belief 没有特定的信仰	
Others 其它	

2. How do you usually identify yourself?
   您通常如何辨认您的身份?

Chinese 华人	Singaporean 新加坡人	Singapore-Chinese 新加坡华人	Han 汉人

Others
其它

3. Do you feel that your ancestors and/or place of origins are important aspect of your identity? Please explain your answers briefly.
    您认为您的祖先、籍贯、或祖籍是您身份认同的重要部分吗?

_____

_____

_____

III. Biographical data
   个人资料

Place of birth
出生地

Year of birth
出生年份

Gender
性别

Educational level
教育程度

What is your usual occupation?
职业

What is the main language of your education?
主要教育语言

What languages do you use at home?
(*Please list in order of frequency of use*)
在家所用的语言（请依常用次序排列）

Who in your family is the first generation to be born in Singapore? 您的哪一代家庭成员是在新加坡出生的?	
Who in your family first migrated to Singapore? 您的哪一位家庭成员是第一位移民到新加坡的?	

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Your help is very much appreciated.

谢谢您的参与！

If you are willing to further share your experiences with me in an interview, kindly provide your contact details below. Thank you!
如果您愿意接受进一步的访问，和我分享您的经验，请在以下填写您的联络资料。谢谢！

Name
姓名
_____

Contact no.:
联络号码
_____

Email add.:
电邮地址
_____

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