Transnational Social Practice from Below: The Experiences of a Chinese Lineage
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Chapter 2
Individual and Institutional Ties: the Zheng Lineage in the Malay Peninsula

Generally speaking, trans-territorial migration means that migrants leave their native place - in the familiar living environment, moving to a foreign land - a foreign place. When facing unfamiliar natural and social environments, immigrants are likely to seek two ways to mobilize or to utilize their already existing social capital, in order to satisfy material needs essential to survival and psychological needs welling up from nostalgia. Given the possibility the first is, to set up connections with the hometown in a number of ways, such as communication by letter, marriage, return visiting, remittances and the like; the latter is to find acquaintances in the place of residence, first and foremost, clansmen and hometown mates to obtain help. The former encompasses seeking assistance from the basis of existing social capital from the place of emigration; we might call this backward seeking. The latter means that the immigrants make use of their original social relation to make new social capital. We might name this forward seeking.

When trans-territorial migration develops from individual and scattered behaviour incrementally into a massive and successive process, when the pioneers constantly return to their hometown to bring other locals to follow in their footsteps, what scholars call “migration chains” have been forged. In this case the immigrants will gradually form new immigrant communities in the receiving places. Consequently,
the relationship tie between immigrants and their native place will accumulate incrementally. As soon as the accumulation reaches a certain degree, i.e., with a certain scale and regulation, an embryonic form of trans-territorial social space will be formed.

For Chinese overseas immigrants, there have been two traits auguring the possibilities of generating the linkages between emigrants and their hometown. One is that in traditional Chinese culture "being attached to one’s native land and unwilling to leave it" is a prevailing creed. The moral concept "as long as the parents are alive, one should not stay far away" lends added weight to this belief. Although this kind of traditional concept is not strong enough to resist the overwhelming need to survive in reality, undoubtedly it has been one of the fundamental motives for Chinese transnational migrants to keep links with their hometown.

Another reason is that Chinese migration overseas for a long period was almost exclusively a male affair. Were the migrant already married when he emigrated, he would leave his wife and children behind in his extended family, to live with his parents. If he could hold his ground in his new domicile later, he would bring his sons to the receiving country. If he was still a bachelor, he would remain overseas till he accumulated a certain amount of money and then go back to get married and remain at home for a certain time until he had begotten children, after which he would return to the receiving country. When his sons grew up, they would follow along the ready-made track. This characteristic of male migration certainly strengthened the necessity for them to maintain connections with their hometown.
On the basis of the knowledge just cited, this chapter will narrate how the Zhensgs set up and elaborated the relational tie with the hometown after they moved to the Malay Peninsula. We will discuss how, against the background of the collective, cultural schema already in place, the relationship, first enacted by scattered individual behaviour, developed into a massive, collective and regular one. The former type backward seeking will be illustrated by two cases. One is the case of San Shan in the agricultural sector, while another is the case of Xingdeshun and Xingde Tang in commerce. The latter type (forward seeking) is reflected in the emergence of the Zheng clan association as well as its trans-territorial operations on issues like the re-compiling the lineage genealogy; the running the lineage school and preparing to set up the planned Peng Siong new village. I am convinced that this transformation from individual to collective embodies exactly the construction of trans-territorial kinship ties and regional ties which constitutes the concrete form of the social space in the process of the Zheng lineage overseas migration.

This chapter will also include a discussion of how the trans-territorial social space constructed by Zheng lineage experienced various kinds of change in different historical period and spaces, especially during the mid-1950s when a series of transformations in the political and economic environment transpired.
1. Individual Ties

1.1 San Shan in Segamat

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the greatest number of Zheng lineage members emigrated to Malaysia, the places where they settled collectively were: Segamat, a county in north Johore; Kuala Selangor, a port on the west coast; and Tanjong Malim, a small town on the boundary between Selangor and Perak states. They basically concentrated their energies in two kinds of economic activities, commercial crop planting: tapioca first, and rubber later, which they also traded. The other field in which they were involved was the grocery business. At this point Segamat will be presented as an illustrative example of the backward seeking type to throw light on the early picture.

Segamat is one of eight districts in Johore as well as one of the key towns in north Johore. It has an area of about 1082 square miles. Early data about the population is unavailable but it was about 1,700,000 in the 1980s, consisting of 800,000 Chinese, 700,000 Malays and 100,000 Indians. Like other inland areas, Segamat was a typical plantation district, which has been largely formed in response to the commercialization of agriculture since the mid-nineteenth century. Taking Johore as a whole, Jackson (Jackson, 1968) gives us a picture of how Segamat was explored by Chinese pioneers.

After the island of Singapore was cultivated by Chinese pioneers by planting gambier and pepper in the early nineteenth century, Chinese planters started to expand their plantations into nearby Johore. This was encouraged by the Malay ruler of Johore - the Temenggong. In order to develop Johore, Temenggong Ibrahim invited
Chinese planters to his kingdom and open up forests under the Kangchu System, also referred to as the Tuan Sungei system.

The Kangchu system was well suited to conditions in nineteenth-century Johore. Because the state was sparsely populated and almost entirely covered by virgin jungle, like a Penghulu or head of a Malay village, each Chinese kangchu was endowed with full powers by the Malay authorities to administer the settlement and its lands. The kangchu paid rents or taxes for the whole area and in fact assumed the responsibility of the territory of his kang off the shoulders of the government. He was obliged to construct and maintain the paths leading to the various plantations within the kangkar, and to provide for the upkeep of the river communications. To compensate him to be responsible for all administrative services, the Malay authorities empowered him to hold all lucrative sources of income in pioneer Chinese settlements, whether mining or agricultural, such as the opium and gambling 'farms', together with exclusive rights of pawnbroking, selling liquor, slaughtering pigs and selling pork. The organization of the kangchu system fitted in well with the clan structure of Chinese society because the kangchu usually enrolled planters by means of the kinship migrant chain. Therefore dialect and kinship became the basis by which a kangchu controlled his village.

The development of Segamat followed this general pattern. However, it deviated in its choice of commercialised crop. The major crop Segamat developed in the late nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century was tapioca instead of
gambier and pepper. This followed a trend prevalent in Malacca, and the nearby parts of Negeri Sembilan.

Because planting tapioca demands only a small investment and produces a quick return, the cultivation of tapioca, as one of the export crops, became a profitable alternative for the Chinese of Malacca when the position of Malacca as a trading centre was usurped by Penang and Singapore in the middle of the nineteenth century. Soon tapioca was grown on a large-scale commercial level in Malacca and the neighbouring area. “It was the cornerstone of Chinese commercial agriculture, and indeed of almost all forms of Chinese enterprise, in these states for over fifty years” (Jackson 1968:171).

The tapioca planting activity was pursued in Johore until well into the second decade of twentieth century and it was concentrated particularly in the Muar and Segamat districts close to the Malacca boundary. If we were to say that Johore as a whole had a close connection with Singapore, then it is apparent that Segamat and Muar were exceptions as they were more under the influence of Malacca. It is interesting to point out that the Chinese majorities in these two places are both of Yongchun origin. According to recollection of Zheng lineage members in Segamat, the route their pioneers took was by sea from Malacca to Muar, then along the river into the inland area, from Muar to Buloh Kasap, and then later to Segamat. The pioneers were chiefly involved in planting tapioca, but also cultivated some gambier and other crops.
In the process of exploiting Segamat, several Zhengs in particular emerged as successful tapioca planters. Before 1930, there were three relatively big and well-known plantations in Segamat. The local Chinese called them the San Shan (literally means three hills) and they consisted of: Quanmao Shan owned by Yisheng Zheng; Yuanyi Shan owned by Yijing Zheng; and Quanyi Shan owned by Yunlou Zheng. The names of the three plantations can literally be translated as rich spring hill, overflowing with vitality hill and overflowing spring hill. Each of them possessed a concession between around 3,000 to 5,000 acres. The owners of the three hills were brothers, from Dayu village of Yongchun. Of them, the business history of Yisheng’s family may serve as a good illustration of the trajectory of Zheng Lineage pioneer’s activities.

Yisheng Zheng’s father, Meizhang Zheng, was the first one in his family to move to Malacca. He was born in 1849 and was brought up by his widowed mother. He came to Malacca in search of a living in the early 1870s and left his family, his wife and sons, behind in this hometown. According to the memories of Zheng members in Segamat, Meizhang Zheng laid the foundations of his fortune by running a grocery shop and a cloth store. He expanded his business gradually. When his four sons grew up, they eventually came to Malacca to help him. The family accumulated its primary capital by means of planting tapioca when the second generation, i.e. Yisheng’s generation, took over the family business. Yisheng Zheng was born as the youngest son in the family in 1880, so it can be inferred that he came over to follow his father in the late 1890s or the beginning of the 1900s.

Generally speaking, the pattern the Chinese followed to get access to land for plantation can be divided into two sorts of strategies. One was the kangchu system
that first evolved in Singapore and later in Johore. The other was the contract system that prevailed in places where Western capital was also involved. (Chen, 1989)

Chinese plantation activities in Malacca developed within an administrative framework run by British officials and on terms set down by these officials.

Zheng lineage members recall that Yisheng Zheng became a contractor by cultivating a personal relationship with a British official who lived next door to him. At that time, the big Western planting corporations like Lunglob were the big landowners in Malacca. Those corporations chose fertile land near roads for cultivating, leaving the second-rate land to the Chinese contractors. Yisheng Zheng acquired access to this sort of land that belonged to the Lunglob. He went back to China to his village to recruit peasants, many of them his fellow lineage members. He promised that he would pay the cost of the ticket and offered free board and lodging on his plantation. The recruitment by him and two other plantation owners led to the first wave of Zheng lineage immigration to Segamat, then still an uncultivated inland area.

Yisheng Zheng’s Quanmao Shan plantation covered 3,000 acres at the place where the Lamang College, the only institution for higher education in the Southern part of Malaysia, is now located. Even though tapioca requires a smaller labour force for planting and maintaining compared with the plantation of gambier and pepper, the process of reclaiming virgin forest requires a considerable amount of very hard work. Zheng members recall that on a plantation like “Quanmao Shan” around a few hundred workers were needed in the opening up period.

The organizational framework of Quanmao Shan resembles that of the kongsi system which was popular among all pioneer Chinese enterprises in Southeast Asia. The plantation was enclosed and all the workers were offered board and lodging within the plantation. As a kangchu, within his plantation, Yisheng held all the lucrative sources of income such as opium and gambling ‘farms’, brothels, pork-selling and the like. The highest wages earned by workers did not exceed 5 M$ dollars
per month. What the workers earned was likely to be spent on the plantation. At that time, one piece of opium cost 2 cents, the most expensive quality was about 5 to 10 cents. Smoking opium was the major recreation for those people and also an efficient instrument to bind them to the plantation. Even though the majority of the labourers were the owner’s clansmen, violence was wielded as a weapon of plantation management. For instance, the workers were forced to keep working even when they were sick.

The story of the Zheng lineage in Segamat displays the complex relationship between rich and poor members. A plantation was owned by the rich members and functioned as a receiver for the poor lineage members who were in search of a living in Malaya. In the Hokkien vocabulary this situation is described by the term Longbang, literally meaning that the new immigrant comes and seeks refuge with his relatives and friends. For those Zheng lineage members who immigrated to Segamat, the owners of the “Three Hills” were their helpers for providing them temporary lodgings, even though some of them were not able to leave the plantation until they could no longer work. Conversely it is also clear, however, that a cruel exploiters and exploited relationship existed between the rich and the poor even though they were each other’s lineage members.

The rich lineage members kept a close linkage with the hometown and conjured up a pleasant image of themselves in the imaginations of the hometown, even though they may not have been kind to the fellows working in their farms.

Yisheng Zheng’s mother, the wife of Meizhang Zheng, remained in the home village in China throughout her whole life. Meizhang Zheng and his sons went back to her from time to time. When Meizhang Zheng grew old, he eventually settled down
in his home village and died there. The couple purchased farms and built two magnificent houses named Bo Peng and Chong Peng, literally translated as fighting cock and adoring cock. The cock had been chosen by Zheng lineage as their lineage symbol. Meizhang Zheng and his sons also contributed a large amount to the lineage for help to poor members in the home village. As recorded in the genealogy, Yisheng Zheng started to make a spectacular donation to the lineage in 1915. In the late 1930s he donated 1000 silver dollars for establishing the Peng Siong School. In the same year, he contributed also 1000 silver dollars for compiling the lineage genealogy. They also helped to build the ancestral hall and established roads and bridges in the home village (ZLG, literature 19; 41).

One story, which unfolded in the lineage, illustrates the relationship between this family and other lineage members in the hometown. It is said that in the late nineteenth century, the people of Yongchun were the victims of an extortion racket. Whenever people built their houses, local scoundrels always found a pretext for extorting money by claiming that the arteries and veins of a dragon would be harmed by the construction. However, when Yisheng Zheng’s family built their two magnificent houses, nobody appeared to create difficulties. The reason, according to the story, was that this rich family was willing to give large sums in charity, and many of the clansmen and neighbours cherished the favour this family. Therefore the local confidence tricksters did not dare to try their scurvy plays.

What could be concluded from the case presented by Segamat is that the kinship is not always invariably a source exuding tenderness and affinity, especially in the hard time of an early pioneering settlement. Though massive numbers of Zheng immigrated to the Malay Peninsula through the family chain and though they lived there in their own community, the relationship between the rich and the poor turns out to have been more cruelly coloured than what has depicted in the conventional picture. More interesting is that, when we turn to examine the trans-places relationship
between the rich members and the hometown, the former were likely to be presented in a rosy glow because they made contribution benefiting their fellows members and the community in the hometown. Was this a kind of strategy to serve their trans-territories family living pattern or was it motivated by the cultural trait which exacts that descendants should bring honour to the ancestors? Did Therefore, in the hope of fulfilling this duty, the rich emigrants desire to build up fame in the hometown community? It is hard to make a simple judgment here.

1.2 Xingdeshun and Xingde Tang

After looking at the picture of Zheng pioneers in the agricultural sector, the following section will examine the way Zheng immigrants built up their grocery businesses. Pertinently, if the description of the achievement of Yisheng Zheng informs us about the kind of preliminary trans-territories ties immigrants had with their hometown, then the following case will reveal in concrete terms how a trans-territorial family business and family life were built up and operated in an institutional framework.

In the first half of the twentieth century, most Chinese businessmen or shop owners in Malaya were faced with the dearth of a labour force who knew their style of working, way of living and code of loyalty, and with whom they could communicate in their mother tongue. Under these circumstances, first generation migrants preferred to recruit labour from their homeland. If the newly arrived relative, fellow villager or person from the same region was considered acceptable, his passage would be paid
for by the future employer and he would be accepted to work as an apprentice in the shop or enterprise.

The founder of Xingdeshun and Xingde Tang was Yiyu Zheng. Yiyu Zheng was born in 1875 into a family of poor peasant who had engaged in agriculture for centuries at Wolong Village in Yongchun County. He was the eldest of the three sons of his widowed mother. Like other peasants in the village, he had tried every means to earn a living to support his mother and brothers. One day, while he was selling some local sweets at the entrance of the village, a broker (called shui jiao in Chinese), a kind of middlemen who came to China twice or thrice yearly and were entrusted by Chinese already in the Malay Peninsula with the assignment of bringing over their relatives, lineage members and/or fellow villagers, mistook Yiyu Zheng to be someone's relative. Yiyu Zheng was told that his uncle had asked the broker to bring him out to Malaya. If Yiyu Zheng consented to the proposal, he must be prepared to leave the next day. They would rendezvous at the same spot at which they had met. Yiyu Zheng knew the broker had made a mistake, but he saw it as a chance to make his fortune, so he agreed. He was twenty-one at the time.

On arrival in 1895, Yiyu Zheng went to his distant uncle who ran an opium den and he was put to work there. However, Yiyu Zheng could not stand the listless, addicted patrons and ran away on the same day. Then he was introduced to work on a pig farm where his main work was to go into the flooded weed fields to gather and then cut up weed as feed for the pigs. Again he quit as soon as he discovered that the weeds were infested with blood sucking leeches. He panicked when he saw leeches clinging fiercely and sucking hungrily on his exposed arms and legs as soon as he stepped into the wet field. Eventually he went to Kuala Lumpur to work for a vendor, surnamed Chen who was also of Yongchun origin. Chen imported odd bits of cloth from Singapore and organized a team of street vendors who spread out to rural areas to sell his goods carried on a bamboo pole across their shoulders. So, Yiyu Zheng took to the road as a street vendor everyday. In Kuala Lumpur, Chen rented a place to serve as a boarding house and he sub-let space to his own or other vendors. He lived
with them and observed from the inside who was industrious and most trustworthy. Among his team, Yiyu Zheng earned the trust of Chen for two reasons. Yiyu Zheng could sell his goods faster than others, although the cloth imported from Singapore was only surplus leftovers from bolts of cloth. Yiyu Zheng worked so hard that he spat blood. The second was because Yiyu Zheng always kept his promise. Each vendor took consignments of cloth from Chen on credit. The vendor was expected to make a payment every two weeks. Yiyu Zheng kept his payments on schedule and never lapsed.

Ten years later with the support of Chen, Yiyu Zheng decided to open a shop on his own. He heard that someone at Tanjung Malim, a town on the northern border of Selangor located at the mid-point of the main communications line from Kuala Lumpur to the Northern provinces, would like to sell the ownership of a shop. He took a train north. Tanjung Malim consisted of one and half streets and the train station was right next to the only mosque in town. Yiyu Zheng happened to arrive on a Friday. When Yiyu Zheng stepped out of the station, he saw crowds on the streets – these people had just finished their Friday prayers and were pouring out from the mosque. Yiyu Zheng did not know that the crowd was so big only on Friday and therefore, reasonably concluded that it must be profitable to do business in Tanjung Malim. He decided to purchase the shop with a capital of M$5000, half of which was borrowed from Chen, while the other half was treated as an investment by Chen.

Yiyu Zheng opened his shop which he called Xingdeshun in 1902. In the first twenty years, the main business handled by the shop was retailing groceries and cloth. Groceries like salted fish, dried vegetable, seaweed, mushrooms as well as cloth were imported from Singapore. These goods were given on a half monthly credit arrangement. Unless the bill was paid, no new consignments could be drawn. And each time goods were taken, they went out on credit again.

Apart from groceries, his shop also functioned as one of the local rubber trading houses. Yiyu Zheng collected dried latex from several plantations and each plantation would deliver 3-4 carloads a day to his shop. Then Yiyu Zheng sold them to Di
Zheng, his lineage member who was one of biggest Chinese rubber traders in Kuala Lumpur.

*Xingdeshun* also functioned as a sort of bank, as there was no bank in the town at that time. When local Malay people were paid after completing a contract, they deposited it at Xingdeshun. The deal being that the store could use part of saved capital as circulating capital.

In the 1930s, *Xingdeshun* started to conduct a groceries wholesale business which included goods for Western consumers, in order to cater to the growing population of expatriates who had come to the Malay Peninsula to work on the British-owned plantations and enterprises. It eventually won the contract to be the local agent of the Nestlé Company.

Yiyu Zheng went back to Yongchun to get married when he was twenty-seven years old and his wife remained at the village throughout her life. They had twelve children, seven of whom were sons. To mention the gender of one’s offspring is significant because only the males in this family could be agents, supposed to move back and forth between Yongchun and Tanjung Malim.

An institutional framework of crossing-space for running the family business and arranging family life was established at the outset by Yiyu Zheng. After he had opened his own shop, he brought one of his brothers over to run the shop with him. In his generation, Yiyu Zheng and his youngest brother ran the business in Tanjung Malim while the second sibling remained in their hometown. All the properties purchased by the family-owned enterprise were divided into three equal proportions, and all properties were under co-ownership or became what is known as 'common property'.

When the second generation grew up, a more complete system was formed. All the under-age males in the big family lived in Yongchun and went to school there until they were in their late teens. Then the young men were sent to *Nanyang*, i.e. Southeast Asia, in turn to work in the family business of Xingdeshun. All the female members of the family remained in Wolong Village. Yiyu Zheng wanted to uphold Chinese traditional values in his family and insisted that wives should not move to
Malaya, otherwise the whole family would degenerate into" fanggui " (literally translated, it means foreign ghost – anyone non-Chinese is thus referred to).

Under these circumstances, almost all adult males of the family, their lineage members and fellow villagers were brought over to Malaya to work together in XingDeshun. And all of them lived on the floor above the store. This pattern is an efficient, cost-saving arrangement in management terms. A boarding house did not need to be large to accommodate thirty or more single men sleeping dormitory style, while common meals saved time and money.

According to the recollections of a member of the family belonging to the third generation, this arrangement extended into the 1960s. At that time, the store had a staff of more than thirty. This is the account given by Junmu Zheng:

I can still remember this noisy picture of bustling activities such as stocking and loading and the voices. There were several big pots cooking warm food for us.

Shizheng, the fifth son of Yiyu Zheng, also remembers:

In order to stop the young people from going out in the evenings, my father always called us together upstairs to tell stories at night. The funny thing was - he could often keep us in suspense by leaving the end of the stories or their climax till the next morning. In this way, he successfully kept us inside the house to avoid us being exposed to bad influences from the outside world.

It took Yiyu Zheng ten years to complete his transformation from a penniless apprentice to the owner of a store. Then another ten years were needed to accumulate sufficient funds to build a grand house which he named Xingde Tang in his hometown, Wonglong village, which is situated at the foot of Wonglong hill. Even today, Xingde Tang is still the biggest house built following the Chinese traditional style. Xingde Tang consists of more than sixty bedrooms, courtyards that link one row or sector to another, hand-carved beams, and painted rafters. When designing Xingde Tang, Yiyu Zheng saw in his mind at least three generations of his descendents and those of his
two brothers living under the same roof. Even so, the house still needed to be enlarged and widened several times later.

In *Xingde Tang*, the huge family in the village, the wives of Yiyu Zheng, of his brothers, and their children, the second generation, shared the same household till the third generation was grown up. Then smaller sub-units were divided off in the large house. Though his youngest brother had no descendants since he died at a rather early age, Yiyu Zheng arranged the adoption of children whom he raised as this brother's branch in the house.

A financial rule was also set up to reinforce the institutional framework. Everyone working in *Xingdeshun* received a salary of M$20 per month while those belonging to the first generation, like Yiyu Zheng and his brother earned M$30. Everyone was permitted to return to Yongchun once every two years and remain in village for a couple of years and he would be given a sum of M$200 to take home besides what he could save from his regular salary. Yiyu Zheng bought 700 *mu* (*mu* = 0.1647 acre) of land in Yongchun and rented it out. The grain taken as the land rent was used to support the entire family. His idea was to buy more land till the rent received was enough to cover the family's consumption of grain. Apart from growing vegetables on the farm around the big house, a sum also was allocated to each household and there was a separate sum for the monthly expenditure for family meals. *Xingdeshun* remitted sums of about 2000-3000 M$ home per transaction, in the early days through a private remittance agent and later through a bank. This sum of money was duly divided and delivered by Yiyu Zheng's brothers in Yongchun to each household in *Xingde Tang* as well as to the families of their fellow villagers and lineage members who worked in *Xingdeshun*. Any excess funds were usually deposited at the store of Yiyu Zheng's friend in Yongchun.

Yiyu Zheng and his brother divided their time between living in both countries. Each took his turn to stay in Yongchun for a couple of years to oversee the affairs of their extended family in Wonglong village. Then he would return to relieve the other who headed the business in Tanjung Malim. Yiyu Zheng was satisfied with this framework for conducting their lives he had set up for himself and his dependents.
even though the family also experienced hardship like others at that time. We said in
the first chapter that Yongchun suffered from frequent attacks of bandits or the forces
on self-styled local warlord the first half the twentieth century. Shizheng Zheng
recalled that;

Our house was looted four times. The bandits climbed up to the roof
and broke through it to gain access into our house by sliding down a
bamboo pole. They kicked doors of rooms open or broke windows
with axes. Each time, they sacked all the goods and chattels in the
house. Other than this, we had to contend with local ruffians. They
forced my uncle to buy guns for them. They were still not satisfied
even though my uncle had already given payment for four guns, so
they kidnapped my aunty.

If this kind of things happened to other families just once, it would be
enough to frighten them into leaving their hometown. But my father
did not want to run away. He often wrote back saying that as long as
he could earn money in Nanyang, for each M$10, he did not mind
sharing M$ 5 with other people. His idea was to earn money in
Malaysia and to enjoy life in our hometown.

According to the recollections of the descendants of Xingdeshun, each year there were
seven or eight trips back and forth made by members of the family. Therefore they did
not have any savings in Malaya.

This trans-space living pattern influenced the management style of Xingdeshun.
The task of supporting the extended family in China was accorded the highest priority.
This led the Xingdeshun to adopt a cautious attitude towards the issue of business
expansion. Maintaining what they had achieved was the most important task
according to Yiyu Zheng's instructions to male members of the family. The following
anecdote may serve to illustrate his defensive attitude clearly.

Yiyu Zheng would have had no difficulty at all affording a private car as did other
storeowners at that time, but he refused to buy one. He said that one could own a car
for the first year, or continue keeping it for the second year, but it would be embarrassing if in the third year he could not afford to run it.

The practice of ‘common property’ ownership in the family also contributed to the defensive strategy of the enterprise. In this family business, the key entrepreneur was Yiyu Zheng, the eldest brother of the three, but everybody received an equal proportion of the enterprise, even the middle brother who was never involved in the family business.

One descendant of Yiyu Zheng complained that when some members insisted on holding what they could get from the shared common property, how could the family enterprise squeeze out capital for further development? The following example illustrates very well how the common property ownership in the family hindered the expansion of the Xingdeshun. To avoid potential conflicts among the next generation, before Yiyu Zheng and his brother retired, they decided to stop dealing in rubber trading, not because it was no longer profitable, but rather because everybody who had a share of the business would want to have a say in it. So the licence for rubber trading was returned to the relevant authority.

The orientation of Yiyu Zheng towards his hometown was reflected not only in his family institutional framework, but also shone out in his concern for his fellow villagers and lineage members. Moreover, later his interest extended to the local affairs of the hometown.

The Xingdeshun constantly brought his clansmen and villagers over to Tanjung Malim as apprentices. There was a trans-territorial migrant transportation framework established by merchants of Yongchun origin as early the beginning of the twentieth century between Xiamen and Singapore. This transporting agency functioned as a
half-way house and travel service. It set up centres in the two ports, one called Yong Jianan in Xiamen, the other Hongfu in Singapore. In the case of the Xingdeshun, Yiyu Zheng only needed to write a letter to the agency and tell it how many people were needed and a 'contract' was accordingly drawn up. The agency then took the responsibility for the whole process of transporting, arranging accommodation before migrants departed from Xiamen, and settling them on a ship, which could convey 3000 steerage passengers. It received the newcomers at their arrival in Singapore. Then the new immigrants would be sent to the destination, Xingdeshun. When the business was rounded off, the agency would present an invoice to collect due payment.

The efforts Yiyu Zheng made to bring his fellow villagers over to Malaya were not only to expedite his business. It was also his way of helping others. This should be understood in the context of Confucian culture. When a person becomes rich, he is supposed to make efforts to benefit his home village and town. By hiring his fellow villagers, he had provided them with an opportunity to earn a regular living, therefore their families in the home village could expect their lives to improve. In the records of his village, Yiyu Zheng is remembered more as a patriarchal figure in his relationship with his workers than viewed in the light of an employer with his employees. The salary for an apprentice was not high, M$5 per month. But were a boy to marry, his salary would be increased to M$20 a month, the same as what his own sons were paid in the shop. What was special was that when Yiyu Zheng went through the accounts of the store, he checked to see who had saved some money. Back then it was a common practice not to draw one's full salary every month, but rather, the apprentice would be given some pocket-money. The undrawn salary was noted and when that
person left, the full sum was paid out. This was one way to save money. When Yiyu Zheng saw a substantial sum logged up, he often advised the apprentice to remit the money back to his family in Yongchun. Young men who were sent to Xingdeshun remained filial and earned to save more than to use. Since Yiyu Zheng lived in Yongchun for a few years at a stretch, respect earned by the families in turn stimulated him to undertake yet other patriarchal deeds.

In the imagination of the villagers, Yiyu Zheng was an ideal and normative “public figure” in the context of the trans-places virtual community. This image acceded with the expectations of the clansmen and county men of a successful emigrant merchant. He was a gentle and kind-hearted person. He never deviated in thought or deed. In particular, he never hesitated to help the poor when they came to him. Yiyu Zheng was not only active in taking part in Zheng lineage public affairs like being a member of Zheng clan committee, taking charge of the financial affairs of the Pong Xiang school, making the first donation on various kinds of occasions and being the chairman of the board, he also threw himself into the local affairs of the county with enthusiasm.

For instance, a severe drought struck Yongchun in the early 1940s and the grain had become scarce and extremely expensive when Yiyu Zheng happened to return home. Together with other local activists, he immediately set up an agency to buy grain from other places and sell it at a lower price to the local people. Yiyu Zheng was content with performing this sort of deed for local society and he confided to others that he drew happiness from conducting this kind of philanthropic project.

At the age of seventy-three in 1948, Yiyu Zheng retired from his business and settled down permanently in his hometown. His image as a philanthropist took on a
new lease of life. The older generation remembers that Yiyu Zheng delivered two silver dollars on the doorstep of each household in the village during each Spring Festival, the Chinese New Year. When he discovered that there was a lack of quinine in the locality, he spent several hundred dollars every year to build up stocks of quinine at his home. Anybody who needed it just approached him and Yiyu Zheng would wrap the medicine in a red paper packet and give it away for free.

Yiyu Zheng’s attachment to his hometown may be seen as an example of the first generation of migration. Although he received extremely unfair treatment in the era when the ideology of the ultra-"Left" was spreading in China, he never wavered in his desire to spend his remaining years in his hometown.

The great irony of the matter is that his philanthropy was what caused him the most sufferings at the turn of 1950s. At that time the Communist Party set out to inculcate its ideals into the everyday lives of the people, to restore order and build up integrated political institutions at all levels throughout the nation. New policies to support this campaign were launched and regulations for the Suppression of Counter Revolutionaries (Feb. 20, 1951) were promulgated, authorizing police action against dissident individuals and suspected groups, bandits and political opponents harbouring anti-Communist sentiments, thoughts or behaviour. As the campaign progressed unmonitored, uncensored, hampered by vague directives and the absolute power given to the police, abuse of this power became inevitable in particular at the grassroots level.

One person who lived and served in a temple did not receive a gift from Yiyu Zheng and made an accusation to the local government saying that Yiyu Zheng was a landlord and had tried to buy popular support from others by giving gifts for which he must have ulterior motives. Since communism stands for the struggle of the common people against class suppression, any report in this category would attract the attention of the authorities. This accusation caused Yiyu Zheng to be arrested by the
local authorities. At that peak of this massive movement to root out counter-revolutionaries, the government executed some of the accused and some despotic landlords along with them. Yiyu Zheng was among a group of convicted counter-revolutionaries who were escorted to the open ground under the town bridge for execution. After the gun shots had rung out, Yiyu Zheng understood he was not going to die; his being taken to the execution ground was a form of intimidation.

After more investigations, the local government realized that Yiyu Zheng was merely an industrious merchant who had made good from being a vendor and he was released. On his dossier, the class status of Yiyu Zheng was reclassified as that of an overseas Chinese merchant.

Although he had experienced such a horrible time, the desire of Yiyu Zheng to pass the rest of his remaining years in his hometown still did not waver. He continued to make donations as before and in 1953, he and other returned overseas Chinese initiated steps to set up a middle school called the Overseas Chinese School. Yiyu Zheng was selected as the executive chairman of the board of the school. Later, in acknowledgement of his selfless concern for local affairs, Yiyu Zheng was invited to be a county committee member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Yiyu Zheng died around 1960 and was buried on Wonglong Hill.

It is important to note how Yiyu Zheng's descendants continued living in a trans-territories living pattern set up by Yiyu Zheng, the pioneer migrant.

About a hundred of the offspring of Yiyu Zheng and his brothers are still living in Malaysia. Another hundred are in Yongchun and around the same number in Hong Kong. Some members of the third generation still run Xingdeshun, the grocery wholesale business at Tanjung Malim as an agent of Nestle IN, but the majority has spread out either to operate their own businesses or they are engaged in professional jobs all over Malaysia.

Shizheng Zheng, who is now in his eighties, may be considered a representative of the second generation of Xingdeshun in terms of the relationship with the hometown Members of this generation spent only half their adult life moving between southern
Fujian and Malaysia. This back and forth movement was slowed down by the late 1950s famine and ceased after the "Great Leap Forward" at the beginning of 1960s. By then, those who made a decision to stay on in Malaysia eventually moved their whole families, wives and children, out of Yongchun, although some children who were fifteen and over had to stay on because they were not eligible for migration according to Chinese laws.

Although Shizheng Zheng settled his whole family in Malaysia and for three decades could not make a return visit, he was motivated to go back after China opened her door. Since then he has kept up a pattern of constant visiting to his native place. When asked why it was attractive for him to return to the place from time to time, he explained that his first action on his first return visit in 1986 was to resettle his mother’s grave and to set up a fund in memory his mother: he donated 20,000 RMB to his village school establishing a small foundation which bears his mother’s name. Apart from fulfilling his filial piety, he enjoys being in the hometown, seeing and chatting to his old school fellows and by re-experiencing the local life. "Even the water there is sweet" he says. He plans to bring his son, a professional working in Canada, who was born in Yongchun and moved to Malaysia when he was two years old, to visit his hometown.

The case of Xingdeshun and Xingde Tang unfolds an example of migrant living patterns in the first half of the twentieth century, a pattern of trans-territorial living at two ends. Our story reveals how a poor young southern Chinese farmer immigrated to the Malay Peninsula and started his business right from the ground. More importantly, it shows unequivocally how he constructed an elaborate trans-places family-enterprise framework.

The case also reveals how on the basis of this back and forth living pattern, Yiyu Zheng as a representative of the early first generation migrants built up his "public
figure" image in the trans-places virtual community. This indubitably provides
evidence of his cultural and social values and it also shows that this sort of ideal and
normative image of a "public figure" has deeply influenced the later migrants in the
region, as I should go on to discuss in chapter 3. Therefore it is significant to point out
here that "public figure" images in this particular social space have provided a rich
source of imagination to both immigrant and hometown communities. They set the
terms of how a successful person should behave if he wished to meet the community's
expectations.

2. Transnational Institution: the Zheng Lineage Association

In the process of constructing trans-territorial social space by means of lineage ties,
the Zheng clan association that emerged in the Malay Peninsula plays a significant
role. First, the setting up of an organization marked the point of transition at which the
Zheng lineage turned from individual and scattered behavior, as seen in the cases of
Yisheng Zheng and of Yiyu Zheng, to gather its forces and act together collectively in
a formal organization. This indicates that in the 1930s, after experiencing a certain
preliminary period of cultivation the Zheng trans-places practice began to be
institutionalized.

Second, what Bourdieu tells us about social capital is relevant here. He suggests
that social capital is an aggregate of actual or potential resources, which are embodied
in a certain kind of lasting network. This network is familiar to everybody involved.
It is also one that is generally acknowledged and embodied in a systematized
relationship. The network provides support to each of its member in the form of collectively owned capital and offers an identity to him or her. Armed with this sense of belonging, in turn members often strive to safeguard the reputation of the network and live up to its expectations (Bourdieu 1988). The establishing of the Zheng clan association provided its members with more accessible social capital. Pertinently, it was a sort of new form of social capital, i.e., trans-territorial social capital.

The purpose of this association enshrines the six chief functions that Malaysian and Singaporean Chinese clan associations exemplify, i.e. (1) ancestor worship and the worshipping of deities; (2) celebration of traditional festivals; (3) helping the less fortunate lineage members; (4) arbitrating in disputes; (5) validating marriages, births and deaths; (6) promotion of education. (Yen 1991:77).

All the above-mentioned functions are indeed aimed at forging a collective identity, an identity to the group gathered together under the symbol of blood relationship. In the course of building up the group identity, social capital was centralized. At first, Chinese pioneers lived in rural areas or in underpopulated small towns like Zheng lineage members mentioned above. They lacked an external network, the so-called third form of social capital (Valenzuela & Dornbusch 1994; Hagan 1995). This was a period in which even though Chinese communities in many places began to take shape, one well-known fact about them was that they were not cohesive entities as they belonged to various groups - divided by dialect, region, trade groups and factions. Access to resources and support when it was needed was
available only to people who shared common points embodied in extended blood relations as pointed out by Yen Ching-hwang.

2.1 Trans-territorial Operation of Associations

*Forging of a Collective Identity*

The case of the Zheng lineage provides a pertinent illustration of how a collective identity was built up and then concurrently mobilized the social capital essential to surviving and developing. When the population of Zheng lineage members increased, they fanned out over the Malay Peninsula and their sense of dispersal raised the issue of recompiling of the lineage genealogy, pushing it right to the forefront of their activities.

Compiling a genealogy is a serious responsibility for a lineage in Chinese traditional society. Special persons in each generation in a village or place of residence are entrusted with this task and these appointees become the indisputable experts for future reference. There are a number of reasons behind such an activity. One is to clarify the lineage pedigree and descent, therefore to denote unequivocally every member’s position in the co-ordinates of the lineage. Another, to record the achievements attained by the lineage members, in particular by those who achieved official positions and gained scholastic honours or accumulated substantial wealth, in order to bring honour to the ancestors.

Although both these reasons aimed at establishing a basis for the group’s identity, it inevitably also forged a link of unity between the lineage members and at the same
time presented a show of the power of the family. Therefore, an elaborately compiled genealogy could promote the social standing of the lineage in both local communities in which it was involved.

Generally speaking, among lineages in Fujian Province it is understood that it is an obligation to recompile the genealogy every thirty years, considered the duration of a period for producing a generation. Failing to follow this rule will be regarded as a failure of descendants to demonstrate their filial piety towards the older generations (Chen 1996, 37-38). However, it has been difficult to realize the ideal, in most cases because of the chaos caused by wars and the fluctuations in economic conditions.

The following data show that the basic rhythm of Zheng lineage’s compiling of its genealogy is about once every sixty years. The first version of the genealogy of the Zheng lineage was compiled in 1503, after which it was recompiled five times as follows: 1566, 1633, 1681, 1700, and 1903.

In 1937, a number of the upper echelon of Zheng lineage members in Malaya suggested that an invitation should be sent to all Zheng lineage members in Malaya and Singapore. They were to gather at the building of the Yongchun Hometown Association, which was established in Kuala Lumpur in 1922 to discuss the issue. This proposal met with an ardent response from the Zheng lineage members. The result of the meeting was the formation of the Agency of Peng Siong Zheng Sojourning Abroad in 1937. The board of the Agency consisted of ten respected Zheng lineage members from Kuala Lumpur, Segamat, Buloh Kasap, Malacca, Kuala Selangor, Tanjung Malim and Ipoh. They were charged with the obligation to mobilize funds for the massive project of taking a census and updating the genealogy.

In May 1937, the Agency proposed to lineage members in Yongchun that a meeting would be held there and that participants should be representatives of various branches of the lineage family from both the hometown, Yongchun, as well as from Malaya. To accede to the requirements, the Committee for Recompiling the
Genealogy was set up in Yongchun with seventeen lineage members drawn from the various branches. To ensure that the results in both countries would be congruent with each other, a set of twelve guidelines was laid down. The Committee was put in charge of re-compiling genealogy in Yongchun, but the final compilation was to be supervised by the Agency, the funding party. In the guidelines, it was stated explicitly that “Our committee holds a close relationship with the Agency of Peng Siong Zheng Sojourning Abroad. All recommendations, findings and feedback should be mailed to the Agency and any line of action outside the guidelines must first be approved by the Agency before implementation. And we should also accept the resolutions decided on by the Agency and carry out any of the entrusted tasks assigned to us” (ZLG, 1941 Miscellaneous, 73). The actual funds came from members of the lineage in Malaya and Singapore. For the record, forty-seven people in Malaya made substantial donations to this project. The total amount was around 36,500 dollars in silver; while the highest donation by an individual was 4000 dollars (ZLG, 1941 Miscellaneous, 66-67).

In order to supervise the work of compilation more efficiently, in the second year of the establishment of the Agency, the membership of the committee of Agency was enlarged from ten to thirty-three. This was the basis on which the Peng Siong Zheng Lineage Association was formally established in 1939.

**Strengthening of Ties: Power and Projects**

What deserves our attention is that the structure of this lineage association reflects the pattern of trans-locality. This lineage association consisted of two branches, one was in Malaya, called “living overseas” (Zhuyang), and another was in Yongchun, called “remaining in hometown” (Zaixiang). Therefore, two groups of leaders were appointed.
Table 4: The construction of the trans-territorial Zheng lineage association:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERSEAS</th>
<th>HOMETOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POSITION</td>
<td>NAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Zheng Er'ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman and Director of the</td>
<td>Zheng Yiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-chairman and Director of</td>
<td>Zheng Tiansong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer and Director of</td>
<td>Zheng Yiyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Treasurer</td>
<td>Zheng Meishou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Affairs</td>
<td>Zheng Erchang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-General Affairs</td>
<td>Zheng Meijin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanuensis</td>
<td>Zheng Weizhong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor</td>
<td>Zheng Yuzhao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor</td>
<td>Zheng Qingtang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Clerk</td>
<td>Zheng Yuxian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Clerk</td>
<td>Zheng Qingzhong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ZLG, 1941, Miscellaneous, 69)

The table above shows that the principal positions of the Association, such as that of chairman, treasurer, general affairs were held by overseas members. And the members in the hometown occupied only the second tier leadership position like vice-chairmen, vice-treasurer, and vice-general affairs. This serves as a cogent illustration of how the set up differs from the traditional power structure that often existed in a lineage or a
clan in China. According to the traditional principle, it is only the reputable elders in the locality who are eligible to hold the top positions. Now dynamic members of acknowledged capacity could speak with authority because it was they who were able to launch and finance the undertakings and promote the education of members of the lineage with their wealth, even though they were far from their hometown.

The implication is that the heart of power of the Zheng lineage had already shifted from the hometown to the Malay Peninsula, which provided more space and more convenience for the Zhengs to forge and strengthen the lineage ties.

This point is emphasized by looking at three projects in which the lineage association was engaged from 1937, the establishment of the Agency of Peng Siong Zheng Sojourning Abroad to the end of 1941, before the outbreak of the Pacific War.

The first project was launched in 1937 with the purpose of helping their hometown clansmen. An analysis of the census data makes it evident that quite a number of the Zhengs in Yongchun had fallen on hard times, mainly because of the lack of farmland with which they could support their basic needs. Er’ai Zheng, once the chairman of the Agency of Peng Siong Zheng Sojourning Abroad and later a counsellor of the Zheng Lineage Association, proposed that the Association would apply directly to the local Chinese authorities for permission to purchase a piece of land in order to establish a Peng Siong New Village. Lineage members who were living below poverty line could then be relocated for settlement. This vast piece of land lies in the western part of Fujian Province and is sparsely populated. This proposal met with the general approval of the lineage members. The lineage on the Malayan side decided to organize a corporation to raise capital. Rules, terms and conditions were worked out in great detail meeting after a meeting. However, before they could reach the stage of implementation, a full-scale war broke out between
China and Japan. The Malay Peninsula was itself later on invaded by the Japanese, so this ambitious plan was cancelled. (Lin, 1988:121)

In 1939, the association, right after its foundation, elected the board of trustees of the Peng Siong School consisting of twenty persons, in order to strengthen the financial support for and management of the lineage school in the hometown. The board of trustees of the school was similarly divided into two branches: abroad and hometown. The chairman of the Zheng Association, Yiding Zheng, was also the chairman of the board. Under his leadership, the association mobilized donations for running the school from the members all over the Malay Peninsula.

The third thing the Zheng Lineage Association undertook was to strengthen its supervision on the project of recompiling the genealogy. In March 1940, a committee, called the Examination Committee for Recompiling of the Genealogy, was set up. The Examination Committee was again divided into two sets. One team based in the Malay Peninsula and the other in the hometown. A rule was instituted by the Examination Committee in the Malay Peninsula that they carry the decisive power for nominating the candidates who would join the committee in their hometown. The rule again shows the leading position of its overseas members. (ZLG, 1941 Miscellaneous, 74).

_Weakening of Ties: Constraining of Context_

The late 1940s marks a turning point, at which the lineage tie in the transnational social space weakened. The strength of the lineage tie was closely affected by various major factors in the broader context, i.e. the changing political, economic and social situation in the two localities at each end of the afore-mentioned transnational space.

At home in China, the establishing of the People Republic of China in 1949 ended up the trend of emigration that began in the mid-nineteenth century. It was also a period in which the government under the influence of the Left ideology did not encourage
its citizens to keep their overseas connection alive. The 1950s was also the period when the Chinese in the Malay Peninsula changed their national identity. As explained in the Introduction, the Chinese in the Malay Peninsula can basically be divided into two categories distinguished by crucial factors such as the language spoken and type of education received, i.e. the Straits Chinese and the immigrant group and their descendants. The latter had formed the majority of the Chinese population since the beginning of the twentieth century as the consequence of the pouring of immigrants into the Malay Peninsula. This group was basically Chinese educated. Even though many of them were illiterates, they were deeply influenced by Confucian values and identified themselves not only culturally, but also politically and nationally with Mainland China before WW II. The 1950s in Malaya was a period of change for the Chinese. In the process of the Malay Peninsula becoming an independent national country, the Chinese struggled collectively to gain their political, social and educational rights. The major issue that mobilized almost all Chinese associations was to obtain full citizenship (Cui, 1998). In the meantime, political moves carried out in Mainland China in the 1950s one after another seriously undermined the feelings Malaya Chinese had held for their hometown and country. Consequently, a process of the localization of the Malaya Chinese was speeded up. This transformation brought about the weakening of the lineage tie. However, the process of transformation was gradual and the transnational linkage did not come to a standstill immediately. In the period from the 1950s to the late 1970s the links changed from a process of weakening to complete suspension.
For a long time, the prevailing view in academic circles was that communist China had not formed any diplomatic relationship with countries in Southeast Asia since it came into power in 1949 because of suspicion on all fronts. Politically, there was a Cold War, so juridically, the connection between the Chinese overseas and their lineage members in hometowns should have ground to a halt. But it was too easily assumed that this meant a complete cutting of links. This did not take place as the blood relationship prevailed over that of boundaries and conflicting political ideologies.

Take the case of the Zheng lineage in the 1950s. In the first half of the 1950s, the link between the Malaysian Zheng lineage members and their hometown was still carried on through a focal point – the school. Lineage members overseas continued making donations to the school to help resolve financial difficulties. The Association in Malaysia at that time had already moved from Kuala Lumpur to the town of the residence of its chairman who kept the communication lines open by means of mail. However, by the late 1950s, communication between the Association and its lineage members in Yongchun had finally ceased altogether.

In China, the nation-wide, Anti-Rightist Struggle took place (the counterattack in 1957 against the bourgeois Rightists). The ultra-“left” trend of thought claimed that the issue of the class struggle must be taken as the key topic in national political life. In Fujian and Guangdong Provinces much of this negative sentiment was directed against overseas Chinese who had voluntarily repatriated back to China or against the families and relatives of overseas Chinese. Anyone accused or found to have overseas
connections was discriminated against in the issue of job assignments, welfare and social benefits. This policy hurt the feelings of overseas Chinese deeply.

To secure its hold on power, the Chinese government needed to imbue its citizenry with ideology. It assumed a highly critical stance towards family associations that it equated with nepotism, corruption and the perpetuation of inequality. The anti-rightist struggle swept through every level of Chinese society.

At the Malayan end, to obtain a peaceful and smooth transition of power in preparation for the gaining of independence in 1957 from British colonial rule, one of the requisite clauses was: the government of independent Malaya should be a democracy. Internally, this caused an upheaval, as the Malay government would have to dump one of its coalition partners – the Labour Party which was strongly supported by the working sector and by resistance fighters who had opposed the Japanese invasion during World War II. The latter group was also pro-China and was considered undemocratic. So when the government dropped the Labour Party when it formed the coalition front that would rule independent Malaya, the ex-resistance fighters rebelled. This began the arduous fight between the Malayan government and what they called the communist terrorist insurgents in the jungles of Malaya. This “insurgency” was to last for more than twenty years. On the civilian side, the Malaya government adopted a strict policy of bringing the Chinese associations and privately funded Chinese schools under its heel because the nature of their activities and because their stated aim was to promote Chinese culture, and both these institutions
were viewed as pro-Communist China. At this time, nationalistic sentiments were at a peak fanned by consistent political campaigns.

In this tense situation, the head of the Zheng Lineage Association in Malaya replied to a letter from his hometown lineage counterpart in an ironic formal tone, saying that as we are now Malaya citizens, please do not bother us with school business. Our relationship is the relationship between your country and our country. This trans-territorial social space was thus directly influenced by political forces.

Meanwhile, the second and the third generation overseas-born Chinese gained Malaysian citizenship. They tended to identify themselves with the country of their birth rather than that of their ancestors, as they have no memory of their ancestral home or lineage members.

Again, the case of the Zheng lineage association serves to illustrate this. What happened to it bespoke the common fate suffered by all Chinese associations. Following the new restrictive regulations of the government, the Zheng Lineage Association changed its name to the Malaysia Peng Siong Teh Clan Association and stipulated in its referendum that its now ex-members would have to reregister. In the prevailing political and social context, the clan association started to shift its entire functional direction from hometown to the host country, focusing on the issue of Malaysia Zheng members' welfare.

This turning away from the hometown to Malaysia was finally accomplished in the end of 1972 when further spurts of population growth forced the Association to look for larger premises. It was decided that the Association would buy into real estate and settle its headquarters permanently in Kuala Lumpur. This was in the wake of the worst racial riots in its history in 1969. This plan caught the imagination of its members, even the younger ones, as they took it as a sign of moving on with life. M$150,000 was finally collected from the lineage members throughout Malaysia. The Association also sold its two rubber plantations for M$110,000. The income from
these two properties was that which used to be set aside to support the school in Yongchun. All the money they raised was used for purchasing a new building. A total of MS300,000 was eventually spent to build a five-storey building on Jalan Masjid India. The third floor is kept as the lineage hall and administrative office; the fourth floor is used as a guesthouse for visiting lineage members. And the other floors are rented out to take care of the Association’s monthly expenses. (Lin 1988, C122)

In conclusion, the establishing of the Zheng Clan Association marks the institutionalization of Zheng trans-territorial practices. In its initial stages, its operation reveals a process of the forming of a collective identity. The recompiling of the lineage genealogy was a foundation stone for this. Furthermore, this collective identity contains an acknowledgement on the shifting of the core of power formed in this social space, as the newly emerged authority in the group could provide the members with actual or potential resources.

However, the trans-national practice from below appeared to be constrained by the macro context in which the actors and their actions are located. The weakening of the collective practice in this regard in the late 1940s and its eventually coming to a standstill in the early 1960s are cogent examples of what was happening.

2.2 Core activity in the Transnational Practice: the Peng Siong School

According to Smith and Guarnizo (Smith and Guarnizo 1998), transnational actions are to be understood in two ways. First, by understanding that "reality on the ground" is socially constructed within the transnational networks, formed and moved by people. And secondly, by understanding that people are subjected to territorial-based
policies and practices of both the sending country and receiving host nation, states and communities. This also marks the distinction between domestic and transnational migration, even where the transnational is seen as a geographical extension of earlier domestic migration.

Historically, one of the recognizable features of a Chinese lineage is its possession of trust holdings, also referred to as ‘lineage property’. This is as varied as it is far ranging. Lineage property might encompass ownership of farmland, hills, houses, bridges, ferries, irrigation works, lineage schools and so on. Lineage property is the material mainstay that enables lineage institutions to function independently. It is not only a source of funds that sustains various public activities, but it binds its members spiritually. Returns from the lineage property are also used to pay for:

- the building of temples for congregational worship
- offerings and sacrifices to the gods made on behalf of its members
- burial grounds and their continued maintenance
- construction and maintenance of ancestral halls
- compiling and upkeeping of the lineage genealogy
- building roads, and bridges for needy communities where their members form the bulk of the population
- helping its poor members
- maintaining a reserve fund to relieve victims of natural and man-made calamities
- cultural education
Lineage property, combined with ancestral hall and lineage genealogy, constitutes a fundamental ground for lineage organization to bind the lineage members together efficiently. Therefore, the running of lineage property becomes the chief activity for the lineage.

The Zheng lineage genealogy shows that Zheng lineage property can be categorized under four headings:
1) a whole area of farmlands of 300 mu
2) more than 30 pieces of landed estate
3) more than 36 locations of hill estate
4) a school called the Peng Siong School

Farmland represents the ensuring of the fundamental subsistence needs of its members, but the most striking is the lineage school. The lineage school has played a key role in the maintaining the connection between lineage members in Malaysia and those who have remained at Yongchun (ZLG Record of Estate, 54-72).

The fact that the school has been listed as a major undertaking by this lineage is not unique. As Siu and Faure state: the existence of interlineage and intervillage networking via schools was very much a discovery, which emerged from a study by Wakeman in the 1960s on the three-day battle staged by 25,000 people against British troops who landed near Guangzhou in the Opium War. "Wakeman discovered that it was the inter village organization that summoned their members through the communal school - the focal point of gentry organization". Siu and Faure were right in pointing out that the local school could play a crucial role for the local community because the school was the communal organization most acceptable to the State (which still holds true today). They claim, however, that as the arena where the
cultural nexus of power was enacted, the one activity in which it did not seem to be engaged was to furnish academic education. In opposing this view, I would like to argue that in the southern Fujian area, both in modern times and in the past three decades, schools also have been academic institutions. For exactly this reason, schools have been seen as a proper stage on which the local prominent figures, the elites of society in the form of local entrepreneurs, businessmen, current and former officials who are actively involved in politics and social economic affairs, should perform as education always is the central social issue in the region.

On one hand, schools are the appropriate medium for local leaders to utilize to achieve their ends. On the other hand, education is a symbolic tool for them to play with to display their status and power in local communities. That is why the Peng Siong School has always been the fulcrum in the transnational practices of Zheng lineage.

From interviews with Zheng lineage members, Yiliang Zheng was reckoned to be one of a handful who received the full commendation and respect of his peers and fellow lineage members. He is also among the few whose biography is published in the lineage genealogy. The main reason for this accolade was his active participation in the affairs of the Peng Siong School. Yiliang Zheng was its founder and it was he who donated a major part of the property on which the School stands.

The school was registered in the spring of 1918 and thus has a history of more than eighty years. The trail back to its beginnings itself bespeaks the degree of involvement and the role played by the overseas Zhengs in terms of the running of lineage property in Yongchun, their hometown. Yiliang Zheng was born in 1873 into a poor peasant family. When he was just a child, he started going with his parents to work on their farmland because his family could not afford to send him to school.
Having to do heavy work from a young age, Yiliang Zheng was a strapping lad by the time he was about fourteen years old. He joined the exodus to Malaysia and ended up in Segamat where he worked as a coolie. He had to struggle for a long time before he could save enough to buy 10 acres of uncultivated land from the British colonial authority for planting rubber and tapioca with his co-investors - his lineage members. At this time, the rubber industry was in its embryonic stage in the Malay Peninsula. Being an enterprising and prudent man, Yiliang Zheng accumulated his savings to branch out on his own. He rose from being a shareholder to being the sole proprietor of a small rubber holding eventually to become the owner of a rubber plantation of 10,000 acres in Labis, a township that grew up next to Segamat. Later, he also took part in a pioneering scheme to open up land for rubber plantation in Mersing, a 7000 acre venture. By then, Yiliang Zheng had become one of the richest members of the Zheng lineage in Malaysia. In 1929, he died in Mersing leaving behind an unfinished development plan for his heirs to complete. (ZLG, Literature, 27).

Education is often the most important means available for enhancing one’s social status. A man who is well educated can find himself elevated to the ranks of the social upper class. In traditional Chinese society, a lineage member who passed the imperial examinations and accordingly obtained a corresponding official post would be highly respected not just for his personal success alone, but his glory reflected on the esteem with which his lineage was regarded by society. It goes without saying that the more members of a particular lineage scored scholastic achievements, the more officials among its rank, the more the lineage collectively enjoyed prestige and was able to exert stronger influence on the local community. As a consequence, in Chinese society, education became a sort of yardstick for measuring the social status of an individual as well as of a lineage. Therefore, any Chinese lineage considers the
foundation of schools to be one of the most crucial tasks to be fulfilled for the common good.

The establishment of the school on paper enshrined its prime function, that of bringing into fruition the space of ‘trans-locality’. To bring the idea of the school to life, the acting principal of Peng Siong School, Yichuan Zheng, was sent to the Malay Peninsula in 1919 to raise the desperately needed funds for building the school. There Yichuan Zheng met Yiliang Zheng and found a staunch ally in him. Yiliang Zheng became a dedicated driving force in the fund-raising campaign that was to last till the end of his life. As a result, the first board of trustees of Peng Siong School was set up, based not in the place of its conception, but in Malaysia, with Yiliang Zheng as the chairman of the board. In this manner, Yiliang Zheng became the founder of the school.

In the early days, the school was simply called “Peng Siong High and Primary School”. Two kinds of classes were taught. The high school classes consisted of three years of schooling, while the primary equivalent encompasses four years. For a start, 150 students were recruited. The school was set up inside of the Zheng lineage ancestry hall in Yongchun.

In 1925, experiencing a serious shortage of money, the then current principal of the school, Hairu Zheng, once again trod the well travelled path set by his predecessor. He went to the Malay Peninsula to call upon financial aid. To facilitate a wider participation of lineage members in this meritorious deed, Yiliang Zheng proposed to reform the Board. Accordingly, the first Board was divided into two with the addition of new members. The old Board remained in Segamat while a new one was based in Kuala Selangor, a township located in the centre of the Malay Peninsula. By the 1920s the population within the Zheng lineage had multiplied and quite a number of its members who had done well in plantations, fisheries and trade had spread out from Segamat to look for greener pastures. The Board decided to purchase 300 acres land suitable for planting rubber. This cost M$20,000 and the money was collected from among the lineage members. The income generated by the plantation was placed into
a Trust Fund to provide for the continued operation of the Peng Siong School.

Thereafter, the School found itself on a relatively stable financial footing and was even able to expand with the availability of sufficient funds.

Since then, members of the Zheng lineage in Malaysia have constantly made up for shortfalls, even during the low years when the rubber plantation did not earn well. They have also sporadically made separate contributions for various installations needed by the school. For example, Meishou Zheng donated 10,000 dollars in silver for purchasing a piece of land covering 150 ‘mu’ for a playground and for the building of a future structure that would house the middle school. In 1933 Yijing Zheng (whom we met in the preceding section) went back to China and spent 10,000 dollars in silver to buy a shop house in Xiamen. The income from the rental of this property was donated to the school as a complementary fund and Yijing Zheng also contributed educational instruments and equipment. (ZLG, Education. 47-49; PXS)

The Peng Siong School was the only lineage property the Zheng Lineage managed to hold on to after 1949. The biggest fund it received in the 1950s was a sum of about 80,000 RMB donated by Zhengs in Malaya as a congratulation gesture on the completion of the genealogy. However, towards the end of the 1950s, the linkage between the Zhengs in Malaysia and those in Yongchun weakened and the financial support for the school from the Malay Peninsula was discontinued. The Peng Siong School sought and received a subsidy from the local government. In return, the school was required to transform itself to adhere to the set pattern of operations demanded by the funding body: that is the Chinese authorities. This type of school is called “Minban Gongzhu” (literally translated, run by local people and subsidized by the State). In 1966, the infamous Great Cultural Revolution swept over China and the ultra-leftist trend of thought governed Chinese social life. The theory of proletarian dictatorship did not allow for any form of private enterprise. The notion of permitting educational institutions which were regarded as fundamentally ideological based to be left outside the Communist Party’s control was unthinkable. Furthermore, the case of the Peng Siong School was aggravated by the fact that it was a school run by a lineage, an institution that was the embodiment of “feudalism” in the terms of the Cultural
Revolution. The school was thus totally taken over by the local government and turned into a public school. Without the school, the Board of Peng Siong School in Malaysia headed by the lineage association disbanded. In the second year, the School was re-named “Lixin Primary School” (literally translated newly erected), in line with the drift of the current of the time (HPS, 1997).

In a nutshell, the running of lineage school was the focus of Zheng collective practice. This is because education has always been deemed to be a central social issue in the region since the fruitful results of education will enhance the lineage prestige greatly. What interests us is that, from its founding to its running, it was the clansmen in Malaysia who collectively took responsibility for assisting in maintaining the school located in the far away hometown. For this lineage undertaking, the emigrants set up a Board for mobilizing its group resources and even purchased a collective property—a plantation—to raise trust funds to guarantee the running of the school. The fate of the lineage’s transnational undertaking in the Great Cultural Revolution, however, proves that the analytical distinction suggested by Guarnizo and Smith between the reality “on the ground” and that of the state levels is correct.

3. Conclusion

What can be drawn from this chapter is that first, building up a linkage with the hometown as soon as the action of migration had taken place, is a sort of behaviour for migrants to mobilize the already existing social resource for the sake of surviving
and developing their potential in the new place of residence. Along with a gradually established immigrant community consisting of clansmen, hometown or region fellows, the pioneer migrants also formed new social capital to rely on.

The establishing of the ties of the lineage with the hometown has its own developing logic. There is already a collective, cultural scheme in place, though initially this is enacted by spontaneous individual behaviour, and then extended and transformed into collective action channelled by organization, for instance a lineage association in this case. When the number of immigrants increased to a certain scale and a large group took shape, consequently this so-called migrant trans-territorial social space would be formed as we have seen in this chapter.

The ties immigrants set up with their hometown are not necessarily a relationship which can always be characterized as harmonious. Instead, the nature of this linkage is complex. On the one hand, the mutual relationship of exploiting and exploited can overwhelm the supposed close feelings among clansmen; on the other hand, the rich clansmen desired to play a role as philanthropist in the imagination of clansmen of the distant hometown, as we saw in the case of San Shan in Segamat.

Another case of individual trans-territorial connection shows an elaborated framework of crossing region. The pattern and features of living at two ends produce a real picture of early transnationalism. More importantly, the case reveals how this early transnationalism was socially and culturally constructed.

As far as the collective border crossing activities are concerned, the case of Peng Siong Zheng gives us much food for thought. Historically, a large number of
migrants from southern Fujian have made a notable influence on local lineages. One of the most interesting phenomena is the transformation of authority/power within the lineage: the authority/power have shifted from their homes of origin to new residential places of the migrants. And this results in a series of corresponding changes in the perspectives of organizational structure and operation, as the Zheng case has illustrated.

Furthermore, this case proves that the core of Chinese social capital is derived from the extension and expansion of family and blood relationship as stated by some Chinese sociologists (Yang 1999). In other words, ties of blood and of region embodied in the family and hometown are the fundamental social capital a Chinese individual could access. While the importance of kinship, fictive and otherwise, does not make Chinese forms of social capital very special, the historical depth of these networks does.

However, the trans-territorial social space based on individual and institution is not as fully free one as some scholars have thought in recent years (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998: 3). The transnational running of the Zheng lineage school was affected by the local policies of the Chinese government. And the operation of the Lineage Association was also restricted by the Chinese and Malaysian authorities.

1 The statistic comes from the special commemoration issue of the 25th anniversary of the Yongchun association of Johore, Segamat, 1978.
2 Jackson gives an implicit explanation of Kangchu system. As there were no roads in mid-nineteenth century Johore the rivers served as highways of immigration and later as arteries of commerce. Based on these all-important river valleys, a system of settlement, cultivation and landholding emerged in connection with gambier and
pepper planting. “In these valleys small villages or river depots were established, each of which was known as a kangkar literally ‘foot of the river’ in Tiechiu dialect, as the planters mainly shifted from Singapore”, and from which cultivation extended “only from the river bank to the nearest watershed.” In most cases, the kangkars were established in areas containing a very small population. Each kangkar and its section of the valley was governed by a semi-feudal Chinese headman known as a kangchu (‘lord of the river’), who held the land under a title known as a surat sungei (‘river document’) granted to him by the Malay ruler. In the mid-nineteenth century specific powers were delegated to the kangchu in the form of a tauliah (‘letter of authority’). This gave him a legal position both as head of his community and as representative of the Sultan’s authority.

Some prices of daily expenditure may be helpful in giving a basic idea of the currency value at that time. From the beginning of the twentieth century to 1940s, a worker’s salary on a plantation, at the highest, was 10 silver dollar. Opium cost 2 cents for each piece. One cup of coffee was 2 cents and one rather satisfying meal for an ordinary man cost 10 cents.

A mu of land could produce 30-40 kilo of rice per half year.

When the population increased in that immediate family, households were divided and subdivided into smaller units.

To the Chinese, the red paper means good luck.