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CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
香港城市大學

**Triad Society in Hong Kong:
The Hierarchical Approach and
Criminal's Collaborations**

香港黑社會：架構階層與犯罪合作的關係

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by

Sharon Ingrid Kwok
郭綺雯

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Abstract

The present study adopted hierarchical approach to examine the structure and operation of triad societies; and how structural features of triad societies facilitate their members in accessing criminal resources and establishing criminal collaborations within triad community. Different from conventional triad research method, the present study adopted in-depth interviews and ethnography to study two triad associates and 28 triads ranging from Sze Kau members to Lo Shuk Fu and former Cho Kun, and covered eight different triad societies in Hong Kong, including the three major triad societies, namely Sun Yee On, Wo Shing Wo, and 14K. The present study not only provides empirical contribution to triad research, but also a new dimension in studying organised crime - the “structural-social capital” approach in an attempt to link up “Organized Crime” (organized crime committed by criminal organization) and “organized crime” (crime that is organized) as defined by Finckenauer (2005) and Hagan (2006).

The triad community is a gateway to the network hub of the underworld in Hong Kong. The triad structure turns the individual resources and power into aggregate resources for individual purposes. The established triad networks provide an exclusive social platform for criminal collaborations. This study found that the genuine value of triad societies is the triad identity and status that offer an opportunity to establish social capital and to access the resources in the criminal underworld through the structural hierarchical network in the triad societies.

The present study reveals that triad societies are decentralised but not disorganized. Triad societies are made up by factions, which constitutes of the spider-web structure that links up numerous generations of triads through the Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationship. The hierarchy of triad society is determined by seniority and financial power. The triad structure and hierarchical positions significantly influence the access to triad resources, and hence the chance of successful criminal collaborations. In addition to structural factors, Dor (reputation) and face are important asset and credentials for establishing trust and hence facilitate criminal collaboration and the establishment of social capital. The establishment, advertisement and verification of Dor are crucial to criminal collaboration. Triad societies provide a breeding ground for young criminals to establish criminal networks in the triad community, which provides a hierarchical ladder for triads to accumulate power, resources and Dor. Triad territories provide a networking platform for triads to circulate criminal information, promote themselves, verify Dor, and obtain information about potential collaborators.

CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Qualifying Panel and Examination Panel

Surname: KWOK
First Name: Sharon Ingrid
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
College/Department: Department of Applied Social Sciences

The Qualifying Panel of the above student is composed of:

Supervisor(s)

Prof. LO Tit Wing Department of Applied Social Sciences
City University of Hong Kong

Co-Supervisor(s)

Dr. HUI Na Na Anna Department of Applied Social Sciences
City University of Hong Kong

Qualifying Panel Member(s)

Dr. ZHONG Yueying Lena Department of Applied Social Sciences
City University of Hong Kong

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following examiners:

Dr. LAU Kwok Yu Department of Public Policy
City University of Hong Kong

Prof. CHUI Wing Hong Department of Applied Social Sciences
City University of Hong Kong

Prof. LO Tit Wing Department of Applied Social Sciences
City University of Hong Kong

Prof. CHIN Ko Lin Center for Law and Justice
Rutgers School of Criminal Justice

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TRIAD GLOSSARY TRANSLATIONS

<u>English</u>	<u>Chinese</u>
Ah Kung	阿公
Ah Kung Business	阿公生意
Bau Lou (one of the 14K branch)	拜勞
Big portion Dai Lo	大份大佬
Cha So	揸數
Cheung Hung	長紅
Cho Hai	草鞋
Cho Kun	坐館
Chuen Yat Chi	全一志
Chung Yee Tong	忠義堂
Dan Yee	單義
Dai Lo	大佬
Dai Lo- Lang Chai relationship	大佬嘍仔關係
Dor	朵
Dor Heung (repute reputation)	朵響
Dual Cho Kun system	雙坐館制度
Dual Dai Lo system	雙大佬制度
Fa Pau Wui	花炮會
Five Tigers and Ten Heroes	五虎十傑
Fu Shan Chu	副山主
Fuk Yee Hing	福義興
Hai Di (triad membership record)	海底
Hau (one of the 14K branch)	孝
Hanging the Blue Lantern/Blue Lantern	掛藍燈籠/掛藍
Heung Dor	響朵
(to declare which triad society one belongs to, using triad reputation to claim territory)	
Hung Shing Wui	洪勝會
Heung Chu	香主
Ngai (one of the 14K branch)	魏
Lang Chai	嘍仔
Lo Shuk Fu	老叔父
Lo Sze Kau/Old Sze Kau	老四九
King Yee	敬義
Hung Kwan/ Red Pole/426	紅棍
Pier	碼頭
(means valuable accessories own by triads)	
Shan Chu	山主

Shining Horse (mobilizing a significant number of foot soldiers to demonstrate triad power)	晒馬
Shuk Fu	叔父
Small Portion Dai Lo	細份大佬
Sin Fung	先鋒
Sze Dai	四大
Sze Kau (Chai)	四九(仔)
Sun Yee On / Lo Sun	新義安 / 老新
Pak Tsz Sin	白紙扇
Wa Si Yan	話事人
Wo Ho Choi	和好彩
Wo Hop To	和合圖
Wo On Lok / Shui Fong	和安樂 / 水房
Wo Tsz Tau	和字頭
Wo Shing Wo	和勝和
Wo Yung Yee	和勇義
Wo Yee Tong	和義堂
Tak (one of the 14K branch)	德
Triad faction	水
Triad faction Dor	支水的朵
Tor Dei (territory/dominator of territory)	陀地
Yee (one of the 14K branch)	義
Yung Yee Tong	勇義堂

CHAPTER 1

TRIAD SOCIETY IN HONG KONG

1.1 Definition

The term “triad” is a general description of a traditional Hong Kong organised criminal group, with a clearly definable cohesive organizational structure and permanent character (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009). During the colonial period, triads in Hong Kong represented organised crime (Lethbridge, 1985). According to a police commissioner, Selvin, triads were defined as:

unlawful criminal societies involved in the systematic development, through the use of criminal intimidation, of criminal monopolies ... Triads are suspected of being closely linked with syndicated corruption and are currently associated with much of Hong Kong’s violent crime ... to create or maintain criminal monopolies (Lethbridge, 1985: 132).

A legal definition of triad society in Hong Kong can be found in Section 18(3) of the Societies Ordinance, Chapter 151, Laws of Hong Kong. According to this ordinance, “every society which uses any triad ritual or which adopts or makes use of any triad title or nomenclature shall be deemed to be a triad society”. Under this legal definition, triad crime is strictly defined based on the rituals, membership and connections with a triad society, rather than as a result of organised crime.

1.2 Triads in Hong Kong

Triad society had been developed prior to the British colonial rule. It had been argued that the Chinese secret societies including triads were actively engaged in salt and opium smuggling, violent organised crime and racketeering in the South China region after the suppression of the secret societies movement by the Qing government (Sinn, 1989). In the early 1840s, the appearance and activities of Hakka triad members in Hong Kong were also documented (Morgan, 1960:62), and the first arrests of triad members were made in 1844 (Liu, 2001:32). According to Liu (2001), the British estimation of the number of Hong Kong triads was about three-quarters of the Hong Kong Chinese community in 1800 (p.34). At the end of the nineteenth century, at least one-third of Hong Kong Chinese were triads (ibid.). After Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain, they immediately passed the first legislation to criminalize the triad society and other secret societies in 1845 (Bolton, Hutton and Ip, 1996; Kwok and Lo, 2013; Morgan, 1960), in their efforts to strengthen colonial rule.

Chu (2000:16) argued that Hong Kong triad societies did not originate from Hong Kong but were imported from Mainland China with the influx of Chinese refugees. They made use of the triad network to organize the business of opium trafficking and labor trade and participate in republican movement, and they gradually relocated to other regions without taking root in Hong Kong (Chu, 2000:16). He further argued that the existence of Hong Kong triad society was a mutual assistance group organised to “respond to migratory labor” (Chu, 2000:17), aiming at self-protection and providing welfare to Chinese refugees who had originated from different regions of China, in particular from Chiu Chow and other parts of Guangdong province (Chu, 2000:16-18). Chin (1990) argued that the influx of immigrants together with triad members from the Mainland (such as 14K

and Ching Gang) after World War II changed the nature of triads from welfare service providers to pure criminal syndicates. Chin (1990) added that the intrusion of Chinese triad societies from the Mainland transformed local triad activities from victimless crimes, such as prostitution and gambling, to predatory crimes, such as extortion, robbery and narcotics trafficking.

The change of political rule and the geographical location of Hong Kong provided fertile soil for the growth of triad society in the territory. On the one hand, due to its geographic proximity to China, the location of Hong Kong made it a perfect entrepôt for international trade, such as drug and human trafficking (Chu, 2000; Morgan, 1960). On the other hand, the British colonial rule transformed Hong Kong into a shelter for Chinese refugees and a center of the Chinese revolutionary movement. It was documented that a number of triad and secret society members involved in the political revolutionary movement escaped to Hong Kong during the 1950s (Crisswell and Watson, 1982:43-4; Morgan, 1960). Hong Kong was an important base of anti-Qing dynasty revolutionary activists, such as Dr Sun Yat-sen (Chan, 1990; Chu, 2000:15; Liu, 2001; Morgan, 1960). Since China became a Republic in 1911, such patriotic characteristics in China had been gradually fading, leading to the disintegration of secret political groups into triad societies engaging in criminal activities.

The biggest trait of triad society – its collective power – also facilitated its rapid expansion in Hong Kong. Different from those from wealthier regions such as Shanghai, many of the Mainland refugees were poor, mostly working as unskilled laborers, hawkers or coolies in boarding houses (Chu, 2000). They needed to rely on themselves for survival, without the government's support. Due to the keen competition among refugees from different regions, they could only rely on

kinship ties and own dialect groups to compete with others in securing employment (Tsai, 1993:111). This fostered the cohesion in different regional and dialect groups and became the embryonic form of Hong Kong's triad society. Once these groups had accumulated sufficient power, coolies were required to join them in order to get a job (Chan, 1991:157).

It had been argued that triads had monopolised the labor market since 1857 (Morgan, 1960:61); this was not only restricted in the coolie industry but also in hawking (Chang, 1989) and construction and public services (Chu, 2000), which fostered the spread of triad society in local labor markets. In order to enhance their cohesive power for dominance, they adopted the triad oath and rituals originated from Hung Mun to bind their members (Morgan, 1960:67). There were a vast number of independent triad societies in Hong Kong and conflicts between them in competing for territories were common.

Based on the historical account of the development of triad society, although the origin and nature of triad society remained controversial, two features of triad society remained unchanged: its cohesive structure and the rituals used as a binding force to maintain its cohesiveness (Chu, 2000). Triads utilised these features to serve a variety of purposes, including self-protection, mutual assistance, organizing criminal activities, monopolizing business and participating in political movement.

1.3 Triad Structure: From Ancient to Modern

There are three different approaches to examining the structure of organised crime, which are the structural/hierarchical approach, social network approach and social capital approach (see Chapter 2 for detailed discussion). Criminal organizations, such as triad societies and Italian Mafias, are generally perceived as Weberian forms of organizations. Criminal organization researchers tend to focus on the internal operational structure, such as hierarchical structure, division of labor (i.e. the defined role and responsibility of each individual within the organization) and mechanism of command and control (authority, communication and resource distribution) within an organization. Moreover, some researchers argue that criminal organizations are loosely structured, and they perceive them as a network of webs consisting of many different patron-client relationships (for example, the study of American Mafia, Albini, 1971). McKenna (1996) argued that the structure of triad society is not centralised. By examining triad-related organised crimes, he found that they are mostly committed by a faction of a triad society led by the area boss or the red pole (a triad office-bearer) rather than commanded by the triad headquarters. The centralised operational structure is only restricted within the faction at area level, rather than the criminal organization as a whole, as area bosses of the triad society had a high degree of autonomy in controlling organised crime. Xia (2008) suggested that the structure of triad society is a horizontal social network rather than a vertical centralised structure in its operations. This enhances its resilience, makes it more adaptive to hostile external environments, and facilitates the movement of individual triads outside their territories and their participation in illicit markets and transnational organised crime. Lo (2010) argued that both the traditional structural/hierarchical approach and the social network approach have failed to fully explain triad-related organised crime. He proposed a social capital approach to examine how senior triad leaders utilised the social capital that they developed in Mainland China

and turned it into economic capital.

Triad society was generally perceived as a hierarchically structured organization. Owing to its historical background, many triad society researchers perceived it as a form of hierarchical, military-like organization that evolved from ancient Chinese secret societies. For instance, Chin (1990) explained how the Chinese secret societies influenced Hong Kong triad development by comparing the structural similarities between Hong Kong triad societies and ancient Chinese secret societies, such as the Hung Gang and the Ching Gang. He argued that the Hong Kong triad society followed the general organizational structure of ancient secret societies but simplified it from eleven positions to six. Some titles of the positions remain unchanged (i.e. Shan Chu and Fu Shan Chu), but other subordinate positions were more diverse and division of labor became more sophisticated. Each position was represented by numbers and each set of numbers was related to the ritual origin of the ancient Chinese secret societies – Shui Hu Zhuan.

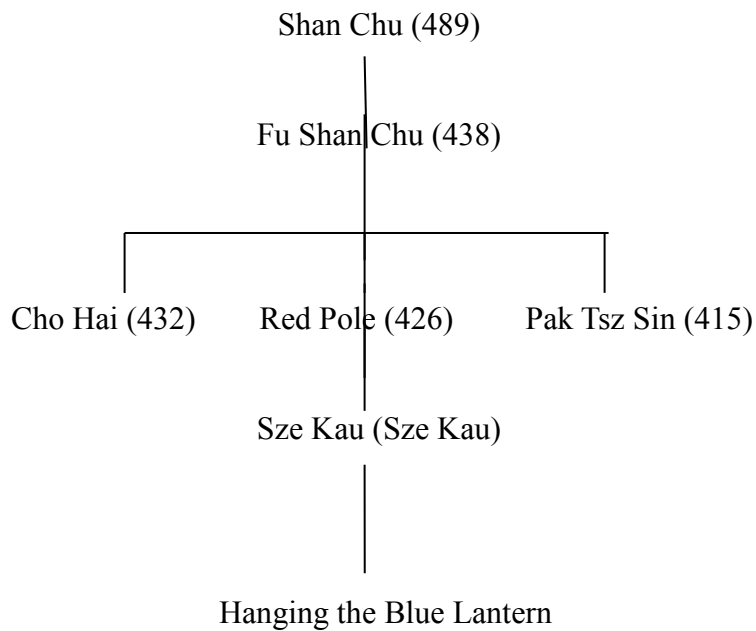
Morgan (1960) perceived the traditional triad structure as rigid and hierarchical, with high division of labor and centralised control. For instance, he adopted the Wo group as an example in illustrating the structure of triad societies before the 1960s. He portrayed the Wo group as consisting of a centralised administrative headquarters comprising such branches as Wo Shing Yee and Wo Shing Wo (p.95). The headquarters was responsible for major decision making and arbitration between each branch (p.95-6).

Morgan (1960) provided an authoritative description of Hong Kong triad societies before the 1960s. The leader of a triad society was known as Shan Chu (also known as 489), assisted by a deputy leader known as Fu Shan Chu (438). The Shan Chu had the ultimate authority of decision making in all matters related to the triad society. Assisting him were two senior triad officers, namely Heung Chu (Incense Master, 438) and Sin Fung (Vanguard, 438), who were responsible for holding initiation and promotion ceremonies as well as recruitment and expansion of the triad (Morgan, 1960: 96-8). The remainder of the headquarters personnel consisted of senior officials and influential ordinary members who were in charge of five main departments, including a general affairs section (responsible for organizational administration and finance), recruitment section (responsible for recruitment, registration, investigation of members and socializing with groups outside the parent society), organization section (responsible for controlling activities, major operations and internal discipline), liaison section (responsible for internal communication within the society and between headquarters and branches) and education and welfare section (responsible for providing welfare for members and their families) (Morgan, 1960: 97-8). Under the headquarters, each of the branch societies in Hong Kong had a Cho Kun (head of branch) and Cha So (treasurer), who were elected for fixed periods (Morgan, 1960: 98).

The middle management under the headquarters was composed of three triad officers: Red Pole (426), Pak Tsz Sin (415) and Cho Hai (432). These ranks still exist to date (Lo, 2012). Red Pole is the leader of fighters, who is also responsible for inflicting punishment on traitors. Pak Tsz Sin is the leader of strategic planner responsible for offering advice and planning (ibid.). Cho Hai is the liaison and public relation officer of a triad society responsible for acting as an intermediary between the headquarters and its branches, as well as between triad societies and with persons or businesses from whom the society was seeking protection money (Morgan, 1960:100-1). The

lowest hierarchy of triad society was composed of Sze Kau (49) (ordinary members who had gone through an initiation ceremony) and Hanging the Blue Lantern (thereafter the Blue Lantern) or probationary members (see Figure 1.1). Since triad initiation ceremony is seldom conducted nowadays to avoid police raid, both Sze Kau members and the Blue Lantern are regarded as formal triad members if they identify a triad society and pledge loyalty to a specific Dai Lo (protector) in that triad society (Lo and Kwok, 2014).

Figure 1.1 Structure of a Triad Society by Rank (Source: Lo, 2012:568)



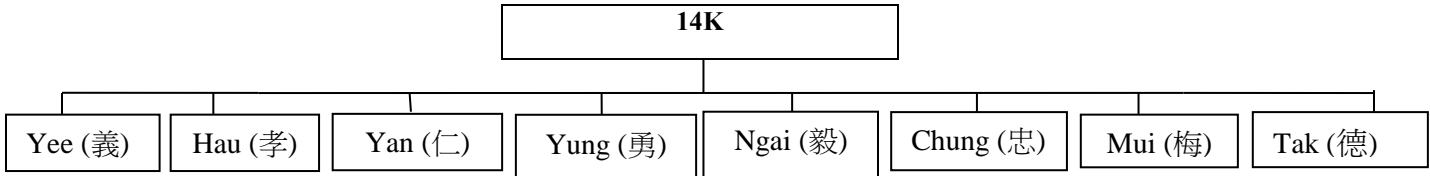
This centralised hierarchical control in traditional triad society was also evidenced in the resources distribution of triad society. According to Morgan (1960), the major financial resources came from members' fees, extortion and protection rackets (p.99). Members' fees only constituted a small portion of income with the majority of income being generated from criminal activities. The majority of the profit went to the powerful triad members (p.90). About 10% of the initiation and

promotion fees were shared by Shan Chu, Heung Chu and Sin Fung officials (Morgan, 1960:99). An agreed proportion would be paid to the headquarters, and the rest would be retained in each branch society. The headquarters common fund was used for paying the daily expenses, such as initiation and promotion ceremonies, entertainment and members' welfare including legal expenses for arrested members and medical expenses for injured members (Morgan, 1960:99).

The triad societies in Hong Kong originally belonged to four large triad consortiums, namely the Wo group, Chiu Chow group, 14K and the Big Four (Sze Tai 四大). In 1970, the prison also adopted this categorization in managing triad prisoners (Liu, 2001:51). As shown in Figure 1.2, the Wo group was composed of many branches, such as Wo Shing Wo, Wo Shing Yee, Wo On Lok, etc. The 14K was formed by such branches as Yee, Hau, Yan, Yung, etc. The Chiu Chow group consisted of Fuk Yee Hing, Sun Yee On, King Yee and Yee Kwan. Sze Tai refers to several small local triad societies, including Tan Yee, the Luen group (for details see Chu, 2000:26), Macau Chai (this means triads from Macau) etc. However, the triad consortiums started to break down after the 1950s as the headquarters' control over the branches declined (Lo and Kwok, 2012). The branches started to operate independently with their own headquarters and collaborated in a form of cartel, even though they still remained under the umbrella of their parent group (Chu, 2000:25; Lo and Kwok, 2012).

Figure 1.2: The Four Largest Triad Consortiums in Hong Kong (Source: Lo and Kwok 2014:5333)

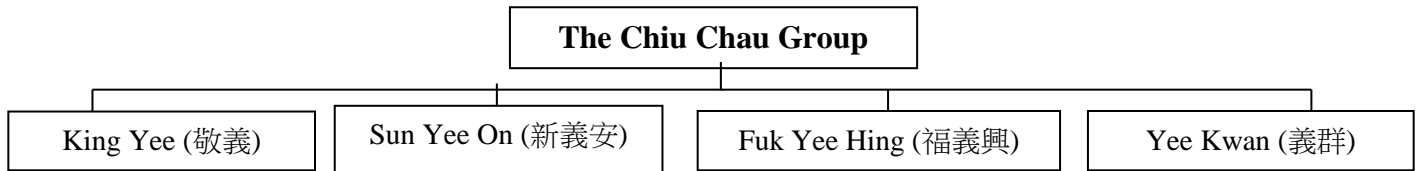
A) 14K



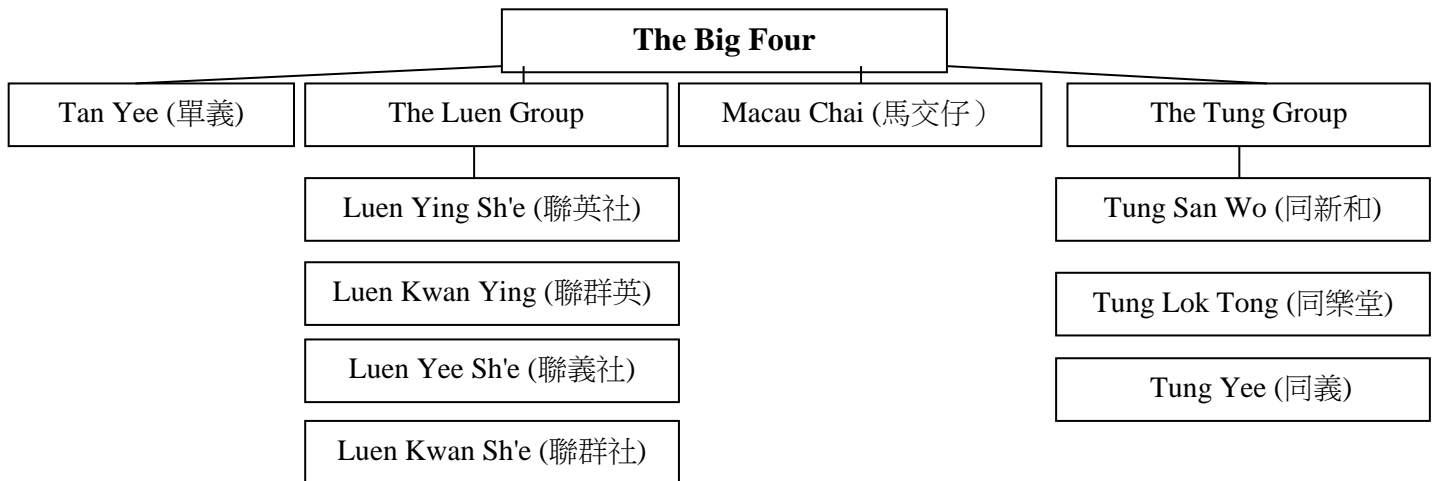
B) The Wo Group



C) The Chiu Chau Group



D) The Big Four



A study in 2002 (Lo and Kwok, 2012, 2014) confirmed that the following triads existed in Hong Kong:

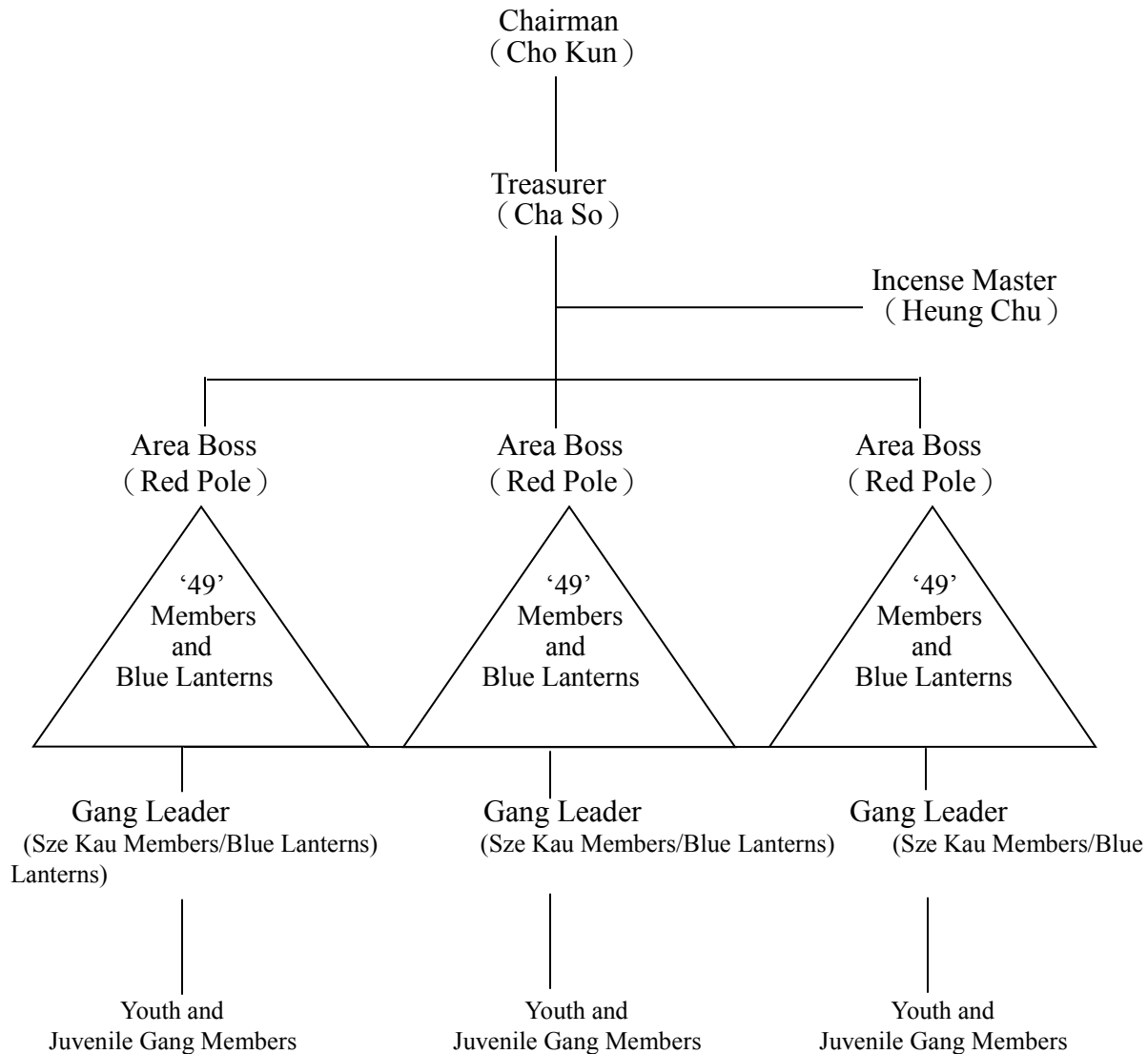
- 14K — Hau, Tak and others
- The Wo Group — Wo On Lok (Shui Fong), Wo Hop To, Wo Shing Wo, Wo Shing Yee, Wo Yee Tong and Wo Yung Yee
- The Chiu Chau Group — Sun Yee On, Fuk Yee Hing and King Yee
- The Big Four — Dan Yee, Luen Kung Lok, Luen Ying Sh'e, Chuen Yat Chi and Lo Tung
- Gangs emerged in the 1990s — the Big Circle Gang and the Hunan Gang

Different triad societies have their own uniqueness in organizational structure. Sun Yee On, as the most cohesive triad in Hong Kong (Lo and Kwok, 2014), adopts a hereditary system in leadership succession and is managed by the 'Heung' family. The 14K, which possesses the largest membership, is a loosely organised society (Lo and Kwok, 2014), consisting of "different street gangs under the control of their own area bosses who cooperate with one another on an ad hoc basis" (Lo and Kwok, 2014:5336), bounded by the same triad name. Triad societies under the Wo group, such as Wo Shing Wo and Wo On Lok, are still managed by a central committee (the headquarters), which controls promotions and performs an arbitration role to enforce internal discipline and settle internal and external disputes (Lo and Kwok, 2014). Each of the triad societies operates autonomously, and is led by a Cho Kun (chairman) and Cha So (treasurer). Chu (2000:27) suggested that they are elected in annual or bi-annual meetings.

Overall, the centralised structure of modern triad societies has been weakened (Chu, 2000:25; Lo and Kwok, 2012). On the one hand, there is a central committee overseeing the administration of the triad societies. On the other hand, under the central committee, there is a cartel of triad gangs operating at the district level which are under the coordination of the central committee. Although each society has central management, this is more of a symbolic figure than possessing real power in controlling the entire organization (Chu, 2000; Lo and Kwok, 2012). Chu (2000) depicted modern triad societies as being neither centrally organised nor disorganised hierarchical organizations; they are “neither a centrally constructed nor an unorganised entity, but loose cartels consisting of numerous autonomous societies which adopt similar organizational structure and rituals to bind their members together” (p.22). He argued that modern triad societies in Hong Kong should be understood as a collection of “many small hierarchical pyramids led by area bosses at the district level and connected to each other under the same triad society” (ibid) (see Figure 1.3).

In addition, the operational structure of the modern triad society has been simplified. Some ranks, such as Shan Chu, Sin Fung and Cho Hai, become inactive (Chu, 2000). Pak Tsz Sin is not often found in many triad societies, and 14K has already discarded the rank of Cho Hai (Chu, 2000; Lo and Kwok, 2014). Chu (2000:27) even suggested that only Red Pole, Sze Kau (ol) and the Blue Lantern are active to date.

Figure 1.3: Structure of a Modern Triad Society (Source: Chu, 2000:28)

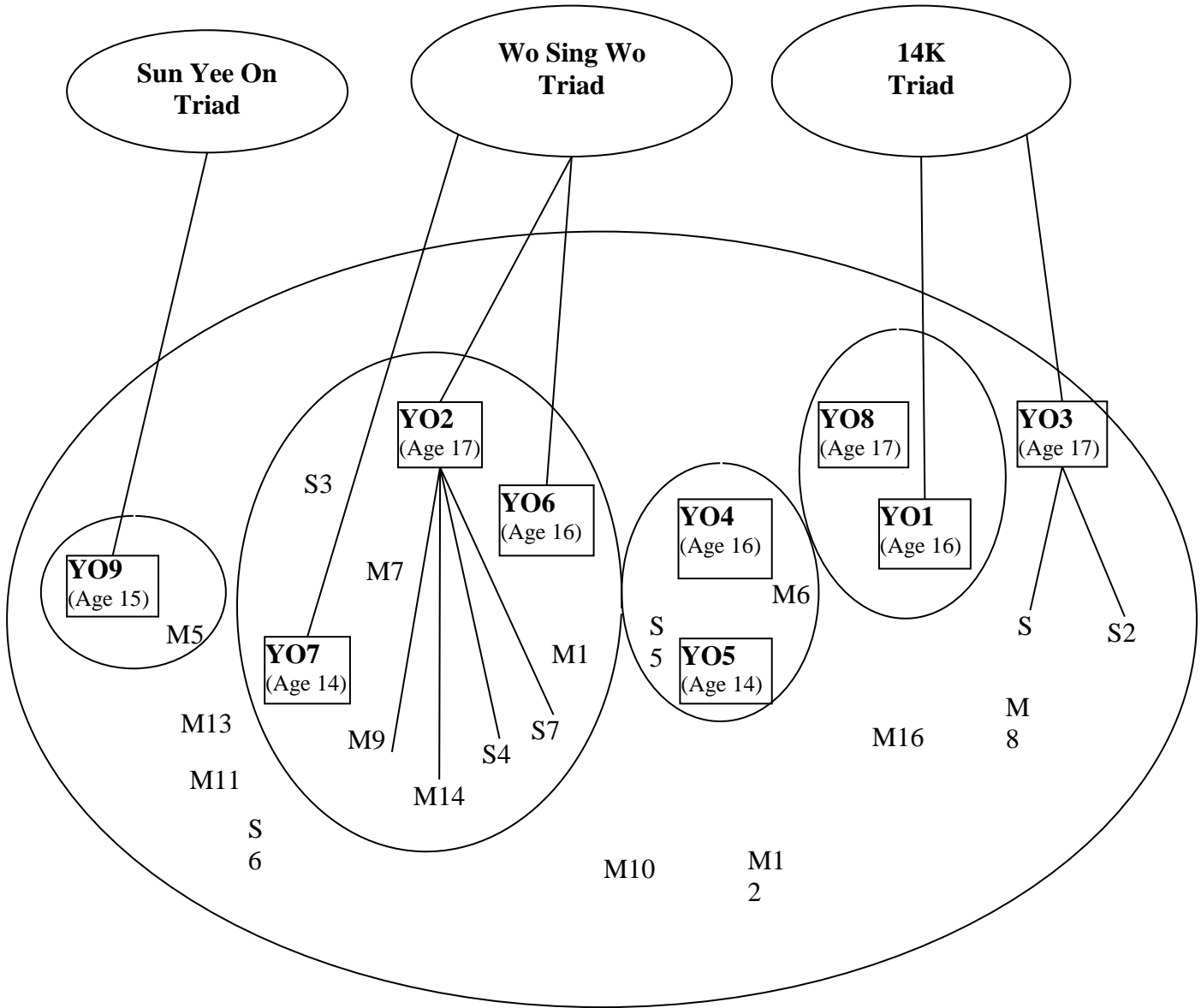


In the modern triad structure, the headquarters has turned into a central committee, composing of a Cho Kun (坐館 chairman), Cha So (揸數 treasurer) and probably Heung Chu (香主 Incense Master). The central committee is mainly responsible for internal administrative management. It controls promotion, enforces discipline and settles disputes, but is less involved in organizing illicit activities for triad members (Chu, 2000; Lo and Kwok, 2012).

At the second level, the triad societies are led by Red Pole who controls a triad territory at an area level, and is followed by Sze Kau members and Blue Lanterns (Lo and Kwok, 2012). Each area boss operates independently in his own territory and shares equal power in authority (Chu, 2000:28). McKenna (1998) argued that these area bosses are responsible for organizing the majority of triad-related crime, and the centrality and autonomy within the faction under the area boss is high.

After Chu (2000) described the modern triad society as a three-tier system (see Figure 1.3), Lo (2012) provided a critical examination on the third level of the triad society system – the relationship between the area-level triads and local youth gangs. The third level of triad society is crucial for its survival as it serves as a training ground for junior triad members and provides continuous new-blood to the triad society, as many teenagers join a triad society when they live in working class neighborhoods with adverse triad influence (Lo, 2012). Since the mid-1980s, the government and scholars started to become aware of the structural linkage between triads and youth gangs. The earliest governmental report stated that young people were involved in a variety of street crime led by triad office-bearers (Fight Crime Committee, 1986). Lo (1992) also revealed that most of the youth gangs were highly concentrated in public housing estates dominated by triads and their routine activities were heavily influenced by the triad subculture.

Figure 1.4: Dai Lo-Lang Chai Relationships (Source: Lo, 2012:563)



* YO1-YO9 = Youths interviewed. 'Inner circles' = subgroups. '——' = Dai Lo-Lang Chai Relationship

According to Lo (2012), it is common that many youth gangs are active in triad territories. Within one gang, it is possible that different members follow different triad area bosses who engage in criminal activities and their influence extends to local youth gangs at street level through the 'Dai Lo - Lan Tsai' (Big Brother - Follower) relationship (Lo, 2012; see Figure 1.4). The "Dai Lo - Lan Tsai" relationship refers to a fictive kinship between protector and their followers. Under this

relationship, a Lan Tsai can seek protection from his Dai Lo by claiming the name of Dai Lo and the triad he belongs to when encountering rival gangs. Lan Tsai have to perform any tasks for Dai Lo including criminal activities and fighting for the triad society in exchange for Dai Lo's protection. Through their routine activities and day-to-day interactions with their Dai Lo, youth gang members are socialised with the triad subculture through the 'Dai Lo-Lan Tsai' relationship, which is regarded as a process of triadization (Lo, 2012). When the youth gang leader has accumulated sufficient criminal experience and attended an initiation ceremony, he can be promoted and become an ordinary member.

1.4 Disorganization of Triads in Hong Kong

Triad societies have been undergoing organizational transformation (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009) and becoming disorganised (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Chu, 2000; Zhao and Li, 2010). According to Chin (1990), the disorganization began to occur before World War II since the triad societies abandoned the maintenance of membership record, "Hai Di". As being a triad member is a crime, members nowadays are not registered in the triad societies, and they prefer to be peripheral rather than officially recruited members (Chin, 1990:33).

The disorganization of triad society is also documented in various research works after the 1990s. Lo (2010) observed the change of internal cohesiveness in triad societies: "Gang cohesiveness and members' loyalty and righteousness have begun to diminish. For example, procedures on promotion, recruitment and communication have not been followed closely and the headquarters did not have full control over sub-branches" (p.852). Chin (1995) also argued that the structure of modern triad society is loosely organised, driven by self-interest instead of collectivism and lacks central control in the operation of overseas branches. McKenna (1996) also shared a similar

observation, and portrayed triads as “tasks oriented, and bonded together by informal relationships” (McKenna, 1996:321). Chu (2005) argued that triad society has been going through decentralisation. Due to suppression by the police of triad-related activities, initiation ceremonies are rare and have been replaced by oral agreement. The trimming of the organizational structure does not help in enhancing centralisation but reducing it, as he argued that the central committees are incapable of commanding and disciplining their members. Membership transferal is also common and can be carried out easily (Chu, 2005:5-6). Triads nowadays are allowed to collaborate with members of other triad societies for operating illicit businesses (Lo and Kwok, 2012). For instance, a Hong Kong 14K triad member in a US court trial in 1992 revealed that triads do not need to get permission for operating illicit business and share profit with the headquarters. They can freely collaborate with other triad members or non-triads in operating illicit business (The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Governmental Affairs, US Senate report, 1992). Broadhurst and Lee (2009) also argued that modern triad societies are no longer bound by rituals or brotherhood but by “social and economic ties” (p.2).

Recent research of triad societies and Chinese organised crime found that triads are decentralised, with less emphasis on the hierarchal structure and strict chains of command. They have become more flexible and reflective of market demands and social conditions (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Zhang and Chin, 2003). It has been observed that many Chinese organised criminal syndicates, especially those committing transnational human smuggling, were in dynamic forms involving multi-criminal groups, legitimate business and other social sectors. Perpetrators were often individuals from different backgrounds who shared the same economic goal. They were not bound by a rigid structure or subculture, but teamed up through informal social networking on a tentative

basis (Chin, 1999; Zhang, 2008; Zhang and Chin, 2002, 2003). Xia (2008) also discovered that the structure of Chinese organised crime today is looser than the traditional “command-structured” approach, and is more aligned to business-like networking and contractual approach. Lo (2010) also documented that modern triads can make use of the label of patriotic triads to convert their social capital with Chinese officials and state enterprises to economic capital through the stock market. Gastrow (2001) also mentioned that the triads can use their reputation for establishing social networks in South Africa and make use of the social network established between overseas and local Chinese criminal syndicates in committing transnational organised crime.

Zhang and Chin (2003) introduced the structural deficiency perspective in explaining why triad societies could not control the transnational illicit market. They argued that transnational organised crime perpetrators are individuals from a variety of backgrounds who collaborate in the ad hoc social network rather than being operated by triad society bound by the hierarchical structure. Although triads were found in some transnational organised crime, their involvement was limited and independent from the triad society; they collaborated with other perpetrators through social networks. They argued that transnational organised crime offers limited eligible clientele and restricted market opportunities which make the criminal market demand uncertain. They also involve complex transportation routes and illegal transnational movement, and the vigorous multiple law enforcement controls. This makes the operational environment risky and unstable. The emphasis on continuity and stability, infiltration and control of legitimate business, rigid hierarchical structure, and the monopolistic and territorial nature of triad society make it difficult to operate in such transnational criminal business environment. Therefore, Zhang and Chin (2003) concluded that the triads’ involvement in transnational organised crime is only restricted at an

individual level and is connected through personal social networks.

Since China's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macau in the late 1990s, the survival obligation of triad societies has changed from mutual protection and brotherhood in the post-war decades to entrepreneurship in the 1990s-2000s. Chu (2000) and McKenna (1996) observed that triads became involved in running enterprises and exerting influence in the movie and entertainment industries, the legal profession, law enforcement and even the political arena (Chu, 2000; Fung 1996; Liu 2001; Lo 1993; McKenna 1996). The rapid social and economic changes resulted in the decline of some of the traditional triad businesses. The tightened regulation and enforcement on triads made their survival difficult. These factors fostered the transformation of triad structure and operation. They started to adopt business principles and strategies, such as setting objectives, choosing targets and adopting marketing strategies in managing their organizations and businesses; decisions were made with the consideration of benefit, risk and cost in organised crime (Zhao and Li, 2010). For instance, Lo and Kwok (2012) mentioned that the triads are adopting business marketing principles in drug dealing, in order to secure their soft drug business when heroin was losing popularity in Hong Kong. Triads also put less emphasis on internal cohesion of the triad society, allowing structural flexibility including cooperation with other triads or other business sectors to pursue financial goals without seeking permission from the headquarters (Chu, 2000, 2005; Zhao and Li, 2010). Police in Hong Kong shared the same view as scholars. According to a police triad expert, "since triads are disorganised, it is more appropriate to name them gangs. They are opportunists; you can find their footsteps wherever the money lies" (Lo and Kwok, 2012: 85). With the change of organizational structure and business environment, good social networks and coordination among collaborators become essential for

smooth operation of organised crime (Zhang, 2008).

1.5 Triad Subculture

William and Godson (2002) introduced five models including economic, political, strategic, sociological and composite models in analyzing organised crime. They adopted the sociological models in analyzing triad society, and categorised it as a cultural model based on their cohesiveness being heavily bounded by rituals, oaths, secrecy, loyalty and brotherhood. In fact, the subculture and rituals of triad society are always the focus of triad research. ter Haar (1998) argued that the triad lore and rituals adopted from Chinese culture are the key elements in establishing triad identity, which is the essence of ancient triad society. Triad subculture is not restricted to criminological studies, but also attracts the attention of historian, cultural and religious researchers (Murray, 2004; Schlegel, 1866; Stanton, 1900). Chin (1990) provided a critical analysis of triad subculture by comparing the subculture of ancient triad societies with modern triad subculture and the subculture shared by other Chinese criminal groups, such as the Tongs and Chinese street gangs in US Chinatown. He argued that the triad subculture is a reflection of the strain in responding to the alienated mainstream of Chinese culture (Chin, 1990, 1995).

Traditionally, triads heavily rely on fictive kinship in strengthening cohesiveness. The emphasis on brotherhood has been crucial to the subculture of triad society since ancient times (ter Haar, 1998), as it helps strengthen cohesiveness and solidarity within the triad community. The fictive kinship relationship between triads enhances the closeness and cohesiveness among them. As blood brothers, they are expected not to do harm to each other under untoward circumstances and to sacrifice themselves for their group (Chin, 1990; Lo, 1984; Lo and Kwok, 2012). Loyalty is

another emphasis in triad society for enhancing cohesiveness (Chin, 1990; Lo and Kwok, 2014). Triads are expected to be loyal to the organization and to their brothers. Loyalty to the organization means that members shall not exploit or betray the organization, shall not reveal the inner workings of the organization to others, shall obey the rules set by the organization and shall not take advantage of the organization for private interest. Loyalty to members means that members are obligated to protect and support all other members, and shall not exploit and betray any other members (Chin 1990). The rules, rituals, oaths and codes of conduct also reflect the emphasis on loyalty and sworn brotherhood in triad subculture.

Triad rituals are important for maintaining the cohesiveness of triad society and control over triads. Chu (2000) argued that triad society used religious elements and triad legend in the initiation ceremony to reinforce the significance of brotherhood (for example, drinking the red flower wine containing blood and bowing to each other between new and old members) and loyalty to the organization (for example, bowing to the office bearers). From a religious-cultural perspective, ter Haar (1998) examined the nature of the rituals and narratives of ancient triad society, such as the making of jargon, recognition dialogues and sign language that strengthen internal solidarity and create a common identity. The initiation journey represented the transformation of a member's identity from natal family member to member of the triad community – a fictive-kinship family – in order to strengthen internal solidarity.

Based on the literature review in triad subculture, triad rituals such as the initiation ceremony and language (including hand signs) are the focus of research. Only Lo (1993) and Chin (1990) provided limited information about the subcultural norms and ideologies of triads. Still, their

findings remain under the influence of the historical development of triad society, which emphasizes brotherhood and loyalty. The main anti-triad legislation in Hong Kong, namely the Society Ordinance, has heavily relied on the triad subculture as the foundation for defining triad membership and facilitating prosecutions (Bolton and Hutton, 1995; Kwok and Lo, 2013). However, as noted in Chu (2005), the use of triad rituals in modern triad society is declining, which leads to difficulties in prosecuting triads, causing injustice to the defendants (Bolton and Hutton, 1995; Kwok and Lo, 2013). The decline of triad rituals not only led to the disorganization of triad society, but also led to a change in legislation – the enactment of the Organised and Serious Crime Ordinance – in 1994, in order to combat the financial source of triad society. Given that the use of rituals is declining, while the subculture is the binding force for maintaining the cohesion of triad society, there is still room to explore the current subculture, in particular the group norms of modern triad society and how this subculture influences the structure and relational dynamics of modern triads.

1.6 Triad Business and Activities

There is a misconception that triad society is only engaged in criminal activities that involve violence or threat of violence. By looking at the historical development of triad society, in addition to organised crime, triads are seen to have engaged in a variety of activities, ranging from political activities, mutual assistance, welfare provision, to acting as control agents in Chinese communities (Liu, 2001; Lo, 2010; Lo and Kwok, 2012). In the modern triad societies, triads have been engaged in both licit (such as movie, printing media, and entertainment industries, see Chu, 2000; Liu, 2001; McKenna, 1996) and illicit activities locally, as well as in transnational organised crime. Lo's (2010) triad financial crime study revealed that triad leaders made money from the stock market by controlling legitimate listed companies through third parties. The triads' infiltration into

legitimate business is also documented in the Macau casino studies conducted by Leong's (2002) and Lo and Kwok (2016). Leong (2002) argued that triads infiltrated the casino operation through the 'bate-ficha system' (junket system) and made money from the chip-rolling business and casino-related illegitimate business. Lo and Kwok (2016) further discussed how triads utilised their reputation of violence and reputation of triad societies, and their ability to control followers to exercise extra-legal governance in their economic territory – the Macau casino VIP rooms. With the triad reputation, triads are able to set up junket companies to operate VIP rooms in casino.

Traditionally, the nature of triad activities is characterised by the frequent use of violence, extortion, monopoly and territoriality. However, based on Chin's (1995) study, triads' involvement in illicit businesses is not exclusive and has no tendency towards monopolization. In his study of heroin trafficking, the operators in heroin trafficking are Chinese criminal groups who shared the same triad subculture as opposed to being monopolised by triad societies. McKenna (1996) shared similar findings relating to monopolization, and argued that triad-related crimes are operated by collaboration between diverse triad societies and community sectors through brokers and social networks.

Lo and Kwok (2016) orchestrated that triads cannot monopolize the Macau casino business, but need to collaborate with Mainland criminal syndicates in order to solicit and secure the pool of Mainland customers, due to the shift of customer source from Hong Kong and Macau to Mainland China. This study also revealed that the use of violence is not the only mean for achieving monopoly in triad territories. Instead, triads nowadays can use the reputation of non-violence, harmony or peacemaking (Lo and Kwok, 2016) to gain trust from their collaborators and sustain

their monopolization within their economic territory. Chu (2000) provided the most comprehensive analysis on triad activities in Hong Kong. He argued that the primary role of triad societies is neither extortion nor the provision of illegal goods and services, but rather is “to provide strong arm services to illegal entrepreneurs so that they are able to run their business smoothly in a risky environment” (p.8). He argued that the role of triads in the illegal market is to specialize in trading the commodity of protection.

Another feature of triad activities and businesses is that they are territorial-based (Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000). The invasion of a dominion is strictly prohibited within a triad-dominated territory, as it signifies a threat to the dominant group’s status and authority, in addition to depriving them of their income (Chin, 2000). Violence is a common tactic for taking over part of, or an entire, territory or competing for a virgin (i.e. unclaimed) or disputed territory (Chin, 2000:131). Many triad societies have their own turf and traditional triad businesses, such as prostitution and gambling, are developed in such territories (Chin, 1990:45). They also extort and provide protection services to a variety of legitimate businesses that are located inside the territories (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009). Chu (2000) presented drug dealing, varieties of protection services for entertainment businesses, construction sites, hawkers, the filming industry and home decoration businesses in housing estates as examples, to portray how triads operate and maintain their territory, as well as to reveal the monopolistic and territorial nature of triad businesses. Clashes and violence will break out when rival triads cross, invade or compete for territories (Broadhurst and Lee; 2009; Lo and Kwok, 2012). The reputation of triad societies and their reputation for violence are also vital for the acquisition of illicit markets and monopolizing protection services within the territories (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Chu, 2000).

1.7 Concluding remarks

Among the variety of triad research, from historical to cultural and criminological perspectives, it seems that there have been different focuses on different aspects of triad society. The historical approaches are mostly focused on exploring the origin of triad society and describing the historical development of triad society. The cultural oriented approach places emphasis on the rituals and religious or political elements of triad society while other aspects, in particular the group norms and internal controlling mechanisms, have received less attention. The criminological approach focuses more on the triads' criminal activities, including their role and involvement (or not) in operating organised crime locally, in the Mainland or overseas. However, there are two puzzles missing – the structure of modern triad society and how triads establish and use such structural networks for organised crime operation.

Traditionally, the literature has described triad society as highly organised and hierarchically structured. Researchers have generally described the organizational structure based on Morgan (1960), an authoritative literature published by the Hong Kong government. This general assumption was adopted in describing triad society for 50 years, until Chu (2000) adopted the Hong Kong police interview data and developed a modern triad structure (see Figure 1.3). However, none of the literature further analyzed the internal structure of triad society or provided sufficient empirical data in supporting the claim. Regarding the internal structure of triad society, Lo (1984, 2012) was the first scholar to provide a detail description and analysis on the triadization process. However, his analysis was only restricted at the lowest level of triad society structure – that is the relationship between youth gangs and the lowest level of triad society members (Sze Kau and Hanging the Blue Lantern).

Moreover, literature has revealed that modern triad society is not as highly organised as was generally assumed in the past. They pointed out that triad members are free to operate illicit business on their own without the need for approval from or providing financial return to the triad society. Lo and Kwok (2012) and Broadhurst and Lee (2009) both argued that the triad society is going through a disorganization process, but they did not provide sufficient empirical data to support this assumption. Chu (2000) also provided important information about the modern triad structure, but the description is still very general at macro level and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the interrelations between triad members within the same triad society and across different triad societies.

Due to the limitation of existing research on triad society and the limited amount of empirical research into the structure of triad society, questions are raised concerning the structure of modern triad society in reality: Are triad societies as hierarchically structured as the literature described? Or, are they as disorganised as the modern triad literature suggested? The above literature suggested that cultural bonding (e.g. triad rituals) was the dominant mechanism for maintaining continuity and cohesion, but the use of triad rituals is fading in modern triad societies. In such scenarios, what constitutes bonding and trust for criminal collaborations between individual triads and triads at different levels of the same triad society, or between individual triads and triads of other triad societies?

As noted in the above literature review, it is possible for triads to collaborate on a cross-triad society basis, as well as to collaborate with non-triads in organised crime. But how do triads establish, maintain and utilize the structural networks for such criminal collaboration? Moreover,

if triad societies are unable to monopolize criminal market while research found individual triad involvement in organised crime, then what does the role a triad society play to facilitate members' involvement in organised crime? These research questions will be further considered in the construction of analytical framework in the research methodology chapter (chapter 3) after a review of organised crime literature in chapter two.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ORGANISED CRIME

2.1 Definition of Organised Crime

In fact, many scholars have attempted to seek a definition of organised crime that could be commonly accepted for setting discourse to facilitate knowledge development and prevent misinterpretations (Finckenauer, 2005). For instance, Maltz (1976) attempted to seek a universal definition of organised crime and proposed that the study of organised crime should focus on crime rather than on persons. Hagan (1983) defined organised crime as the organised criminals who use violence and corruption in committing crime and specialize in providing illicit services. He used the means of committing the crime to distinguish organised crime from white collar crime. Finckenauer (2005) attempted to divide the definition by separating the two terms “organised” and “crime”. When defining the term “organised”, he focused on the structure of criminal syndicates and attempted to distinguish crime committed by criminal networks (crime that is organised) from crime committed by criminal organizations. The differences between criminal organization and ‘crime that is organised’ depends on the nature of the crime and the structure of the group. Self-identification, durability of the structure and reputation of the organization are regarded as the distinctive feature of criminal organizations (Finckenauer, 2005:75). Hagan (2006) further defined organised crime in two dimensions: “Organised Crime” (OC) (defined as criminal organizations) and “organised crime” (oc) (defined as “activities, crimes that often require a degree of organization on the part of those committing them” (p.134). Both Finckenauer (2005) and Hagan (2006) emphasized that organised crime and criminal organizations are not necessarily associated.

For instance, in Zhang and Chin's smuggling and drug trafficking studies (2002, 2003), they found no systematic involvement of any criminal organizations, including triads; hence, "organised crime" is not necessarily attributable to "Organised Crime" groups (p.134).

2.2 Hierarchical Approach

From the hierarchical perspective, organised crime is understood as an organization which emphasizes associational structure and continuity. Traditionally, the study of organised crime focuses on the permanent and well-defined hierarchical structure (Cressey, 1969; Paoli, 2002; Reuter, 1983), bounded by specific internal roles (Cressey, 1969), values and identity (Paoli, 2001, 2002) and common organizational goals and tasks over time through formal and informal socialization (Cressey, 1969; Paoli, 2001, 2002).

2.2.1. Hierarchical structure

The well-defined hierarchical structure of organised crime was evidenced in Cressey's work (1969) based on the testimonial of Valachi. According to Cressey, organised crime is operated within a bureaucracy-like structure with a board for decision-making and leadership, chains of military-like commands and close supervision to ensure high compliancy among members. There are codified ranks with specific roles such as Enforcer, Corrupter, Corruptee and Commission for monitoring, planning and coordinating activities of all subgroups across its regions (Cressey, 1969). However, the bureaucracy-like hierarchical perspective was criticized by numerous entrepreneurial approach oriented researchers (e.g. Albin, 1971; Ianni and Ianni, 1972; Smith, 1975) who regarded it as unrealistic and impractical.

The hierarchical approach is commonly used for analyzing the structure of fully fledged criminal organizations (e.g. Chu, 2000; Paoli, 2003; Varese, 2010). Hierarchical structure (Finckenauer, 2005: 65) is defined as follows:

1. It has a leader or boss and then followers in some rank order of authority.
2. It includes associates (non-members who are associated with formal members), hangers on and potential members (e.g. Holding the Blue Lantern in triads)
3. Members of the group are engaged in conspiracies to commit crimes, with centralised planning to give directions and decisions to other members/associates.

For instance, Paoli's (2003) study of Italian mafias addressed the organizational features of mafia groups, such as vertical hierarchical structure with clearly identical leadership, clearly defined-roles and lines of authority, centralised management and a well-developed election and appointment system for managing power, resources and information distribution, as well as the coordination of activities of mafia families. However, Paoli (2002, 2003) also mentioned the problems of such organizational arrangement in practice. She concluded that Italian mafias should be understood as brotherhoods, bounded by fraternization contracts and fictive-kinship identity, which provide structural flexibility for fulfilling different purposes, including profit making and control of territory (Paoli, 2003: 174).

2.2.2. Restricted membership

Another distinctive feature of organised crime from a hierarchical perspective is the restricted and mutually exclusive membership among organised crime groups. Criminal organizations tend to have strict recruitment based on ethnic background (Gambetta, 2009:220-222, examples see Chu, 1999; Hill, 2003), kinship (Paoli, 2003; Varese, 2010), race (Ianni and Ianni, 1972), criminal

records (Abadinsky, 1985), and geographical specificity (Blok, 1974; Paoli, 2003). The limited number of participants and strict restrictions in recruitment enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of monitoring (Polo, 1997) and reduces the risk of information leakage to non-members and the law enforcement. Membership also facilitates the distinction between in-group and out-group, which helps to foster loyalty and cohesion among members.

The identity of the members can be formalised through a ritual of affiliation. Paoli (2002, 2003) argued that the ritual of affiliation is important for maintaining internal cohesion within the criminal groups. Through providing a new identity, members are socialised in accordance to the subculture and obligated to comply with the norm of the criminal organizations (Turner, 1967). This is important to facilitate the control of criminal organization upon their members. The use of ritual is also a common apparatus for binding members to achieve internal cohesion. For instance, the use of tattoos, nicknames and special methods for communication within the criminal group are common tactics for distinguishing membership, as well as enhancing secrecy and providing a sense of belonging to maintain social boundaries (Gambetta, 2009; Paoli, 2003).

The restricted membership within a criminal organization is often based on the fictive-kinship affiliation (i.e. man-made relationship through formal rituals) that maintains the commitment of organised crime group members (Paoli 2002, 2003). The main purposes of the fraternization contract and the obligation of reciprocity are to provide flexibility for the mafia families to use the ritual kinship bonds for fulfilling the long-term and short-term needs of the organization and the personal interests of the chiefs.

2.3 Patron-client Relationship: Organised Crime as a Power Structure, and Network as Utilitarian Relations

Albini (1971) rejected the hierarchical perspective of organised crime groups and argued that organised crime should be understood as a system of patron-client relationship (Albini, 1971:263) and the organised crime network as a utilitarian and interest exchange oriented network (p. 294). When analyzing the structure of organised crime, the hierarchical position of the criminal in the organised crime and interpersonal relationships in the organised crime system are determined by power relations, and power relations is determined by dependency. The hierarchy of the organised crime system depends upon the extent and types of patron and clients they developed (p. 285), the number of clients who can exchange interest (p. 265), and the ability to exercise force and deliver favor to clients (p. 265). The patron serves as a power broker between different social networks, both legitimate and illegitimate, and the person who controls the resources and social capital. The client, in turn, pays back in more intangible assets, for example, esteem and loyalty and may also offer political and other important support to make the relationship reciprocal (Wolf, 1966). The structure is never formally or rigidly structured and it may change depending on the social circumstances.

As the power distribution and structure of the patron-client relationship depends upon social and economic capital, the relationship between the patron and clients is ever changing, depending on “the amount and types of power the individual syndicated criminal can amass and command at any given time” (Albini, 1971:223). Powerful syndicate figures can serve as patrons to their functionaries but, at the same time, can also serve as clients to other more powerful people. A powerless organised crime criminal can do several favors for an equally less powerful organised

crime criminal. When the later becomes a patron for serving a more powerful person, he then becomes a patron for the former and is capable of giving favor to him. From this perspective, he is empowered by serving a more powerful patron, and gains power from him (p.265).

Patron-client relationship is commonly used in explaining political corruption or collaboration between entrepreneurs and government officials (e.g. Rawlinson, 2002, 2012). The use of patron-client relationship in organised crime is also found in Lo and Kwok (2016) Macau casino study. The triad-junket companies that run VIP rooms in Macau casinos are structured as a continuous system of patron-client relationships among Mainland Chinese junkets, investors, whales and triads. Those who possess social capital (e.g. clients or capital for investment) are served as patrons. The interrelations and power distributions between patrons and clients are dynamic (Lo and Kwok, 2016).

The perspective of patron-client relationship provides a new dimension for studying organised crime beyond the structural perspective by looking into the power dynamics among participants within the criminal network. This approach shifts the understanding of organised crime structure from the description of line of authority and role differentiation to the power dynamics between criminals. This helps to explore how and why criminals collaborate in a particular format.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Approach – Organised Crime as Business

According to the entrepreneurial perspective, organised crime is perceived as economic and financial enterprise which adopts a rational cost-benefit analysis in operating illegal business. The entrepreneurial approach is founded on the principle of supply and demand of illegal markets, and

adopting enterprise management and business process principles in order to understand the organised crime structure and operations (Spapens, 2010). An assumption of the entrepreneurial approach is that all actors in organised crime operations are rational, working towards profit maximization; efficiency and effectiveness in operating illicit activities are the main concerns of organised crime criminals (Reuter, 1983, Rubinstein and Reuter (1978a, 1978b), Savona, 1990). The highlight of the entrepreneurial approach is not to just focus on human relations but regards the structure of organised crime as a product of market forces (Fiorentini and Peltzman, 1997; Spapens, 2010). Therefore, scholars from this perspective focus on how the operation and business environments affect the operational structure of organised crime.

Smith (1975) conceptualised organised crime as entrepreneurial in nature. It is a result of the process by which political and dominant social norm constraints are placed on economic activity (Smith, 1982:33). Similar to legitimate business, organised crime also attempts to monopolize their business for achieving profit maximization, and respond to the market, such as demand of customers, competitors, and regulators. A better approach to understanding crime should be focused on the organizational behavior of organised crime operators and the market response of a particular illicit business.

Block (1979) also perceived organised crime as entrepreneurial behavior in the illicit cocaine trade in New York during the 1900s. His finding revealed that the operation of cocaine business was different from Cressey's (1969) descriptions. It was operated by small, loosely organised, flexible criminal groups, which made them more responsive to business opportunities and environment. The role and positions of organised crime criminals were never static. Organised crime criminal

groups could have overlapping roles in other criminal groups, involving a variety of crimes with different collaborators (Chambliss, 1987; Gardiner 1970; Potter and Jenkins, 1985).

2.4.1 Monopoly

Schelling (1967) argued that monopoly is a key feature of organised crime. He regarded the core nature of organised crime to be the exclusivity and monopoly to acquire the right of control in a geographical or economical/functional territory, so that they can acquire maximum benefit through regulating both licit and illicit business. He argued that the use of violence acts as a method of dominion in achieving monopoly and acquiring the “right to control”. Gambetta (1993) agreed that criminal groups, such as Italian mafia, have monopoly tendencies. However, he mentioned that they do not attempt to monopolize all types of organised crime, but instead only “sell and seek to monopolize the supply of protection” (Gambetta, 1993; Varese, 2001:4). He further explained that there is a distinction between the production of illicit goods and services and the production of violent threats (Varese, 2001:5). Those who operate and produce illicit goods and services are different from those who provide the violent protection to these operators. In addition, Varese (2010) argued that there are many forms of illicit goods and that service productions are difficult to monopolize. Those “crime that is organised’ operators can either internalize protection or buy protection services from criminal organizations, while criminal organizations specialize or monopolize their protection services (Gambetta, 1993; Varese, 2001).

Reuter (1985) adopted economic concepts such as property rights and transaction cost to understand organised crime market. He argued that “economic forces rising from the illegality of the product tend to fragment the market” (Reuter, 1985:176), making it difficult for organised crime groups to monopolize the illegal activities on a large scale. From his study of bookmarking

and loansharking in New York City, Reuter (1984) observed that the expansion of organised crime is restricted due to the illegal nature of the business. Organised crime group leaders have to minimize the free-flow of information and the number of conspirators and restrict the production of proof in transactions and agreements in order to conceal their activities and minimize the risk of being apprehended. Therefore, the structure of illegal enterprises should be restricted to minimal, with few conspirers, lower capitalization and more flexible management than legitimate business (Reuter, 1983). Paoli (2002) shared a similar view to Reuter, stating that the supply of illegal goods is not controlled by large scale criminal enterprises but by smaller flexible efficient enterprises. Spapens (2012) also argued that it is unlikely for organised crime groups to monopolize the market to enjoy economies of scale, because the monitoring cost in surveillance of operators and transactions in the market is very high, which outweighs the profit gain from domination.

Reuter's analogy of organised crime structure – “small is beautiful” (Kleemans, 2014: 4) is further supported by many transnational organised crime scholars. For instance, Chin and Finckenauer's (2012) study of Asian prostitution business revealed that prostitution in Asia was mainly operated by small, independent local groups with close-ties to local communities, because this provides flexibility and efficiency in a holistic market environment. Zhang and Chin (2002) study of Chinese human smuggling is another classic example to explain why small, horizontal, loosely structured criminal syndicates are most preferred in operating organised crime, especially transnational ones.

2.4.2 Criminal collaboration and importance of reputation

From the entrepreneurial perspective, organised crime syndicates can be collaborated with each other for business purposes. Haller (1990) observed that organised crime business is operated on the basis of a series of alienated small scale business partnerships for risk management and resource sharing, as in legitimate business. Williams (2001) provided a wide range of examples of cross ethnicity syndicate collaborations for operating illicit businesses. Williams (2001) explained how criminal collaborations between criminal groups are beneficial for organised crime operations. For example, collaboration with other criminal syndicates can help to reduce the number of competitors in order to increase market share and competitiveness. Collaboration between firms also helps to spread and reduce risk (Williams, 2001:3). Organised crime criminals are required to exchange information and expertise with other criminal syndicates to compensate one's weakness by using the other's strength, or to bring alliance on something that the other lacks, so that both parties will be mutually benefited in increasing each other's competitiveness (Williams, 2001:3). Collaboration between different syndicates also helps to reduce unpredictability through co-opting the resource suppliers to ensure a reliable supply of the resources of production (Williams, 2001:3).

If collaboration between criminal syndicates is possible and feasible, how do they collaborate? Many scholars have suggested that reputation is one of the crucial foundations for facilitating collaboration and business exchange. Dasgupta (1988) first conceptualised reputation as an economic good for fostering business exchange, and argued that reputation is the foundation of trust between buyers and sellers (p.59). Gambetta (2000, 2009) attempted to explore how criminals are collaborated and how trust is established between criminals. He highlighted the importance of the reputation of violence as a precursor leading to collaboration between the mafia groups – the

protection service provider - and their clients (Gambetta, 1993). He argued that reputation of mafia groups is an important asset to them, because it helps to differentiate the products and services quality, and can be used as a guide for products and services buyers (Gambetta, 1993:43, also Gambetta, 2009). Second, the established reputation can be used to extort money or to gain advantage, such as getting trust for business opportunities (Gambetta, 2009: 197), fencing off competitors to secure a business or protecting allies (Gambetta, 2009: 178). Reputation is particularly important when the goods, services or track record of performance cannot be assessed during the first time of exchange and collaboration (Gambetta, 2009: 197). The established reputation also helps to lower the operation cost of criminal organizations, because once the reputation of violence is established, then the need for the actual use of violence will be decreased (Gambetta, 2009: 204-5).

Reputation can be attached to individual criminals and to criminal organizations (Gambetta, 2009). For operating in organised crime, reputation is commonly attached to individuals. For instance, in illegal gambling operations, Reuter (1985) argued that even criminal organizations are not involved. Bookmakers still value the importance of the reputation of the operators, because the nature of their business requires frequent extensions of credit to customers. For protection business, reputation is mostly attached to criminal organizations (Gambetta, 2009:205), because the sustainability of the protection business depends on the collective power and the endure structure of criminal organizations. Therefore, the reputation of criminal organization is “a common asset” (Gambetta, 1993:245), which can be acquired through membership, and needs to be protected by “clear and credible rule and practice” in member selection and use of reputation (Gambetta, 2009: 205-6).

Different from legitimate businesses, sources of reputation in organised crime are mainly based on various elements including violence (Blok, 1984; Gambetta, 1993, 2009; Hess, 1973:46-8; Paoli, 2003; Schneider and Schneider, 1976:86-102; Tremblay, Bouchard and Petit, 2009; Varese, 2001), financial power (Paoli, 2003) and a good track record (Spapens, 2012). Spapens argued that reputation is an important prescription for criminal collaboration because they heavily rely on a criminal's reputation for establishing trust (Spapens, 2012:11). von Lampe and Johanson (2006:175) share the similar view that trust can be established based on reputation. Research also found that an ethnic group's criminal reputation is one of the pulling factors facilitating the collaboration between criminals in overseas and local territories (Bovenkerk, Sigel and Zaitch, 2003; Morselli, Turcotte and Tenti, 2011). Without the reputation, it would be difficult for any individual to enter the criminal market or to form criminal collaboration (Spapens, 2012:11).

Gambetta (1993) and Varese (2011) mentioned that third party enforcement can also facilitate collaboration between organised crime operators. Reuter and Gambetta (1995) observed that the mafia plays an important role in upholding cartels in the garbage collection industry in the US. Chu (2000) stated that triads also provide protection in a variety of legitimate and illegitimate businesses in protecting their protectees' vested interests. Criminal organizations also offer dispute resolution in situations where the state has failed to provide (Gambetta, 1993; Varese, 2010; Campana and Varese, 2011), which facilitates the stable collaborations between cartel members.

Gambetta (2009) further developed the concept of reputation into signally theory to explain how criminals enter into collaborations when trust is limited or absent. Increasing the cost of producing

criminal signals, such as self-harming, disclosing incriminate information, and committing serious crimes are common tactics adopted by criminals to make themselves trustworthy. He also mentioned that exchanging compromising information and using criminal information as hostage are commonly used as binding mechanism to maintain criminals' collaboration and to prevent betrayal (also see Varese and Campana, 2013).

2.5 Social Network Approach- Organised Crime as Networks

The social network approach (henceforth SNA) was developed in 1954 with the work of the British anthropologist, John Barnes. He was the first scholar who regarded the social field of relationships as a "network" to describe the nature of relationships and the methods by which individuals made use of personal ties of kinship and friendship (Bartol and Bartol, 1989:233). Bartol and Bartol (1989) suggested that SNA is "a conceptual or analytical tool which provides a framework for examining the social relations between individuals and groups" (p.234). By using the SNA, researchers can have a better understanding of the relationship between organised crime individuals and their influence and interactions in the political, economic and structural social environment (Wasserman and Faust, 1994:3). The use of SNA in studying organised crime often adopts a bottom up approach in explaining how criminals are associated and establish their network based on police surveillance information, such as wiretapping data. It focuses on the frequency of contacts, except that a few researchers focus on the relationship and content of communication (Campana, 2011; Campana and Varese, 2011; Natarajan, 2006).

The study of organised crime from a social network perspective started in the mid-1970s, originating from Hess's (1970) historical research on Italian mafia. Since then, the social relations

of organised crime criminals came to attention of criminologists. For instance, Ianni and Ianni (1972) revealed race and neighborhood networks are crucial factors leading to criminals' collaborations in New York. Block and Chambliss (1981) argued that organised crime groups are not independent entities in the underworld, but they do closely collude with other social actors through social networks. The social networks embrace gangsters, businessmen, politicians and union leaders at local levels or throughout the region into the web of organised crime system. McIllwain (1999) also stressed the importance of social relations in the understanding of organised crime. Based on his analysis on the Italian mafia and Chinese organised crime, he concluded that human relationship is the most important underlying basis of organised crime operation "to protect, regulate, and extort those engaged in the provision or consumption of illegal goods and services" and that it "encompasses underworld and upperworld actors who benefit from this social system" (McIllwain, 1999:319).

The modern interpretation of the social network perspective in the study of organised crime can be found in Morselli's studies on different types of criminal groups (Morselli, 2009). He challenged the general view that the decentralised structure of organizational networks is deliberately developed by the central participants for the sake of enhancing flexibility. He believed that the structural arrangement is determined by the environment and opportunities provided within the network, and as a result of opportunities and impulse (Morselli, 2009). In addition, the network pattern is not static; it can transcend all forms of organizations over time from disorganised networks to formal structures, or from fixed organizational structures to disorganised loose networks (Morselli, 2009:10). For instance, Kleemans and de Bunt (1999) observed that criminal networks could gradually expand to macro criminal networks through the snowball effect.

Among the various SNA research in understanding organised crime, many of them focus on the pattern of criminal networks and examine which pattern is most resilient to law enforcement. For instance, Baran (1964) argued that centralised network is most vulnerable as removal of the central node will weaken the strength of network, or even dismantle the entire network. In contrast, a decentralised network is the best approach and commonly adopted in organised crime operations (Baker and Faulkner, 1993; Morselli, 2009), as it increases the resilience of the network because segmentation in a decentralised network reduces the contact between organised crime leaders and front line operators (Potter, 1994). Colombian drug trafficking is one of the examples (Kenny, 2007). Potter (1994) also used the heroin industry and gambling as examples in demonstrating how a decentralised network is commonly used in organised crime operations (Potter, 1994:128-9). Such pattern of criminal networks is adopted by criminal organizations. For instance, Russian mafia adopted this form of network to open a new branch in Italy (Varese, 2012).

The SNA also addresses the redundancy structure and how such structural pattern enhances resilience. The criminal network/organization tends to reduce the role differences between members, and members are connected with weak links or “loose couplings”. Such mode of operation helps to enhance the flexibility and adaptability of the organization when facing the removal of members. Reducing the immensity of the number of connections within the system helps to maintain secrecy of the core operation, and protection of the core (Williams, 2001: 80-81). Loose coupling networks also preserve diversity as they can access more extensive clientele and opportunities (Williams, 2001:80).

SNA researchers are not only interested in the pattern of the operational structure of organised crime, but also in what position within the network is of the greatest importance and has the greatest vulnerability, as this is important for the development of policing strategies for combatting organised crime. Sparrow (1991) and Peterson (1994) argued that the most connected intermediate players in the network are the most vulnerable. Morselli (2009, 2010) argued that central nodes are more likely to be arrested and receive higher sentences than peripheral members, because central nodes have the highest connectivity with other participants within the network. While many researchers and law enforcement agencies (Fayley, 2003 for example) believe that the central node is the most important position within the organised crime network, some of them hold a different view. Watts (2003) highlighted the importance of central nodes and suggested that removing the central node can increase network vulnerability. However, he raised concern about the feasibility of this in reality. Law enforcement may not have complete knowledge about the structure of a criminal network; a random attack on a decentralised or distributed network without hitting the central node, or simply targeting the central nodes, may overlook some important peripheral members of the network and so may not help substantially in dissolving the organised crime network.

Carley and associates (2001) and Varese (2012) raised the issue of defining the “central nodes”, which may cause problems in the disruption of an organised crime network. Carley and associates (2001) suggested that researchers should distinguish between the concepts of leaders and central participants. They argued that the central participants should be defined as the node with most contact within the network, while the leader should be defined as “the individual with the highest cognitive load” (Carley and Ren, 2001) and the person who possesses the caliber of a leader (for

example, experience, resources etc.). Varese (2012) suggested that the centrality should be defined as the persons who possess the most authority to give orders and disseminate information within the network (p.7). Carley and associates (2001) argued that leaders and central participants can be separated but their roles will simply become occupied by others; in other words, simply demolishing the central participants or leader may not necessarily lead to the disruption of an OC network.

Another perspective in analyzing organised crime networks is to focus on the importance of brokers. The SNA scholars, Morselli, for example, argued that individuals and groups possessing brokerage like networks are key participants in organised crime and criminal organizations (Morselli 2005; Moreselli and Tremblay, 2004; Morselli, 2009). The importance of brokers can be found in a series of research works in illegal drug trafficking (Natarajan, 2006; Pearson and Hobbs, 2001), human trafficking (Kleemans and de Bunt, 2003; Zhang and Chin, 2002) and criminal organizations (Finckenauer and Waring, 1998; Haller, 1990; Morselli, 2005). The term “broker” refers to those who control information travelling between disconnected individuals and resources, and those positioned in strategic positions for connecting with those who possess resources; brokers themselves are not directly or actively involved in criminal activities (Morselli, 2009). The number of brokers found within the SNA reflects the sophistication of the organised crime structure (Coles, 2001; Klerks, 2001; Williams, 1998). Having a large number of brokers involved in organised crime networks also enhances the flexibility of organised crime structures, which is important for their survival in a hostile environment and competitive criminal market (Morselli and Tremblay, 2004).

2.6 Social Capital Approach

Lo (2010) argued that neither the hierarchical nor the SNA is sufficient in explaining contemporary organised crime in Hong Kong and China. He used the idea of social capital to explain the connections between political and social networks and organised crime in Hong Kong in around 1997 when China resumed sovereignty of Hong Kong.

Social capital is a loaded term, which consists of a “set of rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structure and society’s institutional arrangement that enable members to achieve their individual and community objectives” (Lederman, Loayza and Menendez, 2002:509). Fukuyama (1995) also indicated that the driving forces behind social relationships are social capital, trust, mutual benefit and return. He defined the term ‘social capital’ as “the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations” (p. 10). A third definition is seen as the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the social relationships possessed by an individual or social unit (Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998).

Social capital is particularly important to organised crime operations, because the illicit nature makes the agreement and contract unenforceable. If the transactions take place within social relations, or partners are referred by entrusted social networkers, then the problems of co-operation such as distrust and suspicions can be dissolved (Granovetter, 1985). Social capital also helps in pooling varieties of resources and helps to bridge criminals and criminal groups (Kleemans, 2007; Williams, 2001).

Social capital can be characterised in different social institutions, ranging from kinship, race, origin, occupation and ethnicity. For instance, Albin (1971), Corsino (2014), Ianni and Ianni (1972), and von Lampe (2003) have argued that organised crime criminals could utilize their ethnic relationships in operating organised crime. Kleemans and de Poot (2008) argued that the development of an organised crime career is better explained by social capital which is established in the course of occupation or leisure activities or venues.

Putnam (2000) suggested that social capital exists in different forms including bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital is conceptualised by close and frequent interactions and collective actions within group of people who share relatively homogenous background (Putnam, 2000). Although bonding social capital strengthens reciprocity, cohesiveness and trust, its exclusivity nature tends to exclude other social groups with diverse backgrounds (Paoli, 2003; Zhong 2009). Criminal organizations and gangs are often bound by bonding social capital due to the emphasis on internal control and sharing of subculture (Lo, 2010; Paoli, 2003; Rochelle, Lo and Ng, 2010; So, 2011). Rochelle, Lo and Ng (2010) illustrated some features of social capital by looking at the structural and cognitive aspects of social capital by, and the behavior of, gangs. So (2011) adopted the social capital concept in explaining the drug trafficking business in Hong Kong, illustrating both the negative and positive aspects of social capital in describing behavior.

On the other hand, bridging social capital has an outward tendency, referring to interactions between people with diverse backgrounds. People tend to establish networks with outside groups such as distant friends, external organizations and associations and therefore bridging social capital

promotes interactions between diverse and heterogeneous groups of people. For example, Lo (2010) argued that the triad society, Sun Yee On, can utilize their “patriotic label” in establishing bridging social capital with Mainland Chinese officials. This bridging social capital facilitates them in operating financial crime in Hong Kong. Linking social capital involves vertical relationships with those in authority and power (Woolcock, 1998), which enables individuals to leverage resources, ideas, information and knowledge within a community or groups. Bonding and bridging social capital link up networks horizontally. Linking social capital strengthens social ties with asymmetric power relations between the state, organizations and the communities. Such vertical linking provides access to power, economic and social status by different social groups, including criminal groups. Bridging and linking social capital may improve the chances of having the right kind of contacts for various purposes, thus providing access to new information, enhancing people’s actual control of resources and improving their ability to solve various problems (Ferlander, 2007:122).

Another Chinese interpretation of social capital is *guanxi*. *Guanxi* literally means ‘relation’ or ‘relationship’. From the contemporary Chinese perspective, it refers to ‘particularistic ties’ (Jacobs, 1979, 1980), which is “the state of two or more parties being connected or the connected parties themselves” (Chen and Chen, 204:307), which embraces individual bonding, empathy, reciprocity and trust (Geddie et al., 2005). The foundation of social ties is based on ascribed characteristics, including kinship, ethnicity and native place (Gold et al., 2002:6) as well as on achieved characteristics, including attending the same educational institution and sharing experience. The social ties, as the basis of *guanxi*, can be naturally occurring or purposely cultivated. While the social ties provide a basis for establishing *guanxi*, it has to be cultivated and maintained over time

(Kipnis, 1997; Yan, 1996; Yang, 1994). Guanxi is generally applicable in Chinese or Asian relations as it does not simply refer to social networks but is a cultural aspect in evaluating social relations that are influenced by Confucian culture (Chen and Chen, 2004; Wang, 1987). It focuses on how Confucian culture and Chinese culture set the hierarchy of social relations in different settings and how the social culture shapes the norms, obligations and expectations that bind individual and group behavior and choices, as well as how they value and categorize their social relations. Jiang and associates (2012) proposed the mechanism of establishing guanxi. Wang (2014) adopted this mechanism in explaining the guanxi in China and how it facilitates the corruption operation in Chongqing, Mainland China. Guanxi consists of four characteristics, including reciprocity, utilitarianism, transferability and intangibility (Jiang et al., 2012).

Allum and Sands (2004), Myers (1995), Wang (2014), Xia (2008), and Zhang and Chin (2002) also referred to Chinese organised criminals utilizing guanxi on a network basis in operating organised crime and transnational organised crime. For instance, Myers (1995) characterised Chinese transnational crime as “an opportunistic entrepreneurial activity, conducted exclusively through individual and organizational guanxi (mutual-obligation bonds) networks whose members share common characteristics, such as language, lineage, and natal place” (p.181). Allum and Sands (2004) also agreed with Myer’s argument that Chinese organised crime criminals are not bound by criminal organizations such as triad societies, but rely on the guanxi available to them which arises from these bonds in operating organised crime. Wang (2014) demonstrated how guanxi distorts China’s legal system by facilitating the buying and selling of public offices and promoting the formation of corrupt networks between locally based criminals and government officials. Although these studies illustrated the importance of guanxi for Chinese organised crime

criminals, only Wang (2014) provided some insightful information in explaining how Chinese organised crime criminals established the guanxi and how these guanxi contributed to the corruption ring operation in Mainland China.

2.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter provides different definitions of organised crime and five theoretical approaches in understanding OC. The first approach is hierarchical approach. It focuses on the way in which criminals are organised and structured. It focuses on describing the hierarchical structure of organised crime, and how individuals operate within the hierarchical structure, such as division of labor, line of authority, and the formalization of control.

The second is patron-client relationship approach. This approach is developed based on Albin's (1971) study on American Mafia. This approach perceives organised crime as a web of power relations, and perceives hierarchy as a result of social relationships between offenders and their resources. This approach provides an insightful dimension in understanding criminal groups beyond their hierarchical structure.

The third is entrepreneurial approach. The assumption behind this approach is to perceive organised crime as business operated in the underworld. Economic theories and concepts are often applied in explaining OC. The focus of this approach is how people operate illicit business, what illicit markets look like, what factors contribute towards the market structure, and how the illicit market structure influences the operational structure.

The fourth approach is social network approach. It focuses on how social relations generate or constitute the organised crime networks. Through describing different modes of criminal collaborations, the SNA provides insightful discussion on which structural patterns are most resilient and best fit with the nature of crime and operational environment, and what strategic positions are most important or vulnerable. By exploring the pattern of relationships between organised crime criminals and their extended network, it helps to inform theories in organised crime and develop policing strategies in combating organised crime.

The fifth approach, social capital, is a new dimension in studying organised crime. This approach resolves the shortcomings of SNA by looking into what lies beneath the façade of the general description on network structure, such as how criminals obtain and utilize their network in operating organised crime, and the power dynamics and quality of relationships between organised crime operators.

None of the theoretical approaches above-mentioned can fully explain organised crime. These theoretical approaches are developed based upon different orientations: criminal-oriented, criminal activity-oriented and criminal organization-oriented approaches, which shape the way on how researchers describe and analyze the reality. In the next chapter, I will further explain why the hierarchical approach is adopted in the present study.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Justification for the Choice of Research Approach

3.1.1 Limitations of organised crime research approaches

Based on an overview of the current literature, the existing organised crime research can be generalised into a dichotomy between a “who” and a “what”: The term “who” refers to “individual offenders and their variable partnerships”; the term “what” refers to the criminal activities conducted (Paoli and Vander Beken, 2015:14). Hagan (2006) and Finckenauer (2005) further distinguished “Organised Crime”, which refers to criminal organisations, and “organised crime”, which refers to criminal activities that require a degree of organisation. The fundamental problem with the current research on criminal organisations and organised crime operations is that they have adopted different approaches in studying organised crime.

Among these approaches, the traditional hierarchical approach since Cressey (1969) tend to focus on describing a general overview of organizational structure, without examining how such structural arrangements influence criminal collaborations. It has attempted to merge “Organised Crime” (i.e. criminal organization under an assumption that it is centrally and hierarchically organised) with “organised crime” (i.e. “crimes that often require a degree of organization on the part of those committing them” (Hagan, 2006: 134)), presuming that all organised crime activities are centralized organised and strictly hierarchically structured, based on an assumption that criminal organisations are capable of controlling, or even monopolising, an illicit market.

The organised crime activities-oriented approach, such as entrepreneur approach, social network analysis (SNA), and social capital approach have tended to focus on organised crime market and its operational structure, while the contributions of the criminal organisation in facilitating their members to enter organised crime operations have received less attention. This is because, in the organised crime activities-oriented approach, researchers have presumed that criminal organisations have the form of a more or less formal bureaucracy: pyramid shaped, with a strict hierarchy, a clear division of labour and formal control, but such an organisational form is not suitable or feasible for organised crime operations.

For instance, the entrepreneurial approach tends to focus on organised crime activities, including how illicit markets emerge and how illicit markets have influenced the operational methods and structure of the organised crime. For most of the researchers adopting this perspective, the criminal organisation seems less relevant in operating organised crime in general, with the exception of the issue of protection. The supporters of the entrepreneur approach believe that the features of a criminal organisation, such as its exclusive nature (e.g. restricted membership), strict hierarchical control, and territorial nature may hinder its involvement in operating organised crime (in particular, in transnational organised crime).

From Reuter (1983, 1984, 1985), one of the fiercest critics of the possibility for criminal organisations to monopolise an organised crime market or business, to the “structural deficiency perspective” proposed by Zhang and Chin (2003) explain how unlikely it is for criminal organisations to monopolise and participate in organised crime operations. These researchers’

arguments are based on an assumption that criminal organisations are formed as a strict hierarchy. Such a hierarchy is not compatible with the fluid and risky environment of the organised crime market, which requires a flexible structure in order to grasp the variety of resources that are necessary for organised crime operations and criminal opportunities. However, if the structure of triad societies does not have the form described (or presumed) by previous triad literature, does this make a difference?

On the other hand, the view of criminal organisations as ‘strictly hierarchically structured’ is now being challenged. Paoli (2003) argued that Italian mafias are similar to primordial societies of general exchange, rather than to a Weberian form of organisation, as perceived by Cressey. Their members are tied together by status or “fraternization contracts”, which provides flexibility for their members to perform different tasks and goals, ranging from the provision of illicit products and services to political functions. If triad societies are similar in nature to the Italian mafia, then perhaps their involvement in organised crime operations may not be hindered as the advocates of the entrepreneurial approach have expected.

Although numerous organised crime studies have confirmed that it is difficult for a criminal organisation to monopolise or control the illicit market except by protection, they also have revealed the involvement of criminal organisations and their members in operating organised crime (Albini, 1971; Reuter, 1983, 1984, 1985; Spapens, 2012; Zhang and Chin, 2002, 2003). Given that researchers have admitted the existence of individual triads in organised crime operations, how do criminal organisations contribute to the facilitation of their members in organised crime operations? Simply relying on the entrepreneurial approach and neglecting the role of criminal organisations

in facilitating their members in organised crime operations is insufficient to explain the linkage between criminal organisations and organised crime operations.

The social network approach is also in line with the organised crime activities-oriented approach. It focuses on how organised crime offenders utilise their social networks to acquire resources and the factors that contribute to the emergence of criminal networks (e.g. neighbourhood, ethnic origin, personal background), and examines the patterns of criminal networks, in particular, which positions of the criminal networks are most important or vulnerable, and how different formats of criminal network have influenced organised crime operations.

The shortcoming of this approach has been a tendency to focus on the patterns of networks (e.g. the frequency and density of contacts) based on wiretapping data from police intelligence, while only a few such studies have focused on the context of the relationships and the content of the interactions (e.g. Campana, 2011; Natarajan, 2006; Varese, 2011). Although the social network approach has expanded the scope of study beyond criminal organisations and has attempted to explain how criminals are connected, there are still some problems. The heavy reliance on police surveillance data leads to several problems with the social network approach. First, the factors that determine criminals' decision making in their choices of collaborators and the dynamics between the criminals, such as the trust, reciprocity and power differences between the organised crime operators that determine their choices of and opportunities for co-offending, are underdeveloped. Second, two groups of criminals who are outside the police surveillance have been neglected: those important persons who contribute to the establishment of criminal collaborations, and those who are less involved in organised crime operations (e.g. the middlemen). The social network approach

continues to suffer from the same problem as the entrepreneurial approach, which focuses only on organised crime activities and the personal background (e.g. ethnicity family, neighborhood, and occupation) of criminals, while least attentions are given to those important parties, such as criminal organisations, who contribute to drawing criminals into the network. As a result, the social network approach fails to link the criminal organisation and the organised crime operations.

3.1.2 Limitations of current triad research

The hierarchical approach is the most common approach adopted in triad research. Yet there is insufficient empirical data to support it. Most researchers have tended to focus on the structure of triad societies from a macro perspective. They describe the general structure of triad societies from the Weberian approach, which focuses on the bureaucratic nature of the structure of a triad society, such as the hierarchy, the division of labour, and the formalisation of control. Most of the triad literature has tended to generalise the triad structure without addressing the structural differences between different triad societies, and it has failed to provide empirical investigations on such triads' operations. For instance, Chu (2000) provided limited empirical data in illustrating the current triad structure, portraying them as a cartel form of criminal alliance without addressing the differences between different triad societies. Lo (2012) provided a detailed examination of how the triads have established their hierarchical structure, but it was restricted to lower level triads and did not touch upon the mid and higher levels. Due to limited research regarding triad structure, much of what lies under the façade of the general structure of triad societies remains unknown.

Due to the lack of empirical research on the operation of triad societies, existing triad research has tended to presume the existence of a cohesive hierarchical structure of triads based on previous literature. Yet some researchers have provided an alternative “non-cohesive” view regarding the

structure of the triad societies, based on the examination of triad-related crime operations (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; McKenna, 1996; Xia, 2008; Yu, 1998). The cultural perspective is often adopted in evaluating the bonding mechanisms of triad structures (e.g. Chin, 1990); it has tended to emphasise the importance of triad rituals in facilitating the cohesiveness and bonding between triads. On the other hand, other research holds a contradictory view, i.e. that the hierarchical structure and restricted membership remain, but that the triad rituals are fading (Chu, 2000; Yu, 1998) and thus are no longer able to maintain the cohesiveness of the triad societies.

Against this backdrop, the discourse on whether or not triad societies are cohesive and hierarchically structured has remained unresolved. Thus, if the hierarchical structure of triad societies still exists, although it is no longer as cohesive as it has historically been portrayed, how do triad societies operate, and how do they influence their members in reality? Without examining what is underneath the façade of their general structure, these questions can never be answered.

In addition, triad researchers have failed to explain how the triad organisational structure has facilitated operations. For instance, Lo (2010) failed to explain how the hierarchical structure (he coined it as bonding social capital) of the sampled triad society has facilitated its financial crime operations. The same problem is found in Chu's (2000) study. While admitting the existence of a hierarchical structure, an examination of how the hierarchical structure facilitates organised crime operations is equally important. Unfortunately, none of the existing triad research has focused on how triad societies' hierarchical and structural arrangements contribute to co-offending between organised crime operators and how these arrangements facilitate organised crime operations.

The social capital approach has provided a new dimension to the study of organised crime. This approach has overcome some of the shortcomings of the social network approach by looking into what lies beneath the façade of the general descriptions of its structure, such as how criminals obtain and utilise their networks in operating organised crime, and the power dynamics and the quality of the relationships between organised crime operators. Unfortunately, this approach is still underdeveloped in the study of organised crime. Although Lo (2010) attempted to use the social capital approach in examining triad-related financial crime, the study insufficiently explained how triad societies facilitate the collaboration between their members and other operators, and how triad societies contribute to the financial crime operations of their members; instead, it only revealed triad involvement in the commission of financial crimes.

Recently, Lo and Kwok (2016) further explored the relationship between triad societies and organised crime operations through examining how triads have utilised the features of the criminal organisation, such as its triad reputation, its reputation for violence, and its hierarchical control over its members, to establish trust and social capital with entrepreneurs in order to infiltrate into Macau's casino VIP-room business operations. Admitting that triad societies are incapable of controlling the entire business because of the large territory, Lo and Kwok (2016) revealed that the features of a criminal organisation, such as its reputation and collective power, equipped the triads to establish collaborations with the casino management, entrepreneurs and criminal syndicates in Mainland China.

The Lo and Kwok (2016) study shed light on a new dimension in the triad research by attempting to connect criminal organisations with organised crime activities. It proved that even if a triad

society cannot control the illicit market, its features can facilitate its members' access to organised crime operations and their establishment of criminal networks outside of the triad community. Yet this research is considered to be incomplete. As reputation plays an important role in establishing trust and collaborations, Lo and Kwok (2016) did not undertake a full examination of how triads establish a reputation for the infiltration of organised crime operations. As collective power under the hierarchical structure contributes to the success of triad businesses, the issue of how triad hierarchical structure and subculture has empowered triads to establish criminal collaborations in the underworld has not yet been fully addressed.

3.1.3 Justification for the use of the Hierarchical Approach

The most typical organized crime approaches, including the entrepreneur approach, SNA, and social capital are criminal activities centric, which focus on how the nature of crime and operational environment result in operational structure. These approaches tend to downplay, or even neglect the influence of criminal organizations in organised crime operations, while at the same time, they often found members of criminal organizations involved in such operations. These approaches failed to explain why criminal organization members are involved and how a criminal organization facilitates its members in engaging in organised crime operations. In order to connect criminal organizations and organised crime activities, it is necessary to empirically re-examine the operational structure of triad societies from the hierarchical approach to determine whether they are structured as previous triad literature has portrayed. This is because how triad societies are structured and operated are important to determine whether they are capable to operate organised crime as criticized by scholars of entrepreneur approach, and how their features influence their members in organised crime operations. Through investigating how triads are collaborated, it also helps to explain how the features of criminal organisation facilitate the collaborations of their

members in organised crime operations. These factors are both important to link up the criminal organisation oriented approach and oc-oriented approach.

The focus of the present research is triad societies in Hong Kong and their operational structure rather than criminal activities involving triads. The hierarchical approach is the most predominant approach adopted in criminal organization research. It focuses on the structure of criminal organization, such as hierarchy, division of labour, command and control, and membership. As previous triad research also revealed these features, it is a more suitable and appropriate framework to explore the operational structure of triad society.

3.2. Research Framework

Against this backdrop, the hierarchical approach is used as the research framework in the present study, with the following four variables: (1) organisational structure, (2) group identity and membership, (3) the use of violence and the authority of reputation, and (4) territoriality. These four variables, derived from the works of Gambetta (1993), Finckenauer (2005), and Zhang and Chin (2003), will be introduced below with reference to Table 3.1.

(1) Organisational structure

Finckenauer (2005) distinguished criminal organisations from criminal networks by specifying certain organisational features, including (1) hierarchy of authority, (2) division of labour, (3) continuity and durability of networks, and (4) the need to build up reputation (p. 75). Hierarchy of authority refers to a well-structured hierarchy with leaders or bosses, and then, followers in some ranked order of authority. Such a hierarchical arrangement should be self-penetrating, which

means that it should have endured over a long period of time and across different crimes, regardless of any change of personnel in the position. In addition, a criminal organisation should have a well-established reputation for extortion and corruption, and such reputation should be durable (p. 75).

Triad societies are generally perceived as hierarchically structured Chinese criminal organisations, with clear leadership in a specific ranked order of authority in giving commands for organised crime operations. They have a sophisticated division of labour, bounded by a Dai Lo-Lan Chai relationship and a spider's web structure (Lo, 2012). Triad societies also consist of well-established structural mechanisms for maintaining continuity, such as recruitment, promotion, and elections (for some triad societies only, please refer to chapter 4). This ensures that the arrest or death of an officeholder would not affect their operations. Triad societies also consist of long-established reputations for soliciting and maintaining their protection businesses (Chu, 2000).

Since triad societies are perceived as hierarchically structured, it is presumed that those who are positioned at the top of the hierarchy have exclusive control over all members within the triad society, and have access to triad resources and criminal information and opportunities, while those positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy possess the least autonomy and are obliged to follow the commands of their seniors. However, there are unresolved controversies about the cohesive structure of modern triad societies. Some scholars have argued that triad societies are cohesive organisations (Lo, 2012; Morgan, 1960), but some argued that triad societies are disorganised (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Zhao and Li, 2010). The issue of whether triad societies are cohesive or disorganised is the **first research question** that is worthy of a detailed examination with sufficient empirical support, especially the question of whether the disorganisation thesis is

applicable to all triad societies, despite their diversified structures (see Table 3.1).

(2) Group identity and membership

Group identity and restricted membership are well-accepted features of criminal organisations (Finckenauer, 2005; Hagan, 1983; Maltz, 1985, 1994; Varese, 2010). Membership reinforces group identity, which facilitates the distinction between the in-group and the out-group to foster loyalty and cohesion among members (Finckenauer, 2005). The exclusivity of organised criminal group members is commonly bounded by codes, rules, specific symbols, entitlement to benefits, and obligations (Cressey, 1969; Finckenauer, 2005). Triad societies consist of restricted membership and are tied by triad subcultural norms, such as brotherhood, loyalty, an emphasis on secrecy, rituals, and the use of strict command and control mechanisms (Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000; Lo, 2012; Lo and Kwok, 2014; Morgan, 1960).

Zhang and Chin (2003) mentioned that time-honoured traditions and multigenerational membership are key structural and subcultural variables in triad societies. Thus the **second research question** is to explore how time-honoured traditions and multigenerational membership form part of the hierarchy in modern triad societies when they are undergoing a process of disorganisation (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Chu, 2000, 2005; Lo and Kwok, 2012; Zhao and Li, 2010). Since some oc-oriented researchers believe that triad identity and membership may hinder efficiency in obtaining criminal resources and opportunities (Zhang and Chin, 2003), the **third research question** is to examine how triads utilize triad membership and group identity in access to criminal resources (see Table 3.1).

(3) Use of violence and authority of reputation

In criminal organisations, violence is often used for the purpose of ensuring compliance, fencing off competitors, and soliciting and maintaining protection services (Gambetta, 2009; Varese, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Moreover, a reputation for violence is another distinctive feature of criminal organisations (Finckenauer, 2005; Gambetta, 1993, 2009; Paoli, 2002; Varese, 2010). It can be regarded as a source of trust (Gambetta, 2000, 2009; Lo and Kwok, 2016; Spapens, 2012). The reputation of triad societies and reputational violence are both vital for the acquisition of illicit markets and the maintenance of the monopolisation of protection services in triad territories, as well as the protection of their vested interests (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Chin, 1990, 2000; Chu, 2000; Lo and Kwok, 2016).

Given that violence and a reputation for violence are both important assets for the triads, the **fourth research question** is whether possessing a reputation for violence alone is sufficient in seeking criminal collaborators and maintaining collaborations among triads. If not, the elements that constitute the reputation of triads in facilitating triad social capital are worthy of investigation (see Table 3.1).

(4) Territoriality

Territoriality is a distinctive feature of criminal organisations (Gambetta, 1993; Gambetta and Reuter, 1997; Paoli, 2003; Varese, 2011; Zhang and Chin, 2003), particularly Chinese criminal organisations (Chu, 2000; Kelly, Chin, and Fagan, 1993; Zhang and Chin, 2003). Many scholars have argued that criminal organisations need to become entrenched in their dominated territory due to their reliance on local networks to collect intelligence, to spread their reputation, and to

monitor and control their agents, and for cost savings in monitoring criminal activities (Campana, 2011; Gambetta, 1993; Polo, 1997; Reuter, 1985; Spapens, 2010; Varese, 2011).

Triad societies have a nature that is similar to other criminal organisations. Their activities and businesses are territorially based (Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000; Lo, 1984). They have their own turf and traditional criminal businesses, such as prostitution and gambling, which are developed in their local territory (Chin, 1990: 45). They also extort and provide protection services to a variety of businesses, including licit and illicit ones, which are located inside their territory (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Chu, 2000). Clashes and violence break out when rival triads cross, invade, or compete for territories (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Lo and Kwok, 2012).

Given that triad societies are territorial in nature, the **fifth research question** is how a triad territory functions in facilitating the triads' collaboration (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Research Framework --- The Hierarchical Approach

Variables	Descriptions of the variables	Research questions that have not been fully addressed in triad literature and will be examined in this study
<p>1. Organisational structure (Finckenauer, 2005; Zhang and Chin, 2003)</p>	<p>Zhang and Chin (2003: 484)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid hierarchy with clear leadership structure • Command driven • Organised through clear division of labour <p>Finckenauer (2005: 75)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchy of authority • Division of labour • Continuity and durability of networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-perpetuating - The structure is maintained over time and across crimes (p.66) • The need to build up reputation 	<p>1. Are triad societies cohesive or disorganised? Is the disorganisation thesis applicable to all triad societies?</p>
<p>2. Group identity and membership (Finckenauer, 2005; Zhang and Chin, 2003)</p>	<p>Zhang and Chin (2003: 484)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive membership Recruitment based on connection and capability • Time-honoured traditions, rituals and code of conduct • Lifetime membership and sense of belonging • Multigenerational <p>Finckenauer (2005: 75)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceive themselves as members of a criminal organisation - Members are bonded by shared rituals 	<p>2. How do time-honoured traditions and multigenerational membership form part of the hierarchy in modern triad societies?</p> <p>3. How do triads utilize triad membership and identity in access to criminal resources?</p>
<p>3. Use of violence and reputation (Finckenauer, 2005; Gambetta, 2009;</p>	<p>Zhang and Chin (2003: 484)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To achieve domination (by eliminating competitors) 	<p>4. What constitutes the reputation of triads in facilitating criminal collaborations? Is the reputation of violence alone sufficient in</p>

<p>Zhang and Chin, 2003)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To coerce unwilling participants (e.g. business owners) - To enforce contracts - To discipline triad members - To settle inter-triad conflicts <p>Finckenauer (2005: 76)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority of reputation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the capacity to force others--whether criminals or non-criminals--to do what it dictates without having to resort to actual physical violence - With ability to instill fear and to intimidate others <p>Gambetta (2009: 216)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation for violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The ability to intimidate, ultimately to use violence effectively” 	<p>seeking criminal collaborators and maintaining collaborations among triads?</p>
<p>4. Operational (Territorial) characteristics</p> <p>(Finckenauer, 2005; Gambetta, 1993; Zhang and Chin, 2003)</p>	<p>Zhang and Chin (2003: 484)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional or local • Territorial 	<p>5. How does a triad territory function in facilitating the triads’ collaborations?</p>

3.3 Research Methods

The present research is qualitative, exploratory, and ethnographic in nature. The reason the qualitative research method was chosen is that it helps to uncover people’s meanings, definitions

and descriptions of events (Berg, 1989), as well as human perceptions, feelings, motives and behaviours from the informants' perspectives (Minichiello et al, 1995:10). The proposed research aims at investigating the operational structure of triad societies and, from the triads' perspective, how the structure determines the triads' access to criminal resources and information, and how it facilitates criminal collaborations, the decision making processes and the establishment of social networks for crime operations.

The most common research data collection methods adopted in criminal organisation studies are interviews with the police, official data provided by the criminal justice bureaucracies, and journalistic materials (e.g. Gambetta, 1993; Paoli, 2003; Varese, 2011). Participant observations and interviews are rare in the study of criminal organisations. As stated by Gambetta (1993), “no study of mafia is based on fieldwork” (p. 9). Due to the illicit nature and risk present in organised crime criminals and activities, direct access to the internal dynamics within criminal organisations is difficult (Paoli, 2003: 20). In contrast to traditional triad research data collection methods, which mainly rely on information provided by law enforcement and journalistic materials as the major source of data (e.g. Chu, 2000; Morgan, 1960), the present study adopted different data collection methods, including in-depth interviews and participatory observations, which were aimed at collecting data directly from the triads in order to avoid bias and misinterpretation by third parties.

3.3.1 Access to the research field: the triad community

The access to the fieldwork was divided into three paths. The first path of access to the triad community was generated through social introductions to triads by church pastors. As a church member of a Christian church that specialises in serving the triad community, the researcher had opportunities to participate in triad social occasions and events through invitations by the pastors.

The church provides outreach religious services for triad members outside of the church setting. The pastors, assisted by a number of ex-triad church members, constantly reach out to the triad underworld to preach to triads (i.e. potential triad church members) and invite them to attend church services. In return, the triads also invite the pastors to attend triad social events (discussed below). Knowing that the researcher is conducting triad research for her PhD studies, the pastors often invited the researcher to attend triad banquets, social meals, and festive events to facilitate participatory observations of triad subculture. Through the weekly church meetings and other social activities, the researcher established a social network with the triads, who cover different triad ranks and positions, and are from different triad societies (see Figure 3.2).

The second path was generated by the key informants of the present study, who are ex-triad church members. With their assistance, the researcher further established social networks in the triad community. The key informants occasionally invited her to join dinners and social gatherings with their triad friends, which provided good opportunities for closer observation and interactions with them, as well as opportunities to conduct formal and informal interviews with triads outside of the church's triad network.

The third path was generated by the staff of an NGO which provides rehabilitation and support services for ex-offenders in Hong Kong. The researcher had worked closely with the NGO while serving as a senior research assistant in triad research projects of City University of Hong Kong. This continued collaborative relationship enhanced the feasibility of the arrangement of in-depth interviews through volunteers of the NGO who are triad ex-offenders. Details of the samples are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Barriers of access to the field and strategies to cope with these barriers

Gender is perceived as a potential problem in conducting research in the triad community, which is a masculine domain, because females are generally perceived as taking subordinate roles in the triad community. To cope with the problem of gender differences, the researcher needed to rely on her key informants – the pastor and ex-triad church members to establish a network and trust with potential participants. The background of key informants of the research, including the pastors and ex-triad church members, contributed a great deal in opening the gateway to the triad community. The pastors had been working with triads, especially senior triads for more than fifteen years. The ex-triad church member was a senior triad member who was active in the triad community for over twenty years. Their religious professional background and well-established reputation in the triad community facilitated the researcher to establish trust with and obtain information from participants. The researcher not only asked the key informants to accompany her, introduce her, and be present during meetings; sometimes the researcher needed to rely on the informants to seek answers from the participants. The presence of and the introductions and assistance provided by the key informants, who themselves were male and well respected figures in the triad community, not only resulted in assisting her in establishing a network with triads but also resulted in collecting quality data. Interestingly, the face-saving culture shared in the triad community also contributed to the access to the field and obtaining data from participants. Because the key informants are well respected in the triad community, the participants needed to give face to the pastor, and the researcher was respected since she is an associate of the pastor.

Another problem constantly encountered by female researchers in a male-dominated community

is sexual attention and the risk of sexual harassment. To cope with this problem, the researcher needed to distance herself from her gender identity. She achieved this through conscious efforts to monitor and “manage” the researcher’s image in the field such as cutting her hair short, wearing baggy and gender-neutral clothing, and using the language commonly used in triads (including their slang) when interacting with triad members. While the researcher need to establish rapport with participants, she needed to avoid emotional disclosure and maintain physical distance from participants. The presence of trusted key informants also protected her from physical harassment.

On the other hand, the gender of the researcher also gave her an advantage in accessing to the triad community, because a woman was perceived as less threatening and less likely to be an undercover police officer due to gender stereotyping and the subordinate image of females in the triad community. A few informants expressed that they would not bother to answer the researcher’s questions if she were a man, as they worried that the researcher could be a police informant.

On the contrary, age and social status differences between the researcher and participants of the research, especially senior triads, is the biggest barrier that the researcher encountered in the fieldwork. Seniors prefer to meet and talk to people of a similar age or those of higher social status, rather than to meet a “young” and “naïve” (in terms of triad knowledge) student due to the seniority subculture in the triad community. To overcome this problem, the researcher needed to rely on her supervisor, who is a professor and university department head, and the chief pastor to actively engage the researcher with the senior triads in the beginning stage of the research in order to establish a relationship with them. After successfully cultivating *guanxi* with them, the researcher accumulated triad knowledge (in particular, on the subculture and rituals of triads) through

frequent interactions with them. The researcher gradually established the reputation of a “triad expert” in the triad community and was accepted as an independent researcher, without the presence of the supervisor and the pastors.

3.3.2 In-depth interviews

In the present research, in-depth interviews were the main data collection method. The in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, face-to-face manner. Face-to-face interviews help to build rapport and trust with the participants and facilitate responses to the questions (Minichiello et al, 1995: 64), which is important for obtaining valid and reliable data (Venkatesh, 2002). The purpose of using semi-structured interviews is to explore and identify other variables that are highly related to the research questions, and yet are not included in the interview guide and conceptual framework, which could enhance the validity of the designed conceptual framework and subsequent interview questions.

Before starting the in-depth interviews, three pilot interviews with two triads and one triad associate were conducted to ensure that the conceptual framework had generated interview questions that were valid. The questions were mainly focused on the operational structure of triad societies, the factors that determine the access to criminal resources, how they obtain resources and information from triad societies, and the criteria that determine the selection of criminal collaborators.

The in-depth interviews took place after an ethical review was conducted and approved by the university. Informed consent from the participants was sought beforehand. Audio-tape recording was used. For a few of the key informants, a series of interviews was conducted with the same

participants. Warm-ups and debriefings were conducted with the participants before and after the interviews.

Sampling for the in-depth interviews

As a member of a local church that specialises in providing services for triads and ex-triads, the researcher gained approval from the chief pastor of the church to conduct triad research over the last two years. The pastors referred church members with triad backgrounds to the researcher for interviews. Another source of samples was referred by the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, which specialises in providing rehabilitation services for ex-offenders (see Figure 3.1). The third source of samples was generated through snowballing. With the assistance of two entrusted ex-triad church members, the researcher was able to reach a much larger population through their direct connections in the triad community for formal interviews (see Figure 3.2).

By means of purposive sampling, the present study covered 30 participants, including 28 triads with different triad backgrounds, one ex-offender who closely collaborated with triad figures to operate large-scale untaxed cigarette smuggling, and the wife of an experienced triad. In order to enhance representativeness, the samples covered all triad ranks and were from a variety of Hong Kong triad societies (see Table 3.2). In the present research, eleven interviewees had one encounter (two hours on average for each in-depth interview). The other participants had five encounters on average, while key informants had thirty encounters or more on average. The large number of encounters and lengthy engagement in each encounter should be sufficient to produce a good source of data. The research adopted both in-depth interviews and ethnography. Multiple data collection methods and multiple interviews also justify the small number of participants (Lee, Woo,

and Mackenzie, 2002).

The justification for the small sample size is related to the nature of the research target population and access to data. Due to the criminalization of triad membership and illicit nature of triad organisations and activities, access to the field and data is extremely difficult. In order to get a better understanding of the operational structure and hierarchy in the triad societies and community, it is necessary to include senior triads, including triad officers, Cho Kun (and ex-Cho Kun) and Lo Shuk Fu. Since the number of these senior triads is small, gaining access to these samples are extremely difficult, which posed difficulties in generating a bigger sample. The researcher has performed due-diligence to exhaust all possible networks through the NGO, the church, and key informants for getting the maximum number of samples of these senior ranks. Taking into consideration the difficulty in soliciting triad members as samples, the current sample size should be large enough to produce a good source of information and for triangulation.

The concept of saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is important in determining the adequate number of samples to assure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that saturation could be reached when generating more data becomes “counter-productive” and that “the new” that is discovered does not necessarily add anything to the overall story, model, theory, or framework (p.136) (see also Green and Thorogood, 2009:120). The researcher spent about five years in the field conducting interviews and fieldwork study to investigate the operational structure of triad societies and how they established criminal collaborations. During first two years, when investigating how triads established criminal collaborations, common characteristics or criterion in determining their

collaboration, such as seniority, reputation, face, and triad territory gradually emerged. In the third year, sub-dimensions and new insights in understanding seniority and reputation gradually emerged. After spending one extra year in the field and interviewing more samples, no new variables or sub-variables emerged. Information obtained from fieldwork observations and new participants became homogeneous, and fitted with the framework and variables identified. The researcher decided to stop generating more samples, as data collected from the 30 participants was sufficient to address the research questions.

Table 3.2 Background of Participants in In-depth Interviews (N=30)

Code	Gender	Age	Rank
T1	Male	19	Sze Kau
T2	Male	40+	Sze Kau
T3	Male	38	Sze Kau and Cho Kun candidate
T4	Male	60+	Former Cho Kun
T5	Male	60+	Triad Officer (Red Pole) and Lo Shuk Fu
T6	Male	50+	Cho Kun
T7	Male	39	Sze Kau
T8	Male	40-50	Sze Kau
T9	Male	40-50	Old Sze Kau
T10	Male	60+	Old Sze Kau
T11	Male	50+	Sze Kau
T12	Male	60+	Old Sze Kau
T13	Male	40+	Old Sze Kau
T14	Male	40+	Sze Kau
T15	Male	60+	Former Wa Si Yan
T16	Male	60+	Triad officer (Red Pole) and area boss
T17	Male	70+	Triad officer (Red Pole) and Lo Shuk Fu
T18	Male	60+	Old Sze Kau and Lo Shuk Fu
T19	Male	60+	Old Sze Kau and Lo Shuk Fu
T20	Male	40+	Sze Kau
T21	Male	60+	Old Sze Kau
T22	Male	28	Sze Kau
T23	Male	20+	Sze Kau
T24	Female	40+	Sze Kau
T25	Male	30+	Sze Kau
T26	Male	40+	Triad Officer (Red Pole)
T27	Male	80+	Lo Shuk Fu
T28	Male	50+	Lo Shuk Fu
W1	Female	60+	Wife of a triad
E1	Male	50+	Businessman who closely collaborated with triads to operate large-scale untaxed cigarette smuggling

*The names of triad societies are purposefully omitted here to protect the participants.

Figure 3.1 Samples Generated through a NGO

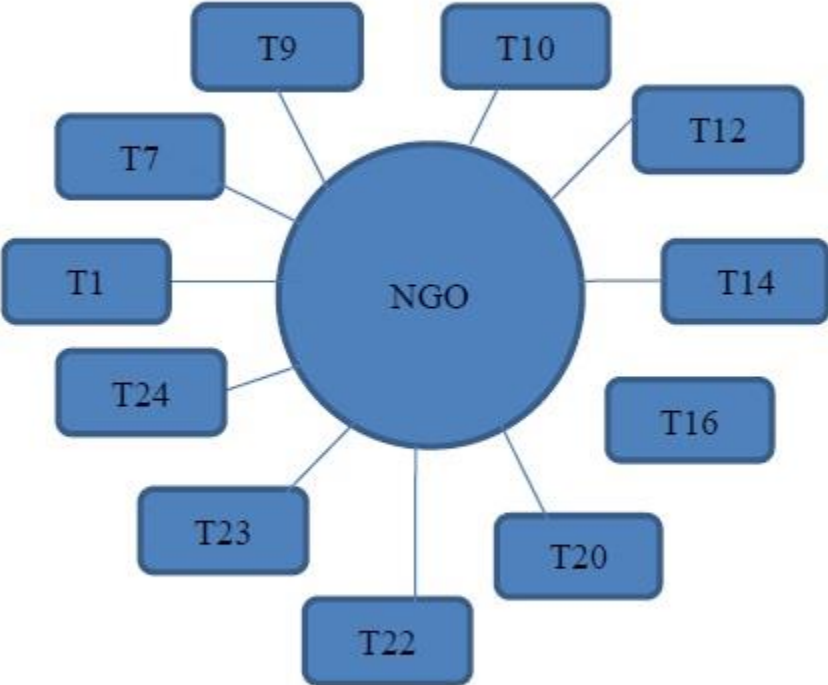
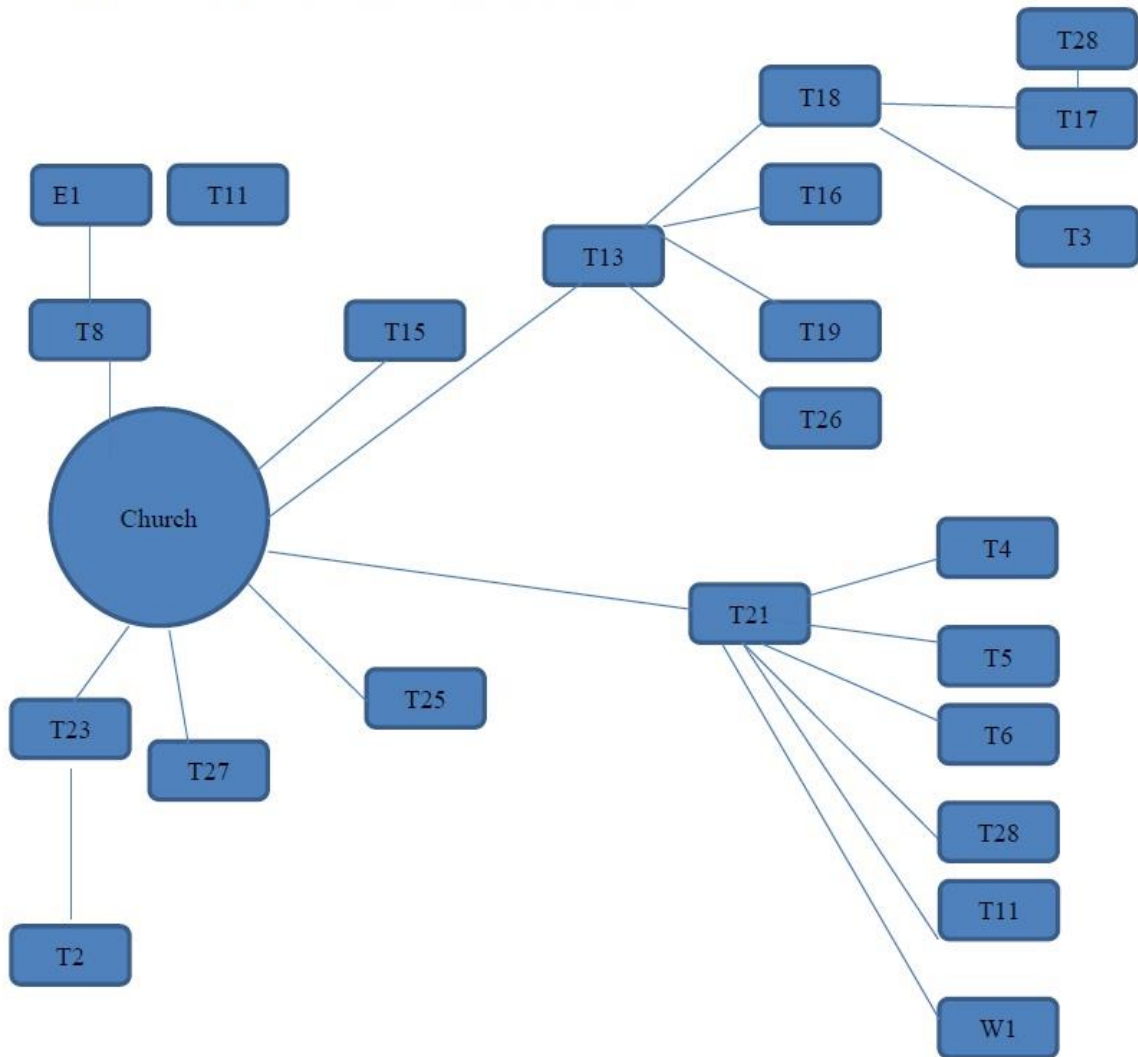


Figure 3.2 Samples Generated Through a Church

Figure 3.2 Samples Generated Through a Church



3.3.3 Participant observations

In addition to in-depth interviews, participant observations were also adopted in this research. The purpose of the observation is to gain an increased understanding about triad communication patterns and interactions in an informal setting, as well as to observe the subculture of triad society (in particular, the behavioural and social norms in triad communities) beyond the existing literature, which has focused on triad rituals and initiation ceremonies, in order to understand the structure of and norms shared within triad societies. In addition, by undertaking participatory observations, it was possible to gain increased knowledge about the triads' social networks in reality, and how they interact with members within their networks. The use of participant observations supplemented and was triangulated by the information obtained from the formal interviews.

Role of researcher in participant observations

Triad banquets and events

The role of the researcher was to act as an “observer as participant” (Gold, 1958) to observe the triads in a variety of triad festive events, banquets and social meals. The role of the researcher was mainly to observe the event settings and the interactions between triads with minimal direct interactions with the subjects. The researcher was present at the triad events and banquets as a researcher through the introduction of the church pastors and key informants.

In contrast to a conventional ethnographic study, which has a specific community setting to investigate, the researcher chose events and occasions in which triads commonly participate, such as birthday banquets and festive celebrations (Chu, 2000: 36). The reason these occasions were chosen for participant observation is the low risk to the researcher's physical safety (see Code of

Ethics, British Society of Criminology, 4.1).

In an ordinary community setting, it is difficult to identify who the triads are for valid observations. Participation in these social events could also avoid the researcher's participation in any criminal activities, such as the discussion or planning of criminal operations. Based on the researcher's previous research experiences, members of triad societies seldom discuss recent crime operations or planning during these occasions, and these events provide the best opportunities for observing their social norms and interaction patterns.

Regarding observation in the events, both focused observation and selected observation methods were adopted (Angrosino and Mays dePerez, 2000). In addition to investigating who the guests and hosts are, the researcher was also interested in what people did, when and why they did it. For instance, attention was paid to the seating arrangements at the banquets, as this provided a good indication of whom the hosts were and reflected the importance of and the relationship of the guests to the hosts, in terms of their relative seating distance from the hosts' table. This seating arrangement provided useful information in understanding the quality of the relationships between the hosts and their guests. In addition, at Chinese banquets, toasting is common. By observing the pattern of toasting between the guests – for example, who proactively proposed a toast for whom – the behavioural response of the proposer and their attitudes toward each other can indicate the power relations between them in order to determine the hierarchy and the quality of the relationship between them. When possible, attention was also paid to the behaviour of and the conversations between the guests during the event. Attention was also paid to the tone and attitude of the conversations and behaviours of the guests in order to understand how the individuals felt about

and responded to what others were saying. This allowed the researcher some insight into the relationships between the guests and the patterns of their interactions (e.g. what they often talked about, what they would say when someone they did not know approached them, how they responded, etc.). This information is important in exploring the social norms in the triad community, such as how triads communicate and interact, and why they behave this way, and to discover the kinds of people with whom they typically interact, and the nature and quality of their relationships. In order to ensure the most accurate interpretation, it was necessary to rely on key informants to explain the settings and arrangements of the events, the backgrounds of the participants in the events, and the meanings behind the settings or people's gestures or behaviours, particularly the subcultural norms of triads.

Social meals and gathering with triads

In social meals and gatherings with triads, the role of the researcher was to act as a “participant as observer” (Gold, 1958). The researcher was often invited by them to attend their dinners and social gatherings. The researcher was introduced to the key informants' triad friends who were no longer engaged in criminal activities, while possessing long years of triad experience and extensive triad networks. They were informed about the researcher's identity and the purpose of the research when she was first introduced to the participants. Face-to-face conversations were involved throughout each meeting, and spontaneous interviews and unplanned questions during participating observations were adopted (Antonopoulos, 2008: 75; Sigel, 2008: 24). The purpose of this form of participant observation was to establish trust and rapport with the subjects to enhance the reliability of the data obtained from them and to gain a better understanding of the triads' relationships from a closer proximity.

The major triad events and banquets I have participated, and key field visits during the study period are listed in the following table:

Table 3.3 Key Triad Events and Field Visits

Date	<u>Church events and visits</u>
22-2-2014 Evening	Church Annual Dinner
8-6-2014 Evening	Fa Pau Wui
16-7-2014 Evening	Temple Street triads hot pot gathering
31-10-2014 Evening	Street food stall in Temple Street 1
1-11-2014	Traditional night club in Temple Street
27-8-2014 Evening	Wo Yee Tong - Mid Autumn Festival big bowl feast
14-1-2015 Evening	Street food stall in Temple Street 2
7-5-2015	Dinner gathering at Temple Street
20-1-2016 Evening	A Cho Kun's funeral
	T13's Events
14-12-2013	T13 birthday party 1
16-7-2014	Temple Street field visit
31-10-2014	Temple Street field visit
14-12-2014	T13 birthday party 2
23-4-2015	Temple Street field visit
31-7-2015 Evening	Dinner with T26 and T13
	T18's Events
11-2-2015 Lunch	Shenzhen field visit
11-2-2015 Afternoon	Yuen Long field visit
11-2-2015 Evening	Hung Shui Bridge dinner
14-2-2015 Evening	Eight Village Upper Village "big bowl feast"
28-2-2015 Evening	Tsang Tai House "big bowl feast"
	T17's events
7-3-2014 Afternoon	T17 Home visit
7-3-2014 Evening	Dinner with T6 and his associates
4-8-2014 Lunch & Afternoon	Dinner with T17 and his associates
8-8-2014 Evening	Sun Yee On senior triad's birthday banquet
2-9-2014 Evening	Retired Soldiers' Association annual dinner
27-10-2014 Evening	Dinner with T17 and associates
14-11-2014 Whole day	Wei Tung field visit and wedding banquet of a senior triads' son
2-1-2015 Lunch	Dinner with T17 and associates

*T13, T17, T18 are the key triad informants of the study

3.4 Ethical Issues in Fieldwork

3.4.1 Level of engagement in social eating with participants

In the criminology ethnography, what warrants most attention is the danger and risk involved in overt engagement with participants, including exposure to law-breaking or even engagement in criminality (Travers, Putt, and Howard-Wagner, 2013). Although the researcher was often invited by participants to join in their social eating and gatherings, her engagement with triad participants in the field was restricted to only social eating in restaurants or food stalls with the presence of pastors and ex-triad church members. Different from being a complete participant, her identity as a researcher was known to all participants (Gold, 1958:219). According to Spradley (1980: 58–62), the researcher's participation is only considered to be that of a moderate participant. The researcher was involved in conversation and interaction with participants during social eating with triads. In order to avoid becoming an active participant, she never attended other activities besides social conversation and dining in restaurants, food stalls, and lounges of night clubs. Key informants – in particular, the pastors –also refrained from participating in high-risk events such as illicit business meetings. On the other hand, although discussion between researcher and participants was not restricted to triad-related subjects, the researcher was quite detached from participants, as she seldom mentioned anything personal except research-related activities (i.e. attending academic conference where the researcher presented her triad research) for the sake of establishing her identity as a triad expert and researcher. The purpose of such a role and participation is for establishing rapport and trust with participants, rather than revealing the everyday life experience of triads. Although these restrictions may not provide a perfect setting

for fieldwork, it ensures the researcher's safety and lowers the risk of exposure to the involvement of criminality.

3.4.2 Researcher's safety issue

Regarding the participatory observation in triad social eating and gatherings, several measures were taken to alleviate the risks to the researcher for meeting triad members in these activities. First, the safety of the researcher was safeguarded by the presence of the trusted key informants, including church pastors and ex-triad church members. The researcher never met the participants on her own without their presence. The presence of the trusted key informants, in particular the non-triad members (e.g. pastors), is important to prevent the potential collusion between the participants and key triad informants, which may compromise the safety of the researcher. Second, social eating and gathering only took place in open public places, for example restaurants and food stalls. The researcher avoided meeting participants in private or enclosed settings, such as participants' homes, their offices, or a karaoke room. The open environment with the presence of the general public serves as natural surveillance, which helps to protect the safety of the researcher. Third, as suggested by Kovats-Bernat (2002), who advocates a strategy of "localized ethic", the research participants should possess the best knowledge and the potential risks associated with participation and how best to mitigate them (Goldsmith 2003; Peritore 1990). Therefore, the key informants, in particular the pastors and ex-triad church members, should be able to provide the best advice and possess the best knowledge about the triad community. The researcher needed to rely on their assessment of the suitability of participants for the present study and the suitability of the researcher's participating in selected triad events. Key informants, as the gatekeeper of the

field, only referred low-risk triads, such as those who were not actively engaged in criminal activities and inactive triads (e.g. ex-Cho Kun) to reduce the possibility of witnessing or engagement in their criminal activities. Fourth, as young female researchers are more vulnerable to sexual assault, especially in a male-dominated community, the researcher needed to present herself in a less feminine appearance when meeting triads, and kept a physical distance from participants during the fieldwork. For instance, she sat between key informants in order to keep a physical distance from the participants.

3.4.3 Disclosure of criminal information in conversations

Another ethical concern of fieldwork in the triad community is that during the conversation participants might disclose criminality that they had been involved in, which could potentially incriminate participants and could be of interest to authorities (Polsky, 1967). This gives rise to the ethical dilemma between reporting to authorities and maintaining confidentiality.

Based on the researcher's previous experience with triad research, triads seldom talked about current crime operations or discussed existing illicit business that they operate in the presence of people who are not triads. As the focus of the present research is the triad structure and how the social networks of triads are generated, their criminal activity is not the focus of the research. Therefore, the researcher avoided asking questions about their criminal activities or illicit businesses. This tactic helped to maintain researcher's neutrality as a researcher (see Sigel, 2008:24), and is useful to prevent inducing participants' negative feelings (Renzetti and Lee, 1993) when asking about sensitive information.

Although the strategy of not asking criminal activity was adopted, sometimes the participants would disclose some criminal activities of other people in the course of conversation. However, the criminal information obtained during conversation probably falls into the category of hearsay if tested in court and is less likely to be treated as admissible evidence (Research ethics policy note No. 12, Sheffield University). In addition, according to the Code of Ethics of the British Society of Criminology (2015), people who witness crimes or hear about them before or after they are committed are not legally obliged to report them to the police. Researchers are under no additional legal obligations, except for crime related to terrorism, long-term child abuse, and money laundering. None of these crimes were discussed throughout my research. According to the Statement of Ethics issued by British Society of Criminology (2015), the confidentiality of participants should prevail. Reporting their criminal information to authorities not only breaches the code of ethics but also undermines the established trust with participants. It also increases the physical risk of researcher, as it breaches the triad norm and is likely to result in retaliation. Based on these justifications, the criminal information revealed by participants should not be reported to authorities.

Regarding the use of information revealed during the course of conversation between the researcher and participants during social eating with triads, several safeguards were taken to ensure that participants were respected. First, the researcher had obtained the prior consent from participants during the interview. When new participants were introduced, they were informed of the identity of the researcher as a PhD student, the purpose of research, and how the information obtained would be used. Participants were fully aware of the researcher's identity and research throughout the fieldwork, as she constantly mentioned her research progress, and her identity as a

triad researcher was well established within the triad community. The researcher avoided taking fieldwork notes in front of participants during social eating so as to show respect to them.

Second, if the researcher needed to quote the participants' conversation in the research, she would seek their consent on the spot, asking them whether they would permit me to quote it in her research and ensuring that their identity would be kept in strict confidence. She also asked the key informants to check the accuracy of the information, and asked the same participant to verify its accuracy when she had the opportunity to meet him a second time. They also had the right to amend the record if they did not want any of the information to be recorded. As noted, both the key informants and participants should possess the "localized ethics" (Kovats-Bernat, 2000) about the triad community; they should know best about what should and should not be recorded. Since all the participants are adults, as reasonable men with knowledge of the researcher's identity and purpose of her presence in social gatherings, they should have reasonable judgement of what should be mentioned in the presence of the researcher. Respecting the participants is crucial to establishing trust, which in turn is crucial for enhancing the reliability of the data provided by the participants and maintaining a trusting relationship between participants and the researcher.

In order to lower the legal risk of participants in light of the possibility of subpoena, Palys and Lowman (2000) suggest a methodological strategy to confuse one's research materials in such a way that even if materials are subpoenaed, they will be meaningless and no participants could be identified, such as using numbers or codes for identification without recording the names of offenders or victims in all research files. Without such details, the files are less useful to law-enforcement officials (Wolfgang, 1981). In the present research, the researcher also adopted this

practice when producing interviews records and ethnographic notes. During the course of events, the researcher created nicknames that are only known to the researcher (i.e. not the triad nicknames) to represent each participant. When transcribing the preliminary observational notes into formal ethnographic notes, all of these nicknames were replaced by formal codes. All of the preliminary observation notes in the mobile phone were deleted immediately after formal ethnographic notes were produced. These measures help to ensure that no participant would be identified in any research file.

3.5 Fieldwork Recordings Production and Analysis

3.5.1 Observation guidelines

Regarding the production of observational data, the researcher developed an observation guide which compiled various elements to be recorded in field notes, including seating arrangement (detail descriptions with a simplified map of seating), activities and interactions between guests and hosts and between guests (triads and non-triads) that occur in the settings, including symbolic meanings, nonverbal communication, physical clues, who speaks to whom, who talks, and sequence of actions (e.g. who initiates the toast, sequence of toast, who starts eating, etc.). Specific events that occurred were also recorded (e.g. Lo Shuk Fu got angry and swore after dinner when he noticed that a less experienced triad member pretended to be a senior member in order to “pull *guanxi*” with him; this incident was also noted in the thesis). Fieldwork notes also include follow-up and spontaneous interviews with key informants.

3.5.2 Recording of observations

All of the descriptions of observations were recorded with researcher's mobile phone, or recorded with voice notes when there were breaks during the course of events, such as when participants were going to washroom or making phone calls. The identity of participants was protected by using only "nicknames" or codes given by the researcher instead of genuine name or triad Dor. If the nicknames given would potentially reveal the identity of the participants, names would be transformed into codes during transcription. To prevent memory loss, the researcher immediately transcribed the audio and written observation notes into detail fieldwork notes on computer soon after she returned home. Observations were transcribed and organized into categories as noted in the observation guidelines. The next day, the researcher verified the observations with the key informants who participated in the same event to ensure the accuracy of recordings. After cross-checking between the raw fieldwork notes in her mobile phone and detailed fieldwork notes on computer, and confirming the observation with key informants, she deleted the raw notes files in the mobile phone immediately.

3.5.3 The use of observations in fieldwork for analysis and triangulation

Participatory observation is used to supplement and triangulate the information obtained from formal interviews. Thus, observation findings help to triangulate with the situations described in interviews, to ensure that there is no distortion or inaccuracies described by participants (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). In the present research, the observation findings were used to supplement and triangulate with interview findings for explaining the operational structure (triad factions) and

power structure (seniority and seniority stratification), as well as how seniority influences triads' collaboration in the triad community and the subculture of triads. In order to demonstrate how the observation findings were analysed and triangulated, examples are provided as follows.

Regarding the issue of power structure within triad society, for instance, many participants expressed that there was a clear division between junior and senior triad members in the triad community during interviews. This finding was confirmed with fieldwork observation at triad events and social eating. For example, the seating arrangement at triad events, banquets, and social eating is based on rank and seniority. Junior and senior members sat at separate tables at triad banquets and social eating. Senior members sat at VIP tables at these events, while the junior members sat far from the seniors, confirming this finding. Interactions between junior and senior triad members were very limited or virtually absent.

Many triad members mentioned that triad collaborations often take place between members from the same generation and rank. It is difficult for less experienced and low ranking triad members to establish a social network with senior members due to the clear seniority stratification in the triad community. This finding was further confirmed by two events recorded in the fieldwork study: first, a Lo Shuk Fu (the informant) refused to collaborate with a less experienced triad member when he noticed that the member was much lower in rank than himself and, second, when a 14K Lo Shuk Fu was introduced to the informant, they successfully established a good relationship when they realized that both of them came from the same generation and both were knowledgeable in triad rituals and history. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the informant and the follower of informant further showed how senior triads perceive seniority and how it determines

the chance for successful collaboration among triads.

The factional structure of triad societies was revealed in interviews. This finding was further confirmed with fieldwork observations. In Fa Pau Wui and triad events, seating was arranged based on the faction and triad society they belong to. In the funeral of Cho Kun, triad members were seated according to faction and triad society. When bowing to the deceased and deceased's family, members were formed into groups based on triad faction, led by the most senior members of the triad factions. The sequence of bowing also confirmed the hierarchy within the triad factional structure of Wo Shing Wo: Lo Shuk Fu bowed first, his followers – area bosses – bowed next, then the area bosses' followers, and frontline triads, the most junior triads bowed last in the group.

3.6 Measures to Enhance Validity and Reliability

The reliability and validity of the information obtained from interviewing offenders constantly warrants attention. Common reliability and validity problems arise in the following three areas: problems of memory (Antonopoulos, 2008: 76), difficulty in identifying where a particular piece of information or an impression originated (Finckenauer and Waring, 1998: 122), exaggeration (Antonopoulos, 2008: 76; Sigel, 2008: 27) and telling lies (Sigel, 2008: 27). The following measures were adopted to enhance the validity and reliability of the data:

3.6.1 Careful sample selection for in-depth interviews

1. Only formally initiated triad members and close associates of triads, including former long-term, close criminal partners, were selected. The legal definition of triad membership was used to screen suitable participants. The screening questions were: (A) What is your triad rank and what triad

society do you belong to? (B) Have you attended a triad initiation ceremony? (C) Have you pledged loyalty to any formal initiated triads as your protector? These screening questions were set based on the criterion in defining triad membership under current legal practices (see Kwok and Lo, 2013). Supplementary questions were asked about the basic structure in triad society and the process of the initiation ceremony in order to check the participants' triad knowledge and reconfirm their triad membership. These questions were asked before the audio recording. The names of the interviewees were replaced by codes in all documents. Only two close triad associates were selected in the present research. The selection criteria were (1) long-term collaborations with triads for organised crime operations, (2) direct involvement in organised crime operations with triads, and (3) possession of solid knowledge about triads and the triad community, which could be verified by the information provided through triangulation with the other collected data.

2. Only adults over 18 years of age were selected. This was to ensure the maturity of the participants so that they could understand the purpose and nature of the research. Because being or claiming to be a triad member is a criminal offence in Hong Kong (Kwok and Lo, 2013), it was unlikely that an adult interviewee would mimic being a triad member for an unpaid interview.

3. Only ex-offenders were selected. This was to ensure that the participants would be more willing to share their triad experiences, since they would have less to lose by disclosing information about their relationships with former partners in organised crime.

3.6.2 Confidence: privacy and sense of security

1. Privacy secured. The in-depth interviews were conducted in rooms at the university, the NGO and the church without the presence of others. With their privacy secured, the participants could have the confidence needed to reveal sensitive information.

2. Sense of security. The researcher briefed the participants about her position in the university, the aim of the research, and how the interview data would be handled. The interviewer presented herself as an academic who is interested in the triad subculture and the inter-relations between triads. By emphasising her identity as a researcher and a student, together with the safe interview settings, the participants could have a sense of security that may have enhanced their openness in revealing truthful information, while protecting their privacy and interests.

3. Handling of sensitive information. The researcher advised the participants not to disclose any names before starting the audio recording. The responses for screening purposes, such as details about their rank, the name of their triad society, and clarification about the initiation ceremony process undertaken were asked before the recording was started. In terms of crime operations, the participants were invited to mention only the crime for which they had already been convicted in court and to provide a general description of the crime involved. (Regarding handling sensitive information in the fieldwork, please refer to section 3.4)

4. Confidentiality. The researcher explained to the participants how the collected data would be handled after the interview and promised to keep their identity and information in strict confidence. The data were used only for research purposes. Where names were accidentally disclosed during

the interviews, they were removed in the verbatim records and replaced with a fake name or code.

3.6.3 Trust and rapport building with the participants

1. Trustful relationships between the church and the NGO. The researcher had worked closely with the church and the NGO for two years before the research started, and thus, a trustful relationship had been established. As some of the participants were referred by trusted staff of the church and the NGO, the trust established between the participants and the staff, together with the researcher's trustful relationships with the staff, acted to enhance the level of trust between the researcher and the participants.

2. Trustful relationships between the participants and the researcher. Rapport building is essential for establishing trust between the researcher and the participants, especially for criminals in the Chinese community. Chinese *guanxi* is more implicit for mutual interest and benefit (Jiang et al., 2012), and the triads are no exception. The Chinese often hesitate to reveal the hidden agendas behind their decisions and behaviours to strangers, and they tended to use triad-accepted norms to explain their decisions. For example, many senior triads used brotherhood as the reason to justify their decisions (e.g. supporting their followers in the Cho Kun election). After rapport had been established, they would eventually tell the researcher that a personal vested interest (e.g. money received or to maintain their control in the triad society) was the genuine reason for their decisions.

The researcher spent more than two years in the field to socialise with the key informants and some of their triad friends, and thus, many of them became convinced of her sincerity in guaranteeing their anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher's identity (PhD student and university researcher) and professional background (higher degree qualifications) provided her with prestige

and respect; as a result, the participants were more willing to share their triad experiences or to “teach” her about triad subculture and the operations of triad societies. More than three years of engagement in participant observations with the key informants and their triad friends also facilitated the trust and rapport building between the researcher and the subjects. The established trusted relationships that she cultivated in the previous triad research project also facilitated the establishment of her reputation and trustworthiness, hence expanding her networks in the triad community, which, in turn, provided her with a great deal of reliable and valuable information about the triad community.

3. Respect participants. For the information obtained from the daily conversations with the triad subjects in the participant observations (social meals and gatherings with triads), the researcher needed to re-inform the participants about which parts of the content would be used and how it would be used. Although verbal notification was given to the participants when the researcher was introduced to them, it was more appropriate to reconfirm it with them. If the participants wanted to remove the information provided, it was immediately deleted from the research. In any case, if any of the participants wanted to remove any part of the information, the researcher was obliged to respect their wishes in order to maintain the established trust between the researcher and the participants. The reconfirmation of the data interpretation was also crucial to show respect to the participants, in order to ensure that the researcher did not twist or misinterpret their ideas.

3.6.4 Cross-checking with the participants

In order to improve the validity and the reliability of the research, cross-checking between the participants and the researcher was adopted. This form of cross-checking is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 227–30). Cross-checking with the participants was done at different stages in the research. During the stage of data collection, in order to enhance the accuracy of the information provided by the participants, the researcher asked similar questions at different phases of the interview and conducted multiple interviews with the participants, when possible, over the course of the research, in order to assure the accuracy of the information. Unclear information was verified by asking similar questions in interviews with other participants. After a piece of data was collected from each triad, the researcher counter-checked it with other triads regarding the issue concerned. Only verified data were reported in this study. The following is an example of how the researcher verified the data. When a triad mentioned how Wo Shing Wo had developed into a dual-Cho Kun system since 1990s, the researcher counter-checked this with a few senior triads in Wo Shing Wo to ensure that the information provided by the said participant was accurate. To further verify the observation in the ethnographic study, for triangulation purposes, the data collected were crossed-checked with the key informants to ensure that the interpretations of the observed findings were accurate (examples were given in section 3.5).

After the transcription and interview analysis, the researcher shared and explained the analysis and each stage of the findings with the key informants to check for perceived accuracy (Wolcott, 1990) and to seek their feedback and comments in order to enhance the validity and understanding of the information provided by the participants. For example, after the first stage of the interviews, the

researcher noticed that the term “Dor” (see discussion in following chapters) carried a variety of meanings based on different participants’ interpretations. To clarify, further questions were established and asked to seek further clarification from the participants. Through interviewing different participants with similar sets of questions, and cross-checking the data obtained from the in-depth and informal interviews, the data obtained became repetitive and patterned, which helped to enhance the reliability of the research findings.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

In the present study, thematic analysis was adopted for data analysis. The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data. This method emphasizes organisation and rich description of the data set, which helps to report the experiences, meanings, and reality of participants. The procedure of analysis is further discussed as follows.

In the first stage, the transcription stage, qualitative data obtained from interviews and fieldwork notes were transcribed into Chinese, and saved in Word files. To ensure the accuracy of transcription, the transcribed data was counter-validated by the key informants and my supervisor, Professor T. Wing Lo. Since this is an independent research without the assistance of a research assistant and collaborators, I only relied on the key informants and my supervisor to cross-check the analysis. The researcher shared and explained the analysis and each stage of the findings with the key informants to check for perceived accuracy (Wolcott, 1990) and to seek their feedback and comments in order to enhance the validity and understanding of the information provided by the participants.

In the second stage, the coding stage, the transcribed data generated from in-depth interviews and fieldwork notes (including spontaneous interviews that took place in fieldwork and observations) were coded separately. In-depths interviews were coded first in order to generate themes and sub-themes; spontaneous interviews and observations were coded when the interview coding was done. The present research adopted manual coding instead of using a computer programme for analysis. The researcher started with using research questions and variables in the hierarchical approach as a guide for the first cycle of categorization, and copied and pasted the text from the original interview and observation files into the analysis files. Then she searched for the common factors to generate themes in the second cycle of data analysis and sub-themes in the subsequent cycles of data analysis. The researcher chose not to use computer coding; instead, she went through all the transcripts using a line-by-line approach to code the relevant text and then copy and paste them in the analysis files. The reason for using manual coding is that the researcher did the data collection and transcription on her own, and thus she is highly familiar with the context and content of the data. In addition, using computer coding for analysis might result in confusion and misinterpretation of the data, because many triad jargons consist of multiple meanings. For example, the term “Ah Kung” refers to different meanings: Dai Lo’s triad brother, triad headquarters, triad common fund, and the business of triad society. Therefore, using manual and line-by-line coding is more appropriate to identify the accurate meaning of specific terms.

In order to address the two main goals of the research, namely how triad societies are structured and operated, and how triads establish criminal collaborations in the triad community, mixed analytical methods were adopted – theory driven analysis based on hierarchical approach and inductive analysis based on data obtained.

For the operational structure of triad societies, themes were set based on the theoretical framework of the hierarchical approach. In this research, themes of the hierarchical approach were chosen according to Zhang and Chin (2003) and Finckenauer's (2005) definition of criminal organisations, including hierarchy of authority (promotion and recruitment, leadership, leadership selection/election), command and control (in terms of access to resources and resources distribution, including control of manpower, access to triad headquarters' resources, and profit sharing), division of labour (role and obligations of each rank), and membership (e.g. bonding between members of the same triad society). After the first cycle of data analysis, new sub-themes emerged in explaining the hierarchy of triad societies, namely operational structure and power structure. These sub-themes were generated based on the data obtained from interviews with new participants in the later stage of research. These sub-themes were not discovered in previous triad research (e.g. Lo, 2012) due to the presumption of the hierarchical approach that higher rank should possess highest authority and autonomy; however, the interview data revealed that rank and authority possessed is not always consistent. In order to provide a clear understanding of the triad hierarchy, which is the fundamental pillar in explaining the operational structure of triad societies, the researcher further categorized data into two sub-themes, namely operational structure and power structure. In addition, the interview data revealed that seniority is important in determining the authority and access to resources within triad society. Since this issue was not discovered in previous triad literature (e.g. Chu, 2000), a new theme under the sub-theme of power structure, namely seniority, was added in explaining the operational structure of triad societies.

Due to limited triad research available addressing how triads collaborate, inductive analysis (themes were generated from data instead of using a preset theoretical framework) was adopted for addressing the second research aim. The reason for supplementing the pre-existing theoretical framework (i.e. hierarchical approach) is to reflect the triads' practice in reality and to avoid preconception bias resulting from theoretical stands. Instead of relying on one theory to generate themes, the researcher sought common patterns in how triads established criminal collaboration in the triad community, what the considerations when choosing collaborators were, and how they maintained criminal collaborations. These questions guided the researcher to categorize rich data under these dimensions for further categorization and generating common themes and patterns.

After conducting the first cycle of analysis based on the data obtained from first two years, some new themes gradually emerged in explaining the triads' collaboration and access to resources, namely seniority, face, Dor, and triad territory (see Table 3.4). Thus, these themes were induced from the interview data based on the similar patterns found in explaining how triads established collaboration, and these variables were frequently mentioned by participants when asking the listed questions above. These themes replaced the listed questions for categorization. In order to illustrate how Dor and face are generated, and how these variables facilitate the establishment of triads' collaboration, I further developed these themes into sub-themes for detailed analysis. For the theme "territory", although there is a vast amount of data related to how territories were established and obtained, the present research only focused on how territory facilitates triads' collaboration within (bonding social capital) and between triad societies (bridging social capital). The themes and sub-

themes in the research are listed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Summary of Themes and Subthemes Identified in The Study

Scope of research	Theme	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3
Organisational Structure	Hierarchy of authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment - Promotion - Leadership - Resource access/distribution - Membership 	Operational Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rank 	Power Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possession of economic and social capital - Seniority 	Bonding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triad faction - Dai Lo Lang Chai relationship - Triad society
Criminal collaboration in triad community	Territory	Criminal collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bonding social capital - Bridging social capital 		
	Dor	Sources of Dor (How it is produced)	Spread of Dor (How reputation is circulated)	Dor verification
	Face	Construction and process of face-work (How to establish and maintain face)	Effects of face-work	

3.8 Presentation of the Findings

Findings of the present study are divided into two parts. Part One focuses on the organisational structure of triad societies in Hong Kong. In this part, Chapters four and five provide an answer through detailed examination on the historical background, and organisational and power structure of three major triad societies in Hong Kong, namely Sun Yee On, Wo Shing Wo and 14K. Differences and similarities in their structure are discussed. How seniority influences the hierarchical structure of triad society is examined in Chapter six.

Part Two focuses on how triads establish collaboration in the triad community. It examines what credentials triads would rely on in selecting collaborators. Special attention is given to the establishment and functions of Dor (reputation) in facilitating the development of triads' collaboration. It also provides an analysis on how face, face-work and its relations to Dor facilitate triads' collaborations, and how Dor is circulated and verified in the triad territories.

Part I

THE STRUCTURE OF TRIAD SOCIETIES

IN HONG KONG

Chapter 4 The Structure of Wo Shing Wo Triad Society

Chapter 5 The Structure of 14K and Sun Yee On Triad Societies

Chapter 6 Seniority as Hierarchical and Power Structure

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUCTURE OF WO SHING WO TRIAD SOCIETY

4.1 Introduction

The Chinese triad society, being one of the foremost criminal organisations in the world, has been long perceived as representing an ideal form of Weberian organisation, consisting of a hierarchical structure bound by rules and norms, clear divisions of labor and specified roles and responsibilities, and managed by chains of command. The hierarchical approach is the predominant approach applied in understanding the structure of triad societies (Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000; Morgan, 1960). Due to the limited availability of empirical studies into Hong Kong triad society, many scholars and Western governments continued to portray triad societies as being centrally structured, cohesive criminal organizations until the 1990s. For instance, Zhang and Chin (2003, 2008) maintained that a strict hierarchical structure with strong leadership and chain of commands, and restricted membership hindered the involvement of triad societies in transnational organised crime operations.

This mirage of a “centralised and hierarchical triad society” has gradually faded and, instead, many scholars now argue that triad society is loosely organised, or even disorganised (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009; Chin, 2005; Chu, 2005; Lo, 2010; McKenna, 1996; Xia, 2008; Zhao and Li, 2010). Although controversy within the study of triad societies remains, it is evident that analyses are exclusively based on a crime-oriented approach. As such, studies of the structure of triad societies are based on the crimes committed, while the internal management and structure of these societies

remains unaddressed, thereby only partially revealing their operational structure. What is more problematic is that the majority of triad scholars offer very limited empirical data, especially data from triads, upon which to support their claims (for example Chin, 1995; Chu, 2005).

However, thereafter Chu (2000, 2005) proposed a new dimension in describing triad societies as “small hierarchical pyramids led by area bosses at district level and connected by a form of cartel” (p. 22). Chu’s view is very similar to that of the police on triad societies (e.g. Curtis et al., 2004; McWalters, 1999) as his major source of empirical data comes from the Hong Kong Police. This new perspective has become the dominant standpoint in modern triad literature in the millennium (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009).

Nevertheless, Chu’s findings are inconclusive, and still many pieces of the puzzle are missing in connection with the operational structure of triad societies. For instance, he has only provided a general structure of triad societies, while the distinctiveness between different triad societies is not clearly addressed. He has mainly addressed the general structure of triad societies – in particular the headquarters system – and has provided a general description of the role of each rank of officer. However, the operational structure, including resources distribution, territorial management and information circulation, remains untouched.

In order to provide a more detailed examination of the structure of Hong Kong triad societies, three of the most active Hong Kong triad societies – namely 14K, Sun Yee On and Wo Shing Wo (Liu 2001:57; also see Chu, 2005; Lo and Kwok, 2014) – are selected to demonstrate the structural differences between them. The internal management of triad societies will also be examined in an

effort to provide a more complete picture of the triad structure.

These three triad samples have been selected in order to provide a rigorous representation of the structure of Hong Kong triad societies. The 14K has been selected as a sample triad society because it is the largest triad in terms of membership, and is the most disorganised triad society in Hong Kong (Lo and Kwok, 2014). In order to provide a strong comparison base upon which to evaluate the level of cohesiveness of triad societies, Sun Yee On is selected as it is regarded as having the most cohesive and organised structure of all triad societies (ibid.). Wo Shing Wo has been chosen as the third sample, as it is the largest triad society under the Wo Group consortium – one of the principal consortiums of all Hong Kong triad societies – and thus is able to provide an enhanced portrayal of the structure of Wo Group triad societies. In this chapter, the structure of Wo Shing Wo triad society will be examined. In the next chapter, the structure of the 14K and Sun Yee On triad societies will be discussed.

4.2 The Origin of Wo Shing Wo

Wo Shing Wo is one of the triad societies located under the “Wo Group” or “Wo Tsz Tau”, which is portrayed as a triad consortium (Morgan, 1960). Prior to the establishment of the Wo Tsz Tau, several local triad societies, such as Hung Shing Wui and Young Yee Tong, were operating in Hong Kong. In order to terminate the constant warfare between these local triad societies, in 1909, a respected senior triad of Yung Yee Tong decided to unify them by affixing the word “Wo” before the name of each triad society, thereby establishing the Wo Group (Cheung, 1987; Chu, 2000:18). The literal meaning of “Wo” is peace, signifying internal harmony between the Wo Group triad societies.

Wo Tsz Tau, according to Morgan (1960), is the “administrative body and is not a branch society of the Wo Group” (p. 95). Its role is that of a superordinate body of Wo Group branches, such as Wo Shing Yee and Wo Shing Wo. Members of the Wo Tsz Tau are appointed by senior triads from each branch, although they are able to retain their branch identity. The chief function of the headquarters of Wo Tsz Tau is arbitration between Wo Group branches (Morgan, 1960:95-6). One of the senior triad participants briefly explained the development of the Wo Group triad societies in Hong Kong:

(T5) The Wo Group is one of the oldest triad societies in Hong Kong. Wo Ho Choi was the first Wo Group triad society in Hong Kong and specialised in managing the coolie market. To be a coolie, one had to be a member of Wo Ho Choi. Some of the Wo Ho Choi members started working in the On Lok Beverage Factory. They eventually became independent from Wo Ho Choi and formed the triad group Wo On Lok. Wo Shing Wo was split from another triad group, Wo Hop To.

Triad societies under the Wo Group consortium operated independently. As all the Wo Group triad societies were part of the alliance under the Wo Tsz Tau, they adopted a mutual guarantor system to facilitate human resources management among them. A senior triad officer explained how the mutual guarantor system worked in the past:

(T5) The Wo Group used to consist of a few independent triad societies under the Wo Tsz Tau. Later, these triad societies started to split and developed into more independent triad societies. Because all triad societies were under the same consortium, inter-triad society promotion was common; that is, a triad from Wo Hop To could be promoted to be an office-

bearer of Wo On Lok. However, as unfairness and unclear identity of triads led to conflicts between triad societies, they abolished this form of mutual guarantor system and became totally independent, with no resource or manpower sharing.

After the Wo Group abandoned the mutual guarantor system in the 1960s, Wo Tsz Tau disappeared. Although the Wo Group triad societies were freed from the limited control of Wo Tsz Tau and operated autonomously, symbolically they have distanced themselves from other non-Wo Group triad societies and regard themselves as members of the Wo Group alliance. This is especially the case in the prison setting, as noted by a triad of Wo Shing Wo:

(T14) In prison, there are many inmate representatives from different triad societies managing other inmates. On the day I arrived in prison, triad representatives from different triad societies, such as 14K, Big Four and Wo Tsz Tau, hung out in the open area for the purpose of recruiting new inmates into their groups. It was necessary for me to “Heung Dor” (this means he had to declare which triad society he belonged to) and so I told them that I was a (Wo) Shing Wo member. They put me into the Wo Group, which consists of different triad societies under the Wo Tsz Tau. Then, I became a member of Wo Tsz Tau in prison. If any conflict arose, the members of Wo Tsz Tau would unite and fight back.

Even now, although the Wo Tsz Tau has been dissolved and triad societies under the Wo Group have become independent, the alliance status that exists between the Wo Group triad societies remains unchanged. The Wo Tsz Tau identity still plays an important role in terms of maintaining the cohesiveness of the alliance when competing with other triad societies.

4.3 Organizational Structure of Wo Shing Wo

Prior to the 1990s, Wo Shing Wo had only one Cho Kun (chairman) and one Cha So (treasurer) in its headquarters. This tradition has since changed and now there are two Cho Kun and two Cha So in the headquarters of Wo Shing Wo (further details will follow in later sections). The Heung Chu (incense master) is responsible for organizing and holding verities of triad ceremonial events, including initiation and promotion ceremonies.

In my fieldwork, I witnessed that the Heung Chu of Wo Shing Wo appeared at a grand opening ceremony of a local village sports association in the New Territories. He was teaching a triad Cho Kun candidate how to give red pockets to the dragon dance with triad hand signs, and was instructing dragon dancers to perform in a special triad ceremonial manner during the event. However, the role of Heung Chu is gradually fading and being replaced by that of Lo Shuk Fu in terms of teaching senior triads the triad hand signs (T18, T17). Triad ritual teaching often takes place during triad events or private occasions, such as birthday banquets of senior triads (T18).

4.3.1 Cho Kun

The Cho Kun, as the head of a triad society, possesses the ultimate authority in manpower management within the triad society. This power is crucial as it allows the Cho Kun to arbitrate internal conflict between different factions within the same triad society. For instance, Wo Shing Wo (as is the case in other triad societies) has “execution teams” (行動組) to exercise violence led by territorial bosses. However, the Cho Kun can exercise ultimate authority over the execution teams, as depicted by an ex-execution team member of Wo Shing Wo:

(T13) The execution team is responsible for killing and wounding, and is something like a special task force in triad society, which executes triad command professionally. The Cho

Kun has the authority to command them. For example, if you need to kill someone in To Kwa Wan, then you gotta contact the territorial boss to instruct his team to execute the task for you. If the territorial bosses need to mobilize their execution team, theoretically it has to be approved by the Cho Kun.

Based on the information provided by this ex-execution team member, territorial bosses are not highly independent. As the key role of the Cho Kun involves arbitration between different factions within triad society, if territorial bosses wish to mobilize an execution team to exercise violence, approval from the Cho Kun is also required. On the other hand, the Cho Kun also has the authority to mobilize execution team members to kill or fight for him when necessary. So, he could utilize this authority to mobilize manpower for territorial management. For instance, the Cho Kun has the final decision on the choice of area boss within each triad territory, as an experienced Wo Yee Tong triad described:

(T21) As a territorial boss, you need to share some of your profit with the Lo Shuk Fu and the Cho Kun in order to retain their support. Otherwise, if triads from another faction in your territory do this and successfully get their support, the Cho Kun could mobilize other triads to take over your territory. Even if you are the territorial boss, it doesn't mean that the territory is yours and your dominion is forever.

In Wo Shing Wo, territorial bosses are still required to share their profits with the Cho Kun in order to maintain their dominion within their triad territory. Without the support of the Cho Kun, their dominion would be at risk. For instance, a participant (T13) mentioned an uprising of triads that took place in Sheung Shui, challenging the right of control of the existing territorial boss. The

challenge ended in failure because the Cho Kun mobilized execution teams from other regions to support the existing territorial boss in defeating the rivals.

Based on the information provided by two experienced triads, the Cho Kun has the ultimate authority over manpower mobilization and territorial management. This power is critical in terms of allowing the Cho Kun to perform his role as arbitrator of triad society. Without this authority, simply relying on seniority to exert influence over territorial bosses would be insufficient for the Cho Kun to perform his role. This finding indicates the existence of centrality in the Wo Shing Wo triad society; territorial bosses are not completely free from the control of Cho Kun.

Although the Cho Kun enjoys much privilege and authority in triad society, this does not imply that he has ownership of the triad society and all its resources, including the common fund and all profit generated by triads within the triad society. A current Cho Kun of one of the Wo Group triad societies described the obligations and benefits of the Cho Kun:

(T6) Up until the 1980s, the Cho Kun only received HK\$30,000 per month as salary. In addition, we are required to share any profit gained from our territories with the common fund. This is used to support the welfare of the triads and other necessary daily expenses of the triad society. We don't have ownership of the fund but they do have the right to control it during office. In return, the Cho Kun has the power to mobilize manpower within the triad society. Because of this authority, it would be easy for us to establish Dor (reputation) and social networking for the purpose of soliciting business.

4.3.2 Lo Shuk Fu (老叔父)

Although the Cho Kun is positioned at the apex of power within Wo Shing Wo, in reality his structural position does not guarantee his possession of the highest power within the triad structure. Lo Shuk Fu, who do not exist in the formal triad structure, are often positioned within a higher power structure in Wo Shing Wo. In triad subculture, the term “Lo Shuk Fu” (literally meaning “old uncles”) refers to those senior triads who have stepped down from the Cho Kun position (T7).

The term Lo Shuk Fu also has a second meaning – an honorary position in the headquarters – as explained by a Lo Shuk Fu of Wo Shing Wo:

(T17) Lo Shuk Fu is a formal, official position within Wo Shing Wo. It is also an honor. We are different from ordinary “Shuk Fu” (i.e. ordinary senior triads with long service experience within triad society). In terms of seniority, we enjoy a higher status and authority than them. This is because we were nominated and elected by many well recognized, experienced senior triads. Spending lots of years in triad society is, on its own, insufficient to enable one to become a Lo Shuk Fu. A good understanding of triad history, traditions, rituals and norms is very important. This is the minimum requirement. In addition, contribution to triad society is important. Only those with a well-established recognition of, and contribution towards, triad society can be elected. After being elected, the incense master will hold an initiation ceremony for the successful candidate and will announce him the official Lo Shuk Fu. Then some items will be given to the Lo Shuk Fu as evidence of his identity, including “real beard fake teeth” (i.e. some accessories that hang on the waist) and a vest with a triad poem inside.

An experienced triad also confirms the existence of this position in triad society:

(T17) Only Wo Group triad societies have the official position of Lo Shuk Fu. In other triad societies, Lo Shuk Fu is not an official position but rather is a general term used to refer to senior triads. Our triad society (Wo Yee Tong) also has this position. The successful candidate is elected by a group of senior triads with ten years or more triad experience. They are not necessarily triad officers but must spend some fruitful years within triad society. In addition, these official Lo Shuk Fu also need to be confirmed by going through an initiation ceremony held by the incense master.

Different from Lo Shuk Fu of other sample triad societies, the position of the Lo Shuk Fu in Wo Shing Wo is regarded as part of the headquarters system and is a more senior position than that held by ordinary senior triads or ex-Cho Kun. Traditionally, they were required to be nominated and elected by a group of senior triads, depending on seniority – the term “seniority” here refers to experience and years spent in triad society, and recognition among senior triads. The nomination had to pass through a formal initiation ceremony with the incense master’s approval.

According to a Lo Shuk Fu of Wo Shing Wo, the last nomination of the Lo Shuk Fu took place in the 1960s. No further formal Lo Shuk Fu have since been elected. This honorary position has disappeared due to a simplification of triad structure and rituals during the 1970s (T17). The Lo Shuk Fu system remains unchanged in terms of role and functions, but composition of the board of the Lo Shuk Fu has altered from an official position elected by senior triads to automatically being granted to those who step down from the Cho Kun position. As such, the term Lo Shuk Fu nowadays simply refers generally to those ex-Cho Kun.

Lo Shuk Fu continue to play an important role in triad society. Although they do not officially exist

within the triad structure, their authority and influence in triad society is equivalent to those of headquarters staff. As already noted, the board of Lo Shuk Fu has the right to nominate and vote within the process of the election of the Cho Kun (This finding is confirmed by T17, along with two other Wo Shing Wo triads, T9, T13).

The performance of the Cho Kun is constantly examined by the Lo Shuk Fu, as described by a senior triad of Wo Shing Wo:

(T9) The Lo Shuk Fu play a very important role in triad society. They are not only responsible for voting and nominating the Cho Kun; they are also responsible for monitoring the performance of the Cho Kun. If the Cho Kun fails to perform his job well, the board of Lo Shuk Fu can remove him through election during his office and re-elect a replacement.

Although the Cho Kun is the head of triad society, his power is not superior to all members. In fact, the ultimate power is instead vested in the hands of the Lo Shuk Fu, as confirmed by an ex-Cho Kun of one of the Wo Group triad societies:

(T4) In the Wo Group, Cho Kun are just puppets, because they are elected by the Lo Shuk Fu. If they have the power to promote you to the role of Cho Kun, they also have the power to remove you. In the past, only the Lo Shuk Fu have had the authority to vote for the Dragon Head of the Wo Tsz Tau. The Cho Kun had no vote at all.

Using modern corporate terms to explain, the Cho Kun in modern triad society is similar to a CEO. The board of the Lo Shuk Fu is similar to a board of directors. The chief function of the Lo Shuk

Fu is to safeguard, control and monitor the performance of the Cho Kun, which is important in terms of counterbalancing the power of the Cho Kun. In triad tradition, authority over manpower and resources (the common fund) has been vested in the hands of the Cho Kun. The Cho Kun is in turn subject to the control of a group of Lo Shuk Fu, and thus is accountable to them. It can be seen that the Lo Shuk Fu has the right to oversee the performance of the Cho Kun.

4.4 Cho Kun Elections

Wo Shing Wo adopts an election system for the selection of Cho Kun. Chu (2000:27) argued that the election of Cho Kun in a triad society takes place annually or bi-annually. But according to my interviews with senior triads of Wo Shing Wo, elections of Wo Shing Wo should take place triennially (T18, T17). Cho Kun can be re-elected once ((T9, T17).

4.4.1 Past Cho Kun elections

Elections of Wo Shing Wo do not adopt universal suffrage. Only the Lo Shuk Fu have the right to nominate candidates and vote in Cho Kun elections. A Lo Shuk Fu portrays the Wo Shing Wo election procedure that was in place in the 1960s and 1970s:

(T17) During the 1960s and 1970s, all Cho Kun were required to be nominated publicly in the headquarters. The names of all the Cho Kun nominees would be posted in the headquarters office. Then all of the Lo Shuk Fu would gather together in a meeting to justify their support of their particular nominees. The Lo Shuk Fu could comment on each nominee during the meeting. After hearing all the comments, the Lo Shuk Fu could vote for the best candidate. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes would be the next Cho Kun. If there was any controversy or conflicting opinions between the Lo Shuk Fu, the most senior Lo Shuk Fu would make the final adjudication. Therefore, the words of the most senior Lo Shuk Fu would prevail. If he was of the opinion that any candidate was unqualified, then the candidate's name

would be removed from the list of candidates immediately.

In traditional Cho Kun elections, only official Lo Shuk Fu had the authority to nominate and vote. Since Cho Kun were elected through the consensus of a significant number of experienced and respectable triads, the elected Cho Kun would be fully recognized among triads. Although the opinion of the Lo Shuk Fu did not necessarily represent the interests of all triads within the organization, the recognition by triads of the official Lo Shuk Fu election acted to enhance the legitimacy of the Cho Kun. This would have been important in terms of securing his authority and control within triad society. The transparency of the nomination and election process also enhanced the objectivity and fairness of the Cho Kun election system.

4.4.2 Criteria of the Cho Kun

Seniority is the most important element in traditional Cho Kun elections, as explained by two Wo Shing Wo triads:

(T13) The position of Cho Kun is mostly occupied by senior triads, such as area bosses or triad officers; for instance, it might be occupied by a 426 (Red Pole) with a sound Dor (reputation).

(T17) To become a Cho Kun, seniority (that is, years of services within triad societies) and contribution to triad society are both important.

In Lo Shuk Fu elections, rank and position may not be relevant when defining seniority. However, in Cho Kun elections, traditionally, seniority refers to rank, positions held, years spent in and contributions made to triad society. These criteria are not mutually exclusive, as triad officers often fulfil the last two criteria.

Many triad researchers have emphasized the importance of violence to triad societies and have presumed that leadership of triad societies should be vested in triads who are successful fighters, such as Red Pole (Chu, 2000), and possess the ability to exercise violence. However, historically, heads of triad societies have often been dominated by the Cho Hai (Liaison Officers), who possess extensive social networks, as one senior triad disclosed:

(T5) In the past, most of the Shan Chu positions were occupied by Cho Hai, because they were specialised in liaison and communication. With their extensive social networks, they had significant access to information. These resources were particularly important for Shan Chu, as they needed to rely on them for decision making.

However, this criterion was altered when triad societies were turned into criminal organizations. The change in criteria for leadership roles signified the changing nature of triad societies. The emphasis on violence led to the rise of Red Pole's importance in triad society. For this reason, modern triads usually have Red Pole to be the Cho Kun, because triads needed to use violence to compete for territories and protect their vested interests (T17).

In addition to violence, triad norm compliance, contributions to triad society and seniority were important criteria in Cho Kun selection, as illustrated by a Lo Shuk Fu:

(T17) In the past, the morality of the triad was very important. Heavy weight was attached to the norm compliance of the triad. If he infringed triad norms, such as having an affair with his brothers' wives, or betraying triad society, or stealing from his brothers, then his credibility would be seriously discounted; he might even have been removed from the

candidate list.....To be a Cho Kun, performance was very important. Performance was evaluated on how many territories he secured for triad society, and how much he earned for us. However, as already stated, morality was even more important in terms of obtaining the recognition of other triads. No matter how much he earned or how many territories he secured, if he infringed triad norms, he would be removed from the list for sure.

As a member of triad society, triads are expected to comply with the triad norms, which is crucial for maintaining the cohesion among members, even senior triads have no exception. The importance of norm compliance was emphasized in traditional Cho Kun elections, which implies the importance of the honor of triads. Italian mafia also applied the norm compliance of Mafiosi to their man of honor selection (Paoli, 2003: 74-5).

Honor, from Girodano (2010) 's interpretation, is understood as compliance to social norms that are acknowledged by the community who share them (p. 686), which is important for upholding the cohesiveness of that community. Honor is also important for affirming superiority and legitimate power within the community. Adhesion to shared norms can also be interpreted as utilitarian, in terms of guaranteeing the dominion of the powerful over the community (Paoli, 2003:75).

The Cho Kun, as the leader of triad society, is expected to fully comply with triad norms. This is crucial for maintaining order within the triad society and ensuring the compliance of followers. Contributions to triad society can be interpreted as enhancing both the honor and ability credentials of triads, since it signifies altruism to the collective good and to the leaders (e.g. being imprisoned

for committing a crime for the good of the triad society or headquarters). In addition, such contributions prove a triad's ability to mobilize manpower and exercise violence to conquer and protect territories, as well as his ability to generate profit.

4.4.3 Present Cho Kun elections

Traditionally, the Wo Group has only a single Cho Kun in each triad society. However, this tradition changed within Wo Shing Wo in the 1990s. In modern times, there are dual Cho Kun in Wo Shing Wo, who come from different factions within the triad society (T6, T13, T17).

Two senior triads from Wo Shing Wo (an experienced triad and an experienced Lo Shuk Fu) confirmed and explained the origin of the dual Cho Kun in Wo Shing Wo:

(T13) Chick [fake name] was the Cho Kun of my triad society during the 1990s. Originally, we had only one Cho Kun. However, Chick secretly transferred the entire common fund into his personal account and used it to support one of his followers in his quest to become the next Cho Kun. Supporting this candidate was expensive as he needed to pay the Lo Shuk Fu for their votes. He used this method in an attempt to secure his continued control over the society after he had stepped down from the position. He supported his follower's campaign to become his successor, so that he could extend his dominion over the triad society and fence off other competitors.....Those who were not part of Chick's faction were, of course, marginalised and their chance of being elected was hampered. In order to compete, 18 Dai Lo established an alliance in an attempt to overthrow Chick and his follower. Ultimately, two Cho Kun were elected – one was Chick's follower, and the other was supported by the 18 Dai Lo alliance. Since then, my triad society has had two Cho Kun.

(T17) Originally we had only one Cho Kun until, in the 1990s, we began to have a dual Cho Kun. Chick and the Cha So of his faction stole the money from the common fund to support Chick's follower as the next Cho Kun. The marginalised triads were discontent and assigned another triad as the Cho Kun. In fact, these marginalised triads were not particularly cohesive as they emanated from different factions and thus were supported by different Lo Shuk Fu. Therefore, during the following term of election, the alliance was dissolved. Each of the factions, led by their various Lo Shuk Fu, assigned members of their own faction as the Cho Kun. This is why we have two Cho Kun now. In fact, none of these Cho Kun are recognized by the majority of triads; they are only recognized by members of their own faction.

This incident from the 1990s changed the leadership of Wo Shing Wo from a monocratic to an oligarchic regime, thus paving the pathway to decentralisation. There are a couple of reasons behind the transformation of the leadership of Wo Shing Wo. First, the risk to the Cho Kun increased. In the 1990s, the colonial Hong Kong government initiated a series of legislative reforms to enhance the power of law enforcement in tackling triad societies (Broadhurst and Lee, 2009). The surveillance power of the police was enhanced and tougher sanctions on triad related activities were also introduced (Kwok and Lo, 2013) in order to curb the financial power of triads. Under these circumstances, being a Cho Kun of a triad society became risky.

Therefore, the Cho Kun positions become less attractive to capable and senior triads and many hesitate to put themselves forward for the position. Instead, these triads prefer to maintain their control and influence in the background by assigning their followers as the Cho Kun. This reduces

the risk of them being targeted by law enforcement, while enabling them to continue maintaining control in the triad society. This decreasing interest of capable and senior triads in the Cho Kun position also provides an opportunity for less experienced triads to occupy the Cho Kun office.

The second reason behind the transformation of the leadership of Wo Shing Wo relates to the change in the Cho Kun selection criteria and the composition of the board of Lo Shuk Fu. After the fadeout of the old form of official Lo Shuk Fu, they were replaced by ex-Cho Kun. According to an experienced Wo Shing Wo triad, there are currently 21 Lo Shuk Fu in Wo Shing Wo. All of them are exclusively former Cho Kun:

(T13) [Wo] Shing Wo used to have 19 votes, and now we have 21. The number of votes is based on the number of former Cho Kun. Basically, the Lo Shuk Fu nowadays are all Cho Kun who have stepped down from the position. There is no more official Lo Shuk Fu now (T17).

Under the traditional election system, a Cho Kun would resume the status and rank they had occupied prior to promotion, after stepping down from the Cho Kun position (T7, T17). However, as ex-Cho Kun replaced the official Lo Shuk Fu, they could maintain their power and control by nominating trusted followers as the new Cho Kun. As a result, the modern Lo Shuk Fu system has become a platform from which each Cho Kun can continue to foster power interests through close followers. In other words, they can extend their power from generation to generation through continuously assigning their followers as Cho Kun, and using their dependency on them as a control apparatus to exploit triad resources and maintain their power for an extended period of time.

This compositional change in the Lo Shuk Fu system led to the decline of the original function of the Lo Shuk Fu – as a method of check and balance of the Cho Kun’s power and performance – since modern day Cho Kun and Lo Shuk Fu emanate from the same faction and maintain a strong bond and mutual interests. Due to this lack of autonomous check and balance, the headquarters and the common fund can be easily exploited by the Lo Shuk Fu for the purpose of empowering their faction members.

The importance of triad norm compliance, seniority, experience and contribution to triad society in Cho Kun elections is also declining. Instead, the financial power and manpower of triads has become more important, as noted by a Lo Shuk Fu of Wo Shing Wo:

(T17) Those with power – I mean, the wealthiest ones with the most manpower – are more likely to be Cho Kun. These wealthy and powerful triads will assign their own followers to be the Cho Kun by giving money to the Lo Shuk Fu. The chance of winning the office depends on which faction gives the most money.

In the past, only triad officers were eligible for selection as the Cho Kun. However, in modern elections, even a young Sze Kau member with little noted contribution to triad society can be elected as a Cho Kun. Rank, position and experience have become less important (T9, T17). As a result, the authority and power of the Cho Kun has been declining in triad society, as observed by a Lo Shuk Fu of Wo Shing Wo:

(T17) The Cho Kun in modern triad society is like a “spirit tablet” (神主牌). They are put there as a ritual, but they are useless. It’s like those “spirit tablets” in villages; you worship

them because it is the tradition, but it wouldn't bring you any actual benefit or return.....Whenever there are gang fights or anything related to triads occurs within your triad society, the police come to you and bug you. You have to deal with the police and you can't do anything at all, because Cho Kun nowadays have no actual power of control over their members. The Cho Kun can only control his followers within his faction, but is unable to control the entire Wo Shing Wo.

The transformation of the Lo Shuk Fu system not only led to changes in the criteria of Cho Kun selection, but also destroyed the objectivity and fairness previously present in Cho Kun elections. Without seniority, and with limited experience in and contributions to triad society, it is difficult for Cho Kun to gain the respect and recognition of triads, especially senior and capable ones (T17).

In my fieldwork study, I had an opportunity to meet a Cho Kun candidate (T3), who had been assigned by a Lo Shuk Fu (a former Cho Kun and his protector) to be one of the upcoming Cho Kun. This candidate was an ordinary Sze Kau member with around 20 years' triad experience. Compared to the Cho Kun of the pre-1990s, he is regarded as a junior triad. He told me that he ordered his followers to attack the protestors involved in the "Umbrella Movement". It was not his wish to attack the protestors because he did not want to be involved in political issues. He had done so only because he had been so instructed by his "boss" – a Lo Shuk Fu and a former Cho Kun of Wo Shing Wo. Similarly, he had been instructed by the same Lo Shuk Fu to encroach upon a 14K territory in the New Territories, because his "boss" was keen to invest in the region following an announcement by the government of future urban planning in the area.

This series of evidence reveals that this informant, despite being a Cho Kun candidate, is subordinate to the Lo Shuk Fu and is subject to his control. Without seniority and with little contribution made to the triad society, he does not have the recognition of senior triads; therefore, he can only rely on his protector's support in order to assure his forthcoming Cho Kun position. This means that his autonomy is limited and that he is subject to the control of his protector. Although the authority of the Cho Kun remains unchanged, in practice the power is no longer vested in the Cho Kun but in the Lo Shuk Fu. In other words, the organizational structure may not be consistent with the social hierarchy and power structure. The modern Lo Shuk Fu system not only empowers the ex-Cho Kun, but also creates a system of dependency of current Cho Kun, making them a puppet of the Lo Shuk Fu.

Due to the weakened recognition and authority of the Cho Kun, the quality of the relationship between the Lo Shuk Fu and the Cho Kun (mostly followers or faction members of the Lo Shuk Fu) has become pivotal in determining a candidate's chance of winning the office. In traditional Cho Kun elections, it was common for Lo Shuk Fu to nominate and vote for their followers as Cho Kun (T17). Although "bribing" Lo Shuk Fu has become a common practice in modern Cho Kun elections, many conservative Lo Shuk Fu still prefer to follow tradition, as noted by a Lo Shuk Fu of Wo Shing Wo:

(T17) Every Lo Shuk Fu has his own preference in Cho Kun candidate nominations. It is often the case that they support their follower because of brotherhood... In fact, I really wanna support Sai (fake name) as a Cho Kun candidate in the coming election – that is the one you met in Wei Tung before. I think he is very good because he is my follower's follower. As a Lo Shuk Fu, my preference depends on the *guanxi* of the candidate.

Therefore, I prefer to support my follower.

In addition, the power of the Lo Shuk Fu is also crucial in determining the chance of office winning. For instance, T3, the Cho Kun candidate was supported by a notorious triad figure. However, he finally lost in the election due to a series of scandals that affected the power and reputation of his protector (the Lo Shuk Fu who sponsored him), as confirmed by one of the Lo Shuk Fu:

(T18) The chance of winning the election really depends on the power of Lo Shuk Fu, because the Cho Kun candidate needs to depend on his Dai Lo's support in order to win the office. If the Dai Lo's power is declining, like his Dai Lo, who lost reputation among Sing Wo triads, a negative result should be expected. Even if he attempted to do something, like attacking the rival in an attempt to demonstrate his power and contribution to our triad society, it wouldn't change his destiny.

Since the relationship between Lo Shuk Fu and Cho Kun candidate is crucial in determining the chance of nomination and winning office, Cho Kun candidates need to establish a good relationship (*la guanxi*) with them in order to gain their support, as illustrated by an experienced Wo Shing Wo triad:

(T9) If a triad wants to be nominated, of course he needs to buy some expensive gifts for the Lo Shuk Fu, treat them with good meals, and provide them with money. This is not an obligation, but if he fails to do so, they will not bother to support him. Simply having *ganqing* (affection) between them is insufficient; actual benefit is equally important.

As a result, those who are capable of providing financial resources to the Lo Shuk Fu, who can

control nominations and votes, are more likely to be selected as a Cho Kun candidate. This situation has opened the floodgates of using financial resources to bribe the Lo Shuk Fu in order to gain election support. This also explains why financial resources have become so important nowadays. Hence, the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship is not maintained by brotherhood or affection, but rather depends on instrumental and utilitarian returns. This practice has gradually changed the values of triad society from a brotherhood to a utilitarian basis.

4.4.4 Factionalisation and decentralisation

The modern Lo Shuk Fu system has not only changed the power structure of Wo Shing Wo, but has also significantly impacted the decline of its cohesiveness and fostered the development of factions within the triad society. The transformation of modern Cho Kun elections provides opportunities for Lo Shuk Fu to pursue their personal interests by perpetuating their power through assigning their followers as Cho Kun, in order to permanently exploit the privileges associated with the position. This transformation has two consequences.

First, it has strengthened the bond among triad members within the same faction controlled by a Lo Shuk Fu. The weakening of the Cho Kun has created his dependency on the Lo Shuk Fu, which has in turn strengthened the Lo Shuk Fu's control and the bond between them. However, this form of centrality is limited to triad factions and does not apply to the entire triad society, as observed by an experienced triad:

(T21) In fact, a powerful Dai Lo can provide lots of profit-making opportunities (i.e. including legitimate and illicit businesses) to his Lang Chai (followers) in exchange for their support. On the other hand, followers and their protégés, as faction members under the same Dai Lo, also benefit from their Dai Lo, especially those who possess a strong

social network. The relationship between the Dai Lo and his followers is not one directional, but is better understood as a mutually beneficial relationship. However, this kind of strong bonding only exists within the web of Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship – that is, the faction members under the same Dai Lo – and does not extend to the entire triad society.

Some of the marginalised triads lacking the support of the powerful Lo Shuk Fu choose to either seek their support through “bribery” or develop their own faction to compete with the dominant one, thus paving the way for a factionalisation of leadership.

Second, different Lo Shuk Fu have their own faction members, that forms their power base. In order to maximize the benefit of the faction, the Lo Shuk Fu are less willing to compromise and consensus between different factions is difficult to reach. Due to the diversified leadership in the headquarters – which consists of two Cho Kun representing different factions within the triad society, backed by different competing Lo Shuk Fu – further decentralisation of the triad society to a faction-based structure has occurred.

4.5 Recruitment of Wo Shing Wo Triads

Following Wo Group tradition, only formally initiated triads, i.e. the Sze Kau member, have the authority to recruit followers. Thus, the direct approval of protectors is also required (T7). This rule is also applicable to Wo Shing Wo. The power and ability of the triad and his protector are important in determining recruitment decision making, as confirmed by an experienced triad of Wo Shing Wo:

(T13) Two years after I joined Wo Shing Wo, when I was about 14, my Dai Lo asked me to recruit some Lang Chai (followers) because he thought I had the ability to assist them. The permission to recruit meant that he had the ability to protect, because I needed to rely on his protection. Without the backup of my Dai Lo, I didn't have the ability to provide sufficient protection for my Lang Chai. Of course, my ability is also important, because not everyone would be approved by the Dai Lo to recruit followers.

The protector has strict control over the recruitment process. This is because junior triads need to rely on their protectors for backup, in order to provide protection to the next tier of followers. Due to the status and hierarchical differences between protectors and followers, followers are expected to show respect to their protector and comply with his commands:

(T13) I was obligated to report everything to my Dai Lo, including who I had argued with, who I had recruited. I needed to bring my Lang Chai to meet him and to introduce them; I asked my Lang Chai to call him Ah Kung, in order to show respect to him.

Since the 1980s, the recruitment process of Wo Shing Wo has been further loosening as they work towards expanding their manpower to compete with their rivals. Authority for recruitment is not

restricted to initiated triads, i.e. the Sze Kau members, but also extends to the Hanging the Blue Lantern (T13). However, the recruiter is still required to gain approval from the direct protector. Strict recruitment control is still vested in the direct relationship between a triad and his followers, but is not binding to the followers' next generation of new recruits (T13, T23).

Prior to being formally initiated into triad society, newly recruited followers are known as "Hanging the Blue Lantern" (T7). In fact, this is not a formal rank of the triad society and this term is not mentioned in Morgan's (1960) description of triad structure. Chu (2000) regarded them as "probationary members" and as the lowest rank of triad hierarchy. In triad norms, a Blue Lantern is not automatically transformed into a formal triad member. In order to gain promotion to formal member, they are first closely observed by their protector – the triad who recruited him. There is no fixed probation period, the period of time depending instead on the performance of the probationer and his protector's discretion:

(T7) Many Blue Lanterns follow Sze Kau Chai, but not all can be promoted to formal triads. Their Dai Lo determines promotion. There are many criteria of promotion, including loyalty, ability to fight and assist his Dai Lo, reciprocity and brotherhood. The performance of a Blue Lantern is evaluated based on braveness in fighting: for instance, whether he may run away from a gang fight, or may even not show up whenever the Dai Lo "blows his whistle" (calling followers together for a fight).

To gain promotion to the position of formal triad member, a Blue Lantern's protector becomes his guarantor and submits his name to the protector's superior. The new recruit then awaits the next initiation ceremony and can become a Sze Kau member after going through an initiation ceremony.

Following the initiation ceremony, protectors will teach their followers the triad rituals, such as hand signs and triad poems (T9).

During the millennium era, many triad societies, such as Wo Shing Wo, have loosen their recruitment requirements, including less vigorous background checks and a shorter observation period prior to initiation. Traditionally, in Wo Shing Wo, a Blue Lantern was expected to undergo approximately three years of observation prior to promotion to a Sze Kau member (T9, T13). In the 2000s, this observation period has been shortened, and almost abandoned.

In addition, the distinction between Blue Lantern and Sze Kau members has become blurred since Wo Shing Wo ceased its initiation ceremonies in the 2000s. As long as potential recruits pledge loyalty to the protector and the protector promises to provide protection to the potential followers, newly recruited triads automatically become followers, with authority to recruit new members if approved by their protector.

This observation is consistent with the findings of interviews conducted with a junior triad member who was admitted into Wo Shing Wo after 2005, and an experienced Wo Shing Wo Sze Kau member:

(T23) My friend introduced me to his Dai Lo. He decided to take me after the night I first met him. In fact, he doesn't know me at all as we just met once. There is no observation or probation period in Wo Shing Wo now. It is very easy to become a triad in Wo Shing Wo. There is no distinction between a Blue Lantern and a Sze Kau Chai. If there is someone who would like to follow the Dai Lo, and if the Dai Lo is willing to take him, he is in

automatically. No probation or initiation ceremony is required at all! You don't even need to pay the red pocket to Dai Lo as an initiation fee. What does matter is that he allows me to use his Dor (reputation) - this is all I need. Nowadays, triads of Wo Shing Wo take everyone. They need more Lang Chai - the more Lang Chai the better.

(T9) Well, since 2000 there has been no distinction between a Sze Kau and a Blue Lantern. It all depends on the willingness to follow matching the willingness to take!

A series of interviews portrays the transformation of the recruitment process of Wo Shing Wo from that of the 1980s to what is now the case in the new millennium. Nevertheless, although the recruitment process has loosened, the ultimate decision making power and authority to approve in the recruitment process is always vested in the hands of the protector.

In addition, the recruitment process reflects the semi-hierarchical structure of Wo Shing Wo. The Wo Shing Wo structure adopts a line relationship between protector and direct followers that helps to vertically link triads from generation to generation (see Lo, 2012). However, although recruitment is controlled by the protector, such control does not bind cross-generation recruitment. That is, the protector can control his followers' recruitment by providing protection and serving as guarantor, but he does not bother to take care of his followers' followers' (the third generation) recruitment. And the third-generation protector needs not report or obtain approval from his Ah Kung (his Dai Lo's Dai Lo) for the recruitment.

4.6 Promotion of Wo Shing Wo Triads

The Wo Group of triad societies has adopted a guarantor and election mechanism in the triad officer promotion system. It is necessary for triads to be nominated by their protectors, who are triad officers. Only current triad officers have the authority to be guarantor and recommend junior triads (Sze Kau members) to be promoted to officers. Following nomination, triad-officer candidates will be elected by all triad officers, experienced Sze Kau members with ten years' triad experience, and the Lo Shuk Fu (T7, T21). The position is tenure for life (T7). Three triads will be promoted to Cho Hai, Red Pole for Red Pole in each promotion ceremony to be held triennially. In addition, only the Cho Hai can guarantee candidates of Cho Hai, Red Pole for Red Pole, and so on. This rule is applicable to all officer positions in Wo Shing Wo (T18).

4.6.1 Dual Dai Lo system (雙大佬制度)

If a triad's protector is not a triad officer, will promotion be hampered? Wo Shing Wo has a solution to this issue – the use of a dual Dai Lo system, which involves a triad having two protectors within the same triad society. In the traditional norm, these protectors need not derive from the same faction or triad territories. However, agreement should be reached between two protectors prior to any transferal (T13).

In the Wo Shing Wo tradition, if a Sze Kau member's protector is not a triad officer, he is required to transfer half of his "right to control" to a triad officer or a senior triad. The senior triad or officer is called "big portion Dai Lo" (大份大佬). Following the transferal, he will become the guarantor for the triad's promotion. The original protector (the triad who recruited him) can retain his protector status as "small portion Dai Lo" (細份大佬) (T13, T9).

In triad promotions, a triad is required to seek approval from both his protector and his protector's protector (Ah Kung) in order to obtain a recommendation. The Ah Kung (often a senior triad) has influence in decision making because he can assign a triad officer as guarantor (T9).

Under the dual Dai Lo system, theoretically, both protectors have the right to command and control the triad. However, in reality, after the transferal, the triad is only accountable to the more senior triad officer, because he must rely on his seniority to access resources and establish a social network with other triads, as noted by an experienced triad of Wo Shing Wo:

(T9) When I was promoted, my Dai Lo was only a Sze Kau Chai. He was unable to act as my guarantor to sponsor my promotion, so he transferred “half of my right to control” to a triad officer who was a Red Pole. Since then, I have had two Dai Lo — the Dai Lo who recruited me into Wo Shing Wo, as small portion Dai Lo, and the Red Pole, as my big portion Dai Lo. The triad officer Dai Lo was assigned by my Ah Kung (my small portion Dai Lo's Dai Lo). If anything occurs, I don't need to report to my small portion Dai Lo; instead, I report to my big portion Dai Lo. This is because my big portion Dai Lo has more resources and networks. Just like, if I need to escape, he has the smuggling network to ensure I would escape safely.

4.6.2 Alternative functions of dual Dai Lo system

The original rationale of the dual Dai Lo system was to resolve the problem of promotion. However, the use of this system has been expanded beyond promotion. Triads can utilize this system to establish social networks with triads from different factions and triad territories within the same triad society.

For instance, I was advised by a Wo Shing Wo member (T13) that he had transferred half of his “right to control” to another senior triad (his big portion Dai Lo) in Mongkok, because he believed Mongkok to be a more lucrative triad territory with superior business opportunities to his original territory (T13). If he wishes to conduct illicit business in Mongkok, he needs to pledge loyalty to the dominant triad of that area in order to obtain his permission. By using the dual Dai Lo system, he is not required to terminate his relationship with his original protector, which means that he can utilize the new protector’s Dor to operate business in Mongkok without compromising his present sound relationship with his original protector (T13).

In Wo Shing Wo, pledging loyalty to the “big portion Dai Lo” is simple. A triad is required to obtain the permission of the “small portion Dai Lo” (the protector who recruited him in the original territory) and reach a consensus between them. In the modern Wo Shing Wo, or for junior triads, the process has been simplified. The triad needs not gain permission from the original protector or reach a consensus between them. Simply pledging loyalty to the new protector is sufficient to complete the process (T9, T13).

The modern dual Dai Lo system is not so much concerned with promotion and administration as in providing a mechanism for establishing an instrumental relationship for access to resources, clientele and opportunities in illicit business operation. The relationship between the triad and the big portion Dai Lo has less affection and more emphasis on the instrumental motive and value (T9, T13). The function of the dual Dai Lo system is less about the formality of triad rituals than it is a mechanism by which to establish social capital for personal interest. My informant, an experienced Wo Shing Wo triad, explained how triads use the dual Dai Lo system to establish social capital for

entering a lucrative illicit market – drug dealing:

(T13) Dual Dai Lo system nowadays has nothing to do with seniority and rank, and nothing to do with promotion. This is more a way of establishing a network to gain benefit. For instance, if a triad follows a Dai Lo who is not very powerful and is unable to provide him with business opportunities, he will try for another powerful Dai Lo as a big portion Dai Lo. Of course, consensus and agreement between the two Dai Lo are required, and they are required to make an announcement to other related triads.....Another example is where, say, a triad wants to do drug dealing but his Dai Lo doesn't have the suppliers or clientele, and doesn't allow him to do drug dealing; then, he can find a Dai Lo from the same triad society to act as his big portion Dai Lo, upon their agreement.

Basically, this form of Dai Lo - Lang Chai relationship is just an instrumental relationship based on mutual benefit. If the big portion Dai Lo gives you drug suppliers and clients, in exchange you have to work for him, such as showing up for a gang fight whenever he blows the whistle. There is no affection involved. It's more like a business relationship.

4.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter documents the transformation of the operational structure of Wo Shing Wo and explains how it is transformed from a highly centralised organization to a decentralised organization. This chapter reveals several key features of Wo Shing Wo:

1. The leadership is dominated by a group of Lo Shuk Fu, not by Cho Kun.
2. Because of internal conflict between Lo Shuk Fu, there are two Cho Kun and two Cha So

in the current headquarters.

3. There is a Lo Shuk Fu centric faction structure, as opposed to territorial based faction structure in other triad societies (to be discussed in the next chapter). The faction structure links up different tiers of triads, from frontline junior triads to Cho Kun and Lo Shuk Fu at the headquarters. Such factionalisation leads to the gradual decentralisation of Wo Shing Wo.
4. Wo Shing Wo adopts a dual Dai Lo system that facilitates promotion and allows their members to expand triad network to different territories.
5. Cho Kun election still exists in Wo Shing Wo. Concerning the selection of Cho Kun criteria, the emphasis has shifted from meritocracy to plutocracy.

In the next chapter, I will examine the operational structure of the other two major triad societies in Hong Kong, 14 K and Sun Yee On. A comparison of the three triad societies will be summarised.

Chapter 5

THE STRUCTURE OF 14K AND SUN YEE ON TRIAD SOCIETIES

5.1 The Origin of 14K

The origin of 14K is distinctive from the other triad societies in Hong Kong. While most Hong Kong triad societies are mutual assistance groups aimed at providing support to migrants from different territorial origins of China, the 14K was political and military in nature as it was established by Kuomintang to support the overthrow of China's Communist Party. Due to its unique nature, the structure of 14K is different from other triad societies. In terms of membership, the original 14K was composed of a large percentage of civil and military officers rather than uneducated grassroots civilians (Morgan, 1960). It was highly centralised, compared to other triad societies, because it formed part of the military system. The original form of the 14K was administered through 36 main branches led by Kuomintang General Kot Siu Wong (Morgan, 1960: 79-82). My informants, senior triads of 14K, mentioned that the operation of the original 14K followed a military administrative system. The names of the 36 main branches, such as Yan, Yee and Chi, all originated from the Kuomintang military system. Each branch had an assigned branch leader and was centrally controlled by General Kot (T27, T5).

On the other hand, the 14K also infiltrated with strong triad elements. The origin of 14K is Hung Mun. The Kuomintang recruited Hung Mun members elsewhere to form branches, such as Chung Yee Tong (忠義堂), to achieve its political objectives (Morgan, 1960: 80). As a result, the administration of the 14K was infiltrated with Hung Mun subcultural elements, such as the

requirement for members to take a blood oath (Morgan, 1960: 80). Even the number of branches connects with a triad ritual element – the 36 oaths made in initiation ceremonies, which is taken from the legend of Hung Mun (T5, T27). In addition, 14K members regarded General Kot as the Shan Chu or 489 (T5, T27). General Kot is the only 489 in the history of 14K, because there was no one else with his authority and capability in terms of controlling all 14K branches (T5, T27).

Following Kot's death in 1953, the 14K ceased being centrally organised. Morgan (1960) explained that the disorganization of the 14K came about due to the lack of a right of succession to the leadership (p. 82). There was keen competition between branch leaders, all claiming their right of succession to the leadership. However, two senior 14K members provided a different version of events in our interviews. Both of them mentioned the existence of an authorised successor of 14K: the son of General Kot – Kot Chi Hung (T5, T27). However, this successor was not keen on becoming involved in the management of 14K and wielded insufficient power to control the branches. Some branches became increasingly powerful after Kot's death and were unwilling to be controlled by a weak, symbolic leader. As a result, the 14K became disorganised. Subsequently, all of the branches became autonomous and developed into independent triad societies (Chu, 1995: 11). In the process of disorganization, some branches became inactive due to the retirement of their military officers, two branches continued with the political interest, and the remaining eight branches, together with around ten semi-independent groups, became the modern form of 14K, and became actively involved in organised crime and extortion (Morgan, 1960: 82).

Owing to the historical development of the 14K, the modern 14K is disorganised in nature,

following its disconnection from the military system and abandonment of its earlier political aims. Inter-competition between the 14K branches was keen following Kot's death and this competition continues even to date.

5.2 Organisational Structure of 14K

Nowadays, the term 14K is a general term used to describe the triad consortium that was originated from the secret society established by Kuomintang in Hong Kong. It consists of several independent triad societies that developed out of the original 14K branches. The term 14K is commonly used by non-14K members, or when 14K members are in confrontation with other triads or non-triads. 14K triads commonly use the name of branches, such as Ngai, Hau etc., for internal communication and differentiation, as confirmed by a 14K triad:

(T2) "We seldom call ourselves as 14K [members]. The term "14" or "Number" (𦉳把) is only used by outsiders. We only use that title to identify our membership when confronting with people outside 14K. When we communicate with triads within our triad society, we often use "Ngai, Hau" (i.e. the title of 14K branch) to identify ourselves..."

After Kot's death, the 14K had no centralised superordinate body in place through which the leaders can control the 14K branches (T2, T5, T17). According to the 14K senior triad, only five 14K branches remain active now, namely Tak, Hau, Ngai, Yee and Bau Lou (T5, T19, T2), all of which are independent and operate autonomously (T2, T5). In Hong Kong, the 14K members used to call the Ngai group "Kiu Kiang Street" because its dominant territory is located in Kiu Kiang Street, Sham Shui Po (T5, T2). The Bai Lou branch was a new branch developed following the

disorganization of the 14K. (T19, T5).

My findings suggest that there is no clear headquarters of the 14K branches. During my interviews and discussions with 14K members concerning the structure of the 14K branches, none mentioned the term “headquarters” or anything similar. Instead of Cho Kun, they referred to the leadership of branches as “Wa Si Yan” (話事人), that is the head of the branch. In the general triad structure, the 489 (Shan Chu or dragonhead) is generally regarded as the head of the triad society (Morgan, 1960: 23). Wa Si Yan are distinct from the dragonhead, that is the leader of the triad consortium, because they can only control their own branch and not the other 14K branches (T5, T27).

Middle level triads are led by different area bosses, followed by Sze Kau triads and the youth gangs within their territories. The middle level structure of 14K is territory based. The size of triad territories varies from branch to branch, from public estates comprising just a few blocks (T24, T20, T5), to a whole street (T13, T25), right up to half the region (e.g. Yuen Long region) (T23). However, the middle level structure is fragmented. Internal conflicts in the territories are frequent as observed by a triad informant:

(T7) Gang fights between 14K happen regularly, even though they are from the same branch and dominate the same street, because they belong to different factions within the same branch.

Another 14K member explained the importance of factions in crime operation within triad territories. He mentioned that the use of “faction Dor” (reputation), the Dor of the head of a faction (mostly senior triads), contained more weight than using the “14K” or “branch” reputation when

protecting himself (T14). He used Mongkok as an example for illustration. The territories of the 14K are diverse and fragmented in Mongkok. It is common for different faction members from the same branch to occupy neighboring areas. He further explained how the faction reputation is more useful for protection than the reputation of the branch or triad society:

(T14) If 14K members from the Portland Street faction encroach on Sai Yeung Choi Street, even though we are from the same branch, we will beat them without a second thought. Even if triad operators come from the same branch operating in Sai Yeung Choi Street, if they are not from our faction, they will also be beaten by us.

These examples demonstrate how the 14K triads perceive their identity as faction based rather than branch or triad society based. In addition, territory is not the key determinant in distinguishing factions, as triads dominating the same territory are not necessarily regarded as “same faction members”. Faction, from the 14K triad’s perspective, is determined by the Dai Lo - Lang Chai relationship. Those who follow the same protector, or Ah Kung (protector’s protector), could be regarded as “faction members”. The faction head position is often occupied by a Red Pole (e.g. T5), followed by his own brothers, their followers and then their followers’ protégés, and all are bound by the Dai Lo – Lang Chai relationship. Based on the triad informant’s observations, bonding between branch members is weak in the absence of a territorial superior to control them and arbitrate their conflicts.

Another interesting observation is that many frontline 14K triads are unfamiliar with the organizational structure of 14K. Upon asking questions in relation to the structure of 14K, many participants replied that they only knew their protector and brothers under the same protector; they

were not familiar with the triads above their protectors or Ah Kung, nor the structure above them, suggesting that its hierarchical structure is flat and fragmented. For instance, one of the participants, T4, said that he had only met the so called Wa Si Yan of his branch once. He was unable to confirm his identity because he only met him once and there was no way he could verify his identity. Another participant, T20, only knew his protectors and brothers under the same protector. Another participant mentioned that her connection with 14K was only up to the level of her Ah Kung and she was only familiar with her protector and brothers under the same protector (T24). None of these three participants knew anything about the hierarchy above their protector and Ah Kung and anything about the general structure other than matters concerning their direct protectors.

5.2.1 Inter-relations between 14K branches

Since the modern 14K has no superordinate figure or body overseeing coordination between branches, inter-branch competition and violence are common amongst 14K branches, as confirmed by the Lo Shuk Fu of 14K:

(T5) The organizational structure of 14K is very fragmented compared to other triad societies. Inter-branch clashes are more common compared with other triad societies. As a result, the power of 14K is comparatively weaker than that of others.

Although the 14K branches operate autonomously, when facing rivals branch members perceive themselves as a unified entity – 14K. In prison, for instance, members of 14K group together under a single assigned 14K prison leader. Should crisis occur, members of other branches of 14K provide mutual assistance in order to resolve the crisis (T10, T14). In another example, a senior triad of 14K (T5) mentioned that a 14K senior triad from another branch opened a disco in Jordan,

which was located in the triad territory of Wo Shing Wo. The territory dominator from Wo Shing Wo sent 200 foot soldiers to the disco in order to threaten him into sharing the profit gained from the disco. The 14K disco owner asked for help from my informant – a Lo Shuk Fu of another 14K branch – who called 14K leaders from different branches and territories, such as Jordan, Yuen Long and Cheung Chow, to send followers for show-up (晒馬) to demonstrate manpower so as to defend the triad disco owner's territory (T5, T15).

When branches of 14K are in crisis, triads can utilize the institutional reputation of 14K to seek resources from other branches for support. The 14K identity becomes crucial for accessing resources from the alliance. In other words, a major source of support is still offered by the 14K branches. Therefore, the relationship between the 14K branches can be regarded as an alliance when clashing with other non-14K triad societies.

However, there is no obligation for 14K branches to offer this form of assistance. In this incident, once the conflict was settled, the disco owner needed to pay all expenses incurred in connection with sending 14K foot soldiers from other branches, as well as the entertainment expenses of my informant and the other branch leaders. Each of them was rewarded with a VIP card from the disco owner, which can be used to take five people to the disco free of charge (T5, T15).

Frequent inter-branch conflicts and violence has weakened the power of 14K to compete with other comparatively centralised triad societies. This resulted in several attempts to reunify 14K. The first reunification attempt took place in 1956 and aimed to strengthen the power of 14K in order to absorb other loosely organised societies (Morgan, 1960: 86). However, this attempt was

unsuccessful due to police disruption. The reunification of 14K ceased during the colonial era, in 1956. Some of the powerful branch leaders attempted to re-initiate the reunification of 14K branches in 1997 and 2014 but to no avail (T5, T15), which was reported in the local media (see Next Magazine, 13 November 2014) and was confirmed by the senior 14K triad participants (T5, T15).

Centralisation of a triad society serves a variety of purposes. First, it ensures rational use of violence, in order to reduce inter-branch violence and achieve mutual protection. Second, it facilitates the circulation and sharing of information between branches. These are both important factors in terms of protecting triad territories from rivals. Unfortunately, the reunification of 14K was unsuccessful (T17, T5). The fragmented structure within 14K, along with the long established oligarchical leadership, was the main reason for the failure, as explained by the Lo Shuk Fu of 14K:

(T5) Two reunification attempts of 14K ended in failure because the branches had long been led by powerful Wa Si Yan after General Kot's death. All branches were operated autonomously and independently. Since the Wa Si Yan had established their power within the branch and had become used to their autonomous status, they were unwilling to compromise with other branches, as this would reduce their power and influence. Therefore, the failure was inevitable.

5.2.2 Wa Si Yan of 14K

Each of the 14K branches has a head of branch. Different from the Wo Group (where they are known as "Cho Kun") and Sun Yee On (where they are known by the term "dragonhead"), the head of each 14K branch is known as the Wa Si Yan (T5, T2). This literally means "the person

who makes the ultimate decision”. Different from the Cho Kun of the Wo Group triad societies, 14K branch leaders are not entitled to receive a salary from the 14K branches (T5).

Prior to the 1980s, the Wa Si Yan had the authority to distribute territories and control all manpower within the branch, including assigning area bosses (T5). However, the authority of the Wa Si Yan decreased after the 1980s. The modern Wa Si Yan’s role is akin to that of a symbolic figurehead, who is mainly responsible for arbitration – utilizing seniority and credibility to facilitate negotiation and achieve conflict resolution among members, and organizing triad ceremonial events such as members’ funerals and birthday banquets (T5).

Similar to the Wo Group triad societies, the 14K branches also have elections. All 14K branch leaders are elected by the Lo Shuk Fu of the particular 14K branch – the most powerful and senior triads (T5). Different from the Wo Group, the 14K has no periodic election. Instead, the 14K leadership adopts a tenure system, which means that an election takes place only when the Wa Si Yan passes away (T5).

The selection criterion of the branch leader is consistent with their role. They need to have seniority, credibility and social network as source of authority to influence their members during negotiation and conflict resolution. Seniority is important for gaining the respect and obedience of the triads. The term “credibility” (公信力) means recognition based on the reputation of the triad and his previous experience and contribution to triad society (T5). Both elements are important for ensuring triads’ compliance. The possession of an extensive social network is also crucial to the Wa Si Yan, as they can utilize these networks and social capital in negotiating and mobilizing

manpower within the branch, and in requesting manpower support from other 14K branches (T5, T15). However, without possessing financial resources and manpower, simply relying on these elements is insufficient to generate the power to control the branch, especially when triad brotherhood and loyalty is fading (T5). This explains why 14K triad society remains disorganised.

5.2.3 Lo Shuk Fu of 14K

Similar to the Wo Group, 14K has a group of Lo Shuk Fu who controls the election of 14k branch leaders. Lo Shuk Fu in the 14K refers to those senior triads with extensive experience serving in the 14K, with contributions to the branch. Different from the Wo Group, the rank of the triad is not relevant in determining the appointment. Experienced Sze Kau members with ten or more years in 14K, and with contributions to triad society (who are regarded as “Old Sze Kau”) can also be regarded as Lo Shuk Fu (T5, T21). Again different from the Wo Group, 14K does not adopt an election system in Lo Shuk Fu elections (T17). Instead, the selection of Lo Shuk Fu is informal, and depends on the recognition among triads in 14K branches (T21). Lo Shuk Fu of the 14K have authority in assigning their protégé to take up businesses owned by him or his followers when a senior triad is imprisoned or passes away, as explained by a Lo Shuk Fu of 14K:

(T5) Wing (fake name) was originally a junior triad who worked as a chip roller in Macau, soliciting clients on the footbridge. He was the “grandson” (i.e. the follower’s follower) of Broken Tooth. Wing’s Dai Lo is a very reputable Lo Shuk Fu of 14K based in Hong Kong. When Broken Tooth was in jail, Wing’s Dai Lo transferred all of Broken Tooth’s clients and two VIP rooms in a casino to him.

Since many Lo Shuk Fu control the protection business within the triad territory, they have the right to choose which followers will operate the business on their behalf. In return, triad operators

are required to share the profit with him (T24). However, this kind of business is mainly distributed among triads of the same faction based upon the Dai Lo - Lang Chai relationship – that is, triads located under the same Lo Shuk Fu. This implies that the power of Lo Shuk Fu in business distribution is restricted within factions.

5.3 Recruitment of 14K Triads

There is no unified rule regarding member recruitment in 14K. Two 14K triad participants who were admitted into the triad society at the end of the 1980s have portrayed two different recruitment initiation processes. One of the 14K triad participants, T14, was recruited by a Sze Kau member; the other informant, T20, was recruited by a triad officer. By comparing the two recruitment channels, it can be seen that the procedure of recruitment is not fixed. The general rule of thumb is that only formally initiated members are eligible to recruit followers – an observation period was also required prior to initiation during the 1980s.

What is noteworthy is the duration of the Dai Lo - Lang Chai relationship between junior triads and their protector. Participant T14 maintained his 14K membership for only a short period of time before switching to Wo Shing Wo. Although Participant T20 maintained his 14K membership, he stopped following his initial protector and instead switched to following a protector of 14K of another branch after two years. No formal procedure (i.e. paying red packet to the protector) took place for the switch. Neither of the two 14K triad participants obtained consensus between their old and new protectors before switching to another branch or triad society.

Based on the information provided, the duration of the relationship between protectors and followers could be short, and the stability of the Dai Lo - Lang Chai relationship low. In addition,

there is no formal control over switching protectors. 14K triads can join and leave their protector, or even the triad society, without much sanction. This implies that the membership system of 14K is flexible and informal compared to other triad societies, such as Wo Shing Wo.

5.4 Promotion of 14K Triads

In terms of officer promotion, the modern 14K has no centralised officer promotion system. Authority for officer promotion is vested in the hands of the triad's direct protector and requires no approval from branch leaders (T5). Once a promotion is confirmed, the protector will teach the promoted triad officer hand signs and paper signs (a special way of folding paper) to prove officer status (T5).

For promotion from Blue Lantern to Sze Kau triad member, similar to other triad societies, observation is required; the observation period depends on the performance of the Blue Lantern. For instance, one of the 14K informants (T14) who was initiated during the 1980s mentioned that he was closely observed by his protector for around one year prior to being promoted to a Sze Kau member. Another 14K triad informant (T20) who was initiated during the same period was promoted to Sze Kau member within one year by his protector because he fought for his protector a couple of times. Neither of them was required to gain the approval of anybody except their direct protectors.

Traditionally, the 14K required candidates to pass through an initiation ceremony in order to become a formal Sze Kau member. Although modern triads seldom hold initiation ceremonies due to police crackdowns, this ceremony was still taking place in Hong Kong up to the early 1990s (T20). Both 14K informants who were admitted to 14K during the 1980s were required to go

through an initiation ceremony to become a formal triad.

In the interviews with 14K members, an interesting observation was made. When asked about the organizational structure of 14K, such as headquarters, promotion system and rituals, all the participants except one senior officer were found to know little. This reflects the fact that, first, 14K is so disorganised that it has become akin to a street gang criminal group. Second, 14K members are only connected with each other through the title of the triad society – i.e. 14K and/or its branch and the Dor of the Dai Lo – rather than by way of any of the other organizational elements that exist in the triad society.

5.5 The Origin of Sun Yee On

Sun Yee On was originally a mutual assistance ethnic group for people migrating to Hong Kong from Chiu Chow (Chu, 2005; Morgan, 1960). Their operation mainly took place in Kowloon City and Kowloon Walled City (Morgan, 1960: 305), which included a high percentage of Chiu Chow migrants among their resident populations. Sun Yee On was a coolie association that handled coolie recruitment and referral services. In addition to employment services, they also provided other welfare services for their members (T17). The strong dialect- and ethnicity-based membership and welfare nature of Sun Yee On facilitated the development of cohesiveness among its members. Sharing the same dialect and origin had facilitated members' collaboration through effective communication (T17). Sun Yee On is regarded as the most cohesive triad society in Hong Kong (Lo and Kwok, 2014). The centralised management of Sun Yee On can be explained by examining its membership system, its district-based management and its promotion system.

5.6 Organizational Structure of Sun Yee On

5.6.1 Dragonheads and the heredity system

Hereditary leadership is a distinctive feature of the Sun Yee On organizational structure. Different from the other triad societies, such as 14K and the Wo Group, which adopt an election process to select leaders, Sun Yee On has no elections. Leadership is blood kinship-based, inherited only by Heung family members. After Heung Chin, the founder of Sun Yee On, had successfully transformed “Yee On Company” to Sun Yee On (literally meaning “New” Yee On”), they started to adopt the hereditary system for leadership succession. After Heung Chin was expelled in 1950s and fled to Taiwan, his eldest son, Heung Wah Yim, succeeded the leadership and became the dragonhead (Godfather) of Sun Yee On (Lo, 2010). Heung Wah Yim was convicted in court in 1987 for running a triad society, and was acquitted after two years. His involvement in Sun Yee On’s management has been declining since then, as noted by a triad officer of Sun Yee On:

(T26) In fact, Mr. Heung was seldom involved in the management of Sun Yee On after he was imprisoned. Although he was acquitted after appeal, he was still very inactive in our business. He now serves as the figurehead of our triad society, just like the Queen of England who represents England while having not much involvement in any internal affairs.

A member of the Heung family had succeeded the position of dragonhead after Heung Wah Yim’s imprisonment, as noted by a senior triad of Sun Yee On:

(T26) A member of Heung’s family is still our dragonhead. The heredity system doesn’t change. When Mr. Heung Wah-yim was imprisoned, his position was transferred to his brother, Mr. Heung Wah-po, and he (Heung Wah-po) is still our figurehead now.

The heredity leadership of Sun Yee On is reconfirmed through a series of interviews with different Sun Yee On triads. They all expressed the fact that the Sun Yee On is still led by the Heung's family; for instance:

(T11) Sun Yee On is the only triad society to adopt a heredity system. Only Heung's family members can be the dragonhead.

With the extensive social capital Heung's family possessed with significant entrepreneurs and Chinese officials, they are now engaged in legitimate businesses, such as the movie industry and quasi-legitimate business, and commit financial crime instead of conventional triad businesses (Lo, 2010). With the strong district-based management, the power of the dragonhead is gradually transferred to territorial bosses and Lo Shuk Fu, as discussed below.

5.6.2 Middle level district-based management

Under the dragonhead leadership, Sun Yee On is managed by a group of area bosses. For instance, Wong Chuen, nicknamed "Tiger of Tsim Sha Tsui", is the area boss of Tsim Sha Tsui (Lo, 2010). These area bosses are mostly 426 Red Pole triad officers (e.g. Chan Yiu Hing was described as a 426 in news articles reporting on the crackdown on triad society; see Lo, 2010). The term "Five Tigers and Ten Heroes" is a general description of the most powerful area bosses and senior officers within Sun Yee On during the 1990s. However, many league members have since passed away and their positions have been filled by other powerful triad figures. They have avoided using this granted name however as they need to remain low profile to avoid being targeted by law enforcement, as noted by a Sun Yee On member:

(T22) At the time when I was active in Sun Yee On, we still had the "Five Tigers and

Ten Heroes”. My Ah Kung (faction head) was one of them. Most of the “Five Tigers” have now passed away, including Chan Yiu Hing and Wong Chuen, and only To Luen Suen, “Small Pig Head” and “Ghost Tim” still survive. However, no one could replace them after they passed away. The “Ten Heroes” refers generally to territorial bosses. They have more than ten people, and many of them are newly promoted as territorial bosses. In fact, there are many more powerful senior triads in our triad society, but they don’t regard themselves as “Five Tigers and Ten Heroes” because they want to be low profile and prevent being targeted by the police.

The management structure of Sun Yee On is close to the modern triad structure as described by Chu (2000). The modern Sun Yee On is managed on a district basis, the size of territory is much bigger than 14K. Under the dragonhead, there sits a group of area bosses who are responsible for managing territories, as noted by a triad officer of Sun Yee On:

(T26) Under the dragonhead, the middle level of triad society is managed by different area bosses. In our triad society, we have many Tor Dei (territories), including Tuen Mun, Lam Tin, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon City, Causeway Bay, Wan Chai, and Tai Wan Shan.

Each of the bosses operates independently within his own territory under the dragonhead, and no area boss is able to give commands to another, or to interrupt the business or operation of another territory. All illicit businesses and manpower management, including promotion and manpower mobilization within the territory, are controlled by the area boss, as noted by a triad officer of Sun Yee On:

(T26) Each of the territories has one territorial boss who controls all of the Sun Yee On members, the businesses and manpower management. For instance, the promotion and manpower management necessary for exercising violence are controlled by the territorial boss and a group of Lo Shuk Fu within the territory. Generally speaking, our triad society is managed on a territorial basis. Anything that happens within the territory is managed by the territorial seniors themselves. Basically, each of the territorial bosses is independent and autonomous. All territorial bosses share equal power, so no other territorial bosses can influence the management of other territories.

5.6.3 Lo Shuk Fu of Sun Yee On

Under the triad subculture, prima facie, area bosses are required to pledge loyalty and are accountable to the dragonhead (this will be further discussed in the Promotion section below). However, in reality, the authority is mainly vested in the hands of the Lo Shuk Fu, as mentioned by the following triad officer:

(T26) If the territorial boss passes away or is imprisoned, the Lo Shuk Fu of the territory will assign a triad from the territory to replace him. It is very often for the territorial boss to assign his follower to replace him before his imprisonment. For example, when X (the territorial boss of Tuen Mun) was imprisoned, he assigned his follower as his successor beforehand. If the territorial boss passes away suddenly or is imprisoned without assigning a successor, then the Lo Shuk Fu of the territory will do it.....Only the Lo Shuk Fu from the territory are eligible to manage internal affairs within the territory. Lo Shuk Fu from other territories are prohibited from interfering. Say, if the Tuen Mun territorial boss was imprisoned, only Lo Shuk Fu from Tuen Mun would have the right to assign a successor. It is impossible for Lo Shuk Fu from Causeway

Bay, for example, to assign a territorial boss successor. So, only senior triads from the territory are eligible to manage promotions or any other manpower management. Externally, they are also responsible for arbitration between different territories.

Based on the interview data above, the authority of the Lo Shuk Fu of Sun Yee On is compatible with that of the Lo Shuk Fu or the Cho Kun in other triad societies, as they have ultimate authority in assigning territorial bosses, controlling promotions and manpower management. Although their authority is mainly attached to their own territory, their influence can be extended to arbitration between different territories, which is important for facilitating the stability of the triad society and maintaining harmony between area bosses, which is essential for maintaining cohesiveness within Sun Yee On.

Compared to the Wo Group triad societies, Sun Yee On does not adhere to a clear criterion, procedure or mechanism in their selection of Lo Shuk Fu. In the Wo Group, the criteria applied to determine the eligibility of Lo Shuk Fu is clear – members are either elected, or comprise those ex-Cho Kun. In Sun Yee On, the criteria of eligibility is less clear cut than those of the Wo Group, as noted by the following triad officer:

(T26) The main criterion of Lo Shuk Fu is seniority. Because of the seniority, they have high social status with authority. They can't be too young. You wouldn't find a Lo Shuk Fu aged 30 something, like the Lo Shuk Fu in Wo Shing Wo. Of course, I wouldn't say age is the only criterion to determine seniority. The years spent in and contributions made to our triad society are equally important – in particular the contributions to our society as this attests to ability and credibility. Because of seniority, they enjoy high

social status and authority in Sun Yee On. That's why they have Dor (reputation) in the triad community. Since they have influence in the triad community, they know lots of people and lots of people know them. People respect them, listen to them and comply with their orders – this is what we call “power of influence”. However, being senior doesn't mean that they need to be an officer. Only contributions to triad society and years spent count. Of course, the ability and resources possessed by Lo Shuk Fu are the most important criteria. If they don't have them, they can't do their business well, so how can they get the recognition from other senior triads?

....Lo Shuk Fu is not a formal post and so there is no fixed term of office; it's all down to his “power of influence” and recognition in the triad society. Some Lo Shu Fu step down from the position because they are old and seldom involved in triad society management. Some need to step down from the position because of declining business, which affects their influence in triad society. Some Lo Shuk Fu start building a reputation and making profit from their own legitimate business, and so they wish to distance themselves from triad society and cease their involvement in triad matters. Some are imprisoned; this seriously affects their ongoing business which means their influence could decline, in which case they have no other choice but to step down. Some Lo Shuk Fu infringe upon triad norms and becoming “stink Dor” – they may, say, have an affair with their brother's wife or girlfriend. This seriously affects the Lo Shuk Fu's Dor as well as his power of influence in triad society. In fact, it is impossible for triads to occupy the Lo Shuk Fu position for a lifetime. How can they maintain their recognition and influence in triad society for life? If you ask me what determines the term of Lo Shuk Fu, I would say that the general rule of thumb is that, when their

influence declines, they will be out and replaced by up and rising triads with “better influence”.

Based on this participant’s interview, what determines the eligibility and sustainability of Lo Shuk Fu depends on their ability and resources possessed, the level of engagement in triad society management and their Dor, which refers to “honor” such as recognition and achievement to triad society. Infringing triad norms can seriously affect a triad’s Dor in triad society, which in turn can seriously affect his recognition among triads. The authority of Lo Shuk Fu is not simply relied on honor, but also on actual criminal capital possessed.

5.6.4 Compartmentalization of Sun Yee On

Sun Yee On adopts strict compartmentalization between powerful triad figures and frontline triads. Senior triads, such as area bosses, triad officers and Lo Shuk Fu, are responsible for taking tasks from non-triad actors. Criminal businesses and jobs are mainly operated and decided upon among these major operators and their trusted associates. This helps insulate the important criminal information, such as the identity of patron and the background of the task, within a small circle of the core members. The followers of these powerful triad figures serve as intermediators and so disseminate the tasks to their followers. Hence, they order the tasks to be carried out by the followers under them. Juniors are simply responsible for executing orders, they only know when and what task they need to execute. Under strict hierarchical control, lower ranking members are marginalised from the decision making process and access to information related to the task and the patron. This observation is consistent with the description provided by an experienced Sun Yee On member:

(T11) Senior triads in the higher hierarchy are responsible for taking “orders” from their clients – mostly non-triads. Orders range from debt collection and blackmail to land and property resumption. Junior triads won’t be given this opportunity because they have no reputation and no authority to do so. Juniors are responsible for executing tasks assigned by their Dai Lo, and would never be told which “genuine boss” made the order and the reason behind the task. They are prohibited from asking questions. Therefore, juniors do not know how the criminal operation works. The followers of senior triads are the Dai Lo of those juniors. They also don’t know the “boss” but simply know what they need to do; they disseminate the order into small tasks and assign these tasks to suitable followers for execution.

The interview information collected from a junior Sun Yee On member is also consistent with the above finding:

(T22) My relationship with my Dai Lo is that of “boss and employee”; affection is not involved. I don’t regard our relationship as a friendship as we seldom share any personal matters. Whenever I complete a task, I feel like I am going to work like any ordinary employee. My boss asks me to do it and I do it. I am prohibited from asking questions. What I can say is either “I will do it” or “I won’t do it”. My boss still allows me to have a choice – whether to do it or not. I can choose not to do it if I want.

During the interview, Participant T22 mentioned that he did not know why his protector had asked him to destroy the assets in a bar. He was simply responsible for destroying assets in the assigned premises and was paid for this by his protector. When I asked the participant if his protector had

asked him to do so because the bar owner had refused to pay a protection fee, he answered by saying that he had no idea because he was prohibited from asking why; he just needed to get the job done.

The relationship between the interviewee and his protector is like a patron-client relationship – he was paid for providing a service. The frontline triad, as the provider of the service, retains the autonomy to choose whether to carry out the job or not. As a service provider, triads need not know who has requested the task and the entire operation, but simply provides the service assigned. Since affection is absent in the Dai Lo - Lang Chai relationship, the relationship between protector and followers in Sun Yee On is purely instrumental, and is bound by mutual benefit rather than brotherhood.

This compartmentalised structure enhances the efficiency of crime operations and prevents information leakage, thus enhancing secrecy (Ayling, 2009; Paoli, 2003). The secrecy of Sun Yee On is higher than that of other triad societies because of its compartmentalization. For instance, Wo Group triads have better knowledge about the general management of the triad society at different levels, including the headquarters. However, for Sun Yee On, I found it difficult to access information in connection with the operation of the middle and higher levels of management, as ordinary triads of Sun Yee On know so little about it, until I met a triad officer of Sun Yee On (T26).

5.7 Recruitment of Sun Yee On Triads

The membership system is a distinctive feature of Sun Yee On, as it is the only triad society in Hong Kong that uses membership numbers and a systematic, computerised membership system (Lintner, 2004:91). A triad officer of Sun Yee On explained how the membership system operates in his triad society:

(T26) Every triad of Sun Yee On has a membership number. Triads should all know their number although they don't really use it for addressing each other and only use it for identification. Therefore, the number is only known to the triad, and the person who gave him the number, i.e. the territorial boss of the region he belongs to. The territorial boss should know the personal details and membership numbers of all members within his territory. This number is also known to a senior triad in the headquarters, who is responsible for managing membership numbers and members' personal details. Membership numbers of ordinary members consist of up to five digits although the number is meaningless in terms of gauging how many members we have. The reason is that the first two digits are territorial codes, which represent the territory the member belongs to, such as Causeway Bay, Wan Chai, Tuen Mun and so forth; each territory has its own code. Membership numbers can be recycled. Numbers of triad officers have only four digits. In fact, the membership number is a kind of code. Basically it also signifies who your Dai Lo is and which "Shui" (faction) you belong to. What's interesting about the membership system is that you can tell if it is a genuine number from the first and last digits of the membership number. So, generally speaking, even if you go to other Sun Yee On territories, the first and last digit of your number will tell them who your protector is and which territory you are from. You can't make it up or

fake it. This is especially the case for triad officers' numbers because only officers would know the tricks and logic behind these numbers, while juniors would never know.

The membership numbers used by Sun Yee On are codes to indicate their triad identity, rank, and the district they belong to. This membership system indicates the strong district-based structure. Only district bosses (mostly triad officers) are eligible to grant membership numbers to new members, and thus the new recruits are accountable to the former. The autonomy of the triads is constrained by the district boss as he possesses the ultimate decision making power to control member recruitment. This implies that the district-based faction is the foundation of the Sun Yee On organizational structure.

Sun Yee On has strict recruitment requirements compared to Wo Shing Wo and 14K. It continues to follow its traditional recruitment process. Compared with the recruitment process of Wo Shing Wo in recent years, it is obvious that the recruitment process is stricter for Sun Yee On, as noted by a Sun Yee On member who switched from Wo Sing Wo after 2005:

(T22) Compared to Wo Shing Wo and 14K, joining Sun Yee On is very difficult. Both maturity and ability are important. More importantly, they won't let you join them easily. They would do some background checks on you and observe you for a long time before accepting you as a formal member. My friends followed a Sun Yee On Dai Lo for many years. However, they have only recently received a membership number! They didn't go through any initiation ceremony; they were simply given the membership number, showing them to be formal members of Sun Yee On.

A Sun Yee On officer expressed a similar view on the modern triad recruitment of Sun Yee On:

(T26) Sun Yee On did not hold initiation ceremonies for a long time. It still adopts the membership system. Only formal members can get membership numbers. In order to get a membership number, a follower needs to get it from his protector. His protector, as his guarantor, will contact the area boss to get it. In order to gain membership, a follower needs to gain the trust of his protector – you know, observation and series of trials for long period of time is needed. Otherwise, how can he tell if that guy is reliable and credible? In modern Wo Shing Wo, even a Blue Lantern is eligible to recruit followers. However, in Sun Yee On, they still follow the triad tradition and only formal members are eligible to recruit new members.

5.8 Promotion of Sun Yee On Triads

The centrality of Sun Yee On is not limited to the regional level between an area boss and triads in his dominated triad territory; rather, the triad officer promotion system also links up triad officers and area bosses up to headquarters level, which further enhances the centralisation of the organization. All Sun Yee On triad officers are centrally organised by, and directly accountable to, the dragonhead. In order to gain promotion, they need to first obtain the approval of the dragonhead. Following promotion, the dragonhead automatically becomes the protector of the triad officers (confirmed with T5, T6, T26). The authority of command and control over triad officers is transferred from their original protector to the dragonhead. In other words, the dragonhead has ultimate power and control over all triad officers. Following the norm of district-based management (i.e. that all triads are under the control of area bosses), the dragonhead can control all Sun Yee On triads through their control of triad officers, who are often area bosses. The strict and effective control exercised by the dragonhead acts to decrease internal competition between

area bosses and, hence, enhance cohesiveness among core members, as noted by an experienced triad (T6).

Similar to the promotion procedure of the Wo Group triad societies, promotion to triad officer in Sun Yee On also requires an existing officer to act as the guarantor for promotion. However, Sun Yee On is even stricter than other triad societies, as described by the following triad officer:

(T26) In order to get promoted from ordinary member to triad officer, an individual needs to get a recommendation from his Dai Lo. If his Dai Lo himself is a triad officer, he has to look for two other officers to be his guarantors. He needs to get three triad officers to be his guarantors for the purpose of recommendations. Recognition from triad officers is important for promotion. In order to gain recognition from triad officers, he has to prove his ability by contributing to the triad society. Compliance with triad norms is equally important. He can't do anything that infringes triad norms, such as stealing from brothers, being dishonest to brothers, or having affairs with brothers' wives or girlfriends for example – to do so would constitute a “stink Dor”. If all the triad officers agree, and the area boss approves his promotion, he can get his officer membership number from the area boss. If the triad's Dai Lo is not a triad officer, he needs to get recommendations from three triad officers in order to get the nomination. It's difficult to get promoted to officer in our triad society, because the number of officer positions is limited and gaining their recognition is even more difficult.

The reason for adopting a strict promotion process is to keep the number of triad officers at a small size for efficient management and control. In addition, by way of quality assurance, three triad

officers are required to act as guarantors so as to ensure the ability and credibility of the triad candidate. Since the area boss has ultimate control over the promotion process, the promoted officers are accountable to the dragonhead through the area boss, rather than to their protector or guarantor; this strengthens the centralised control of the area boss over the triad officers within his territory.

Another implication of the promotion procedure to be revealed is the importance of territoriality in triad management in Sun Yee On. Therefore, promotion is only open to those operating within the territory, as noted by a triad officer:

(T26) If he is operating in this territory, his Dai Lo has to also come from this territory. Once he is initiated as a member of this territory, he gotta stick with his territory that he initiated. This means his upward mobility is restricted within this territory. He can never get promoted in other territories.

5.9 Concluding Remarks

To summarize, 14K has a fragmented and physically disorganised structure when compared to the other two sampled triad societies:

1. There is no centralised headquarters in 14K and lack of strong leadership. The authority of Wa Si Yan of each 14K branch is limited to his own branch. Reliance on seniority and honor as source of authority is insufficient to control their members.
2. Due to lack of strong leadership, intra-gang conflicts within the same branch and same territory is widespread.
3. The organizational structure of 14K branch tends to be flat and horizontally-expanded. The 14K factions tend to be small in size, ranging from two levels (Dai Lo and followers) up to three levels (Ah Kung, Dai Lo, and followers) in its hierarchy.
4. A 14K faction within a 14K branch is Dai Lo or Ah Kung centric.
5. Membership system of 14K is flexible, yet, unstable. Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship tends to be short term.
6. 14K adopts Dai Lo-appointed promotion instead of centralised promotion system.

On the contrary, Sun Yee On is functionally decentralised, yet cohesive, with a territorial cartel-based form of management:

1. Sun Yee On is decentralised in operation, as it adopts a district-based management system. Each of the territory is autonomously operated. The power of control is dedicated to the area bosses and Lo Shuk Fu of the territory. They control the business, manpower management, and promotion within the territory.
2. The functional decentralisation does not affect its cohesiveness, because all triad officers

and area bosses are organised and directly accountable to the dragonhead. The arbitration role of Lo Shuk Fu also contributes to the cohesiveness and harmony among the triad leaders in different territories.

3. The membership system of Sun Yee On is the strictest among the sampled triad societies. Members are difficult to switch to other protectors or territories. Promotion and operation are restricted within the territory they belong to. The probationary period is the longest compared to other triad societies.
4. Promotion procedure in Sun Yee On is highly demanding, as it requires recommendations from three triad officers and the approval of the dragonhead.
5. The secrecy of Sun Yee On is higher compared to the other triad societies, due to its compartmentalised structure and strict membership system.

To facilitate readers' understanding of the three sampled triad societies, Wo Shing Wo, 14K and Sun Yee On, their structural differences are summarised in the following table:

Table 5.1 Structural Differences of Three Sample Triad Societies

Theme	Sub-theme	Wo Shing Wo	14K	Sun Yee On
Organizational Structure	Structural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From semi-centralised alliance with superordinate body (Wo Tsz Tau) to individual autonomous triad societies - Common identity rests in individual society under the Wo Group - Collaboration between Wo Group triad societies almost absent except in prison setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From centralised organization with strong leadership to physically decentralised autonomous triad branches - Common identity rests in different triad branches of 14K - Some level of collaboration between 14K branches, but it is not obligated and is instrumentally oriented; competition is keen between 14K branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From centralised organization with strong leadership to functionally decentralised organization led by territorial leaders - Common identity rests in Sun Yee On
Organizational Structure	Leadership	From oligarchy to polyarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From oligarchy to polyarchy in the whole 14K triad society - Oligarchy within each 14K branch 	Oligarchy (Territorial based leadership)
Organizational Structure	Leadership selection	<p>Cho Kun:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Periodic election -Term of office: three years, can be re-elected once 	<p>Wa Si Yan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-periodic election -Term of office: tenure 	<p>Dragonhead :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blood-tie kinship heredity <p>Area Boss :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected by Lo Shuk Fu within the territory - Term of office: tenure, except imprisonment and retirement

Power structure	Leadership authority	<p>Traditional</p> <p>- Cho Kun, who possessed the ultimate authority in controlling manpower and territorial management</p> <p>Modern</p> <p>- Lo Shuk Fu, who control the Cho Kun election system, manpower and territory management through the Cho Kun</p>	<p>Traditional</p> <p>- Shan Chu or 489, who possessed ultimate authority in manpower control and management, including territorial business distribution and territorial bosses' assignment</p> <p>Modern</p> <p>- Wa Si Yan who are in charge of arbitration and triad ceremonial events</p> <p>- Lo Shuk Fu who control Wa Si Yan election, business management, including protection business</p>	<p>Traditional</p> <p>- Dragonhead who possessed ultimate authority in manpower control and territorial management</p> <p>Modern</p> <p>- Dragonhead becomes a symbolic head</p> <p>- Territorial bosses control territorial management, including manpower mobilization, promotion, business and profit distribution and arbitration</p> <p>- Lo Shuk Fu control the assignments of the territorial boss when he is absent</p>
Power Structure	Criteria of leadership	<p>- Traditional – Seniority and honor</p> <p>- Modern – Financial power, manpower, reputation and quality of relationship with Lo Shuk Fu (rank is not relevant)</p>	<p>- Seniority (rank is not relevant), credibility (track record on performance), members' recognition, reputation and social capital</p>	<p>- Dragonhead : kinship ties</p> <p>- Territorial bosses : seniority, recognition, reputation and social capital</p>
Organizational Structure	Promotion	<p>- Centralised promotion, triad officers and senior triads control the nomination and election of triad officers</p>	<p>- Decentralised promotion</p> <p>- Dai Lo-appointed promotion system</p>	<p>- Centralised promotion, triad officers are required to obtain nominations from three triad officers and be confirmed by the dragonhead</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guarantor system, only triad officers can be promotion guarantors - Promoted officers are accountable to their guarantor and superior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoted officers are accountable to their protector only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theoretically, officers are accountable to the dragonhead only; in practice, they are accountable to the territorial bosses or Lo Shuk Fu of the territory they belong to
Organizational Structure	Recruitment and transferral	<p>Traditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal, triad rituals are required - Eligibility of recruitment: only Sze Kau members or above are eligible to recruit followers; approval from protector is required - Probation period is required <p>Modern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal, no triad rituals are required, pledging loyalty to protector is sufficient - Eligibility of recruitment: Hanging the Blue Lantern are also eligible to recruit followers; approval from protector is still required - No probation period is required - Protector transferral is semi-formal; consensus between new and old protectors is required 	<p>Traditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal, triad rituals are required - Probation period is required <p>Modern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal, triad rituals not required - Probation period is not required - Triad membership is determined by the willingness of protector to provide protection and recognize his follower status - Eligibility of recruitment: no standard rules - Protector transferral is flexible and informal; no consensus between protectors is required 	<p>Traditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal, triad rituals are required; formally initiated members are given a membership number for identification <p>Modern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-formal, no triad rituals are required but notification to and approval of territorial bosses are required - Eligibility of recruitment: only Sze Kau members are eligible to recruit followers - Probation period is required, and probation period is the longest of all triad societies; it often takes years for observation period to be complete - Protector transferral is difficult as membership number indicates the identity of protector

Organizational Structure	Positional Hierarchy	(from highest to lowest) 1. Lo shuk Fu 2. Cho Kun 3. Officer 4. Sze Kau 5. Hanging Blue Lantern	(from highest to lowest hierarchy) 1. Wa Si Yan 2. Officer 3. Sze Kau 4. Hanging Blue Lantern #Lo Shuk Fu is not a formal position in 14K	(from highest to lowest hierarchy) 1. Dragonhead 2. Area Boss 3. Officer 4. Sze Kau 5. Hanging Blue Lantern # Lo Shuk Fu is not a formal position in Sun Yee On
Power Structure	Power hierarchy	(from highest to Lowest) 1. Lo Shuk Fuk 2. Cho Kun 3. Officer 4. Sze Kau 5. Hanging Blue Lantern	(from highest to lowest) 1. Wa Si Yan & Lo Shuk Fu 2. Officer 3. Sze Kau & Hanging Blue Lantern	(from highest to lowest) 1. Area Boss & Lo Shuk Fu 2. Officer 3. Sze Kau 4. Hanging Blue Lantern

CHAPTER 6

SENIORITY AS HIERARCHICAL AND POWER STRUCTURE

6.1 Introduction

In the hierarchical approach, the term “structure” generally refers to positional structure or rank within the criminal organization, including the roles or functions of each position within the organization. It explains the level of sophistication in terms of division of labour, command and control, and how the people within the organisation are connected (Abadinsky, 2010; Finckenauer, 2005). The existing triad literature also adopts a hierarchical approach in understanding the organizational structure of triad society (Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000; Lo, 1984; Lo and Kwok, 2014; Morgan, 1960). However, this literature only provides a general description of organizational structure, such as role and function of each rank without providing further analysis. It is presumed that those who are posited in higher positions of the criminal organizations are regarded as senior, and should possess the highest authority within the organization.

When discussing the definition of structure, scholars emphasized the importance of “knowledgeability” (Giddens, 1984) or “culture” (Sewell, 1992), which refers to the rules and norms for group action and behavior (p. 8). They argued that rules or schemas construct the structure (p.8). Confucian culture and Chinese culture set the hierarchy of social relations and social structure. It also shapes the norms, obligations and expectations that bind individual and group behavior and choices, as well as how they value and categorize their social relations (Lin,

2001). To understand the triad structure, in particular what constitutes the hierarchy in triad societies, the subcultural element of triad society should also be investigated.

Seniority is important in the triad subculture. While brotherhood and loyalty are emphasized (Chin, 1990), the importance of seniority has not been fully mentioned in previous triad literature. Chapters four and five provide an overview of the organizational structure of three major triad societies in Hong Kong. The importance of seniority was highlighted as a crucial determinant of hierarchical positions, authority, and power of triads. This chapter will focus on what seniority means to triads, and how it shapes the triad relations, and influences the access to resources in the triad community.

The term seniority in Chinese culture literally means elder. Under the influence of Confucianism, seniority is given a great range of authority, power, and status (Bond and Hwang, 1986; Chen and Starosta, 1997; Knutson, Hwang and Deng, 2000). Authority is embedded in the structure of the Five Codes of Ethic of Confucianism. The hierarchical structure of particularist relationships ascribes the ruler (supervisor), father, husband, and elder brother with authority to receive more power and exert influence on the family, organization, and political arena (Chung, 1996). Under the influence of Confucian culture, age is always a symbol of prestige and social authority. An elder's seniority is regarded as a hierarchical code for claiming respectful treatment, and exercising discipline and control over the young (Park, 1993). Seniority can command respect in Chinese societies (Chen and Starosta, 1997).

Seniority is also connected with credibility, because seniority implies the possession of knowledge

and wisdom under Confucianism (Hill, 2006). Due to the prerogatives and power possessed by seniors, they can utilize their seniority to exert control over the decision-making process (Chen and Chung, 2002) and obtain personal benefits. They can also utilize trust deriving from their seniority to ensure the compliance of others (Griffin, 1967).

6.2 Definition of Seniority in the Triad Community

6.2.1 Seniority as elder and position in Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship

Seniority in triad subculture has multiple meanings. From the organizational structure perspective, seniority refers to the rank and position held in triad society. The higher position held in the positional structure, the higher hierarchy he is posited. For instance, in terms of positional structure, Cho Kun, Dragon head, and Wa Si Yan, the head of triad society, have the highest seniority; area bosses come next; then triad officers; and Sze Kau members, respectively. Members posited in the higher hierarchy are presumed to have higher authority, better access to triad resources and greater influence in triad society.

However, seniority also refers to years of service and experience in triad society, regardless of the person's rank in triad society, as noted by two experienced triads:

(T9) Seniority is determined by years of service in triad society. The one who was initiated into triad society earlier will be more senior.... As one of the Sze Kau members, I have authority to recruit followers and recommend them for promotion as ordinary members. After they participated in the initiation ceremony, they become an ordinary member like me. In terms of rank, we share the same rank; but in terms of seniority, I am still senior than them.

(T13) Seniority means those who were initiated into triad society earlier with more years served in triad society, regardless of their position. It's what we call Lo Sze Kau [old Sze Kau or experienced ordinary triad member]. Although we are Sze Kau members, this does not imply that we are positioned with the same social status. Those triads who enter the triad society later are expected to respect them.

(T20) Seniority does not always refer to those in higher positions in triad society, but mostly refers to experienced members with time spent in triad society. Those who joined triad society earlier with many generations of followers are regarded as senior, while rank is not very important. Even Cho Kun needs to give face and respect to those experienced triads, such as 'Lo Sze Kau'.

The interview data reveals that seniority refers to the position in the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship, which is determined by the year of admission. Those who were admitted earlier into triad society are mostly positioned at higher positions in the chain of the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship. The earlier the admittance into triad society, the more likely the person is to be positioned at a higher position in the line relationship, regardless of their rank (e.g. Sze Kau, triad officer, etc.). In addition, the more generations of subsequent followers created, the higher the seniority of the triad is. Those positioned in the lower positions in the line relationship are expected to respect those who joined earlier, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T20) Seniority means those who were admitted into triad society earlier, those possessing more experience in triad society. Seniority also means those who are positioned as Dai Lo

in the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship [social and business network]. Although their rank is the same as their follower, Dai Lo are always senior to their followers, even those followers who have better Dor [reputation] or later become officers or Cho Kun. So, seniority and rank are not necessarily related.

(T9) We need to respect higher ranking triads, partly because they have more experience and possess more power in triad society. However, even if a triad is promoted to triad officer while his Dai Lo was still an ordinary member, it doesn't imply that he doesn't need to respect his Dai Lo. This is because it was his Dai Lo who initiated him and recruited him. Without his Dai Lo, he would never have this opportunity. He still has to respect his Dai Lo as his mentor. For instance, even if I have better Dor Heung (more reputable) than my Dai Lo, I still need to respect him even if I have more power than him.

The logic behind seniority from an elder perspective is due to the guarantor system adopted in the recruitment and promotion procedure. In order to join the triad society and to be promoted as a formal member, initiates are required to be sponsored by a Sze Kau member as their guarantor, and the authority of recruitment and promotion depends on the guarantor. The triad officer promotion also relies on their Dai Lo's recommendation. As such, the guarantor system gives the Dai Lo superiority over the late-comer.

The power imbalance between the followers and the Dai Lo is not restricted to promotion; the mentor role served by the Dai Lo also controls their followers' access to opportunities and resources for money-making operations, as well as opportunities for learning criminal skills and

triad rituals and norms, as confirmed by following triads:

(T1) I started by assisting my Dai Lo as a “courier” to deliver drugs; later I started my own [drug dealing] business. My Dai Lo asked me to do it, so I did it. After two years of assisting my Dai Lo to sell drugs, I told my Dai Lo I wanted to start my own [drug dealing] business. After I got his approval, I got the client network and the drug supply from him and started my own drug dealing business.... He taught me lots of skills to become a successful drug dealer. I taught the same to my followers.

(T9) After I was initiated into triad society, my Dai Lo taught me the hand-sign and poems for identification.... Prostitution was my first illicit business after joining triad society. My Dai Lo taught me how to operate a brothel; later he taught me how to be a pimp. Then he brought me three groups of girls and asked me to be their pimp. This is how I started my career in prostitution.

(T7) My Dai Lo taught me many things and I regard him as my mentor. He taught me how to negotiate when conflict occurs between triads. He taught me how to be a Dai Lo. He asked me to be fearless in fighting and to never leave my triad brothers in a gang fight. He also advised me as to what type of crime is risky and should be avoided, such as drug dealing, money laundering, and counterfeit credit card businesses. Finally, he gave me the ‘riding dragon’ (a form of loan sharking and debt collection) job, because it is less risky and lucrative. This job became the major source of income in my triad life.

The Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship is like a mentor-protégé relationship. On the one hand, junior

triads are highly dependent on their Dai Lo in a variety of aspects in order to survive in triad society (e.g. protection) and entering the functional territory i.e., the illicit business community (note: see also T13's case in the dual Dai Lo system in Chapter four, which explains how he relied on his "big portion Dai Lo" (大份大佬) to enter a new triad territory for operating illicit businesses). During my interviews, many participants also said that they needed to rely on their protector to start their criminal career, because their Dai Lo provided them with various illicit business opportunities, so that they could accumulate sufficient criminal experience and exposure in illicit industries in order to establish reputation and social networks before they became independent. Such dependency bestows authority to the Dai Lo, giving them positional superiority over their followers, and is constructed as a paternalistic relationship between the protector and followers.

Even if triads eventually start their illicit businesses autonomously after they have accumulated sufficient criminal contacts and experience, many triads still rely on their protector to further their triad career. For instance, as noted in Chapter four, a Cho Kun candidate needs to rely on his Dai Lo to provide him support for Cho Kun election. In exchange, he has to comply with his Dai Lo's order, even if he does not want to. Even if he is not interested in political issues, he still has to comply with his Dai Lo's order to send his followers to attack protestors in the "Umbrella Movement", because he relies on his Dai Lo to continue to give him business and, more importantly, support him in the next Cho Kun election. The same situation applies for the triad officer (T16) who was the area boss of Kwun Tong. He also said that he got the protection business in his territory and the officer position with his Dai Lo's support. Therefore, he felt obligated to share the profit gain with his Dai Lo, even after he stepped down from the position (T16). These cases are further evidence that even experienced triads still need to rely on their superior to support

them in order to climb up the social ladder in triad society

On the other hand, triads see their Dai Lo as a mentor who provides them with criminal skills training, criminal career guidance, and teaches them triad rituals and norms. Without their Dai Lo as a gateway to enter the criminal market, and providing a platform to accumulate criminal experience and skills, it is very difficult for triads to further their criminal and triad career. Therefore, from the triad's perspective, followers should be grateful to their superior and reciprocate the favour given by showing respect and loyalty to their senior, regardless of their rank in triad society; this is what triads interpret as "brotherhood" or "Yi Qi" (義氣). Loyalty and respect continue, regardless of the power of the Dai Lo. Here is one example:

(T8) Triads are obligated to respect seniors. Although some old Sze Kau members are no longer involved in illegal activities or are now poor. We still need to respect them because of their years spent as a triad, their criminal experiences and, more importantly, because they are our Dai Los, the ones who brought us into the underworld and provided us support in the past. This is the meaning of brotherhood, and such brotherhood should not be affected because of his power and status.

6.2.2 Seniority as experience

In addition to structural position, criminal and triad experience are both important in determining seniority. From the triads' perspective, the possession of criminal skills and triad knowledge, such as knowledge of triad rituals and norms, and the criminal social capital they have established, all depend on their accumulated experience in both crime operations and triad society. The knowledge and social capital determine status in triad communities, which gives them authority and influence over other triads. For instance, a Lo Shuk Fu explains why a Sze Kau member can become a Lo

Shuk Fu:

(T18) I got the status in Wo Group because I am able to resolve problems for senior triads. I have different social networks in different triad societies and other areas, such as legal sectors and the political arena, and I am able to utilize these networks to resolve their problems...In the Cho Kun election, I utilised the networks I established throughout my years in Wo Shing Wo to support X. X won the election because both my friends and I fully supported him... I was a member of Wo Shing Wo for many years. Many of the influential triad figures in Wo Shing Wo are from my generation and their followers. This is why I got a high status in the triad community; even though I was never a triad officer or Cho Kun.”

(T13) Even though I was just an old Sze Kau member, I still had status among triads operating in Jordan and my triad society, because I established various triad networks in different triad societies. I operated in Jordan and Mongkok for more than twenty years. I operated many different illicit businesses there, such as drug dealing, prostitution, entertainment venue protector. If a triad has longer exposure in a triad community and is involved in more varieties of businesses, it is easier for him to establish various types of networks. He won't be able to do this if he doesn't have long enough exposure and experience in the triad community. Experience not only allows me to source different business opportunities and access resources, it also helps to boost my Dor [reputation] and status in the triad community.”

6.3 Seniority Rule in Triad Societies

In the existing triad literature, the term “structure” often refers to positional structure, including the rank and role of different positions and how they are connected (Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000; Lo, 1984; Lo and Kwok, 2014; Morgan, 1960). However, findings in organizational structure in the present study reflect two kinds of structure in triad societies: positional structure and authority structure. The former refers to formal organizational positions or ranks, such as the Cho Kun, area boss, triad officers, Sze Kau members, and Blue Lanterns. The latter refers to those powerful figures (e.g. the Lo Shuk Fu) within the organization that possess the power and authority to lead and govern the respective triad societies. Though seniority has two different meaning to triads, they are not mutually exclusive. This is because years of service and experience in triad society are also regarded as important criteria in determining the eligibility of promotion and election. In traditional triad societies, triad officers and leadership positions are often occupied by experienced triads with many years served in triad society (e.g. Area boss of Sun Yee On).

However, the existence of the Lo Shuk Fu system reveals that the authority structure is not equivalent to positional structure. For instance, the Cho Kun (positional structure) is regarded as the positional apex of Wo Shing Wo; however, he may be less powerful than the Lo Shuk Fu (power structure) who might be only a Sze Kau member, especially in the modern Wo Shing Wo. For some triad societies such as 14K and Sun Yee On, Lo Shuk Fu does not exist in the positional structure (except within Wo Shing Wo) and there is no clear procedure for selection. The selection criteria are often based on the years spent and experience in triad society and a general recognition of achievement and reputation by other senior triads. Nonetheless, their power and influence is significant, as they control the promotion, leadership selection, and authority of arbitration of triad

societies.

As discussed in connection with the leadership selection criteria of the three sample triad societies, seniority is the common predominant criterion in determining leadership selection. For example, in 14K, the authority for Wa Si Yan selection is vested in Lo Shuk Fu; business distribution and assignment is also vested in Lo Shuk Fu rather than the Wa Si Yan. Wa Si Yan, as the head of 14K branch, they only serve as a figurehead and authority in limited. The criterion for Lo Shuk Fu selection is determined by experience while rank is held as irrelevant. In traditional Wo Shing Wo, Lo Shuk Fu controls the nomination and vote in Cho Kun election and has a supervisory role in overseeing the performance of Cho Kun. In the modern era, the Lo Shuk Fu system not only empowers those experienced triads who are ex-Cho Kun, but also creates the current Cho Kun's dependency on them, which further decreases the authority of the Cho Kun and serves to make them a puppet of the Lo Shuk Fu. As a result, the authority structure is not always consistent with the positional structure. Thus, the authority hierarchy of triad society is mainly determined by a seniority that is defined by years of service, triad and criminal experience, and honour (contribution to triad society and compliance with triad norms). Among these criteria, honour prevails, as explained by a former Cho Kun of one of the Wo Group triad society and an experienced triad:

(T4) To determine eligibility to be a Cho Kun, achievement and contribution in triad society are important. Being 'old' is an insufficient qualification to become a Cho Kun. I conquered many territories for my triad societies and brought lots of profit from them. That's how I got elected in Wo Yung Yee. Simply being 'old' is insufficient to be a Cho Kun; without achievement and contribution, age is meaningless.

(T24) Seniority and triad interests are positively related. Seniority means that he has lots of achievements and contributions to triad society which allowed him to become a senior triad. Seniority also means that he served in triad society for a long time; otherwise he wouldn't have achievements and contributions. That's why senior triads deserved to be respected.

6.4 Seniority-based Resource Distribution in Triad Society

Seniority also influences the access to criminal resources and information in triad society. In the past, the major source of triad funding came from an initiation and promotion fee, and the protection fees obtained from the triad territory (Morgan, 1960: 99). As the use of triad rituals has been simplified and decreased, the major source of funding in triad society is mostly generated from profits obtained from legitimate and illegitimate businesses operated in the triad territory, including protection, entertainment businesses, illicit gambling dens, minibus routes, building refurbishment projects, and land and property acquisitions (T18). In the Wo Group of triad societies, a Cho Kun is obligated to inject all of his profit gained from his territory into the common fund, except his personal business without utilizing any of resources owned by the headquarters (T18, T17).

6.4.1 Eligibility of access to common fund

The common fund is mainly utilised for supporting the salaries of Cho Kun (about HKD \$30,000 a month in Wo Shing Wo) (T18, T17), official Lu Shuk Fu, and triad officers (T17, T16), and the daily operation of triad society and welfare for triads including medical, legal, and funeral expenses, and compensation for imprisonment (Morgan, 1960: 99). However, in practice, only senior triads are eligible to get welfare or access to the triad common fund, as noted by the different triads:

(T7) We seldom get money from triad society. Only senior triads and those who have authority in triad society and headquarters members are eligible to get money from triad society. Triad society provides financial and resource support, such as weapons. But not every triad can get this. Only those Cho Kun, officers, and those who are able to ‘sit at the same table’ [note: experienced senior triads at higher strata] are eligible to get it. Ordinary triads normally do not have direct access to these resources.”

(T23) Not everyone who completed a task commanded by triad society and ended up getting injured, dead, or imprisoned is eligible to compensation from the triad common fund. Only senior triads, those 426 (triad officers) or above are eligible. Lang Chai seldom receive compensation from triad society.

6.4.2 Stratified resource distribution

If a senior triad orders his frontline triads to execute a command, they are expected to claim the necessary expenses and resources from their Dai Lo, and let him claim the funds through numerous strata of triads, from the direct protector up to higher positions in the chain of the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationships, as described by a triad:

(T7) If a front line triad needs to obtain money or any form of support from ‘Ah Kung’ [triad common fund], we are required to obtain the money through numerous strata of Dai Lo. For example, if I need to obtain compensation, or legal or medical expenses, I need to get it from my Dai Lo. Then he will request the funds from his Dai Lo, up until it reaches the triad who gave the command.

Even front line junior triads are assisted by their superiors in executing tasks commanded by senior

triads; because payment is delivered through many strata of triads before reaching them, triads in each stratum are entitled to share a portion of payment. As a result, the amount of payment received by the frontline triads is a lot less than what they should be entitled to. Here are few examples provided by participants:

(T10) If Ah Kung gave one hundred thousand dollars for murdering someone, the executor could only be entitled to about eight thousand dollars. This is because each level of Dai Lo above him shares part of the payment. Very often, the executor might not know the original payment offered by the triad who took that order. Frontline triads only know what they will receive when the task is done.

(T14) There was an order to cause damage in five nightclubs. My Ah Kung (i.e. the protector of the participant's Dai Lo) received one hundred thousand dollars to do so. Each Dai Lo under Ah Kung responsible for one nightclub received ten thousand dollars and I got five thousand from my Dai Lo. The Ah Kung and Dai Lo never showed up, they are just responsible for taking orders and distributing tasks to their followers. This is how senior triads earn money.

(T12) When I was in jail after committing a crime for my triad society, my Dai Lo also benefited from me, because he asked for money from the triad society in the pretext of providing welfare for their detained followers, such as transportation costs and legal expenses. The triad society offered ten thousand dollars for my legal expenses. My Dai Lo spent only three to four thousand on actual legal expenses and pocketed the rest of the money.

In these cases, triad protectors benefited by taking large portions of payment from the patron or headquarters. The position in the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship determines the cut of the triads—the higher position in the line relationship, the higher returns they would get, and vice versa. In other words, if there are more strata of triads between the patron triad who gave the order and the frontline triad, the less money that the frontline triads could receive. Triads in higher positions in the line relationship can exploit their structural position advantage to obtain personal benefit, leaving the risk of injury and arrest to the frontline triads—those who receive the least money.

6.4.3 Compartmentalization and restricted access to information

The compartmentalization between the triad strata can create information asymmetry between the junior triads and senior triads. Triad norms allow triads from higher strata (rank and position in the line relationship) access to information, but frontline triads are prohibited from asking for further information from superiors, except about the task they need to execute (T13, T23, T16). Since senior triads have better access to the illicit businesses, tasks from the patron at headquarters, and people outside triad society, and tasks are mainly distributed by seniors, therefore triads from lower strata may not know what benefits they could be entitled to. The restriction of information further hampers the bargaining power of frontline triads, as noted by the following triads:

(T13) I often ask the frontline to do the task first, and tell them what kind of benefit they will be entitled to when the task is completed. However, not all of them will get the benefit we claim. Of course, if information is open to everyone, you can't deceive them. But the fact is that only the one who got the 'order' or the 'business' owner and those who are close to them would know the full picture. Triads from lower levels wouldn't know the truth.

(T20) Information is not open in triad society. Very often, only those who got the business

order would know the price of each job. Those responsible for distributing the job to their followers would only know how much they are entitled to and they also determine how much their followers will get, unless you have good relationship with them.

6.4.4 Profit sharing and “renqing” between Dai Lo and followers

Although exploitation often happens between Dai Lo and their followers, many triads are willing to share profits with their Dai Lo, although they have no involvement in the illicit business operation, as noted by two triads:

(T16) My Dai Lo was the area boss before he sponsored me to replace his position. I shared one quarter of the profit gained from my territory with him even after he stepped down from the area boss position and had no involvement in the territorial operation. It was required to share half of the profit with headquarters. I divided the rest of the profit in half; one portion was taken by me and I left the rest to my followers... I think this is a fair deal because it was my Dai Lo who promoted me as area boss; therefore, I need to respect him. I was not obligated to do so, and he did not need my money as he has various sources of income, even after stepping down. I am willing to do that because I need to repay his support to me.

(T13) I share a portion of the profit gained from my prostitution and drug business with my Dai Lo even he does nothing and never asked for it, because I need to respect him as my Dai Lo for what he provided to me in the past. Other triads might not do the same, but I did that because of “renqing” (personal indebtedness).

(T24) “When those triads get old and lose power, some of them can be very poor. They

sometimes call me and ask me to pay the rent for them. I would ask my followers to give them money. I used to share a portion of profits gained from my drug business with my Dai Lo, even though he had no involvement and the business had nothing to do with him. I did that because I respected him. Triads need to respect seniors, no matter whether they are in power or not.

From the triads' perspective, profit sharing with their Dai Lo has nothing to do with the authority or power possessed by the Dai Lo or dependency on them, but comes from respect for their Dai Lo and the practice of renqing. The Five Codes of Ethics in Confucianism provides guiding principles on the appropriate relationships between subordinates (protégés) and superior (mentor) and indicates that subordinates are expected to respect their mentor. However, in practice, not all triads comply with this guiding principle, especially when personal benefit is involved. The rule of renqing in Chinese culture supplements this guiding principle and acts as the “gesture of respect”, which leads to triads sharing profits with their senior, even if they need not do so. The rule of renqing can be interpreted as “obligation of reciprocity” (Silin, 1970), which is grounded in the Confucian norm of interpersonal relationships. According to Hwang (1987), when the recipient of a favour receives the favour, a sense of indebtedness will occur. The sense of indebtedness constitutes an obligation for him to return the favour. Based on the rule of renqing, recipients of favours are obligated to return the favour due to this sense of indebtedness, even if the favour giver did not ask for immediate return. The renqing rule is not generally applicable to all relationships, but depends on the affection and bond in the particular relationship (ibid.). Participant T16 was willing to share the profit because of the strong bond and affection he had with his Dai Lo who provided support for his promotion. Participant T13 shared profit with his

Dai Lo because of favours received from his Dai Lo in the past and the Five Codes of Ethics oblige him to respect his senior.

6.4.5 Use of seniority to influence triads' decision-making

The authority of seniors is not restricted to accessing triad resources and profit distribution. Senior triads can also use the authority embedded in their structural position to influence decision-making.

Seniority determines authority in election in triad society and is evident in these examples:

(T17) Seniority is very important in triad community; this is a crucial part of the triad culture because senior triads have the authority to influence the Cho Kun election. They have the authority of arbitration to resolve conflicts. If there is a controversial opinion between different Lo Shuk Fu in determining the eligibility of the Cho Kun candidate, the most senior, that is, the most experienced triad, would be the final adjudicator. Under the triad norm, the most senior triad always has the final say.

A Lo Shuk Fu, who is an “old Sze Kau member”, explained how he utilised seniority to influence the Cho Kun election:

(T18) I deliberately framed the story, and led them to form a negative perception of my follower's competitor. They believed my words because of my senior status and authority in Wo Shing Wo. This is how I promoted X to become a Cho Kun. The result was even more favourable than if I had bribed them.

Years of service, triad experience, and contributions to triad society are important criteria in determining authority in triad society. Thus, these factors also determine the social capital and resources possessed (this will be further explained in chapters seven and eight). The seniority based

hierarchical structure and subcultural norm of respecting seniority further allows them to use their position of authority to influence triad society (see the example in 14K Wa Si Yan election and the decline of Cho Kun authority in Wo Shing Wo in chapters four and five), to ensure fellow triads comply with seniors' orders and maintain cohesiveness among them at different levels:

(T15) If there are any conflicts between triad brothers, senior triads like Lo Shuk Fu are responsible for arbitration. Seniority is important; otherwise others will not respect and follow their decisions and the cohesiveness of triad society could not be maintained.

(T26) Although Tuen Mun consists of different competing factions, they also need to listen to the senior triads and comply with their orders. Tuen Mun triads [exclusively Sun Yee On members] are prohibited from operating prostitution in Tuen Mun, because X (a Lo Shuk Fu of Tuen Mun Sun Yee On) said that he doesn't want any brothels in Tuen Mun. X is an authoritative and well respected senior triad of Sun Yee On, so every triad operating in Tuen Mun needs to listen to him. When serious conflicts broke out among these factions, X would ask them to stop. This explains why Tuen Mun can be exclusively controlled by Sun Yee On.

(T4) Lo Shuk Fu are important for resolving conflicts between triad societies in the Wo Group. Lo Shuk Fu can utilize their seniority to control their followers to avoid conflicts in order to maintain harmony and cohesiveness among triad societies in the Wo Group.

6.5 Segregation Between Senior and Junior Triads

Triad society is highly stratified based on seniority. While seniority as rank determines the social status in triad society, seniority as elder, which is determined by years of service and experience, is equally important. Frontline and junior triads only have direct access to their Dai Lo and their Dai Lo's protector (Ah Kung) and less often have direct access to triads above them. Here are some examples:

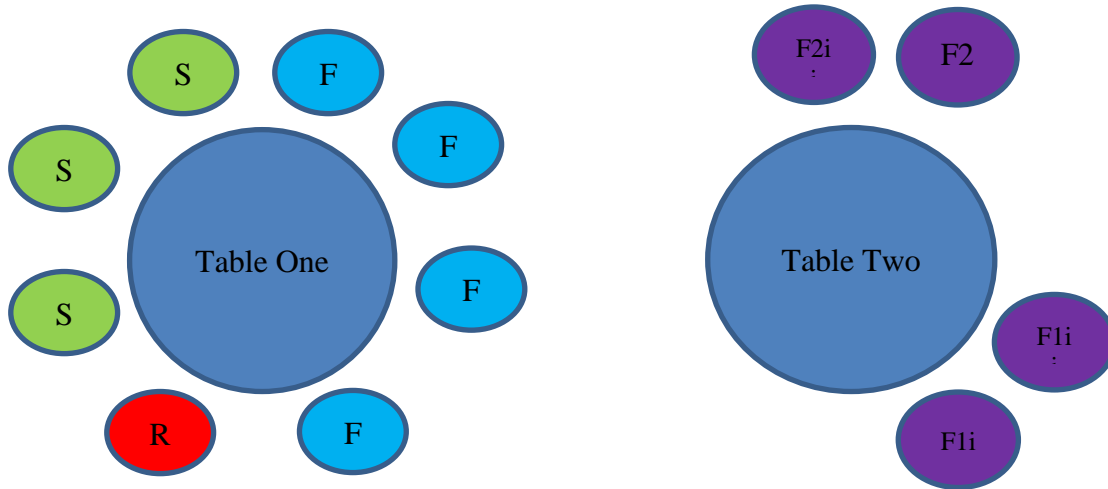
(T12) I didn't meet my Ah Kung often. We were distanced because of seniority. We triads had clear status differences between juniors (those admitted to triad society later) and seniors (those who admitted to triad society earlier), and between officers and ordinary members.

(T23) I didn't meet my Ah Kung (Dai Lo's protector) often. I met him sometimes if Dai Lo invited me to join their dinner or drinks, or when he had something to ask me to do. If not, I wouldn't have a chance to talk to him. Ah Kung is friendly, but as a junior, I need to be very careful when talking to him, because our seniority and status are different. I seldom meet the area boss. I did meet him less than five times, only at triad banquets. We didn't even have a chance to talk.

The hierarchical structure and separation of junior and senior triads is further evident at banquets and social eating among triads. If the social meal is hosted by senior triads, most of the invited attendees are triads of similar age, years served, and seniority in the triad community. Junior or young triads are not invited. However, some of the attendees might bring one or two followers who are adult triads but younger than the senior triads and with less experience in the triad

community. However, these are seated separately and distanced from the seniors (as shown in Figure 6.1).

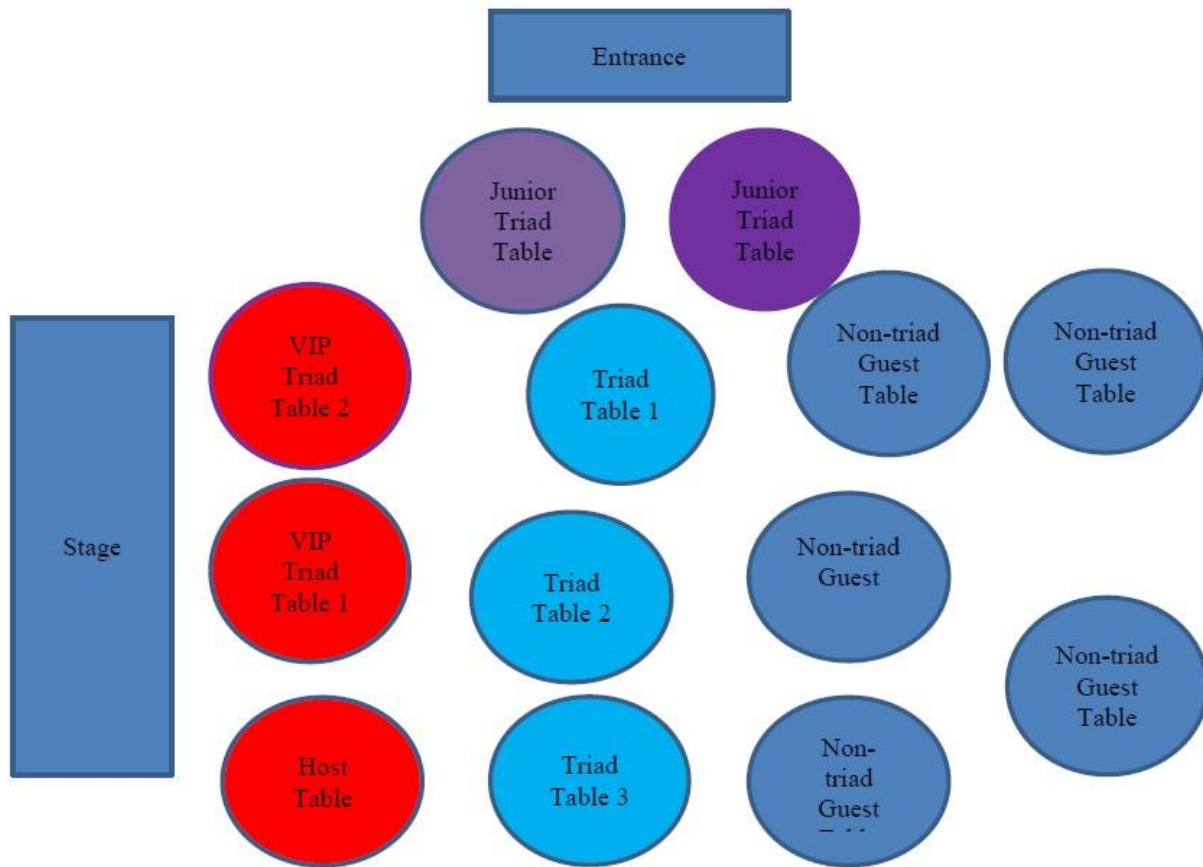
Figure 6.1 General Triad Social Meal Seating Arrangement



Note: R – Researcher; S – Senior triad; F – Follower of S; F1i – Follower of F1

This ethnographic observation is consistent with seating arrangements at other triad hosted banquets. Seating is arranged based on the seniority of triads. The most senior ones are seated at the table closest to the stage, which is reserved for the most honourable attendees and the host. Less senior triads are seated separately and at a greater distance from the stage; while the juniors are seated closed to the exit or the edge of the venue, far from the VIP tables (as shown in Figure 6.2)

Figure 6.2 Seating Plan of Wo Yee Tong Annual Dinner



- Note:
- Host Table – Cho Kun and Cha So of Wo Yee Tong and their direct followers, and Cho Kun’s wife
 - VIP Triad Table 1 – Lo Shuk Fu (including Ex-Cho Kun) of Wo Yee Tong
 - VIP Triad Table 2 – Representatives of the Wo’s Group triad societies (senior triads), and other triad societies
 - Triad Table 1-3 – Members of Wo Yee Tong (mostly middle-aged triads)
 - Junior Triad Table 1-2 – Junior members of Wo Yee Tong (mostly under 30s)

Before the banquet starts, the most senior triad, normally the Lo Shuk Fu or current Cho Kun depending on years of service in the triad community, is seated first. The less senior triads proactively approach and greet them before going to their seats. During the triad banquet, the most senior triads, such as Cho Kun and Lo Shuk Fu, remain seated at the VIP tables. Area bosses and

less senior triads proactively approach them, along with their followers and junior triads, to share a toast with the most senior triads. The junior triads do not have any contact with seniors during the event until the toasting time when they are told by their seniors to toast with the seniors. Junior triads are expected to proactively walk to the senior triad table to toast the senior triads, which is regarded as showing respect to senior triads. After toasting, juniors return to their seats, while the less senior triads, usually the area bosses, would continue chatting at the area close to their tables. Normally, the most senior triads do not stay until the end of the banquet and leave after toasting.

A senior triad officer and a triad also confirmed the observation findings:

(T5) Triads respect seniority. We have clear division in our hierarchy based on seniority. Those who are not officers and the younger generation are not allowed to sit with us at the same table. They need to sit at the separate table and are distanced from us.

(T12) I seldom meet the Ah Kung or Cho Kun. The Ah Kung only hangs out with triad uncles [note: Dai Lo's triad brothers] who are about his age and generation. Even when we met at the banquet, they were all seated separately from us. We didn't have any chance to talk to them. We have nothing in common to chat about, because we are from different generations and ranks. If you are not as senior as them, it's almost impossible to get close to them.

The seating arrangement and interaction pattern in triad social meals reflects the hierarchical structure of the triad community. Triads are positioned in the different hierarchical strata based on seniority, which is the rank and years of service in the triad community. The most senior triads are

positioned as the apex of authority in the triad community, as they are always positioned as the most honourable guest at the triad banquet, located in front of the stage. This observation is consistent with Bian (2001)'s study of social eating network that the most important seats are offered to the highest status attendees.

Face issues are also relevant in such a seating arrangement. The hosts of a triad banquet or social eating event need to give face to the senior triads by allocating the most honourable seats to them. As the hosts of triad banquets are also senior triads, arranging the appropriate seats which represent the senior triad guests' superiority is also a way to maintain their relationship with the seniors. The status of the juniors, who are positioned as the lowest strata, is also reflected in their seating; they are distanced from the senior triads and marginalised at the edge of the banquet venue, for example, at tables far from the stage, close to the exit, or near the washroom.

The separate seating arrangement based on social hierarchy in Chinese banquets is found in Kinpis's (1997) study, which found that those with higher status will not allow those perceived as too low in status to banquet with him. This reflects that triads share similar cultures to other Chinese in general; they emphasise hierarchical differences and clear division of people from different statuses, and status is determined by seniority as rank and elder. Due to the clear division of status hierarchy, there is a compartmentation between juniors and seniors from different generations and ranks, which hinders juniors in establishing social networks with, or obtaining information from, the seniors as confirmed by an experienced triad:

(T13) Seniors would not be bothered to interact with less experienced and younger triads.

Triads like T19, a Lo Shuk Fu with a vote in Wo Shing Wo, would not socialise with those

junior triads. They even hate those junior triads or those without status who attempt to seek advantage from him.

In my ethnographic experience, two triads from different levels of seniority were introduced to T19, with two different results. The experienced one, who is a 14K triad officer, successfully established a social connection with T19 because he was able to demonstrate traditional rituals (e.g., hand sign, poem, way of toasting to signify triad identity) and share accurate information about the history of triad societies and insider stories of old triad figures, and, more importantly, because they were about same age. Age and the ability to demonstrate knowledge of triad rituals and history of triad societies is important in order to display seniority as an elder (not rank). The ability to share insider stories of old triad figures not only signifies seniority, but also indicates his close relationship with powerful triads, which also demonstrates status.

The other case involved a less experienced triad who attempted to 'seek guanxi' with T19. This ended in failure because of his low level of seniority and young age (which will be further discussed in the next chapter). These cases reveal that seniority as elder is an important factor in determining the chance of successful social networking with powerful triads and also further evidences the segregation between junior and senior triads.

6.6 Importance of Seniority for Social Capital Establishment

The triad structure is a seniority based hierarchy. The social structure and position of triads both determine the chances of access to and mobilization of resources embedded in the spider's web networks and social networks in triad community. On the other hand, seniority also serves as a signal to display triads' credentials, which determines the value of the triads, hence, an opportunity for successful social capital development. Seniority is a source of trust, which can be used as credit for gaining personal benefit.

Seniority is an important source of confidence in triads' collaboration. Years of service and criminal experiences in triad society are both crucial for establishing the foundation of trust when searching for collaborators, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T9) Whether to trust him or not depends on experience. I need to know his past triad experience before I decide to collaborate with him or not. Many triads prefer those who have longer experience in triad society, because the longer the history he has, the more track records we can examine. Then we can tell what his personality is like and how experienced he is in operating business, so that I know whether he is reliable or not.

(T7) Seniors tend to be more favourable in drug business because drug ring leaders tend to trust senior triads... Senior means more experienced.

When people outside the triad community are searching for collaborators, seniority as rank becomes a more important credential to determine the ability of triads. A Lo Shuk Fu expressed the importance of seniority in linking social capital with reputable entrepreneurs:

(T17) “Cho Kun has face and Dor. With the Dor that Cho Kun has, it is easier for them to solicit business outside the triad community. Civilians do not know much about the track record of the triads. People can judge the ability and credibility of the triads based on his rank in triad society. The Cho Kun position really helps to enhance the fame and reputation of the triad; and people will proactively want to meet him, or even collaborate with him because of his Cho Kun position.

Since authority is embedded in senior position, triads can rely on seniority to influence less experienced triads to obtain personal benefits and favours in name of “giving face” (which will be further discussed in chapter eight) or “respecting your senior”:

(T20) “Those with seniority in the triad community can put pressure on those positioned in lower strata, and those in lower strata are expected to give face to seniors. Even though some of the juniors are more famous or powerful than those seniors, they are still expected to respect and give face to the seniors.... Seniors tend to receive more favour than less senior triads. Senior triads are more popular and known by other triads, because they have more years of service in the triad community. Other triads will give face to them, say, by giving them a better deal, or by trying to fulfil their demands.”

Moreover, seniors tend to have privileges in accessing to resources for crime operations, as confirmed by two triads:

(T7) Only seniors are eligible to get a large amount of drugs for wholesale, say, a chunk or even a cargo of drugs. We can't get such amounts of drugs for wholesale. That's why only senior triads can be wholesalers.

(T14) Seniors are more likely to borrow more money or attract investment than juniors, because it is easier for them to obtain trust from other triads or businessmen. They can make use of the money for operating loan sharks, buying more quality drugs as a wholesaler, or to operate illicit gambling. These businesses require a large pool of capital to support them. Therefore, juniors have difficulty operating these kinds of businesses.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

From the triads' perspective, the term "seniority" consists of several meanings, depending on the situation. Rank plays an important role in determining access to triad resources and information, and establishing social capital outside the triad society. However, rank is not the only factor in determining the power and authority in triad society.

Albini (1971) argued that the hierarchy of a criminal organisation should not be restricted to the positional structure (rank), but should also include the power structure (p. 265). The power of a criminal in that organisation should be determined by the number of significant patron-client relationships he is able to establish (p.300) and his ability to exercise force and deliver favour to his clients (p. 265). Albini (1971) believed that what determines the hierarchy in a criminal organization is dependency; i.e., one who is more dependent on other members will be positioned lower in the hierarchy and power structure regardless of one's rank in the organization. Therefore, rank is insufficient to evaluate the status of individuals within the criminal groups. It also implies that positional structure may not be equivalent to power structure. The present study has similar findings, revealing that those in higher ranks do not always possess the highest social status or

authority in triad society. Based on the analysis above, what ultimately determines the positions in the power structure is seniority, such as criminal and triad experience, and honour possessed by triads.

Triad subculture plays an important role in constructing the hierarchical structure of triad society. Although triad society is regarded as a criminal organisation, triad subculture is also embedded with Confucian values. The Five Codes of Ethics in Confucianism guide the appropriate gesture in interactions between superiors and subordinates, and ascribes authority to the superior. The relationship between a Dai Lo and his followers is infused with the rules of the relationship between ruler (superior) and ruled (subordinate) and the younger and elder brother relationship. The ruled or younger brother is obligated to respect and be loyal to their superior or elder brother. On the other hand, the emphasis on loyalty in triad subculture also guides followers to respect seniors (no matter their rank or position in the triad society), even if their senior is no longer in power. Therefore, simple possession of power and control of resources is insufficient to explain the triad hierarchical structure.

Seniority signifies status, authority and power. It can be used as a credential for obtaining trust and favours, and facilitates the establishment of social capital in the triad community and the linking of social capital with the higher social strata in the upper world. Seniority establishes the foundation of trust, which can be used as credit for getting advantages from other triads (determined by criminal and triad experience), and to collaborate with people of higher social status (determined by rank). This explains why senior triads tend to obtain more resources and business opportunities inside and outside their triad societies.

Given that seniority confers value to senior triads, it is difficult for less experienced triads to establish social capital with senior triads due to the seniority-based stratification in triad hierarchy. Such segregation deprives junior triads the opportunities to obtain advantages and resources from the criminal organisation, unless they maintain good relationships with senior triads and comply with their orders.

Part II

Triads' Collaborations

Chapter 7 Dor – The Identity and Reputation of Triads

Chapter 8 Face, Dor and Triads' Collaborations

Chapter 9 Spread and Validation of Dor

CHAPTER 7

DOR – THE IDENTITY AND REPUTATION OF TRIADS

7.1 Introduction

After the examination of the organizational and power structure of triad societies in Part I, Part II will examine how the triad structure influences and facilitates triads in establishing criminal collaboration in the underworld. Gambetta (2009) argued that trust is an essential basis for cooperation in the underworld (p. 219). It is particularly important when there is a risk of loss between collaborators (Rousseau et al., 1998: 394). However, whether there exists trust among criminals remains controversial (Lampe and Johanson, 2006). Instead of searching for the existence of trust, Gambetta's (2000) research focused more on how criminals collaborate when trust is limited or does not exist. He further developed signaling theory to examine how criminals use different tactics or signals to signify their criminal credential and credibility to foster collaboration. He argued that reputation, especially reputation of violence, is an important factor leading to criminal collaboration in the underworld. Against this backdrop, Part II, which includes Chapters 7, 8 and 9, aims to examine how triads establish and spread their reputation for establishing criminal collaboration.

Reputation is a distinctive feature of organised crime (Finckenauer, 2005). It represents a valuable asset to both individuals and criminal organizations in terms of being able to run a successful business (Silin, 1972: 388), influencing such factors as establishing relationships and obtaining benefits (e.g. credit – see Reuter, 1985; Silin, 1972). Similar to conventional businesses, Gambetta

(1993) argued that the reputation of operators and criminal organizations is a valuable asset in organised crime, as it helps differentiate the quality of products and services, and is used as a guide by product and service buyers (Gambetta, 1993: 43). For instance, in illegal gambling operations, Reuter (1985) argued that criminal organizations are usually not involved. Bookmakers value the importance of the reputation of their operators, because the nature of their business requires the frequent extension of credit to customers. In the drugs market, it is also common for dealers to establish the reputation of a drug dealer – “brand building” – by using stamps and color stripes on heroin (Gambetta, 2009: 202-3).

7.2 Reputation, Violence and Criminal Collaborations

Reputation is also important in terms of facilitating a relationship of trust among criminals, which is crucial for transforming social networks into social capital. Gambetta (2009), Dasgupta (1988), and Spapens (2012) argued that trust can be built upon the reputation of criminals, which leads to cooperation. For instance, criminals often rely on their established reputation to attract first time customers or collaborators in order to obtain trust from them (Gambetta, 2009: 197). Reputation requires a third party to contribute towards establishing and circulating it. People tend to trust a person’s reputation based upon a third party’s possession of credible information on the trustworthiness of the corroborated party (Burt and Knez, 1996). von Lampe and Johanson (2006) argued that trust can be established based on affectionate bonds, observations on track record, reputation and shared norms and values. Bovenkerk, Sigel and Zaitch (2003) argued that organised criminals construct and utilize the ethnicity reputation for committing crime and attracting collaborators. Morselli and associates (2011) also support the supposition that an ethnic group’s criminal reputation facilitates the collaboration of criminals between overseas and local territories (Morselli, Turcotte and Tenti, 2011). Without the criminal reputation, it would be difficult for any

individual to enter the criminal market or form a criminal collaboration (Spapens, 2012:11). The reputation of criminal organizations can be regarded as a form of aggregated trust, which generalizes the critical mass of trust placed upon individuals into the institution (Shapiro, 1987). It is through this aggregated trust that the reputation of criminal organizations can facilitate their collaboration with other criminals or non-criminals. For instance, Mafiosi can enjoy the reputation attached to Mafia for profit making from providing protection services to their clients (Gambetta, 2000, 2009; Smith and Varese, 2001).

Among the varieties of reputation, the reputation of violence is the most valuable asset to criminals. It refers to “the ability to intimidate, ultimately to use violence effectively” (Gambetta, 2009: 216). The reputation of the criminal organization is particularly crucial for maintaining its core business – protection (Gambetta, 1993, 2009; Varese, 2010; Chu, 2000), because an effective protection service requires violence and intimidation to back it up, which is vital for settling conflicts and enforcing agreements between parties in the underworld. A reputation for violence helps to enhance the efficiency of the criminal organization by decreasing the frequency and cost of deploying violence¹ (Gambetta, 1993: 43-6, 1994, 2009: 205) as well as saving costs on intelligence gathering (Gambetta, 1994: 356). An established reputation for violence can save the operation the cost of exercising violence as the “more robust the reputation, the lower the chance that anyone will challenge a mafioso’s rulings and that he will need to back up his threats by actual force” (Gambetta, 2009: 205). The more robust the reputation, the higher the perceived level of victimization is felt by the victims (Gambetta, 1993, 1994, 2009), thus leaving them more compliant. By reducing the chance of individuals challenging their control, a criminal organization

¹ As Gambetta (2009: 204) argued, “Reputation does not just save on signaling and testing cost for them and their customers. It saves on production costs directly”.

is less likely to need to use actual force in maintaining their control (Gambetta, 2009: 205). A reputation for violence is also a source of trust for clients who pay for protective services. If the trustor has a reputation of violence, the trustee will not dare to be disloyal to the reputation holder, so as to avoid any violent act of revenge (von Lampe and Johanson, 2006: 170). The reputation of violence also helps to deter potential competitors for the protected clients; therefore clients are willing to comply with their decisions and to buy their protection service (Gambetta, 1994: 356; 2009: 205). In order to increase the acceptance of stakeholders, a criminal organization's reputation of ability and willingness to exercise violence for the purpose of enforcement in the underworld is important in terms of maintaining the stability and legitimacy of their governance in both the underworld (Gambetta, 1993; Varese, 2001; Spapens, 2012) and the upperworld (Paoli, 2003).

From the above analysis, it can be seen that reputation, whether attached to criminals or to criminal organizations, serves an important function for money making. What should be noted is the importance of reputation in acquiring business opportunities and social status, both of which are essential to establishing social capital in both the upperworld and the triad community.

7.3 The Concept of Dor – Reputation in the Triad Community

Dor (朵) is a Cantonese term and in triad jargon it literally means ‘name’. It can be a triad’s name, a triad’s nickname, or a triad society name; therefore, it can be attached to a triad society and to an individual triad. The term Dor represents identity, including triad membership or positional identity – that is, seniority or the position held in triad society. In the triad community, Dor is the most important asset of triad members.

The term Dor is, literally speaking, a neutral term and carries neither positive nor negative

implications. However, when used in conjunction with other terms, Dor carries multiple meanings. In triad jargon, “Heung Dor” (響朵) carries two literal meanings. First, “Heung Dor” is a verb referring to using the triad reputation to claim power or territory. Second, “Dor Heung” (朵響) is an adjective that means repute, a positive reputation, or popularity among triads in triad community, which is built through a series of successes achieved in the triad society or triad community.

7.3.1 Dor Heung – credibility, trust and social capital

Dor Heung is an important catalyst in terms of establishing social capital in the underworld, because it signifies the bearer’s credibility, ability and power; these are important elements by which to establish trust, and hence social networks, as noted by various triads including an area boss:

(T10) If a triad’s Dor is Heung (reputing), it means that his reputation is widely spread in the triad community and known by many triads. This implies that he is capable and therefore reliable. It is easier for him to establish guanxi with other triads, because triads tend to trust other triads with reputable Dor ... If your Dor is well known by many triads, this implies that your Dor is “Heung” and people will approach you. Whenever people, including triads and ordinary people, need the help of triads or are looking for illicit business opportunities, or need anything illegal, they will approach you, seek help from you, or ask you to refer them to other ‘networks’ to enable them to achieve their needs.

(T16) What is most important to triads? I think Dor is. If you have reputable Dor, then you will have money and interest. People will give you face and respect, and proactively seek guanxi with you; hence it will be easier to establish social networks for profit-making. People trust me because of my Dor and area boss position. I had control over lots of

valuable resources embedded in my territory. My Dor is an asset. It is also a source of credit.

One of my interviewees – a triad armed robber who robbed more than ten banks in his criminal career – explained how Dor is important for establishing trust with armed robbery gangs in order to join them successfully:

(T12) ... Of course, Dor in triad society is an indicator of a person's ability and credibility. If he has reputable Dor in the triad community, his ability and credibility shouldn't be too bad...An undercover policeman in my robbery gang had reputable Dor in the triad community for being aggressive and upholding the brotherhood, as well as for his recognised contributions to his triad society. He spent lots of effort and years in triad society obtaining such reputable Dor. There was no way you could tell that he was an undercover policeman! We had been observing him for a while. We got along very well during the observation period. We also offered a trial operation and he did it very well. That's why he gained our trust.

In this case, the armed robbery gang relied on Dor as a foundation of trust to allow the undercover policeman to join their gang. As noted by the interviewee, not all triads were eligible to join the armed robbery gang; only those with reputable Dor, as Dor signified the credibility of the triad. The case further confirmed that triads rely on Dor to establish trust and social network.

The Dor of triads is an important catalyst for facilitating collaboration and linking up the underworld and upperworld; for instance:

(T17) Nobody knew Z [a former Cho Kun of Wo Shing Wo] before he was elected as Cho Kun. After he had elected as Cho Kun, his Dor [reputation] became reputable. He got to

know the wife of X [a reputable entrepreneur in Hong Kong] because of his Cho Kun position. Since then, he started to use his position and Dor [reputation] to establish a social network with other tycoons and entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. To be frank, without the Dor for being a Cho Kun, how would these tycoons know and trust him?

The interview data reveal Dor as an important credential that triads rely on, by which to determine triads' credibility and power. It is an important foundation of trust, which facilitates the criminal network establishment among triads and between illicit entrepreneurs and the triad society. The data also indicate that there are varieties of elements that contribute to Dor. It will be further discussed later in this chapter.

7.3.2 Authorised use of Dor for protection and business operation

A reputable Dor of triads also signifies power, which can be used for claiming territory and providing protection. To use as a verb, the phrase refers to 'displaying reputation and authority', demonstrating power for scaring off rivalries. Reputation often refers to a reputation of violence, which carries threat to rivals and use for demanding compliance, as confirmed by the former area boss of a triad society:

(T16) You won't have that territory if you don't have reputable Dor. Having such Dor implies that the Dor bearer has power, because the Dor comes from power. Displaying my Dor as area boss means that I have authority to control the dominated territory. It also means that I am authorised by my triad society to control the assigned territory. Dor Heung of triads means that they are good at fighting and possess many capable and brave fighters who are ready to fight. With the authority and violent power, how can others dare to take over their territory?

Trespassing in a rival's territory without permission is taboo in triad subculture (Lo, 2012). In order to claim territory and to prevent rival trespassing, subjugated triad's followers are required to Heung Dor, which means using his Dai Lo's Dor, or triad dominator's Dor, together with triad society's Dor for protecting themselves. Heung Dor, to some extent, can be interpreted as using subjugated triad society or the dominator's reputation for protection, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T9) When I worked in the public housing estate [where he operated drug dealing business, while he was not originated from that estate], I used my Dai Lo's Dor to seek protection. No one would dare to beat me or give me trouble, because they needed to give face to him. Other rivalries within the estate also knew of him and needed to give face to him, because he was reputable in the estate and he obtained the territory by himself.

Heung Dor also means seeking permission for doing business in triad territory. If a triad would like to do illicit business in other triads' territories, they are required to obtain and display the dominated triad's Dor and triad society's Dor as permission to operate business. Heung Dor also signifies the established social capital between the dominated triads and his affiliates from other triad society. Here is an example provided by an experienced triad of Wo Shing Wo:

(T13) Heung Dor means displaying the approval from the dominant triad for doing business in his territory... Using the dominator's Dor also means that the dominator is the guarantor, who is responsible for the behaviour of the triad who uses his Dor, and he needs to rely on the Dor of the dominator and the relationship with him for doing business, such as selling drugs within his territory.

The concept of Dor is similar to the concept of reputation suggested by Gambetta (2009). It is a signal attached to the triad, signifying his power; displaying the signal can generate real benefits, such as claiming territory and protection. On the other hand, such a signal can generate social capital as it signifies status and power, which facilitates the establishment of trust between triads. The use of Dor can be used by other triads through the established social capital, so that triads who are authorised to use the Dor from the possessor can also obtain benefits as its possessor, such as entering triad territory for operating business and seeking protection. However, transferable Dor can be used only on the assumption that the Dor possessor has provided permission to use his Dor; as the possessor becomes responsible for the Dor borrower's behavior, it is for the possessor to ensure that the Dor borrower will not abuse it. Therefore, Dor transference can only take place once social capital is established between the Dor borrower and the Dor possessor.

7.4 Choices in the Use of Dor

Reputation can be attached to individuals or an organization. In the illegal market, reputation is generally attached to individuals rather than the criminal organization; while in the protection business, reputation is generally attached to the institution (Gambetta, 2009: 205). The continuity of the institutional reputation can be independent from the continuity of the individual's reputation, because institutional reputation is capital accumulated collectively which "can provide a 'rent' to the individual member within the organization" (Gambetta, 2009: 206). The use of criminal organization's reputation by individual members means that they are authorised to use the asset of collective reputation by those who "own" it (Gambetta, 2009: 206). Even if members can use different reputations, including their own or sub-groups' reputations for operating business, the

reputation of the criminal organization is still relevant and important, as they still follow the norms of the criminal organizations for operating business (p.224). Using individual and subgroup reputations as a label does not imply that they are independent from the criminal organization that they belong to (Gambetta, 2009: 224).

For triads, Dor can be attached to individual triads, factions, and triad society. Junior triads tend to use the Dor of Dai Lo instead of their own Dor due to the reliance on Dai Lo for providing protection. The Dor of senior triads can be used alone for protection and soliciting business and collaborators. For those posited at the highest position in the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship, their Dor can be used as faction Dor through presenting their name or districts they dominated. In triad society Dor is less often used among triads. It is more often used when dealing with civilians outside the triad community, or when confronting members from different triad societies. The choice of which Dor to use is dependent on who they are dealing with and the power possessed by the rivals, as explained by the following participants:

(T23) I seldom use my Dor because my Dor is not Heung [reputable]. I always use my Dai Lo's Dor whenever I have conflicts or need to negotiate with other triads. If I go outside my Dai Lo's territory, I would use triad society's or Ah Kung's [note: the Dai Lo's protector, who is the dominator of North Area of the New Territories] Dor, because every triad in Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long knows my Ah Kung as "faction head" (我支水的阿頭). If I go outside the New Territories, I just use the triad society and Ah Kung's Dor instead of my Dai Lo's Dor.

(T10) The Dor of triad society is less commonly used and only used when confronting

members from other triad societies. Even if they use the Dor of triad society, very often we would specify which territory we belong to, say, Tsz Wan Shan 14[K], Yuen Long [Wo] Shing Wo. Dor of Dai Lo are more commonly used among triads in triad community. However, if the Dai Lo's Dor is not powerful or reputable enough, then triads will use their Ah Kung's Dor. Faction Dor is also commonly used by specifying where your territory is and the area boss, or the most senior triad in your territory. The reason for using Dai Lo's or seniors' Dor is to cultivate sufficient fear in rivals --- you know what will happen if you do something bad to his followers. This is very important for negotiation between triads. Therefore, which faction the triad belongs to and who his Dai Lo is are both important to triads. If a triad is a member of powerful faction, they can receive better protection to compete with other triads.

The data explains the rationale in the choice of Dor. If the power of rivals is higher than the triad and his protector, then he will escalate the level of Dor and use the Dor of a higher position triads along the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship, such as Ah Kung, up to the dominator of the triad territory or area boss, in order to ensure that they can obtain sufficient protection from the seniors to override the power of rivals.

The Dor of faction and Dai Lo are both crucial to triads, because they signify the power behind the triad for backing him up, which helps to strengthen the bargaining power of the triad. The Dor of faction is vital to triads when triad societies are going through decentralisation. Under the faction-based structure, triads may have internal confrontations with rivals within the same triad society. Simply claiming the triad society Dor is insufficient for protecting themselves and entering

triad territories for operating illicit business, as noted by two participants:

(T14) When I was in my territory, which is located in Jordan, I used my Dai Lo's Dor because he was the dominator of [Wo] Shing Wo's territory in Jordan. However, if I go outside my triad territory, I need to rely on my triad society and faction head's Dor. I think faction's Dor is more useful than triad society Dor, because triads in the same triad society will not offer any protection or permission to do business in their territory to those who are not their faction members. Even if I told them I was also from [Wo] Sing Wo, they would still beat me up.

(T26) When I was having dinner in Tuen Mun, a group of Tuen Mun triads attempted to provoke me. Even I am also a member of "Lo Sun" (老新) [Sun Yee On], Lo Sun Dor cannot help much to protect me, because I am from Kowloon West, not from their faction.

(T13) If a triad wants to sell drugs in a disco located in a designated area controlled by Wo Shing Wo, he has to get the approval from the dominator and collaborate with triads of [Wo] Shing Wo who sell drugs there. However, even if he is also from [Wo] Shing Wo, while he is not associated with the dominator or his followers, he also needs to get approval and collaborate with the existing operators. Of course, sharing profits with them is inevitable.

The use of a senior's Dor has limits. As Gambetta (2009) argued, the use of reputation is an authorization given by the reputation bearer. Triads cannot use the Dor without the Dor bearer's approval, or they would be subject to severe punishment. Given that the Dor bearer has to be a

guarantor of the Dor user, the use of Dor also signifies the close bonding between the triad and the Dor bearer, as noted by another triad:

(T7) We do have restrictions on the use of senior's Dor. Triads often use their own and their Dai Lo's and Ah Kung's Dor. You can indicate which faction you belong to through displaying the name of the faction head. However, you cannot abuse his Dor without your seniors' approval, or you would be beaten up by them for sure. Therefore, in practice, not many triads can use the Dor of seniors beyond their Dai Lo, unless they really know the triads very well and they let the triads to use their Dor.

When dealing with illicit businesses and protection business, which require support from the triad headquarters, the Dor of triad society will be used. If the triad needs to use triad society's resources, such as the triad common fund, the reputation of triad society for protection or business dealings, or mobilizing manpower through the headquarters, then triads need to use the triad society's Dor and share profits with headquarters, as confirmed by the following triads:

(T7) Riding dragon's business [i.e. collecting Macau casino debt in Hong Kong] needs to use triad society's Dor, because we need to rely on triad society's Dor to call for protection in case something goes wrong. For this kind of large scale lucrative business, it has to be protected by triad society.... If a triad uses the triad common fund for operating business, and the operators and shareholders are all coming from the same triad society, then you need to use triad society Dor and are expected to share profits with the headquarters. Also, protection business needs to use triad society Dor. Operators are expected to share 20% to 30% of profits with the headquarters.

(T9) For businesses that are started, owned, and managed by headquarters or that use the triad common fund for business operations, then triad society's Dor is required—we call it Ah Kung business (阿公生意) [i.e. triad society's business]. For example, “Tor Dei” (陀地) [i.e. protection service] and minibus routes are typical examples of Ah Kung businesses.

(T24) If you use the triad society's resources, such as asking headquarters to mobilize manpower to support you or take revenge, or you need the money from headquarters for doing business, you need to use triad society's Dor. Then you are expected to share profits with the headquarters.

The logic of using Dor has several implications. First, it reveals the function of Dor in triad community. The Dor of triads is a passport for entering the underworld, such as claiming protection and it is used as a permit for entering triad territory for illicit business. Second, Dor has value. The use of Dor means the Dor user can utilize the reputation for gaining benefits. Therefore, unless there is a close bonding between Dor bearer and user, otherwise, payment for the use of Dor is required. Third, the use of Dor reflects the hierarchical structure of triad society, such as the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship and factions within the triad society.

There are three choices in the use of Dor: (1) Dai Lo's Dor; (2) the faction's Dor; (3) triad society's Dor. Dai Lo's Dor is the most commonly used among triads when confronting rival triads, because it is the most accessible to triads and because of the close bond between the Dai Lo and his followers. Faction Dor indicated by presenting Ah Kung or seniors higher in the triad hierarchy is often used when the power of the Dai Lo is insufficient to provide protection or if the Dai Lo has

no authority in controlling triad territory. Triad society's Dor is used when triads need to rely on triad society resources, such as the triad common fund or mobilizing manpower from headquarters, and protection business. It is also often used when triads deal with civilians.

The choice of Dor is determined by the power level between the triads and rivals, and the accessibility of the Dor, which is determined by the distance in hierarchical position between the triads and the Dor bearer, and the quality of relationship between them, because triads in the lower strata are prohibited from using seniors' Dor without their authorization. The choice of Dor is also dependent on the power of who they are confronting. When dealing with civilians, triad society identity is sufficient to generate threats for ensuring compliance. If the competing rival is a triad member with more power, then he needs to present both triad society's Dor and triad faction's Dor (through presenting Ah Kung's Dor or territorial boss's Dor). That means he has to escalate the use of Dor up the factional hierarchy through the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship to ensure that he has sufficient bargaining power. When confronting internal competitors within the same triad society, only the Dor of faction and Dai Lo can generate protection.

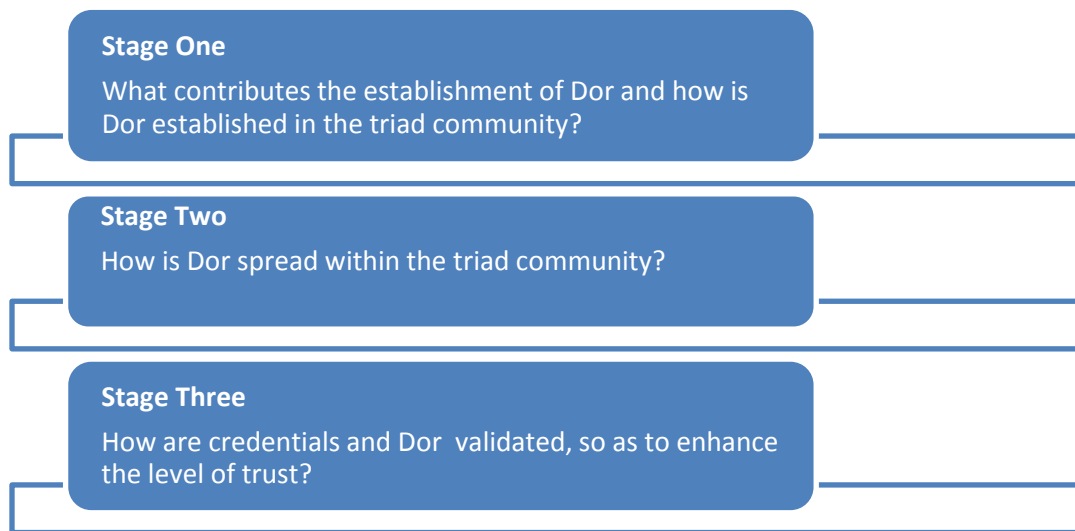
The choice of Dor reveals that the bond between triads is mainly embedded in the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship and faction, rather than in triad society as a whole. When confronting competitors in the triad community, Dai Lo and faction Dor are more often used as the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship is the immediate source of power available for protection. Thus, the control of Dor authorization is vested in the faction head and senior triads within the triad faction. To some extent, the Dor of faction is the collective asset of all faction members rather than triad society.

Although triads often rely on Dai Lo and faction Dor, as Gambetta (2009) argued, the use of reputation attached to subgroups and individual triads does not imply that criminal organization is irrelevant. As Gambetta (2009) explains, reputation is often attached to protection business. This norm also applies to triad society. In addition, when triads need to rely on headquarters' support and protection for business operation, the Dor of triad society remains crucial. Especially when confronted by triads from other triad societies, if the faction is insufficient to compete against the rival, then triads still need to use the triad society Dor for calling other factions' support. Therefore, triad society is the ultimate backup and support in terms of financial resources and manpower.

7.5 Development Process Model of Dor in the Triad Community

After discussing the importance of Dor in the triad community and how it facilitates triads' collaboration and generates different forms of capital, such as permission to conduct illicit business and protection, the following section, together with chapters eight and nine, will further examine how triads establish, spread and verify Dor for the purpose of establishing social capital and other forms of capital. To begin with, we propose a development process model of Dor in the triad community (see Figure 7.1). In stage one, we need to understand what constitutes Dor in order to understand how triads establish their Dor and make it reputable. Once the Dor is established, it has to be recognised by a target audience and so, in stage two, we examine how triads make their Dor known to the triad community in order to attract their target audience. If Dor has to rely on different channels for circulation, distortion may occur. Therefore, in the final stage, we further examine how triads validate criminal credentials and Dor so as to enhance the level of trust between triads, thus paving the way for criminal collaborations.

Figure 7.1 A Development Process Model of Dor in the Triad Community



7.6 Sources of Dor

7.6.1 Reputation of violence

The reputation of organised criminals can be achieved by the use of violence (Gambetta, 1993; Paoli, 2003; Varese, 2001, 2010). In order to establish a reputation in the underworld, they have to commit a serious crime or use violence to show toughness and resilience, in order to project competence in committing crime successfully and demonstrating power. When these deeds become known, others will believe in the power of these criminals. When everyone in the territory or in the underworld believes in their power, their authority can be sustained (Gambetta, 1993). Therefore, a reputation for being violent is essential for building up credibility and reliability as an operator and protector, and eliminating competitors within a territory. For instance, an honorable reputation can be made and maintained through force and physical violence in the Italian mafia (Paoli, 2003: 74; also see Gambetta, 1993, 2009). Committing murder is the most effective way in which to enhance and prove a reputation (Paoli, 2003: 74). This kind of reputation can

survive for an extended period of time, until the individual's position is challenged by competitors (Gambetta, 2009). As rival competition is keen in the underworld, the 'halo effect' of a reputation tends to be short. Therefore, individuals must continuously demonstrate their power through violence in order to maintain their reputation.

In triad society, being violent, toughness and aggression in fighting are all essential elements of reputable Dor, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T13) For a triad, being good in fighting is important. If you are a good fighter, your Dor must be Heung (reputable). My Dai Lo taught me that only tough fighters have reputable Dor. For instance, having ten guys beat up one guy would not make you reputable. If a lone fighter can fight against ten fighters, other triads would perceive him as a tough, insane, and aggressive fighter. ..With reputable Dor, other triads would give face to you and respect you.

A triad officer further explained how he established a reputation for violence in the triad community, and how it facilitated his promotion when he was 16, which is very rare in the triad community:

(T16) I remember that Shui Fong and 14K recruited 50 Thai fighters to Hong Kong to beat me. They came to me when I was having dinner with my followers. I had only seven followers, while there were four to five groups of fighters; about 40 something fighters came to me. I was seriously injured and sent to hospital after the fight. My fingers were all broken. I had a knife implanted into my lap. Although I didn't win the fight, my toughness and braveness made me reputable in the triad community. My Dor was established because

of that incident and that's why I was promoted to 426 [red pole, a triad officer] when I was 16...If you ask me how to turn Dor into reputable Dor, I would tell you that good fighting is insufficient by itself. You gotta tell people who you are by telling them your Fa Dor [i.e. Dor] and where your territory is after beating them, saying that, if you dare to take revenge, you can come to my territory to find me. This is how I made my Dor reputable in the triad community. I will let you know who I am, because I am fearless.”

The interview data revealed that his braveness and toughness contributed to his establishment of Dor, and his Dor became known in the triad community through a series of warfare incidents and by spreading his name and territory after exercising violence. A reputable Dor signifies his capability to provide genuine protection. While Gambetta (1993) argued that a reputation for violence is important for providing genuine protection to clients, for triads, a reputation for violence is also important for recruiting and protecting followers, which is crucial for securing social capital with foot soldiers:

(T16) As a triad, the most important criterion is to be good in fighting and to be violent. Your reputable Dor indicates your ability to protect your territories and followers. If you are unable to fight, how can you protect your followers? If you are unable to protect your followers, no one will follow you.

The reputation of violence generated from Dor also facilitates triads' domination in virgin territory. A reputation for violence serves two purposes: to ensure the compliance of local communities and to enhance a triad's status and power, which facilitates him to establish social capital within the local community. To begin with, a triad must use violence to establish a reputation and project his

power to the community members. However, at a later stage, simply using the threat of violence is insufficient to ensure their cooperation. It is also important to show how his power can facilitate the community members to obtain personal benefit, as then they will be more willing to comply with his governance and, hence, more willing to establish social capital with the triad for the achievement of mutual benefit. A Lo Shuk Fu explained how triads establish a reputation for violence when conquering a virgin land and establishing social capital with local villagers:

(T18) ...you should know who Ching (fake name) is, right? He was the first triad to develop power in local village in the New Territories. We call him the father of Sheung Shui. Ching was originally from Yau Ma Tei, but his Dai Lo asked him to obtain a protection fee from a factory in Sheung Shui. The local villagers in Sheung Shui refused to comply, so Ching sent 300 triads to fight against them. Since then, he has built up his Dor in Sheung Shui and become famous. At the beginning, the Sheung Shui villagers were scared of him but they eventually accepted him and complied with his request because he also brought them the benefit of his status and power. For example, Ching mobilized his followers to occupy a private road that was originally occupied by another village, so that the villagers could more easily travel to the city center. Those who establish a good relationship with Ching will always win the election in a local village, because he has the power to threaten those who might vote for other candidates. Once they enjoy the benefits of Ching, they realize that his power can bring benefits and so they become more willing to comply. Eventually, both Ching and those who support him reach a win-win situation.

A reputation for violence facilitates the establishment of social capital not only among criminals but also among civilians. A reputation for violence helps triads establish status and power among

civilians and criminals. On the one hand, a reputation for violence generates threat and fear, ensuring compliance; on the other hand, a reputation for violence also facilitates personal benefits for clients of protection once resistance is reduced, hence establishing social capital through which mutual benefits can be achieved.

7.6.2 Ability to recruit and mobilize followers

In addition to personal traits contributing to a reputation for violence, the possession of manpower is equally important to the establishment of Dor, as confirmed by another triad:

(T14) Having lots of brave and violent fighters is important to establish Dor. People will be terrified because of this. When there is a dispute between triads, when your Dor is Heung (reputable), they believe that you will send a couple of hundred people to fight – this is what Dor Heung means. Then, people will tend to comply with demands without it being necessary to kick off a fight.

This triad interviewee's description is consistent with Collins' (2009) observations concerning the use of violence, in that it is not necessary to act violently and be strong to win a fight but just to demonstrate the willingness and readiness to use violence. Having manpower mobility and a large number of followers reflects the ability and readiness to use violence without actually starting a fight. To some extent, followers can be regarded as an asset of triads, indicating the power of the triads and, hence, enhancing the reputation of violence. The ability to control the volume of manpower is also important for the establishment of social capital with the underworld and in terms of obtaining business opportunities through them. This observation is confirmed by an experienced triad:

(T21) The ability to mobilize manpower is very important for the establishment of Dor.

Many illicit or quasi-legitimate businesses (偏門生意) nowadays require a high volume of manpower. For example, many triads are involved in scalping concert tickets and smuggling iPhone into China. Triads need to mobilize large volumes of manpower in this kind of business. Another example is assisting political parties or election candidates in their political campaigning. They rely on triads to mobilize large numbers of followers for the purpose of soliciting votes. If you help these politicians, they will help you in return. Some triads are involved in the New Territories Small House development business (新界丁屋); they need triad support to protect their concessionary rights in small houses. Triads are heavily involved in land acquisition in the New Territories. They use their followers to blackmail those with small house land entitlement rights and force villagers to sell their land at very low prices, before reselling the land entitlements and land to the land developers. When they have collected the land, the developers do not develop the land immediately. They allow triads to utilize the land for legitimate purposes, such as renting it out as a car park or a garbage and container recycling center, and rent is taken by the triads. If the villagers learnt that they could rely on triads to enhance their power, say by winning an election or successfully buying more land entitlement and land at low prices, then other villagers would do the same. So, what determines the success of the villagers is the manpower possessed by each triad faction or triad society....

...Regardless of whether we are talking about legitimate business entrepreneurs or politicians, their judgment of the credibility of triads is determined by their ability to mobilize a large number of followers as well as their influential power. They only trust those triads with the ability to control a large number of triads. In terms of the triad community, of course the possession of significant “manpower” [i.e. triads or followers] is

very important, especially when confronting rivals. The more followers a triad possesses, the more bargaining power he has. Bargaining power is determined by the “power to threaten”, which is also dependent on the ability to control a large number of followers.

The involvement of triads in land acquisition in the New Territories is also well reported in the local media. In addition, a Lo Shuk Fu (T18), a Cho Kun candidate (T3), and an experienced triad (T13) who originally resided in the New Territories, mentioned their involvement in land acquisition. Based on the interviewees’ response in relation to how triads establish social capital with entrepreneurs and land developers, the cases have several implications: First, the Dor of triads arises from their ability to exercise violence and the manpower they possess; both elements are crucial in determining the influence of triads in a territory. Second, Triad Dor is an important reflection of a triad's power, which determines the chance of linking social capital with the underworld.

7.6.3 Financial power

Financial power is one of the essential sources of Dor in the underworld, in particular in the modern era, because it signifies a triad's ability to operate illicit businesses. The meaning of financial power is not restricted to the wealth possessed by triads, but also to the possession of manpower (which implies their ability to sustain significant manpower), the ability to provide business opportunities, and the possession of a variety of lucrative businesses (both licit and illicit). Triads with financial power tend to have a highly reputable Dor, which facilitates the establishment of social capital and, hence, the receiving of favors from other triads, such as obtaining credit from drug suppliers and loans (examples are provided and discussed in chapter eight).

One of the reasons for this is that the ability to generate violence, including the possession of manpower, is dependent on financial power. The ability to produce money-making opportunities and the affordability of followers' entertainment and living expenses are crucial in terms of determining the durability of relationships between triads and their followers, as noted by two experienced triads:

(T20) ... To establish Dor, what you need is money. If you have money, Lang Chai and other triads will follow you. Triads need money to keep their followers. You need to pay for their meals and entertainment expenses to maintain their loyalty to you. If you can't afford it, they will leave you and follow other wealthier triads. That's why I say that money is more important than being violent or good in fighting for making Dor Heung.

(T24) ... In fact, money is important to all triads. In order to maintain their connection with me, I need to provide them with drugs and a place for taking drugs. I have spent a few

hundred dollars a day buying them soft drinks. They often asked me to pay for their mobile phone bills and entertainment expenses. In return, whenever I asked them to work for me, they never said no...If I didn't have money, I am pretty sure that no one would follow me or work for me.

In the triad community, Dai Lo often possess power and resources, such as illicit product suppliers and clients, as well as illicit business opportunities, but they also depend on the support of their followers to protect them in their operation of illicit businesses; for instance, they rely on juniors to act as drug couriers and fighters. This is particularly true in the modern triad community, where members of some triad societies are free to join and leave their protector in seeking business opportunities. Many triads reported how they have shifted their protectorship from one Dai Lo to another and have even shifted to another triad society entirely when the former protector became unable to provide business opportunities or to sustain their expenses. This is confirmed by a junior triad, initiated after the year 2000:

(T22) ...I left that Dai Lo because I found him useless. He had no money and no power. He claimed that he could provide us with opportunities to make money, but ended up giving us nothing. He is a broke and is not even able to pay our expenses. That's why we all decided to leave him and follow another Dai Lo.

Although the importance of brotherhood has always been emphasized in the triad community, from past to present, the façade of brotherhood is not an expressive (i.e. affection, emotional bonding, Hwang, 1987:949) but rather an instrumental relationship (i.e. establishing social ties with other people outside family for utilitarian purpose, such as resources exchange, see Hwang, 1987:950),

determined by the financial power and ability to provide business opportunities. Financial power becomes crucial for maintaining a group of followers – their triad asset. It becomes the most important source of Dor under the “triad plutocracy”. The meaning of financial power is not restricted to the possession of wealth, but also includes the ability to provide a variety of money-making opportunities, as noted by a senior triad:

(T28) Dor in modern triad society is defined by the variety of businesses and the value of each business that a triad operates. The greater the variety of lucrative businesses he has, the greater the variety of financial sources he controls by which to support other triads and followers. This leads to increased manpower and, hence, more triads to make money for him. Triads with a greater variety of businesses are wealthier and therefore it is easier for them to establish social networks, especially those with power and resources. Once he has accumulated more networks, he becomes more powerful and makes his Dor Heung.

This participant’s data further illustrates the contribution of financial power to the establishment of Dor. The more business opportunities a triad provides, the more social capital he possesses.

In addition, providing financial support to triad society is common in establishing Dor in triad society. Financial contribution to triad society is an important criterion in determining the ability and performance of triads, especially in Cho Kun election (for example, see Present Cho Kun election of Wo Shing Wo in Chapter 4). In order to increase the chance of winning the office, Cho Kun candidates need to provide financial assistance to Lo Shuk Fu. A participant also expressed that his Dor and status in triad society was boosted because he financially supported his Ah Kung to buy weapons (T12).

7.6.4 Seniority

Seniority as rank is another important source of Dor in the triad community that facilitates the establishment of trust. It also determines the durability of social network. The interview data presented in the seniority chapter (chapter 6) already confirmed that rank in triad society provides reputation; the title of the position can be used as Dor for establishing trust in “bridging social capital” (between members of different triad societies) and “linking social capital” (between triads and the illicit entrepreneurs and people in the upperworld). An experienced triad further explained why the title of rank can serve as Dor for establishing trust:

(T7) A Cho Kun has more business opportunities than ordinary triads. More people would like to collaborate with him because of his reputable Dor. The Cho Kun Dor gives an impression to people that he is powerful and resourceful, as he has authority and power to mobilize triad resources. Thus, being a Cho Kun, his illicit businesses tend to be more stable, because no triads would dare to provoke him or to disturb his businesses. Triads tend to trust him more and hope to collaborate with him, because his Dor as Cho Kun is sufficient to provide sufficient and reliable protection for their business.

The rank in triad society provides assurance to triads and patrons outside the triad community because rank carries reputation, which signifies their ability to provide reliable protection to their business. Therefore, triad officers and leaders of triad society tend to have better access to lucrative illicit business opportunities and establish “linking social capital” with entrepreneurs in Macau casino business, as noted by a triad debt collector:

(T7) Those who are triad officers or those above them are more likely to know the “bosses” [i.e. senior triads who are involved in the operation of VIP rooms in Macau casinos] and

the loan sharks in Macau. Triads from both Hong Kong and Macau will collaborate in the debt collection business, and most of them are triad officers... ordinary triads are responsible for task execution only.

Another triad with casino business operation experiences further explained that higher rank triads tend to have better access to Macau casino business:

(T2) When considering the choice of triads in operating casino business, entrepreneurs would take the rank of triads as consideration. They do concern their Dor, because they don't want to choose those who often use irrational violence and do something dodgy to put their business into trouble. Being a triad officer or above tend to have better Dor, because it represents the power and ability in controlling their followers to ensure that they won't be out of control. Of course, it also ensures that they have sufficient manpower to secure their business.

Both participants confirmed that seniority constitutes Dor. Dor signifies triads' ability and resources they possessed, which promotes trust and facilitates "linking social capital" with entrepreneurs.

7.6.5 Norm compliance and track record – reputation of trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the key to establishing a reputation in the underworld. A reputation of trustworthiness can be regarded as an asset for reinforcing cooperation and trust (Dasgupta, 2000). Gambetta (2009) regarded "reputation of trustworthiness" (Gambetta, 2009:39) as a "reputation for good practice and keeping promises". As Gambetta argued, "Interest may generate pressure to behave honestly, but reputation and commitment are the means by which others are assured of the

effectiveness of that pressure” (Gambetta, 2000: 224). If one side does not want to lose the reputation and the benefits resulting from “being trustworthy”, he will try his very best to keep a promise in order to maintain his “reputation of trustworthiness”. When both parties benefit from keeping promises and maintaining trust, the reputation of trustworthiness can orchestrate both parties and, consequently, lead to cooperation (ibid.). For the sake of protecting their valuable reputation, as well as their future business opportunities, it is rational for triads to live up to their promises (Gambetta, 2009: 40; Misztal, 1996: 121, 126).

Compliance with the norms of a criminal organization is an important determinant of trustworthiness. Norm compliance also means living up to the expectations of the criminal organization. Any behavior that infringes the criminal organization's norms will cause serious damage to a criminal's reputation and honor. For instance, Italian mafiosi are expected to comply with omerta; that is, they are prohibited from establishing any relationship or contact with law enforcement agents (Gambetta, 1993, 2009; Paoli, 2003). For those who fail to comply with the Italian and mafiosi norms, their reputation is seriously damaged and, at the worst, they could be excluded permanently from the mafia family (Paoli, 2003: 75).

In terms of triad norms, loyalty and brotherhood originated from Hung Mun, and remain emphasized in modern triad societies (Chin, 1990). Triad norms include a prohibition from stealing from and taking advantage of triad brothers (T7, T13), having an affair with a triad brother's girlfriend or wife (T13, T9), maintaining reciprocity, and providing necessary assistance to triad brothers when they are in need (T13, T9). Norm compliance is a crucial criterion in Cho Kun elections, and determines the eligibility of Cho Kun candidates, as it indicates his loyalty and

commitment to the triad society. For those who fail to comply, their Dor will be damaged and, hence, will create a barrier in their establishment of social capital with other triads. An experienced triad provided an example:

(T13) ...You know who “X” (a triad we met in a triad banquet) is, right? His Dor “stinks” (bad reputation) in the triad community. Although he is very senior, no one respects him and collaborates with him now. His triad brother helped him to chop a guy and went to jail. Before imprisonment, he asked X to take care of his business and to pass the profit gained from the business to his wife. In the end, X took his profit and refused to return the business to his triad brother when he was released from prison. You know how small our community is. We have no secrets and now everyone knows about it. After that, no one wants to do business with him because he is not reliable and likes to take advantage of people. He is no longer reputable.

Having a good track record in previous business transactions and collaborations is also important for establishing a reputation of trustworthiness. Spapens (2012) argues that a good track record in illicit business is essential in terms of proving credibility (which is an essential source of reputation) and establishing trust among organised criminals. In a study of alcohol smuggling in Norway, a reputation for “payment on time” and “reputation to protect” were found to be important characteristics when entering a smuggling syndicate (von Lampe and Johanson, 2006: 176). In the triad community, being credible is important for establishing Dor. A lack of credibility will lead to difficulty in establishing social capital with other triads in the future. Paying on time is one such example:

(T26) ...Even though triads don’t need to pay immediately after bidding for the oblations

in “Fa Pau Wui” (a triad festive event), no one would dare not pay afterwards. If they know that you didn’t pay or didn’t pay on time, that means you’re broke and lack credibility; then your “stink Dor” will be spread throughout the triad community and no one will want to collaborate with you, especially the host of Fa Pau Wui, the powerful triads. If you are not credible in front of powerful triads, no one in the triad community will collaborate with you for sure.

In some triad businesses, for example, the drug dealing business, credibility also plays an important role in both accumulating and maintaining reputation. Similar to Western organised crime studies, keeping promises such as making payments on time and no stealing or cheating also signifies the credibility of the drug dealers, as confirmed by two triad drug dealers:

(T20) If you have good quality drugs, with no cheating on drug quality (i.e. a high purity of drugs) and pay on time, these are all important factors for establishing Dor in the drug dealing business.

(T13) For a good and reliable drug supplier who is able to supply good quality drugs, that is sufficient to make his Dor known in the drug dealing business. It is difficult to find good quality drugs in the market, because many drug dealers like to cheat their clients by mixing different “ingredients” into drugs to lower the cost and maximize profit. Other important points are payment on time and not stealing (i.e. money or drugs).

Being credible is the minimum requirement for maintaining Dor in the drug dealing business. In addition, payment on time, no stealing, and providing high quality drugs without cheating in

quality are also ways to signify trustworthiness.

In addition to being credible and honest, Gambetta (2009: 13) argued that an imprisonment record can be regarded as a source of credential for establishing and enhancing reputation. For example, one Russian criminal organization (vory) regards previous prison experience to be an important requirement of membership. The length of imprisonment can be regarded as a more objective measure of the reputation and respect afforded, compared to other criminals. As Gambetta (2009: 14) contended, “the length of time spent in prison was a source of prestige and a sign of distinction among the criminals who aspired to become “vory”.

However, for triads, an imprisonment record may not be considered as a good credential for the establishment of Dor; rather, this depends on what constitutes the imprisonment rather than the time spent in prison. Longer lengths of imprisonment may even hamper the effectiveness of Dor, as noted by two triads:

(T7) In fact, imprisonment may not be helpful for establishing Dor in the triad community. It really depends on why you go to jail. If you are imprisoned for the triad society or for the Ah Kung (i.e. headquarters) – say, you killed an undercover police officer in the triad society or prohibited a witness from giving testimony in court in order to deter a successful prosecution against powerful triads – then your Dor will be boosted. However, the effect of the Dor will not last long, because ten or twenty years after your release no one will remember you. So, I don’t think imprisonment helps create Dor.

(T12) When I was jailed for killing a policeman, my Dor was boosted in the triad

community. Inmates believed that I did something brilliant in revenge against the police on behalf of all triads. All triads hated the police, and therefore they regarded me as a hero. Then, I became very popular in the triad community. After my imprisonment, all of my triad brothers were proud of me, and even members of other triad societies regarded me as their brother and were proud of me...However, this pride and honor only lasted for a short while. They soon forgot me because I needed to serve life imprisonment. My triad brothers didn't even visit or mention me. From the triad perspective, no triad would bother to visit someone who is no longer valuable and brings no return..."

7.6.6 Negative effects of Dor in certain organised crimes

Previous organised crime literature emphasizes two important elements of reputation that constitute criminal collaboration: a reputation for violence and a reputation of trustworthiness. The importance of reputation of violence is emphasized in the study of mafia-type criminal organizations (Gambetta, 1993, 2009), as it is an important asset in their core business – extra-legal protection. No doubt, reputation of violence still plays an important role, reflecting the ability and power of triads, and constitutes a foundation of trust. Violence also provides safeguards through which triads can secure their collaboration (Varese and Campana, 2013).

However, simply possessing violence is insufficient to facilitate triad collaboration. In some circumstances – in particular when operating a high risk business which demands high level of secrecy, such as a drug business – a reputation for violence may hinder the possibility of establishing social capital among triads, as suggested by these triad participants:

(T23) Having reputable Dor means everyone knows you in the triad community. On the one hand, triads can obtain trust from your collaborators, making it easier for triads to obtain

favors from others. On the other hand, if everyone knows who you are, it is easy for others to find you. This increases the risk of being targeted by rivals or the police.

(T24) When I first started my drug business, I was silly enough to share my Dor with everyone. I thought it would help boost my business. However, the police caught me after three months because I was so famous in the drugs business. This taught me the lesson that having Dor Heung in the drugs business may place a person in trouble...I avoid buying drugs from my Ah Kung, although he has a reputation for quality drugs directly imported from the golden triangle. Ah Kung's Dor has made him targeted by the 13th floor (i.e. the narcotics bureau of the police), and I would rather buy drugs from others instead of increasing the risk of being targeted by the police.

(T20) If a triad has reputable Dor, his identity will be known to the police and for sure they will know what sort of business he is in. They have done nothing yet because he is not "fat" enough to be caught or they don't have enough evidence to arrest him. So, drug operators keep their business small-scale and low profile, to prevent being targeted.

Having a reputation for violence is a "two-edge sword" (Reuter, 1983: 142). It certainly helps in the establishment of trust with collaborators, and hence the obtaining of favor with collaborators, but it also attracts the attention of the police and rivals (Reuter, 1983: 137), increasing the risk of illicit business operations and the chance of being arrested. Although reputation of violence is a useful means by which to enhance a triad's power and social status in the triad community, simply possessing a reputation for violence is insufficient to establish social capital in all types of illicit

business. Instead, reputation of trustworthiness is more crucial to triads in the establishment and maintenance of social capital. Interview data have revealed that one reason not to collaborate is where triads have failed to keep promises or have told lies (or have bluffed too much), which reflects the fact that honesty and promise-keeping are more important considerations for the establishment and maintenance of triad collaborations.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

In the Italian mafia, reputation traditionally depends on a person's ability to exercise violence and norm compliance (Paoli, 2003: 74-5). Criminals usually use violence to gain a reputation or to establish their position in a particular setting, for example, when population mobility is high and unstable and there is no clear power distribution or position within the population (Gambetta, 2009). However, in the modern era, when the power hierarchy is well established, the importance of financial power is more emphasized. The modern mafia started to identifying reputation and honor with money (Paoli, 2003: 94). The more wealth the chief possesses, the more honor he has (Paoli, 2003: 94, 97). This has become the domain value of the modern mafia (Paoli, 2003: 94, 97).

Hong Kong triads also follow the footprint of the mafia. In the present study, it was found that those experienced triads who were brought up in traditional triad culture held in high regard the reputation of violence and norm compliance as the source of Dor. Meanwhile, those triads who were brought up in the decentralised and disorganised structure regarded financial power as the most important source of Dor. This finding is consistent with the observation in relation to the transformation of the Cho Kun election criteria of Wo Shing Wo.

This finding also reveals a shift in triad subculture from an emphasis on brotherhood and loyalty, to financial power and personal interest. Although the reputation of violence is still emphasized, it is obvious that the importance of violence has started to decline. One of the possible reasons for such a change is that once a triad territory (in particular those located in urban districts) is stabilised, the use of violence to compete for territory or conquer virgin land decreases substantially. The literature also suggests that gang fights would occur when different drug gangs competed for the unstable crack market in New York (Bowling, 1999). In addition, vigorous law enforcement raids against triads also decreased the use of violence. The change in triad business from purely illegal businesses, such as illicit gambling, prostitution, and drug-related businesses, to quasi-legitimate businesses, such as new forms of VIP room operations in Macau casinos (Lo and Kwok, 2016) has also led to a decline in the importance of violence in establishing Dor.

Sources of Dor change over time. Changes in the socioeconomic environment influence the importance of different sources of reputation. In the modern era, we have witnessed the decline of the importance of reputation of violence in criminal organizations, and the growing importance of financial power and the reputation of trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 8

FACE, DOR AND TRIADS' COLLABORATION

8.1 Introduction

After the examination of what contributes the establishment of Dor in triad community, this chapter will focus on another element of reputation – face, and how face influences the establishment of Dor, and hence contributes to triads' collaboration and the establishment of social capital among triads.

Hu (1944) provided a definition of face. The Chinese concept of face is divided into two components: *lian* and *mianzi*. *Lian* focuses on the moral reputation of a person, as defined by Hu (1944:45): “respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation...it represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him to function properly within the community”. *Mianzi* focuses on a person's social status within the social structure, including such characteristics as prestige, success and recognition. Earley (1997: 56) defined *mianzi* as “a person's position within social structure...reflects outcome state of social interaction”. It can be derived from a socially ascribed status, such as sex, appearance, family background, status obtained via personal qualities of knowledge, strength, ability, or status obtained from wealth, authority, and social connections (Hwang, 1987: 961). Having *mianzi* will enhance a person's social position but it also helps in the acquisition of enhanced social status for access to resources (*ibid.*).

Goffman (1972: 5) defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself

by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self – delineated in terms of approved social attitude”. Face is highly related to ‘self’ or identity in the eyes of others. When gaining face, it helps boost pride, honor (Jia, 2001: 31), and confidence (Goffman, 1972: 8). Chau and He (1994: 232) believe that a “person’s face is derived from others in achieving social dignity, or, via others approval and recognition, a public image”. To some extent, face is not a personal matter, as it reflects the group’s approval or condemnation – that is, the social norm of the social group at a particular time.

8.2 Face in the Development of Social Capital and Networks

Face is an important facilitating factor in the development of social network and social capital among triads. The level of power of control in the social network is dependent on the strength of face a person has within a group (Lin, 2010). Having face demonstrates an individual’s positive image within his network, which helps him establish a higher social position within his network. The better an individual’s image, and the higher his position and authority within his network, the greater the degree of dominance and respect he commands within his network. As a result of this, he is more likely to gain access to resources – and so become more powerful (Smart, 1993). In a relationship-oriented society, an individual's social network is an important factor in the judging of that individual’s social status (Jacobs, 1979). The strength of face also depends on the degree of social capital he possesses (Jiang et al., 2012; also see Hwang, 1987: 961). As suggested by Standifird (2006), the key to using social capital as a way of establishing reputation is to focus on developing and maintaining a network of high-quality contacts. The more social capital, or the larger the guanxi network that a person possesses, or the more powerful his connections are, the more face and reputation he has.

Face also serves as an apparatus for the social exchange of power and resources (Hwang, 1987). In a sense, face can be used as symbolic capital in exchange for other capitals (Smart, 1993). In the Chinese community, it is common for those with status and prestige to attract favorable treatment or acquire more resources than those without. They attract these privileges because of the ‘face’ they have – it is akin to having more money (a kind of medium for exchange) to buy better services and better products. As having face represents power, honor and status, it can enhance trustworthiness in a person's community network. It also helps to enhance one’s ability to gain access to resources and receive assistance in the future. Therefore, maintaining and giving other people face is a prerequisite for acquiring resources through guanxi (Hwang, 1987; Jiang et al., 2012).

In the triad underworld, face also facilitates the maintenance of social network (Chiao, 1981; Earley, 1997; Jiang et al., 2012). Face determines the power of control in the networking of triads (Lin 2010). Not giving face to another triad in social interactions would lead to serious conflicts because this would damage his image and status (Chen and Xiao, 1993). If a triad wants to establish or maintain a harmonious relationship with another triad, he has to protect that person’s face.

8.3 Face and the use of violence in the Triad Community

Triad communities are integral part of the Chinese community and face is also important in triad subculture. Several triads emphasized the importance of face to triads:

(T10) Face is important to us, because we all want to be respected – as Dai Lo. We are no different from other Chinese, especially triads.

(T24) Triads care about face very much. Face, money and business interests are all

important to triads.

(T20) I think face is most important to triads. If you want me to choose between Dor and face, I think face is most important to me, and to other triads.

The importance of face is revealed in considering the cause of violence. Many conflicts that arise between triads are due to face-related issues, as noted by a “Wa Si Yan” of the 14K sub-branch:

(T15) Face-issue related conflicts often happen among triads. From my experience, many triads will spark off serious conflict because they feel they are not being respected or others are not giving them face...

For the sake of face saving or making others lose face, it is often the case that triads use excessive violence, and even murder. Chu's (2000) research into the triad society shared a similar view, that triads often exercise violence for reasons related to 'face' (p. 39). For instance, Lee's (2004) case studies of triad related homicide confirmed that face saving as one of the main reasons underlying triad related violence. Lee and associates (2006) further confirmed this finding, suggesting that 15.8% of triad related homicides in Hong Kong are due to loss of face. In the present study, a few triads also expressed the belief that triads often take revenge or use violence against others in order to save face. This is one of the examples:

(T10) Triad violence often occurs because of face issues, such as face saving. In fact, the death of Lee Tai Lung (one of the notorious area bosses of Sun Yee On) was obviously a result of a face issue. He insulted the other triad leader by cutting his face and leaving him with a large scar. Of course, that action really made the latter lose face, and surely the

injured triad leader took revenge by killing Lee Tai Lung in a later ambush, so as to regain face.

The case mentioned by this informant is documented in the major local media as well as in the judgment of HKSAR v Chong Fai-shing (HCCC120/2010). Both the media reports and the court judgment confirmed the above-mentioned incident – Lee Tai Lung’s death and the revenge taken by his rival. Although fighting and injury are common among triads, injuring a triad leader’s face and leaving a scar has a different meaning. An experienced triad, who used to be a “contract fighter”, provided an explanation:

(T13) Wounding on the face is different from an ordinary injury. It is a form of insult, especially when the wounded party is a senior triad and the incident occurs in front of his followers. This is a deliberate insult to a triad, making him ‘lose face’. We often take this kind of ‘order’.

The interview data revealed the cause of murder from the triads’ perspective – face saving. The interviewee also provided another example, which further confirms face saving as a cause of using violence against triads:

(T13) ...My triad friend’s girlfriend was raped by a Wo Shing Wo Dai Lo called “X”. My friend felt humiliated and had lost face, so he finally gathered his own followers to chop X in Temple Street as revenge and to regain face. So now you know that face is so important to triads. In fact, many violent clashes between triads are because of face issues. If you do something to make a triad lose face, he will take revenge for sure.

The general perception about triad violence is irrational as triads tend to use violence due to trivial things, such as “love affairs and simply for ‘face’” (Chu, 2000: 39). Chu (2000), orchestrated with Gambetta (2000), suggested that the use of violence among triads is to build up and maintain a reputation for violence for the purpose of profit-making (p. 39). Chu’s suggestion is partially valid but insufficient. What is true is that reputation is important to triads, but face is not ‘trivial’ as Chu describes. What Chu ignores is the inter-relations between face and reputation – Dor – and their relationship to other forms of ‘profit’, ‘benefit’ or ‘capital’. In order to understand the importance of face in triad subculture, we need to understand the relationship between Dor and face.

8.4 Inter-relations between Face and Dor in the Triad Community

The definition of face shares similar attributes to that of Dor in several aspects. First, both Dor and face signify the bearer’s privileged identity and status, such as prestige and honor, which distinguishes the bearer from others within the group or triad community. Second, face and Dor are both regarded as symbolic capital, which facilitates the establishment of, or exchange for, other types of capital, including social or economic capital. As Dor and face signify the bearer’s power, they may press other parties in the relationship to fulfill their demands. Although they share similar attributes, the concepts of face and Dor are distinctive and one cannot substitute the other. Instead, there exists a positive relationship between face and Dor. In the following, the levels of face-giving are outlined:

8.4.1 Obligated face-giving from junior to senior

In normal circumstances, face always comes with Dor. This means that, if a triad has reputable Dor, he will have face in front of other triads with lower and equal status, who will give him face and comply with any of his requests because of his Dor. Therefore, Dor leads to face. Obligated face-giving serves to transform Dor to a variety of other functions, including assuring compliance,

loan credit, offering protection, and guanxi maintenance, which are important in terms of paving the way for the establishment and actualization of social capital. Obligated face-giving to senior triads can serve as a mechanism by which other triads protect their business interests, as confirmed by an experienced triad:

(T9) When you become a Cho Kun, you have authority and people give face to you. As a result, no one would dare to compete or take over your businesses, no matter whether they are from another triad society or within the same triad society. So your [illicit] businesses tend to be stable.

Obligated face-giving can also be used to resolve conflicts between triads, as noted by a “Wa Si Yan” of a 14K branch:

(T15) When conflicts arise between triads, very often they will ask me to be the adjudicator; they will give face and listen to me because of my seniority and Dor...I became a drug lord and rich at a very young age. I helped lots of people in the past, and so whenever I run into problems, they've gotta give face to me and help me in return.

The above data show how this obligated face-giving mechanism transforms Dor and seniority into compliance, representing a conflict resolution mechanism between triads. The 14K branch leader had offered favors and assistance to other triads in the past. When Dor is established, those who received his favor are expected to giving him face and repay him. Under the renqing rule in Chinese culture, those favor recipients are expected to return if both parties are expected to maintain the long term relationship (Hwang, 1987). In order to preserve the valuable relationship with the triad leader, triads are expected to give face to him and return favor. Therefore, face-giving serves as a

mechanism for using Dor to assure reciprocal returns from previous favor recipients.

Obligated face-giving serves as a mechanism for transferring Dor to credit. Senior triads can utilize face-giving as a mechanism by which to gain personal advantage in advance from other triads or illicit business operators, because Dor serves as a form of credit:

(T20) ...In the drug dealing industry, senior triads always benefit from getting more quality drugs. The more senior the triad is, the more people know of him, and the more favors he receives. They need to give face to him.

A “Wa Si Yan” of a 14K branch confirmed how triads can utilize the Dor generated as a result of their seniority to gain credit in underground gambling and delay debt payment through obligated face-giving:

(T15) This principle also applies to gambling. My identity is very unusual. All I need to do is to tell the banker who I am and my followers can lay a bet without paying. They can even bet without paying in underground casinos with a high turnover of up to a few million dollars...Someone asked me, “You have such (triad boss) Dor and such extensive social networks, would anyone dare urge you to repay the debt?” This is correct; those creditors dare not ask me to repay the debt.

Obligated face-giving also serves as a mechanism by which to transform Dor into protection. Junior triads can utilize senior triads’ Dor for self-protection, as other less senior triads need to respect and give face to seniors, as noted by T29:

(T29) T17 is very well-respected, and his Dor is well-known within the triad community. I offended a triad in Tsim Sha Tsui when I was young. I was scared that the triad would take revenge on me but as long as T17 was with me, I felt very safe and protected. Once T17 gave any instructions, every person would follow and no one would have the courage to offend him. They need to take into account T17's feelings and thoughts, and they dare not hit T17's people.

8.4.2 Reciprocal face-giving between triads with equal status

Reciprocal face-giving between triads with equal status serves as a mechanism for the building and maintenance of guanxi. Distinct from obligated face-giving, this form of face-giving is based on reciprocity – that is, if one party gives face to another, the other party is obligated to give face in return in order to maintain the relationship. This is different from the obliged face-giving between senior and junior triads, which is one-way – juniors need to give face to seniors, but not vice versa.

As part of my fieldwork study, I attended a traditional triad social event called “Fa Pau Wui” (花炮會) (Floral Wreaths Gathering). Fa Pau Wui is an important annual triad event. Originally, it was a religious event for local community members to celebrate the birthday of Chinese gods, such as Kwun Yam (the Goddess of Mercy), Tin Hau (the Sea Goddess), Guan Gong (the God of War, who signifies righteousness and brotherhood), and Tam Kung (the God of healing and weather forecasting) (also see Chu, 2000: 37). Community members often used fire crackers in their god worshipping. Competing for fire crackers was regarded as the most important activity at the Fa Pau Wui. People at the event would compete for possession of the first cracker using violence, because the first fire cracker symbolised fortune. Fire crackers were eventually replaced by other

oblations, such as gold plated statues, jade, bottles of wine, and pictures, after the Hong Kong government banned the use of fire crackers. The first fire cracker was replaced by a long red cloth used as the event banner called “Cheung Hung” (長紅) – which means “maintaining popularity for a long time” (T8 and T21). These events are typically held by local residents’ groups. However, triads are often the key organizers of the event in the name of local sports associations, as confirmed by a Lo Shuk Fu of 14K:

(T5) Most of the hosts of Fa Pau Wui are triads attending in the name of a martial arts club or a local sports association. In fact, they are just triads using these leisure associations as camouflage to cover their triad identity. Ordinary civilians without triad backgrounds would not dare to open a martial arts club for sure.

For instance, the Fa Pau Wui I attended was co-organised by a local Kai Fong (Residents) Welfare Association and “Lung Shing Tong”, a local dragon dance club. In fact, the dragon dance club is organised by Wo Shing Tong, as noted by the triad who invited me to the event:

(T8) On the surface, Lung Shing Tong is a normal local sports association organised by local community members whereas, in fact, it is owned and controlled by Wo Shing Tong senior triads, although some non-triads do participate in the administration of the club.

Due to the triad background of the key organizers, Fa Pau Wui is infiltrated with strong triad elements and, even now, is regarded as an important triad social gathering aimed at establishing social networks and demonstrating triad power (Chu, 2000: 37). According to my informants, T8 and T21, gang fights between triads often took place at the Fa Pau Wui in the past, because violence was used to compete for the first fire cracker or “Cheung Hung” in order to demonstrate power of

triads. Therefore, police detectives of the organised crime bureau were often present at the event for the purpose of deterring potential gang fights. In order to prevent police interference in these events, triads nowadays use bidding instead of violence to compete for oblations.

In my fieldwork study, I found that triads used Fa Pau Wui as a platform from which to establish and maintain social networks in the triad community. Although non-triad civilians also attended those events, almost two third of invited guests were triads, as informed by T8 and T21. Similar to other triad banquets, triads from different triad societies were seated based on the faction or triad society they belonged to, and seated separately from local community members. Senior triads sat on several tables close to the stage, and junior triads sat on another close to the entrance, signifying their power and status differences (see Chapter 6 for details). Attendees of Fa Pau Wui are not restricted to triads and local community members, but also few famous legal professionals and district councilors (i.e. local politicians) who were seated on the host table with a few notorious triads. Before commencing the oblation bidding process, the triads mingled and toasted each other with beer and wine, talked about their ongoing businesses, and gossiped about other triads within their social circle. Junior triads normally just sat without participating actively, or simply followed their senior triads as they walked around.

T8, the informant who brought me to the event, explained how triad face-giving works in Fa Pau Wui in terms of establishing and maintaining guanxi in the triad community:

(T8) Those oblations are donated by goldsmith shops in the local community. In fact, they are only gold plated and aren't really worth much. However, triads still spend lots of money bidding for them – for much higher prices than their true value – because they need to give

face to the hosts, who are exclusively senior triads of Wo Shing Tong, in order to maintain guanxi with them. In return, Wo Shing Tong triads give face to these guests by attending and bidding for oblations at the next Fa Pau Wui held by the latter. This reciprocal face-giving signifies the close alliance between the participants. Attending Fa Pau Wui and bidding for oblations, or not, can reveal the quality of a relationship between different triad factions and triad societies. If a triad society invites another triad society to an event and the invited party refuses to attend, the refusal means they are not giving face to the host and the guanxi between them will be damaged.

A Lo Shuk Fu also offered this observation:

(T5) Only senior triads with reputable Dor will host the Fa Pau Wui. Therefore, triads who are invited need to give face to them and attend their events for the purpose of maintaining guanxi.

Senior triads have the Dor to organize the Fa Pau Wui, solicit donations of gold plated statues from goldsmith shops, and invite other triads to attend. Having the ability to host the Fa Pau Wui enables them to spread their Dor throughout the triad community. Other senior triads need to give them face and attend the event, and to bid for the statues. As Yan (1996) suggests, if a person receives an invitation to a banquet hosted by one's guanxi, the invitee is seen as having face and if the invitee accepts the invitation and attends the banquet, this can be regarded as giving face to the host. Therefore, inviting and attending these banquets reveals reciprocity between hosts and attendees. Based on this logic, participating in the Fa Pau Wui and bidding for the oblations are regarded as a reciprocal face-giving mechanism for guanxi maintenance among senior triads.

8.4.3 Face-acquiring

When the Dor of a triad is not well established in the triad community, it is difficult for him to obtain the favor, respect and recognition of others. In order to establish Dor, face-work serves as an important mechanism for demonstrating and enhancing status within the triad community. As Goffman (1972) explains, face represents the self-image perceived by others in the social group. In order to obtain face for the purpose of establishing reputation and recognition, face-work has to be conducted based on the social norms shared within the social group. Face-acquiring or gaining face is regarded as a tactic to construct a positive image among triad groups for enhancing the prestige and status of the triads involved. In the triad community, violence, financial power and manpower are important sources of Dor. Triads need to demonstrate these traits in front of other triads in order to gain face, which in turn paves the way for the establishment of Dor. An experienced triad explains the importance of demonstrating manpower so as to gain face:

(T14) If you have more followers, you will have face. If you have face, then you will have Dor. It is very important to show that you have the ability to make enough money to support many followers. If you have no money, no one will follow you. If you have 'no face', how can you establish Dor? That's why triads like to recruit lots of teenage followers and take them with them all the time. It is true that they may not be helpful in business or fighting, but they let you gain face in front of other triads, especially on the occasion of show-up (晒馬) to demonstrate manpower. The more followers a triad has, the more bargaining power he has in negotiation.....Face is important to triads. If you have money, you have face. If you have no face, no one will recognize you. If you have face, they [triads] will treat you differently. Say, if a Dai Lo made a lot of money, he would have lots of followers, because they all want to get an advantage from him. If you have no money, this means you cannot

provide any benefits. If you can't make any money, how can they get favor from you? So why bother following you?

These interview data illustrate the importance of gaining face by demonstrating manpower, and the relationship between demonstrating manpower and the financial power of a triad. Chu (2000) argued that mobilizing a significant amount of manpower at festive events or the “shining horse” is a means of establishing reputation, especially a reputation for violence (37-39). However, the interview data provides evidence that this demonstration of manpower is not only for showing a triad's ability to exercise violence, but also for demonstrating his financial power. Dor is not automatically generated through the demonstration of manpower. Instead, Dor should also be established through a series of face-gaining situations, and face-gaining can be enacted by displaying a large amount of manpower with the backup of sufficient financial power.

In order to gain face for the establishment of Dor, unlike violence and manpower, which has greater public visibility, financial power and money making ability are less visible. Unlike an ordinary entrepreneur, who can produce financial documents, such as company transaction records and financial reports, to prove his/her financial status and profit making ability, triads cannot provide these kinds of official statements to prove their financial status due to the illicit nature of the financial source. Therefore, they must rely on other prima facie visible signals to display their financial power.

After gaining face, Dor can be established. Demonstrating manpower and confronting the police can be another tactic for gaining face and establishing Dor. For instance, one particular triad who

claimed to be ‘the dominator of Jordan’ confronted the police with a large group of his followers, saying “I am in charge of Jordan Road after twelve midnight; who doesn’t know who I am?...Fight with me alone if you have the guts” (Apple Daily, 12th February, 2003). The case was widely reported in the local media. The Dor of the triad was boosted after the news was released, as noted by an experienced triad who was active in Jordan:

(T13) He was only a “Tor Dei” (the dominating protector) of Jordan, and not that famous, but yeah his Dor became Heung (very popular) in the triad community after that confrontation. He gained face in front of other triads in the territory because of this incident, and regarded him as “The Tiger of Jordan”. Many junior triads started to follow him after that incident because he was perceived as an icon of “having guts” (有種) and has face. Having many followers of course helped him boost his Dor – at least for a while.

This incident demonstrates how triads utilize the techniques of “demonstration of manpower” and “confronting with the police” to establish a fearless and powerful image in front of the police and other triads in the territory. When face is gained, Dor can be established.

Face acquiring can also be achieved through “soft tactics” instead of violence. Face-work in the triad community can be conducted by frequently providing gifts, holding feasts and other such favors. Constantly paying for the entertainment expenses and meals of other triads is one of the common strategies by which to gain face among triads, as noted by the following triad:

(T14) When I was happy, I would pay the entertainment expenses of my triad brothers, such as massages, drinks and meals. I did that to gain face in front of them. It also showed that I was generous – I was “able” to be generous. Having face is important to maintain

relationship with them.

If the amount of financial contribution is significant, and the beneficiaries of the favor are senior, better Dor can be established in the triad society, as confirmed by the following account:

(T12) After gaining more money from robbing banks, I achieved better Dor within my triad society. My status was significantly enhanced because I always paid for my triad brothers' meals. I was always the one who paid for their meals. They could eat whatever they wanted and the price was not a consideration. I always paid for their leisure expenses. I also sponsored my Dai Lo and Ah Kung to buy weapons whenever they asked me. Eventually, my Dor was "Heung" (boosted) within my triad society. Many of my triad brothers regarded me as their role model.

Face-work can be used as a catalyst to improve guanxi from senren (生人) (a stranger) to suren (a familiar person) (熟人) for the purpose of obtaining personal benefit, in particular when there is power inequality between the favor giver and the favor recipient (Hwang, 1987). In Chinese culture, if a less powerful person wishes to pursue future benefit from a more powerful person, face-work has to be carried out in order to establish or improve guanxi with the powerful person. This process, in Chinese terms, is known as "seeking guanxi" (Hwang, 1987; Yan, 1996). In the triad community, it is often for triads to provide favors to powerful or senior triads in an attempt to "seek guanxi" (i.e. in attempt to establish social capital with higher position or resourceful person) in order to acquire future benefit, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T9) Every hawker is required to pay a protection fee in my Tor Dei (territory). It is a form of permission for doing business here. However, sometimes people are exempted. For

example, if a hawker is a relative of my Dai Lo, or a relative or follower of a reputable triad, we will not ask them for a protection fee. We need to give them face and they may give me some favors or collaboration opportunities in the future... In fact, some did remember what I offered them and gave me favor in return, such as letting me do business in their Tor Dei without sharing profit with them.

In addition, face-work can be conducted by showing off wealth in the triad community, such as by wearing branded fashion items, luxurious watches, and gold accessories, or by driving luxurious cars.

In my fieldwork study, I noticed that many triads like wearing branded fashion items with eye-catching logos printed on clothes or attached to their accessories, such as belts and bags. In addition to branded fashion, Rolex watches are a “must-have” item for many triads. Two experienced triads explained why they like wearing branded fashion items and Rolex watches:

(T13) Triads like wearing branded fashion, because we want to show off our wealth in front of other triads, to give them the impression that we are ‘doing well’ and ‘making lots of money’. We gain face whenever we show them off in front of others. Impression is important, you know. Without the ‘big logos’ [luxurious fashion brand logos], how can they tell I am ‘doing well’ (i.e. making lots of money)? Every triad should have a Rolex [watch]. You can ask around; everyone [triad] has one. Why Rolex? Well, you know, we sometimes make a lot of money, and sometimes we’re poor, like broke. Rolex is the best choice for us, because it has the highest resell value in the second-hand watch market. When we are running out of money, we can sell the watch, or simply put it in a pawn shop as a deposit

for borrowing money.

(T14) If you have face, it can be used as credit for borrowing money and delaying payment, because you won't risk losing your face by not paying back. Branded stuff – watches, cars; we call them 'pier' (碼頭) – can be used as credit. So when a triad needs to borrow money from another triad, he tends to trust you more because he can use them as a deposit. Without the 'pier', you are not 'doing well', you can't make money; so how can other triads trust that you have the ability to repay?

Based on these two interview data, luxurious goods also serve the pragmatic purpose of acting as a deposit for borrowing money. More importantly, wearing luxurious accessories and branded clothing serves the important function of displaying triads' money making credentials, which is important for establishing trust and credit in exchange for favors.

Because of the importance of acquiring face in the triad community, some triads pretend to be resourceful and wealthy for the purpose of establishing guanxi with powerful triads. Sometimes, this practice works due to incomplete information in certain situations, especially in the early stages of social interaction when the powerful triads do not necessarily have sufficient channels or time to verify the background or track record of a face acquirer. Due to this temporary information blockage, initial trust will be established between the two parties. However, in the long run, the powerful triads are likely to discover the true background of the face acquirer through their own network in the triad community, or by trial in terms of committing a crime. These observations are supported by the following data of two triads:

(T14) Many triads drive luxury cars and some wear gold accessories to show off their wealth. Triads cannot tell how much money you make; they can only judge by your appearance – so you wear expensive clothes and gold accessories, and drive a luxurious car. Even if you are broke, you still need to maintain a wealthy image to maintain your ‘face’.

(T20) Triads can’t tell how much [money or wealth] you have, and how much you make. No matter how much you have, you still have to pretend to be rich in front of other triads, even when you are broke. If you present yourself as a wealthy triad, other triads will believe that you are “doing business well” and making lots of money, so that you are capable of providing money-making opportunities or favors to others. If you are broke, no one will trust you or do business with you.

Face in the triad community is established based on how much money you have. Simply speaking, showing off wealth can allow triads to ‘gain-face’, in order to establish status and recognition in the triad community. Expensive clothes, gold accessories, expensive watches, luxurious cars, and holding feasts for other triads all signify a triad’s financial power, which can be transformed into credibility. This is important for the establishment of Dor. Therefore, even when triads are broke, they must still pretend to be rich. By engaging in a series of face-work, as suggested, face can be gained; consequently, Dor can be established, paving the way for the establishment of social capital with senior or resourceful triads.

8.5 Face, Gossiping and Social Capital

In the triad community, the primary use of gossip is to construct a positive image of self in front of other triads, and exchange criminal information. Farrer (2002:207) argued, gossip has an empowering function, such as allowing an individual to gain face. It allows a triad to show off valuable social capital, including that gained through interaction with senior triads and triads with reputable Dor. In addition, non-triad social capital, such as tycoons, politicians, professionals, academics, and Mainland Chinese officials, is another means by which to 'gain face' and exhibit status and Dor in the triad community. The general rule of thumb is that the more valuable social capital a triad possesses, the more face he will have. Higher levels of face mean higher levels of status and reputable Dor. Constructing a positive image through gossip can be used to establish Dor and gain face, which is crucial for triads in terms of allowing them to establish "bridging social capital" in the triad community.

From my fieldwork study, triads adopted numerous methods to show off the social capital they possess. Presenting photos of themselves taken with notorious triads, famous movie stars and politicians to other triads is one of the common tactics used to signify their close relationship with these people. Presenting pictures with valuable social capital is a form of evidence to support their claim.

In addition, whenever a newly introduced triad acquaintance joins dinner, the conversation always turns to discussions about the triads they know in the triad community, and what kinds of business these people undertake in the triad community. Interestingly, the triads they discuss might not be close associates, but simply notorious individuals in the triad community. The rationale of this

form of gossiping is to show that they are knowledgeable of events occurring within the triad community, so as to gain face in front of other triads. This acts to demonstrate their status, such as their level of seniority. If the newly introduced triad gains a significant amount of accurate information about these reputable triads, it would prove that he has possessed valuable social capital in the triad community, and then the other triads will give face to him; this forms the foundation for the establishment of social network between triads.

Some triads with lower status levels utilize this triad norm in order to gain face in front of other triads, with the aim of establishing social capital with resourceful or senior triads, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T13) Many triads are without status or reputable Dor. They often ‘bluff’ in front of other triads, claiming that they know many senior triads. They do this because they want to gain face and enhance their status in front of other triads. Some like to take photos with reputable or senior triads at triad events and show these pictures around, claiming that they know them very well by saying “they are my ‘buddies’, my ‘brothers’”. Sometimes they just hear what other triads say about their relationships with, and incidents involving, powerful triads and repeat these stories in front of others, claiming that they know the powerful triads very well. Simply speaking, they use ‘hear-say as their own experience’ (“收風當經驗”). Gossiping about reputable triads is a known way to establish social networks in the triad community. If you know more reputable triads – I mean, if you really know them well and are not bluffing – you will have face and your status will be enhanced. When you have face and status, it is much easier to establish further social networks with people of higher status. Then you can gain business and collaboration opportunities with valuable people.

In my fieldwork study, I also found that some less experienced triads pretended to be senior triads by showing off their “closed relationship with notorious triad figures”. One particular triad, FFF, attempted to “seek guanxi” with a Lo Shuk Fu of Wo Shing Wo, with the aim of asking him to refer some criminal litigation cases to his son, a newly qualified practice lawyer. For the purpose of seeking guanxi, he claimed to be an experienced triad of Sun Yee On, and with strong relationships with many notorious triad figures of Sun Yee On. In order to convince his audience that he was indeed a senior triad, he attempted to spell out the history of his “close Dai Lo”, the area boss of Tuen Mun, and how this area boss had assisted him to expand his businesses in Tuen Mun. He also claimed that he knew a few triad figures from his triad society very well by presenting their triad histories and achievements, in relation to a couple of famous triad wars in which they were involved. By presenting a detailed history of notorious triad figures, he hoped to convince his audience that he had established close and long relationships with these figures, so that he could gain face from the triads and, hence, enhance his status. By telling others how the area boss supported him in expanding his business, he provides evidence to support the fact that he had successfully established social capital with that notorious triad figure, to prove that he himself is a high-level triad.

However, the success of this tactic for gaining face is dependent on numerous factors, such as the accuracy and truthfulness of the information described, the possession of knowledge about the triads mentioned among the gossip-listeners and, more importantly, the level of seniority of the triad claiming possession of the social capital and the listeners. If the information provided by the triad is inaccurate or untrue, while the listeners possess accurate knowledge of the people

mentioned, not only can face not be gained, but the triad will lose face in front of the listeners. Additionally, he will hamper the possibility of the establishment of social capital with other triads in the future. Triad FFF mentioned above is such a failure case.

8.6 Protection of Face and Territorial Rights

Dor and face, as symbolic capital, are not static over time and both must be maintained through effort, time and cost. Very often, violence will be used to protect Dor and face. Once Dor is established, a triad has to protect it. Since Dor and face are positively related, losing face will result in damage to the Dor, and vice versa. In other words, if a triad loses face, the benefit that originated from his Dor will also be discounted or, at the very worst, he will lose all benefits generated from the Dor. A senior officer of 14K confirmed the importance of the protection of face and Dor:

(T5) I would not taint my Dor. I spent so many years building up my Dor, and I do not want to lose face in the triad world. I will defend my Dor.

As noted by a triad officer, credibility, such as is gained by making payments on time, is important for the establishment and maintenance of Dor. Having face also enhances a triad's trustworthiness, which enhances his chance to obtain resources or other favors from members of his social networks in the future. Any failure to keep his promises will lead to a loss of face and, hence, to damage of the Dor. Consequently, it will also hamper his existing and future guanxi with other triads, as noted by a Lo Shuk Fu:

(T5) Normally, those who successfully bid for the oblations do not pay immediately, but are expected to pay at next year's "Fa Pau Wui"... All of the "Fa Pau Wui" organizers are martial arts club and sports associations; they are all reputable, powerful triads.... If you

don't pay, you're gonna lose face in front of them. Then your "stink Dor" will be spread throughout the triad community. Everyone will know that you are "not doing well (撈唔掂)", or can't make money. Then, it will become impossible for you to find business partners in the triad community in the future. Making payments on time signifies your credibility. Being credible in front of reputable triads is important for building social capital and enhancing the possibility of business collaboration opportunities with other triads.

Territoriality is a distinctive feature of criminal organizations. Gambetta (2000: 162) outlined the distinguished role and activity of Mafia-type criminal organizations as "the enforcement of monopolies over the largest possible number of resources in any given territory". The entitlement of access to and benefits of the territory are often attached to the reputation of criminal organizations rather than to individuals (Gambetta, 2000: 205). Individual members are obligated to contribute to the criminal organization in order to gain the endorsement of the criminal organization's reputation for use in the dominated territory, in relation to the protection business (Gambetta, 2009: 206). As the use of reputation implies an entitlement to territorial benefits, protection of the use of reputation is an important issue in terms of protecting the dominator's interests in the territory.

In triad norms, the right to control triad territory is often attached to triad society. Tuen Mun is a classic example, and has long been exclusively controlled by Sun Yee On (T26). However, the right to control specific districts and areas is often attached to individual triads rather than to the entire triad society. The dominating triad has the authority to control the illicit business operating within his territory (T13). As a general norm, dominating triads only permit their faction members

to operate illicit businesses. If triads from outside the faction, or triads of other triad societies, wish to do business in the dominated territory, they are expected to gain the permission of the dominating triad through profit sharing with, or paying a protection fee to, the dominating triad. Any failure to obtain permission constitutes an act of “not giving face” to the dominator, as noted by a Lo Shuk Fu:

(T18) If there is a triad who dominates a territory and you do not belong to his faction, you had better not to do illicit business there without his permission. It is a matter of face. Doing business without permission or “Heung Dor” in the triad’s territory (i.e. you are claiming your triad name in the rival’s territory) are both regarded as “not giving face” to the dominating triad; then you will be in trouble.

“Not giving face” is regarded as a challenge to the authority. Doing business without the permission of the dominating triad Dai Lo or claiming territory by exhibiting Dor (Heung Dor) is not only regarded as an insult to the dominating triad, but also as a challenge to his capability and authority to control the territory; both result in the dominating triad ‘losing face’.

The relationship between face, Dor, and maintaining territorial rights is further explained by two experienced triads:

(T13) ...I [a Wo Shing Wo triad] used to control part of Ap Liu Street in Sham Shui Po. One side of Ap Liu Street was controlled by Shui Fong (Wo On Lok), and the other side was controlled by me. We used to have lots of street hookers operating in Ap Liu Street, and I served as protector for those who operated in my territory. One day, a guy from 14K approached me, telling me that they would like to send some ‘girls’ (street sex workers) to

operate at the street corner between Shui Fong and my territory. He claimed that he had obtained the permission of the Shui Fong “Tor Dei” (the dominating protector) already. I said no to him, because the triad territory had been clearly distributed between us [Wo Shing Wo and Shui Fong]. If he sent girls to operate on the street corner, that would mean he was attempting to intrude into my territory. If I allowed him to operate in my territory, I would need to allow other triads to operate in my territory too, so how would I maintain my face? If I cannot protect my face, how can I protect my territory?

(T15) Two Dai Lo had an argument about the distribution of profit gained in a Tor Dei (a triad territory) and almost triggered a triad war. One Dai Lo was a reputable triad with more than ten “Tor Dei”, while the other was less senior with only a few “Tor Dei”. The senior triad was very angry and refused to compromise, because he felt he would be losing face if he allowed the other to take more shares. If he lost face, his Dor and interest would be gone.

These examples further support the contention that face and Dor are positively related. In these two cases, the triads refused to compromise with their competitors because compromise damages face. From the triads’ perspectives, if face is not maintained, Dor will be adversely affected. Protection of Dor is equivalent to protection of triad territory, because Dor signifies power and authority to control in triad territory. Therefore, protection of face and Dor are both important for protecting interests, including territory.

8.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter illustrates another important element in triad subculture --- face that constitutes the establishment of triad network and social capital. The examination of face and face work in triad community supports the following properties of face suggested by Ho (1976):

1. Face is derived from authority (p.873).
2. Face is attached to the status of the person (p. 874).
3. Face is derived from wealth and social capital possessed by a person (p. 874).

Face serves important functions in criminal network. It helps the establishment and maintenance of social capital among triads. First, face-giving is a mechanism for establishing social networks with powerful triads, paving the way for the establishment of social capital. In order to establish social capital with more powerful and resourceful triads, triads need to give face to them through the provision of favors and benefits. Second, face also serves as a control mechanism to ensure reciprocity among triads. On the one hand, triad with face can utilize face-work to demand for compliance and seeking favors. On the other hand, he is under strong constraint to act in a manner consistent with the requirement for maintaining face and for reciprocating due to regard for the face of other triads. Under the “face concern” triad subculture, face can exert “a mutually restrictive, coercive power upon each member of the social network” (Ho, 1976:873), which helps to lower the risk of betrayal and cheating among members of the network.

Face and Dor are interrelated. Face and Dor share similar attributes. First, they both signify triads’ authority and status, which are important for establishing and maintaining criminal network and social capital among triads. Second, face and Dor are both important for securing triad interest; in particular, the authority to control triad territory.

Face and Dor are positively related, but not always perfectly correlated. The general rule is that when a triad has Dor, it is certain that he has face. A triad who has face can utilize face-work to exercise considerable influence and control over other triads. Triads can utilize face-giving as a mechanism to transform Dor into benefits and capitals, such as credit, protection and compliance, and assuring reciprocity and mutual assistance with other triads.

Without face, Dor cannot be sustained. Because losing face leads to serious damage to Dor; consequently, any benefit, including social capital, will be lost. Therefore, triads need to defend their face by any means, including violence, in order to protect their Dor. This rule is a general triad norm that is applicable to those who have established reputable Dor in the triad community.

Face can lead to Dor. Some of the triads who are less reputable or without reputable Dor often utilize the attributes of “face implied status and authority” to establish Dor. Demonstrating manpower, providing favor and showing off wealth and accumulated social capital are all common tactics adopted by triads in an effort to enhance their status, recognition, and Dor in the triad community, thus helping them to maintain and strengthen their social network or capital. However, having face does not automatically generate Dor when the face is gained through cultivation of fictive perception. Many triads exploit temporary information blockages and incomplete knowledge in order to mimic – they pretend to be wealthy and resourceful in order to enhance their face and Dor, so as to establish social capital. However, if the triads do not possess genuine authority, status, and resources that they claim to possess, then the effect of “face leading to Dor” will disappear.

The examination of Dor and face in triad community reveals that they are crucial credentials of triads. They are significant variables in the considerations of selecting criminal partners in criminal network and the establishment of social capital among triads. Yet, the study also reveals the reliability problem of face and Dor as they are easily constructed and mimic. Therefore, they only form the foundation of confidence for initial screening purpose, but are insufficient in establishing trustful criminal collaboration. In the next chapter, we will focus on the final stage of triads' collaboration – how triads spread the reputation and validate Dor and face to facilitate criminal collaboration.

CHAPTER 9

SPREAD AND VALIDATION OF DOR

9.1 Introduction

The circulation of information is essential to all social interactions, whether in the conducting of business, the achieving of recognition or the identification of reliable others (Bovenkerk, Sigel and Zaitch, 2003: 27). However, different from ordinary legitimate businesses and entrepreneurs, the illegal nature of their activities and business dealings means that criminals and their illicit businesses are constantly under surveillance from enforcement agencies, which in turn creates a barrier to the spread of reputation so as to avoid being targeted (Gambetta, 2009: 6). As secrecy is essential in the underworld, it is difficult in these circumstances to spread a triad's reputation and to trace that triad's previous criminal career records and transactions.

The spread of a criminal's reputation depends on the chain of relations (Gambetta, 2009; Varese, 2010); criminals need to rely on social networks to obtain information about other criminals' credentials, and in order to gain recognition among criminals (Gambetta, 2009). The circulation of criminal information is an important means by which criminals establish and spread their reputation among other criminals in their search for suitable collaborators. It takes place in criminals' common social areas, and allows offenders to search for potential collaborators, share information, and make plans. These areas include the neighborhoods where criminals live (Gambetta, 2009: 19) and local bars (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1982).

While many organised crime researchers argue that the spread of reputation outside of a social

network is difficult, Varese (2010: 26) argues that it is possible for criminals to advertise through newspaper reporting and promote themselves through popular culture, especially when they need to spread their reputation to a wider audience without any direct connections, or into a new resided territory.

For triads, in order to establish their reputation within dominated territories and neighborhoods, it is common for them to adopt several strategies, including presenting a great number of members in the public arena, and displaying their banners and emblems when celebrating Chinese festivals (Chu, 2000: 37). Some leaders demonstrate their power by mobilizing a number of their members to invade the territory of others in order to establish reputation, and consequently use that reputation as a bargaining power to expand their dominance in other territories (Chu, 2000: 38). Violence is often used by street gang leaders to enhance their status, in order to build up and maintain their reputation as credible protectors and to make a profit from providing protection services (Chu, 2000: 38-39). Data documented in chapter eight also supported Chu's arguments.

Prior to the 1990s, violence was the most common and efficient tactic for spreading Dor in the triad community; because it is easily visualised, it facilitates the spread of Dor through media reporting and witnessing. In the case of a triad officer (T16), he successfully demonstrated his toughness and braveness in a series of triad wars and used violence against other triads. This facilitated his Dor to become known within the triad community and he was promoted. However, the use of violence for spreading Dor among triads is less commonly adopted in modern triads due to the tightening control on triad activities of law enforcement and the shift of triad business from traditional organised crime to quasi-legitimate businesses, which reduces the necessity for violence

(Lo and Kwok, 2016).

If exercising violence is less common for triads nowadays to spread reputation, what channels have triads instead adopted for the circulation of criminal information and the spreading of Dor within the triad community? To answer this question, it is important to understand first how triads obtain and distribute criminal information, in relation to criminals' track-records, their personality, and illicit business market updates in the triad community. To begin with, we need to understand their routine activities – the triad social eating culture, triad events and gossip.

9.2 Social Eating Culture in the Triad Community

In Chinese culture, social eating or banqueting is a vital component of social networking (Yang, 1994) for people to maintain, enhance, expand and mobilize resources from their personal networks (Bian, 2001). Eating socially within the Chinese community is not solely undertaken for the purpose of eating meals but rather provides a sound environmental for conversation and the maintenance of social relations (Bian, 2001). Eating meals together not only unites and reinforces a collective identity (Cheung and Tan, 2007), but also provides business opportunities (Liu and Lin, 2009; Pang, 2002). Traditionally, in Guangdong province, Yam Cha (social eating) plays a role in the establishment of social networks for the purpose of information exchange and business negotiations (Zhang and Long, 2015).

Social eating with triads and followers is the most common triad leisure activity. In my fieldwork study, I found that most triads spend a significant amount of time engaging in social eating at food stalls (大排檔), tea restaurants, and Chinese restaurants with other triads. Triad social eating takes

the form of Yam Cha, afternoon tea, dinner, and banquets. For instance, when I first met the Cho Kun of a Wo Yee Tong and his senior triad friends, we spent around eight hours on dining – two hours at afternoon tea in a tea restaurant and then six hours at dinner in a food stall within his dominated territory. When I was hanging out with a Cho Kun candidate, I noticed that he spent many hours on Yum Cha, afternoon tea and dinner with his followers, triad collaborators, and businessmen. Based on my observations and interviews, most of my triad participants were seen to spend at least eight to ten hours a day on social eating with other triads and business collaborators.

Social eating is an important informational circulation channel for the spreading of updates as well as the spreading of Dor in the triad community, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T9) Who was promoted, who was elected Cho Kun, who was arrested, who has won big business?...These updates in the triad community are no secret. This kind of information is circulated promptly in the triad community by chatting during eating among triads. That's why we spend most of our time on "Yam Cha". We go to "Yam Cha" not for the food or drink, but for the exchange of information among triads. We could spend whole days on "Yam Cha", eating in six to seven restaurants in just one street, meeting different groups of triads for the purpose of obtaining information.

Triads can distribute and obtain information about triad promotions and market updates by chatting during social eating. Dining also serves as a promotion channel for individual triads, in terms of spreading the Dor of newly promoted senior triads and their achievements throughout the triad community. A triad officer further explained the importance of social eating in the triad community:

(T5) It is true that having meals together is an important activity for triads. There are different types of “meal gatherings”. The first involves having a meal with our followers. I used to have meals with my followers every day in the same restaurant within my territory. I always had two large tables reserved for my followers. This is very important for maintaining affection and bonding between us. We regard this as “maintaining reserved military power”. In fact, if anything were to happen, I can mobilize my followers to respond immediately. The second type of meal gathering involves having a meal with triads from other triad societies, or with my triad brothers. This is important for information exchange and the establishing of social networks for researching business opportunities or sourcing new collaborators. Maintaining exposure within the triad territories is important to us, because many triads will eventually leave the triad community for various reasons, such as aging and retiring, switching to legitimate businesses and no longer wanting to be involved in illicit business or triad matters.....

....I like to let other triads know that I am still an active triad, in order to maintain my social networks for the purpose of market updates and searching for business opportunities. During “Occupy Central”, we had lots of “business opportunities”. If you don’t maintain your exposure in the triad community, and join other triads for meals, you will lose these golden opportunities for money making. If you don’t maintain a good relationship with other triads, when someone has a good business deal, they will never count you in.....

....You need to maintain your Dor in the triad community. If you don’t show up to a triad banquet or dinner, no one will remember who you are. If you wanna maintain your Dor, you have to show up at triad banquets and meal gatherings often, and let others know what business you are doing. Therefore, I regard having meals with triads and attending triad

events as an important strategy for the maintenance of Dor and influence in the triad community.

This data clearly explains the core function of social eating in the triad community. Through frequent social eating with followers and other triads, triads are able to maintain the social networks. Social eating also facilitates a strengthening of the emotional bonding between triads and followers, which enhances group cohesion, hence ensuring the consolidation of manpower. Therefore, social eating is important in terms of actualizing social capital – that is, transforming a social network into manpower and business opportunities through frequent meetings for the purpose of establishing familiarity, which is one of the important elements of trust (Luhmann, 1988: 94).

Fa Pau Wui is an important triad banquet, allowing triads from different strata and triad societies to gather together. It serves as an important platform for communication, information exchange, and establishing and maintaining social networks between triads during the banquet. On the other hand, triads can utilize this social platform for the purpose of spreading Dor throughout the triad community by bidding for oblations, as confirmed by two senior triads:

(T5) In the past, all of the triad societies would organize a Fa Pau Wui upon every Quan Kung's birthday (關公誕). Holding a Fa Pau Wui used to be a lucrative business, because triads would spend several hundred thousand on each oblation while they were only worth a few thousand or even less. During the 1980s, competition for the bidding of Cheung Hung (event banner that signifies lasting popularity) was keen. Why would they spend lots of money on bidding for oblations? It's an advertisement for triads! Spending lots of money

on bidding means the triad is wealthy and “doing well” (i.e. meanings doing business well or making money) (撈得掂). When the triad wins the bid, he will be on stage and will have photographs taken with the oblation he has won. Then, he will become the focus of the event and all attendees will know him. Those attendees will talk about it after the event. He gains face and his Dor spreads throughout the triad community. Gaining face is important to triads; if you have face, then Dor will be Heung (well established).

(T17) The reason for bidding for Cheung Hung and other oblations is that triads want to gain face and spread their reputation throughout the triad community, so that every triad knows that those successful bidders are rich and powerful. It is not about the value of the oblation. It can be regarded as a kind of advertisement for triads.

The lifespan of triad criminal careers and illicit businesses tend to be short-lived. Many triads drop out of the triad community due to imprisonment, to escape from the police or from other triads, or to switch to legitimate careers and businesses, and so it is important for triads to maintain exposure within the triad community for the maintenance of Dor and social networks.

9.3 Restaurants as Social Spaces and Marketplaces

Triad territory is important to triads, because they need to occupy and govern a territory in order to protect and monopolize businesses within the specific areas in which the businesses lie (Kelly, Chin and Fagan, 1993). Conventional triad businesses, such as prostitution and gambling (Chin, 1990: 45) and protection (Chu, 2000), are developed in these local territories. Restaurants located within such a triad territory serve a variety of purposes. I would group these restaurants into two categories, namely restaurants as social spaces and restaurants as marketplaces, in examining how

triads utilize them for different purposes.

9.3.1 Restaurants as a social space in the triad territory

Restaurants can serve as social spaces in which triads can act to maintain affection with their triad brothers and followers. Those restaurants that are utilised as social spaces are mostly located within triad territories dominated by specific triad societies. Dominating triads are often stationed in the designated restaurant with their faction members. As noted by T5, triads used to frequently dine with their followers in restaurants within their territory for the purpose of maintaining social bonds. In so doing, a triad can ensure that his followers will comply with his commands – in their service as foot soldiers. This is also confirmed by another triad informant:

(T24) It is almost impossible to have a quiet dinner with my husband (i.e. the interviewee and her husband are both triads of 14K) in our territory. We always have dinner with our followers – about two to three tables of people.... The bills are all settled by us, unless our Dai Lo (protectors) are here. This is important for maintaining relationships with our followers. If we did not do this, it would be difficult to establish ‘ganqing’ (i.e. affection bonds) between us. This is important to ensure that they will comply with our orders and will remain under our control.

The social space also serves as a military base, as triads and their followers are often stationed in the designated restaurant awaiting the commands of their seniors, as confirmed by several triads:

(T20) We always go to the same tea restaurant in our Tor De (territory) for chit-chat and to await our Dai Lo’s commands. Whenever the Dai Lo needs us, perhaps to collect a protection fee, he will find us in the tea restaurant.

(T14) When we have nothing to do, we always go to that tea restaurant. We always meet our Ah Kung (Dai Lo's protector) and Dai Lo there and wait for their orders.

(T22) We always go to the same tea restaurant and sit in the same seats at night. When trouble makers come to our territory, we need to be stationed there and ready to fight. After the fight, we will go back to the tea restaurant after unloading our weapons and changing our clothes.

Since those restaurants that are used as social spaces are stationed at the heart of the dominated territory, if a crisis should occur within that territory, such as an intrusion of rivals or a gang fight, the triads can send their foot soldiers and respond promptly. To some extent, these restaurants are important for maintaining the manpower of the dominating triad – both in terms of maintaining a high quality relationship with his followers for manpower assurance and reserving manpower for the protection of the territory.

9.3.2 Restaurants as a market place in the triad territory

Restaurants within a territory also serve as a marketplace, because they allow triads to exchange information, such as illicit market updates and recent police actions. The following triads expressed the importance of social eating for crime operation:

(T10) Those who operate in the same territory come from different triad societies. Even though we are from different factions or triad societies, we are not enemies. We always go to the same restaurant near where we work for dinner after work. There's nothing really secretive actually; it's just ordinary social chat. We might exchange market information or triad community updates throughout the dinner. Although it is just social chat, it is

important to us, because we need market information, such as police operation information and who is not reliable, so that we can reduce the risk involved in selling drugs.

(T13) Dinner in restaurants within a territory is one of the most important daily activities. This is because we need to exchange information, such as recent police actions, who is doing what kind of business, how they are doing in that business, who is having arguments with other triads and how they are gonna respond. These kinds of discussions usually take place during meal times. Therefore, having meals together with other triads is the most important channel for mutual information exchange. That's why they prefer having meals together in a fixed restaurant. In fact, the main triad daily activity is exchanging information. By having meals together, triads can gain first-hand information on the illicit market and recent news from the triad community. Having meals together is important for us to understand how others are doing in business and the strength or track record of other triads. This information is useful to our searches for appropriate business partners and business opportunities.

While market updates and police operation information are crucial to the risk management of triads in operating their businesses, information on triads, such as in relation to their business operations and gossip, are also important. This is because triads need to rely on this kind of information to select suitable collaborators and in their search for business opportunities. My key informant further explained how restaurants as marketplaces facilitate the establishment of social capital in drug dealing:

(T13) When I was a drug dealer, I sold drugs in Jordan. I used to go to the Chinese

restaurant in X hotel. This was the first late night Yam Cha Chinese restaurant in Hong Kong. Many triads from other triad societies also love to go there for Yam Cha at night for social and market information exchange. Since we always met in the restaurant in Jordan almost every day, we recognised each other and knew each other well. That's why we tended to trust them [those who operated in the same territory] more than an alienated dealer. That's how I have established extensive networks in different triad societies...

...I would introduce my followers to other drug dealers. Sometimes they would also refer their friends or followers to me if they wanted to join us as a drug dealer in our territory. I simply introduced my followers or friends to them, and let them communicate and follow up themselves. This kind of referral in restaurants in the territory is very common in drug dealing. This is how we search for new business opportunities or new collaborators. During the chat throughout the dinner, we come to understand what business other triads are doing and how well they are doing their business, and introduce new collaborators through referral.

The nature of restaurants as marketplaces is different from the nature of restaurants as social space, although they share a similar nature - they both provide a social hub in which triads can hang out. Different from "restaurants as social space", these restaurants are open to all triads from different triad societies or factions rather than serving the faction members of the dominating triads exclusively. Second, restaurants as marketplaces are located at the center of the triad territories dominated by triads from different triad societies; they consist of triads from different triad societies operating different illicit businesses. For example, Jordan is a classic triad hub, controlled by Wo Shing Wo, Shui Fong, 14K, and Luen Ying She (T5, T13, T25). Restaurants as marketplaces

are distributed at the center of each illicit business hotspot. Two experienced triads who actively operated in Jordan and Yau Ma Tei confirmed this finding and explained their preference in choosing “restaurants as marketplaces”:

(T13) Location is our first consideration. They are close to where we “work” (i.e. the area where they operate illicit businesses). When I was a drug dealer, I sold drugs near Temple Street. When I was waiting for my clients or suppliers or in-between my “office hours”, I needed a place to rest and wait for my next deal. It was convenient for me as I needed to walk back and forth between the restaurant and where I sold or got drugs. In fact, Jordan was divided into different areas for different [illicit] businesses. The restaurant I mentioned [a hot spot for drug dealers] was close to the park where drug dealers used to go for trading. That’s why you could find lots of drug dealers in that restaurant. The other restaurant was located near Portland Street. You could find almost all the pimps of Portland Street in that restaurant.

(T25) Why go to that restaurant? The reason is simple. It was close to the brothels in Yau Ma Tei, where my girls [sex workers under his control] worked. Basically, almost all pimps operating in Portland Street go to that restaurant for the same reason – convenience. We need to wait for our girls to go up and down to the brothels. Of course we can’t wait too far from them. Almost all pimps operating in that area go to that restaurant even though we are from different triad societies.

Restaurants as marketplaces are located at the heart of the triad hub and are open overnight, which is convenient in terms of allowing triads to rest and operate crime. Therefore, these restaurants

attract large number of triads from different triad societies, facilitating the expansion of triads' social networks and enhancing the flow and amount of circulation of criminal information.

When I was hanging out with my informants in their territories, I noticed that the attendees changed often throughout the social eating, and the number of attendees grew throughout. At the beginning of the meal, there were only a few attendees invited by the host. Attendees are mostly senior triads of a similar age to the host and with similar lengths of years served in the triad community. Sometimes, triads may bring their followers to join in, but not often. During the middle of social eating, more triads joined without prior arrangement. These new attendees were triads operating in the same territory as the host. They were not necessarily from the same triad society, but all of them knew the host and the other attendees very well. This interesting observation is also mentioned by a triad interviewee:

(T24) ...It always starts with me, my husband and our followers having dinner at a small table. Suddenly, there will be more triad brothers in the neighborhood joining us. Then we need to change to a bigger table for dinner, and end up having more than 20 people having dinner together. It's always like that. This is how we maintain intimate relationships between triad brothers in our territory and it makes it easier for us to obtain updates about what's going on within our territory.

The responses gained from different triads and my observation further confirm how the restaurants as marketplaces facilitate the establishment and maintenance of a social network in the triad community. Through casual chat during social eating, triads can obtain current illicit market information and information on triads' criminal performance and personality, which are important

when searching for suitable collaborators and business opportunities, and smoothing crime operations. The geographical convenience, on the one hand, enhances the number of participants in the social eating, which also increases the number of information sources and information circulation channels. On the other hand, frequent meeting enhances familiarity, which facilitates relationship establishment and the forming of foundations of trust (Fukuyama, 1999; Hearn, 1997; Macy and Skvoretz, 1998: 639; Misztal, 1996).

9.4 Strategies for Information Validation

When triads are searching for suitable targets for the construction of social network and social capital, several important elements are taken into consideration, including Dor, face and seniority, all of which signify triads' criminal credentials. However, these symbolic capitals only serve as a prima facie reference guide or a foundation of trust before any effort is put into the further cultivating of a relationship into social capital. In this regard, verification of information becomes crucial for escalating the level of trust for transforming the relations into partnership. In this section, I will further examine what tactics triads adopt to enhance levels of trust in terms of transforming social networks into social capital for crime operation.

9.4.1 Phase One – questioning and observation

When triads first meet a potential collaborator, questioning and observation are the most common tactics adopted for screening out unsuitable candidates. Questioning and observation are both important aspects of assessing the likelihood and ability of the potential collaborator to fulfill an agreement. Such questioning and observation often take place on the occasion of triad social eating or triad events (e.g. Fa Pau Wui or triad banquets) in the presence of a middleman, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T13) Before I started to run a brothel, I asked my friends in the triad community to ask around and see if anyone had experience in this industry. Then I arranged a dinner and asked all interested parties to join.

Questioning is important; it tests the ability and experience of the triad in the particular industry. Through the answers provided by the candidates, triads can tell how experienced they are in the business and whether they are capable of performing certain tasks, as claimed by them or the middleman. Here are some examples provided by different triads:

(T13) During the dinner, I asked them questions like, “Do you know where the best location would be to start up a brothel?” I also asked what kind of people I would need to operate the business and whether they knew of any pimp who could supply the kinds of girls I needed, etc. If they don’t have experience, they won’t be able to answer and won’t even understand the jargon. Another example is that, if someone claimed that he was experienced in counterfeit VCD but didn’t know what “female” meant (i.e. female refers to the master copy of the movie), then I could be sure he was bluffing about his experience. I have sufficient experience in this industry to judge whether a person is experienced or

not. I believe that experience is important when choosing suitable collaborators, because they must have sufficient knowledge and networks to supply quality goods.

(T20) ...I only trust those who can precisely explain how they operate. I need to see if they can precisely telling me how to operate the [illicit] business – for example, I need to know whether they know how to dilute the drugs with other substances and which substances are best for mixing. I also need to know how they arrange suppliers and couriers for the distribution of drugs. By telling me the precise process, I can tell how much they know about the business operation, and then initial trust will be formed.

In addition to questioning, many triads expressed the view that observation is very important for telling how a person operates a business and performs a task, which is important in terms of gauging the ability of the triad. Observation also highlights the personality of the person, from which it can be judged whether he is trustworthy or not, as confirmed by several experienced triads:

(T20) I need time to observe, and see whether what he says and what he actually does are consistent. I tend to trust those who operate business in my territory, because it is easier for me to observe them. By observing how a person sells drugs in my territory, I can judge his performance and ability in operating business. Personality is also important. I can judge his personality through chit-chat with him in the territory, by witnessing his responses when conflicts occur, and by seeing how he treats his collaborators through observation. Someone operating a business in another territory is less preferable because it's difficult to observe the collaborator's behavior. I will consider them if any of my triad brothers or triad friends know him. I trust my friends' comments, but observation is still inevitable.

(T9) When choosing someone to collaborate with, I prefer triads I know; say, for example, someone I have met many times at triad events, dinners and banquets, or someone who already operates business in my territory. I prefer triads I know because I can observe them through interacting with them. To know a person, observations taken from day to day encounters are most reliable.

(T8) I prefer to trust those who have gone through the ups and downs with me, like fighting together with me, or those who have committed crime with me before. I prefer people from my territory because I meet them every day, and I can tell if they would take advantage of people or do anything dodgy. I even know where they live and do business, and their family members, so they can't do anything dodgy or their family and business will be in danger. I believe that previous record and history are both important, but being an eye-witness of their behaviour is most reliable.

Observation and questioning often take place at the initial stages of collaboration, for the purpose of screening out those who are untrustworthy or incapable of performing the task. Observation is more reliable than listening, because triads are known to pass off the experiences of others as their own. Thus, observation can tell a triad more about the personality of another person because it is undertaken over a longer time period than several meetings. The importance of observation also explains the preference of potential collaborators. All of the above interviewees agreed that triads who operate in the same territory are most preferred because it is easier to observe their daily behavior. Information as hostage can be another reason, although only one interviewee mentioned

this. Given that they are working in the same territory, it is easier to gain full information on their daily lives and businesses. As Gambetta (2009; also see Cook et al., 2005 and Varese and Campana, 2013) states, keeping this information and family members as hostage can be used as a threat to ensure that the collaborator will continue with the commitment.

During my fieldwork, I have witnessed how triads adopt a questioning technique in order to affirm the experience and seniority of newly introduced triads. In the case of less experienced triads who attempt to establish social capital with a Lo Shuk Fu (as noted in Chapter 8), the Lo Shuk Fu asks the triad a series of questions, including what his Chinese zodiac sign is, whether he knows where certain notorious triads began their triad careers, their real name, and who their protectors and close business partners are and how they met. The triad in question attempted to answer these questions by providing vague answers, but failed to provide accurate details. He also incorrectly named their protectors and followers, and failed to name their close collaborators in particular illicit businesses. As a result, this triad's dishonest attempt to establish social capital ended in failure. In fact, similar techniques were in evidence many times at the various triad social dinners I attended. It seems that all Lo Shuk Fu share a similar pattern of questioning when meeting newly introduced triads. My informant explained the rationale behind the pattern of questioning:

(T13) Experienced triads tend to adopt a similar questioning pattern when meeting newly introduced triad. They like raising questions during conversation. On the surface, it sounds like an advice exchange between triads, while in fact this is one of the tactics used to test the background of the triad. The reason for asking the newcomer his Chinese zodiac sign is that they want to know the age of the triad, so that they can gauge his level of seniority and how experienced he is in the triad community. Similarly, asking them to do the hand

sign or a particular manner of toasting is another method used to test their seniority, as young triads don't know these traditional triad rituals. By asking questions about the history of triad figures in the triad community, one can tell how much the triad knows about his triad society, which is of equal importance to determining his seniority and triad experience. Junior or alienated triads [i.e. those who use the reputation of the triad society and the triad identity for operating illicit business without interacting significantly with others within his triad society] would not know much about their triad society. In fact, many triads like to claim they have a good relationship with notorious triads in order to gain face and pretend to be senior. Experienced triads can refute their lies easily by asking for details of those notorious triads, such as their real name, how they entered the triad society, where their original territories were, who their protectors and associates are, and so on.

Of course, the triad community is not large. It is not difficult to know the stories and histories of these notorious triads, as they can get this information from hearsay but, when they don't really know the person, they won't know the details. Simply speaking, accuracy and detail, and the level of secrecy of information shared can tell how much they know. You cannot pretend to be a senior triad by using hearsay information in front of a senior triad. If you are not senior, they will just ignore you. That's why it is difficult for less experienced triads to "la guanxi" [i.e. to establish social capital with a more powerful person] with senior triads.

9.4.2 Phase Two – intelligence gathering

After the first screening phase, triads establish an initial perception of potential collaborators. The second phase is designed to assess the reliability of the candidate to ensure that they are not defectors or informants. In addition, triads need to validate the information gathered from the middleman or provided by the candidates. As Dor, face and seniority signify the power, status, and ability of triads, it is common to use them as a quick reference for screening in the decision-making process. However, these symbols might not be reliable and mimics are common in the triad community. Therefore, it is necessary to perform due-diligence in order to cross-check the accuracy of the symbols presented by triads.

Although triad membership is not requisite for operating organised crime in Hong Kong, many triads expressed the view that it is important within the operation of certain high risk organised crime, including armed robbery and drug wholesaling (similar findings, see So's (2011, 2012) drug trafficking study in Hong Kong), as noted by the following informants who engaged in these crimes:

(T12) All of the members in my gang were triad members from different triad societies. It is impossible for a non-triad member to join an armed robbery gang. Triad membership is a pre-requisite to join our armed robbery gang.

(T1) Triad membership is not important for couriers or dealers as long as you have drugs and clients. But it is extremely important for drug wholesalers. Drug wholesalers must be triad members.

(T24) As a chef [i.e. the person responsible for diluting high purity drugs] with lots of contacts who wholesale drugs to distributors, from my experience, none of them are non-triads. Only couriers and small dealers who sell small amounts of K-chai [ketamine] and “frozen food” [ice] can be non-triads.

The following experienced triads further explained why triad membership is important for joining these high risk business operations:

(T24) ...All triads must have Dai Lo and triad brothers. As long as you are triads, you are connected to a triad network [triad spider’s web]. With this root [triad spider’s web], it is not that difficult to find someone as long as he is connected to the network. If you have a follower and he joined my business, and then did something wrong, I would look for you and you gotta be responsible for that. This is why these important positions are often occupied by triads. We need assurance as to who will be responsible and how I can get you.

(T12) ...Just knowing a triad is insufficient reason to be made a gang member, because we cannot obtain a credible performance record directly and accurately in order to countercheck his background through the triad networks. We need to rely on triad societies as channels for collecting credible information about a person’s strength, ability, credibility, and previous performance in committing crime. If he is an active triad member, the information collected from the triad society should be accurate and credible. If he has not been a triad member, there is no way we can trace his previous criminality, performance, ability, and credibility for the purpose of risk assessment. Even if he claimed to have

excellent skills and a good track record in committing crime, there would be no way we could validate his claim – so how could we trust him?

In their operation of high risk organised crime, triads are cautious about the background of potential collaborators. The interviewee's response reveals that the importance of triad membership is not about screening out potential police informants; rather, the real value of triad membership is the spider's web (see Figure 10.1) of information used to check the ability and previous performance of the potential collaborator. The spider's web is an important information channel for cross-checking track records in the triad community and other crime operations. It can reveal the kind of illicit business a person is involved with and how well they operate that business, in addition to personality. Two experienced triads explain how they perform background checks through this spider's web:

(T13) Even if a friend refers someone to me, or I hear his Dor from someone, these are insufficient for establishing trust with him. I need to check his background to see whether he is reliable or not. As long as he is a triad, he must be connecting with other triads, like Dai Lo or triad brothers. I can use your profession (the researcher) to gain an explanation. If I need to check your background, I will want to know in which university, department or specialty, and year you were studying. It's just like triads; we need to know which triad society and which territory you are operating in, and which year you were initiated in triad society. Then I will ask which professor was your supervisor; you must have a supervisor to teach you, right? In triad society, a triad must have a Dai Lo. So if I know who your Dai Lo is, then I can check your performance. You must have a course mate, right? It's like triads must have collaborated with someone before. So I can check based on the person's

territory, brothers, and Dai Lo. With these chains of lines [network] and information, it is not that difficult to find out a triad's background and previous performance.

(T9) As long as he is a triad, he should have a Dai Lo and triad brothers, and a territory that he 'works'. With this information, I can ask my friends or brothers to check several things, such as what kind of business he does, how well he does, and how he treats his triad brothers and partners. This is very important, because it can demonstrate his personality and predict how he's gonna treat me; say, if he will betray me or steal money. If my friends or brothers don't know him, they may instead know the triad's brothers, 'uncles', or Dai Lo, or those who have 'worked' with him before. Even if they don't know him, they can ask their brothers. Every triad has a root (in the triad spider's web); their territory, Dai Lo, and brothers are their roots.

Based on the participants' answers, the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship and the working relationships that exist within the triad territories are the most important channels for information validation. When the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship is absent and a triad begins to develop his career or business on his own, the triad territorial network becomes the most important channel for accessing criminal information. This also further explains why triads seek collaborators within their own triad territory; they have a better understanding of the potential collaborator through observation and information accessed within the triad territory network, especially when the potential collaborators come from other triad societies or the triad is not linked to the spider's web of information within his triad society:

(T10) Checking a triad's background, if he is from the same triad society, should be easy.

If he is from another triad society, then his network with other triad societies is very important. He needs to establish an extensive network and a good relationship with them. To establish this form of network, he has to rely on the territory he is operating, because this is an important source for establishing networks with triads from other triad societies.

Seniority also determines the scope of sources of information. The longer and more varied the experience is in illicit business, the more social capital that triads can establish in different businesses and across different triad societies. This further explains how senior triads tend to have strong sources of social capital in the triad community:

(T13) If you need to check the background of a triad from another triad society, the social network becomes very important. I knew lots of triads from other triad societies in my territory, because there are many different triad societies operating here. Of course, I spent many years working in this territory and that's how I have established an extensive network throughout different triad societies. Also, I have worked in different illicit industries before and have accumulated lots of triad networks in different triad societies and territories. It doesn't matter if my friends don't know him; they can utilize their networks to ask around.

When searching for triad information across different triad societies, money incentive is commonly adopted in order to speed up progress. However, it does not mean that money incentive can replace the triad identity to utilize the triad network, as noted by an experienced triad:

(T24) If you work in an industry or territory for many years, you can accumulate different networks. With money incentive, they are more willing to use their own network to ask their friends to collect intelligence in the triad society and territory. This method always

works to speed up the process. But if you are not triad, even if you pay, they may not be willing to help. God knows if you are police informant or not, right?

Based on the participants' answers, it can be seen that various information channels, including territory and the spider's web network of triad brothers, are derived from triad membership. As noted in Participant T12's response, it is insufficient to simply be associated with triads when attempting to join an armed robbery gang; rather, the gang needs to rely on multiple sources of information from different triads for the purpose of background and credibility checks in order to increase the level of trust placed on potential collaborators.

In order to operate illicit business in triad territory, triad membership is a prerequisite in terms of acting as a permit of operation. As a general rule of triad norms, only triads from the same faction are allowed to operate business within the dominated triad territory, controlled by the leading triads of the same faction. If other triads need to operate illicit business within the triad territory, they must collaborate with one of the faction members so as to use him as a guarantor, with the dominating triad's approval, as confirmed by the following triads:

(T9) If this is a dominated triad territory, then only those triads of our faction, like me, my followers, my triad brothers, Dai Lo, and Ah Kung are eligible to operate business in the territory. If anyone outside our faction to operate business in the territory, it is possible, but only if he shared his profit with my Ah Kung (the dominated triad), about one-third of his profit gained from the business operated in the territory in exchange for this permission.

(T13) I introduced a 14K triad to sell drugs in Wo Shing Wo territory, but he needed to

collaborate with me, relying on me to obtain permission from my Dai Lo (the dominator of the territory). Sharing a portion of profit with him for getting his approval is inevitable. I would be his guarantor and responsible for his behavior, in order to ensure that he wouldn't do anything dodgy in our territory. He had to bear in mind that he needed to rely on my guanxi for selling drugs here, or otherwise, he would not be allowed to do so.

These social networks among triads, from the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship within the same triad faction to the working relationships that exist within the triad territory, generate the spider's web within the territory, and this spider's web can be used as a channel for information verification. To some extent, triad membership is not simply a criminal credential for identification or a permit for illicit business operation. To be precise, the real value of triad membership lies in the social networks derived from that membership, which provide sources of precious and exclusive networking for criminal information. Without membership, not only is there no access to any network base for the further development of social capital in the underworld, but also there is a failure to connect with the triad community; this in turn creates a barrier to obtaining the trust of other triads. This finding further confirms the importance of structural networks within the triad community for the development of social capital for crime operation.

9.4.3. Phase Three – trial

Following the carrying out of due-diligence on the credentials of potential collaborators, a foundation of trust will be developed. In order to consolidate the foundation of trust between collaborators, triads need to enter the trial phase in order to test the trustworthiness and capability of crime operation in practice by direct observation and experience; this is especially the case for high risk illicit businesses, such as armed robbery and drug dealing. Normally, the trustee is trusted with just low risk deals to see whether they will take advantage of the trust. When the trustee has accumulated sufficient trust and a track record, the trustor will gradually increase the level of trust in connection with other deals. This practice is further confirmed by several triads operating in relation to armed robbery and drug dealing:

(T1) With the first few transactions, I only provided a small amount of drugs by way of trial. After a few months, or more than a year, of continuous transactions, I began providing more drugs to him, and even passing some of my clients to him.

(T12) Basically, they recruited members based on ability and the skills required for operation. In order to gain their trust, I needed to prove my ability in the skills they needed. When I was initiated into the gang, I told them that I was very good at driving and described my participation in the Macau car race. They also learnt about my car racing experience from other triads. In order to prove my ability, they let me drive in one operation with three other gang members in the robbery of a small branch of HSBC as a trial. They were impressed by my performance, so I got in.

9.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter addresses two issues related to triads' collaboration. First, it addresses the role of triad territories in facilitating triads' collaborations. Triad territory serves two important functions for organised crime: maintaining "bonding social capital" and "bridging social capital" among triads (Lo, 2010). Second, this chapter examines how triads verify criminal credentials, in order to enhance the level of trust for successful criminal collaboration.

The intimate relationship between Dai Lo and their followers is regarded as "bonding social capital" (Lo, 2010). Triad territory provides a venue for direct social interactions, such as social eating, between Dai Lo and their followers, which is instrumental for maintaining the reciprocity and affection ties between them (Polo, 1997). Such bonding social capital is important because the followers are reserved army of triads in protecting the territory and crime operations. Under the triad tradition, followers are obliged to follow Dai Lo's instructions due to loyalty and brotherhood. However, in reality, especially in modern triad society, the provision of service from followers is not obligated. Service, such as exercising violence, is also a kind of resource provided by followers. In exchange for their support, Dai Lo is obligated to provide favor to their followers so as to maintain their manpower.

Triad territory is also important for developing and maintaining "bridging social capital" between different triad societies because triads need criminal information, such as police information and illicit market updates, through the territorial networks. This information facilitates triads to obtain business opportunities, personnel data, potential collaborators, and varieties of illicit resources for crime operations, which are vital for the triads' survival. The territory also serves as a venue for

triads to observe each other's performance so as to select suitable collaborators.

The previous chapter has illustrated that triad Dor serves as a reputation for establishing the foundation of trust and selection of criminal collaborators. However, it also demonstrates the unreliability of Dor in reflecting the credibility and ability of triads in some occasions. Because of this issue of unreliability, Dor needs to be verified by triads. This chapter discusses the verification of Dor that consists of three stages. First is to question potential collaborators and observe their performance. Second is to gather intelligence through the spider's web network to check and verify the track records of potential collaborators. Third is to provide a series of trials to test the ability, performance, and trustworthiness of the potential collaborators. This verification is necessary whenever new players are identified.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

This study provides a detailed account of the structure and operations of triad societies in Hong Kong, and how triads establish criminal collaborations within the triad community. Underlying the writing in the previous chapters are five fundamental research questions:

1. Are triad societies cohesive or disorganised? Is the disorganization thesis applicable to all triad societies?
2. How do time-honoured traditions and multigenerational membership form part of the hierarchy in modern triad societies?
3. How do triads utilize triad membership and identity in access to criminal resources?
4. What constitutes the reputation of triads in facilitating criminal collaborations? Is the reputation of violence alone sufficient for seeking criminal collaborators and maintaining collaborations among triads?
5. How does a triad territory function in facilitating triads' collaboration?

The previous chapters have provided detailed empirical data and analysis based on these research questions. It is now pertinent to summarize these findings and go beyond the focus of those chapters to integrate these findings into one theme: why triad society – in particular, triad structure – is important for organised crime operations and criminal collaboration.

10.2 Organizational Structure of Triad Societies in Hong Kong

Traditionally, the triad society is perceived as a cohesive, centrally structured hierarchical criminal

organization. Although Chu (2000) refuted this conventional perception and concluded that the triad society is not a centrally structured or unorganised entity, but rather small hierarchical pyramids led by area bosses at the district level that are connected by a form of cartel (p. 22). From Chu's perspective, having headquarters or not would make no difference between different triad societies. The only difference between triad societies is that the centrality is embedded at different levels. Triad society membership is the only linkage for binding these autonomous groups together in the form of cartels.

In response to the first research question – if triad societies are cohesive or disorganised, and whether the disorganization is applicable to all triad societies – the present study provides an answer through examination of the general structure by considering the historical development, leadership, promotion and recruitment of triad societies. It has become evident that all triad societies exhibit structural differences in terms of degree of decentralisation and format of structure. The cohesiveness of the sample triad societies is evaluated through three dimensions: (i) formats of leadership, (ii) election methods, and (iii) leadership authority. If triad societies are presumed to be strict, hierarchical structures with clearly identified leadership and chains of command (Chin, 1990; Morgan, 1960; Zhang and Chin, 2003), then stability and strength of leadership will determine the level of cohesiveness.

10.2.1 Similarities in the structure of the sample triad societies

Given that there are differences in terms of decentralisation and structural format between the three major triad societies, a few common elements can be identified. First, all three triad societies are going through a process of decentralisation, albeit at varying speeds and in various formats. Second, factionalism is the dominant structure of the triad societies used in this study. Following the

commencement of the decentralisation process, all three triad societies gradually developed factional structures, with bonding and cohesiveness being restricted to factions within the triad societies instead of being present throughout the triad society as a whole. However, the format of these factions varies between triad societies. The third common element between the three triad societies relates to the fact that they have all gradually abandoned their triad rituals, which are regarded as an important mechanism for creating identity (ter Haar, 1998) and enhancing the cohesiveness of the group (Chu, 2000). This decline in the use of rituals enhances the difficulty of identifying triads, as the difference between formal members and non-member associates has become blurred. This also contributes to the progressive decentralisation of triad societies. On the other hand, relaxed membership processes enhance flexibility in recruitment, which in turn enhances efficiency in responding to the dynamic criminal market environment (Zhang and Chin, 2003).

10.2.2 Structural differences of the sample triad societies

14K

Lo and Kwok (2014) contend that 14K is the most decentralised triad society in Hong Kong. The empirical findings are consistent with the conclusive statement. Since there is no centralised control over all 14K branches, the general structure of 14K is disorganised. Every branch enjoys a high degree of autonomy and independence. The general structure within each 14K branch is a flat hierarchical structure. The membership system is flexible and unstable. The Dai Lo-appointed promotion system further confirmed such disorganised structure.

The decentralisation of 14K is revealed from various dimensions. 14K is not a unified triad society but consists of several active autonomous branches under the 14K consortium. When evaluating

interrelations between the 14K branches, prima facie, some level of collaboration between branches is present. However, in practice, this form of collaboration cannot be interpreted as evidencing a unified, cohesive, single triad society, but can instead be considered instrumental to the alliance under the identity of 14K, which plays an important role in facilitating collaboration between these branches. This common identity helps provide social capital for the drawing of resources (such as manpower) when competing with non-14K triad rivals. However, this form of collaboration is not obligatory from a shared common identity but instead is based on instrumental or business-like exchanges between different branches.

Relationships between the 14K branch leaders are more like business-exchange relationships – the branch leader who seeks assistance in his disco in Jordan is aided in the manner of a service recipient. Foot soldiers are recruited from other 14K branches by way of payment rather than as an act of brotherhood. Meanwhile, the other 14K branch leaders act as patrons, or protection service providers, in exchange for payment.

The inter-branch collaboration depends on the relationship between the Wa Si Yan of the 14K branches, as there is no superordinate body above the 14K branches to facilitate such collaboration. In most circumstances, competition and gang fights between branches are frequent, as illustrated by different participants. Therefore, even though some level of collaboration is found between 14K branches, this does not imply that they enjoy a “cohesive alliance”. Collaboration depends on the guanxi between leaders and such collaboration is only temporary and task-based, rather than permanent.

Evaluation of the internal structure of 14K branches in the past showed that it was organised in a pyramid-like form of organization with a centralised leadership – the Wa Si Yan – who possess ultimate authority and control over manpower and territorial management. Oligarchy and tenure in leadership provided stable leadership, which facilitated the centralised management of each 14K sub-branches.

However, nowadays, the Wa Si Yan only serve as figureheads and have limited authority over coordination and arbitration. A lack of genuine authority in manpower control and territorial management has led to a failure to resolve conflicts and control business and profit distribution among different territorial bosses and senior triads, which ultimately has resulted in the disorganization of the 14K branches. The lack of consistent and formalised rules in 14K also contributes to its decentralised structure, as the harmony between triads depends solely on the guanxi of the Wa Si Yan and other powerful triads. This situation is likely to lead to inconsistency and instability, resulting in a disintegration of 14K.

Sun Yee On

In contrast, Sun Yee On was the most cohesive triad society in Hong Kong for a variety of reasons. First, its oligarchic style of leadership and its hereditary leadership succession system enhanced the stability of the leadership. Second, the centralised structure was evidenced by the promotion system of triad officers, as the dragonhead automatically became the direct protector of triad officers – who are accountable only to the dragonhead. The strengthened command and control between them facilitates the centrality of the Sun Yee On management between headquarters and territorial bosses, thereby helping to prevent the development of feudalism in triad territories.

Although the leadership role of the dragonhead was eventually withdrawn from triad society management (which decreased the centrality of Sun Yee On's management), the degree of disorganization present in this organization remains significantly below that of 14K. On the one hand, the authority and power of the dragonhead, such as his control over the selection of area bosses, arbitration and conflict resolution between area bosses, has been delegated to the territorial Lo Shuk Fu. With their centralised and strong leadership, and with the strong bonding between different territorial bosses as a backdrop, this delegation of power and resources to the territorial bosses and territorial Lo Shuk Fu does not compromise the cohesiveness of Sun Yee On. On the other hand, its centralised, territorial-based management facilitates the maintenance of cohesiveness within Sun Yee On, as the territorial bosses are vested with authority to control recruitment, promotion and resource within the territory. Based on the above, the level of cohesiveness can be maintained. Due to its territorial-based management, the macro structure of Sun Yee On should be characterised as decentralised but not disorganised.

Wo Shing Wo

In terms of level of cohesiveness, Wo Shing Wo is positioned between two extremes. There is no doubt that the polyarchical leadership and periodic election system that are in place affect the stability of the leadership. In turn, this leads to competition and conflict between different triad factions and, hence, further decreases the cohesiveness of Wo Shing Wo. However, this does not mean to imply that Wo Shing Wo is as disorganised as 14K. It is true that the intra-competition in Wo Shing Wo results in fragmentation, but this does not make it completely disorganised. The factionalist structure of Wo Shing Wo provides a strong bond between the headquarters on the one hand and the middle level and frontline triads on the other, which enhances centrality within the faction. The strong bonding and mutual dependence between the Lo Shuk Fu and the Cho Kun,

between territorial bosses and triads within territories, and between the protectors and followers in promotion and recruitment evidence the strong connections that exist between different strata of triads within the faction. This structure acts to prevent the development of any extreme disorganization within Wo Shing Wo, and enables it to maintain a certain level of cohesiveness. Therefore, the structure of Wo Shing Wo is cohesive but not fragmented.

10.2.3 Triad factions

Under the decentralisation, the headquarters started losing centralised control over triad societies; intra-competition and conflicts became more frequent, which generated different factions in triad societies. The triad faction refers to the subgroup of dense networks generated within the triad society and surrounding the leadership, with a strong degree of solidarity and a shared identity. The format of triad factions varies between these three major triad societies, depending on the structure of each. Given that there is some degree of variation between different triad societies, there is also a common element: that is, the spider-web and Dai Lo-Lang Chai (protector-followers) relationships form the foundation upon which triad factions are constituted.

Lo's (2012) concept of the spider-web structure illustrates how triads are connected between different aged strata, as well as through the bonding and linkages between different strata of triads, including Blue Lanterns and youth gang members (see Figure 10.1). Although Figure 10.1 only demonstrates the third-tier structural relationship within a triad territory, it also signifies the structural foundation of triad societies based on the Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationships. The concept can also be further extended to explain the structural pattern of the triad societies. The triad society is composed of a number of factions led by different senior triads. Each faction is linked by vertical hierarchical relationships between the Dai Lo and their Lang Chai, and each faction also consists

of different strata of horizontal relationships; that is, triad brothers under the same Dai Lo.

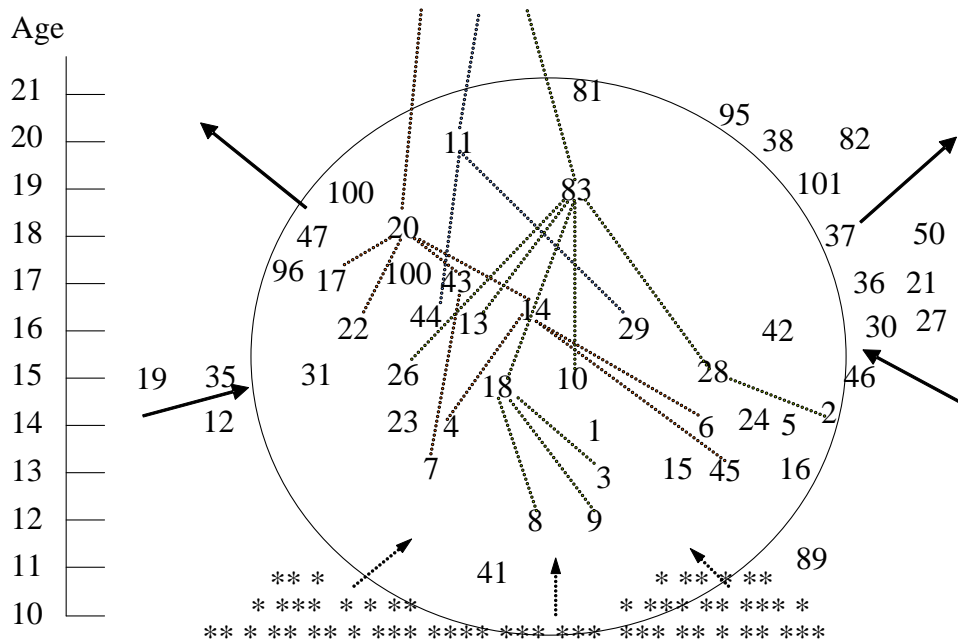


Figure 10.1 Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationships (Lo, 2012: 563)

10.2.4 Different formats of triad factions in the sample triad societies

14K

The 14K triad, as the most disorganised triad society in Hong Kong, has a faction format consistent with its macro organization structure. The pattern of triad factions in 14K varies, ranging from small-knit faction groups of the protector and his direct followers to larger faction groups led by senior triads, consisting of three strata of triads (Ah Kung, protector and frontline triads) connected by the Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationship. Faction leaders range from senior triads to Sze Kau members. Similar to other triad societies, the stability of 14K factions is determined by the quality

of leadership; that is, the Ah Kung or protector.

When evaluating the bonding between 14K members, it was mainly found to exist between the protector and his direct followers. The interviews revealed that very often triads of 14K have no communication with, or even knowledge of, their higher superiors other than their direct protector. Collaboration mainly takes place within small groups consisting of the protector and a few triad followers, operated independently from headquarters (Chu, 2000). The Dai Lo-appointed promotion system of 14K also supports restricted bonding between the protector and his direct followers, as there is no centralised promotion system and authority for promotion depends solely on the direct protector. The longevity of 14k factions tends to be short and unstable compared to other sample triad societies because protector transferral is flexible and informal. Both the lack of connection between leadership and factions and the instability of membership lead to a fragmented and unstable 14K structure.

Sun Yee On

The factional structure of Sun Yee On is territorial-based, which is distinctive from other triad societies. Authority over promotion, manpower control, resource and business management is centralised in the hands of the territorial bosses, facilitating cohesiveness within the territorial factions. The territorial-based factions are also reflected in the membership system of Sun Yee On, as the membership number indicates the importance of territoriality. Membership number approval and record-keeping are also vested in the territorial bosses. Under the strong centralisation within territories, switching protectors or factions is difficult if not impossible in Sun Yee On when compared to the Wo Groups and 14K. Thus, its stability is strengthened by this territorial-based factional structure.

Wo Shing Wo

Wo Shing Wo has a Lo Shuk Fu-led factional structure. The polyarchical structure is a unique feature of Wo Shing Wo, which consists of two Cho Kun, sponsored by the two powerful factions and their Lo Shuk Fu. This polyarchical structure indicates the temporary balance of power at the specific time of triad society development. The election system of Wo Shing Wo has several implications for its factional nature. First, the Cho Kun's dependence on the Lo Shuk Fu reveals the fact that the leadership of the Wo Shing Wo faction is vested in the Lo Shuk Fu rather than in the Cho Kun. The Cho Kun is regarded as little more than a puppet of the Lo Shuk Fu, facilitating their continued dominance over the triad society, until the Cho Kun finishes his term of office and become a Lo Shuk Fu himself. Second, although "bribery" is common in modern Cho Kun elections, the Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationship between the Lo Shuk Fu and the Cho Kun candidates remains a dominant factor in determining the chance of nomination and winning office.

At the middle level, the execution team and territorial management of Wo Shing Wo indicates how the Cho Kun links up with the middle level triads – the territorial bosses. The promotion system of Wo Shing Wo illustrates how strong bonds are established between triad officers and frontline triads as faction members. At the third tier, the recruitment system of Wo Shing Wo reflects the strong bond that exists between the protector and their followers. A clearer picture of the Wo Shing Wo factional structure is revealed – it is a Lo Shuk Fu-led factional structure consisting of different strata of triads at different tiers, bounded by the spider-web and the Dai Lo-Lang Chai relationship.

Based on the above analysis, the structural differences that exist among the three sample triad societies are illustrated in the following table:

Table 10.1 Structural Differences of the Three Sample Triad Societies

Structural Variables	Sun Yee On	Wo Shing Wo	14K
Organization	Organised	Semi-organised	Disorganised
Centralised structure	Decentralised	Centralised	No centralised structure
Cohesion	Highly cohesive	Cohesive	Non-cohesive
Power base	Area boss	Lo Shuk Fu	Faction boss
Leadership mode	Autocratic	Democratic	Laissez-faire
Leadership selection	Heredity (Dragonhead)/ Appointed (Area boss) or based on recognition (Lo Shuk Fu)	Election – periodical (Cho Kun)	Election – Tenure (Wa Si Yan)
Leadership criteria	Seniority, not rank	Seniority, not rank	Seniority, not rank
Internal conflict	Low	High	Very high
Members' stability	Stable	Less stable	Unstable
Faction format	Territorial-based factionalism	Lo Shuk Fu-led factionalism formed by more than three generations	Protector–followers factionalism formed by no more than three generations

10.3 Time-honoured Traditions and Multigenerational Membership

Given that the triad societies are hierarchically structured, then the next research question is how do time-honoured traditions and multigenerational membership form part of the hierarchy in modern triad societies? In the hierarchical approach, the term “hierarchy” generally refers to rank within the criminal organization, which is characterised by authority relations. Command and control should take place in a top-down hierarchy. Under this presumption, those at the top of the rank should possess the highest authority in terms of the control of resources (including manpower, illicit profit-sharing and welfare), criminal information, illicit business or profit-making opportunities, and decision-making (e.g. promotion, adjudication, planning), as well as the highest

degree of autonomy.

The present study reveals that triad societies' hierarchical stratification is more complex than presumed in the previous literature. The hierarchy of triad societies is characterised by three dimensions: (1) rank in triad society, (2) seniority and (3) multigenerational membership structure. While the multigenerational membership structure connects members of the same triad society, both rank and seniority determine the authority in access to resources and criminal information as well as business and promotion opportunities within triad societies.

10.3.1 Rank in organizational structure

The existing triad literature adopts the same analogy of a hierarchical approach in understanding the hierarchical structure of triad society: Triad society is stratified based on rank, including the Cho Kun, territorial boss, triad officers and so on as described in triad literature. The literature presumes that Cho Kun should be the most authoritative position in triad society, followed by triad officers (or area bosses from Chu's (2000) description), Sze Kau members, and Hanging the Blue Lantern (Morgan, 1960; Chin, 1990; Chu, 2000; ; Lo, 1984; Lo and Kwok, 2014).

Rank determines the authority to gain access to triad societies' collective resources, including welfare entitlement, finances, and criminal resources support, such as manpower and weapons. Hence, rank also determines the chance to establish valuable social capital for obtaining lucrative business opportunities within the triad community and with entrepreneurs, because rank signifies their authority in controlling the triad resources.

10.3.2 Seniority: the time-honoured tradition

Although rank is one of the indicators to evaluate the authority of triads in triad society, the organizational structure and authority structure are not always consistent, especially in modern triad societies. Seniority, which is determined by years of service, criminal and triad experience, and contributions and recognitions in triad society, also plays a major role in the hierarchy.

First, the most authoritative triads do not formally exist in the formal organizational structure. This study reveals that Lo Shuk Fu are positioned at the apex of the authority structure in all triad societies. They are not regarded as part of the organizational structure in the majority of triad societies except Wo Shing Wo. There is no formal mechanism in Lo Shuk Fu selection; instead, their existence is based on triad and criminal experience, general recognition of achievement and reputation possessed by triads – with rank of triad being less important. For instance, in 14K, Wa Si Yan and Lo Shuk Fu are not necessarily triad officers but experienced old Sze Kau members. In Wo Shing Wo, some of the current Lo Shuk Fu are old Sze Kau members after stepping down from Cho Kun positions.

Second, the leadership positions in the organizational structure (e.g. Cho Kun, Wa Si Yan) do not possess the highest authority and are subject to the control of Lo Shuk Fu. The power and influence of Lo Shuk Fu are significant as they control the leadership selections and are able to use such authority to control the leaders, while the head of a triad society often serves as a figurehead with limited power. The relationship between Lo Shuk Fu and Cho Kun is a classic example. The autonomy of the Cho Kun (the top position in the organizational structure) is limited and subject to the control of Lo Shuk Fu. This is because Cho Kun nowadays are mostly occupied by less

experienced triads who do not receive sufficient recognition among experienced triads; they need to rely on the authority and influence of Lo Shuk Fu to exercise control in triad society.

10.3.3 Multigenerational membership structure

Triad societies are constructed by numerous Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationships, which connect different triads who joined into triad society at different times and constitute to the multigenerational membership structure. The hierarchy in a multigenerational membership structure is determined by year of admittance and criminal and triad experience. Even among triads positioned in the same rank in triad society, those who are joined earlier are often positioned higher in the hierarchy, accrue certain privileges in profit and welfare distributions, and have the authority to control access to triad resources and criminal information, all of which foster further dependency of those admitted later. Those joined later are obligated to respect those joined earlier regardless of their rank. Therefore, earlier members can utilize this structural advantage to press for an advantage in obtaining benefits and strengthening control over more recent members.

Triad subculture plays an important role in fostering such hierarchical arrangement. Although triad society is regarded as criminal, triad subculture is also embedded with Confucian values. The Five Codes of Ethics in Confucianism guide the hierarchy and appropriate gestures in interactions between superiors and subordinates, and ascribes authority to the superior (Chung, 1996; Park, 1993). The relationship between a Dai Lo and his followers is infused with the rules of the relationship between ruler (superior) and ruled (subordinate), as well as the younger and elder brother relationship. The ruled or younger brother is obligated to respect and be loyal to his superior or elder brother. On the other hand, the emphasis on loyalty in triad subculture also instructs followers to respect superiors (Dai Lo) regardless of their rank. The triad subculture

provides experienced triads with authority over the followers for maintaining their power and status, and for obtaining personal benefit. The culture of seniority under Confucianism renders a great range of authority, power and status to higher strata triads in the multigenerational membership structure to control the lower strata triads (Bond and Huang, 1986; Carmichael, 1991; Knutson, Huang, and Deng, 2000, cited from Chen and Chung, 2002; Nishyama, 1971).

Based on the above analysis, the present study portrays another picture of hierarchy in triad societies that is different from that portrayed in triad literature. Although rank remains important to some extent, it only partially explains the triad hierarchy; ultimately, the authority embedded in triad structure for access and control of triad resources is determined by longevity in triad societies, triad and criminal experience, and honour (including triads' recognition and contribution to triad societies). The time-honoured tradition subculture also fosters the stratification of triad hierarchy. To some extent, the hierarchical structure in triad societies is closed to a seniority-based organization in which status and privilege are often attached to triads who have served in triad society for a long period of time with accumulated triad and criminal experience. The clear division of hierarchical structure between junior and senior rank or less experienced and more experienced triads also reinforces the continuation of seniors' authority in controlling the criminal resources, while hindering the chances of juniors in access to resources and upward mobility in triad society.

Nevertheless, we should not neglect that triads' performance and contributions to triad societies, especially financial contributions, are equally important in determining their recognition shared among triads—hence, the authority of triads. The example of modern Wo Shing Wo elections reminds us that the gradual value change in triad society, particularly the rising importance of

financial power in Cho Kun selection, can also influence the authority structure, which is gradually shifting away from the time-honoured tradition and towards money-based management. Therefore, we can foresee that the importance of seniority would be challenged when triad societies are undergoing decentralisation.

10.4 Membership and Identity

The third research question of the present study is how triads utilize membership and identity in access to criminal resources. Membership is one of essential features of criminal organisations (Finckenauer, 2005; Hagan, 2006; Varese, 2010) which distinguishes it from loose criminal syndicates. Membership is exclusive in nature, which enhances the cohesiveness of the group and sets boundaries to distinguish insiders and outsiders (Goldstein, 1991). This helps to restrict out-groups and prioritize in-groups in accessing collective resources and assets, including reputation (Gambetta, 2000, 2009). As membership generates mutual support and collective resources, it is symbolic capital that signifies the power of the group, which is useful for establishing collaborations.

Membership in criminal organisations functions as reputation for establishing criminal networks and soliciting illicit business opportunities (Gambetta, 1993, 2009). For instance, Chu (2000: 127) argues that triad membership is a license to run some illicit business or to work in an illicit industry (see also Lo and Kwok, 2016; So, 2011, 2012). Triad membership also places their members in an advantageous position to gain access to violence and other criminal resources, which is crucial for establishing criminal networks with entrepreneurs and other criminals (Chu, 2000: 218; see also Gastrow, 2001; Lo and Kwok, 2016).

The present study reveals that triad Dor serves as identification of membership, important to triads for claiming protection and territory for operating illicit business. The most common Dor used by triads are (1) the Dai Lo's Dor, (2) the faction's Dor and (3) the triad society's Dor. The examination in the choice of Dor among triads reflects that the triad factional membership is more important to triads in establishing criminal collaborations among triads and operating illicit business in triad territories. The choice of Dor indicates the strong bonds between the ties of Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationships within the faction. In triad societies, the availability of support and the privilege of operating illicit business in triad territories are restricted to faction members. When the triad society is undergoing decentralisation, while the accessibility of triad societies' collective resources is restricted to senior triads, the factional membership becomes crucial for triads' survival. Hence, the power of faction and faction leaders influences the opportunities of triads for criminal collaborations, particularly those in triad communities and organised crime operations within triad territories.

To prevent the abuse or unregulated use of institutional reputation, the criminal organisations need to regulate the number and quality of members who can benefit from this reputation, requiring careful screening and selection of members (Gambetta, 2009: 206). However, due to loosening restrictions and simplified recruitment of members in modern triad societies, it is much easier for people to abuse the reputation of triad societies and increasingly difficult to monitor the use of triad membership. Therefore, the use of the faction and Dai Lo's Dor helps to restrict the number of members accessing the common resources shared among faction members and makes it easier for Dor bearers to protect and control the use of their Dor.

Nevertheless, triad society membership remains important. The decentralisation does not mean that triad societies are completely disorganised. The headquarters still control some collective assets, such as triad common funds, triad society-owned businesses and triad territories. As Chu (2000) argues, if triads want to operate or work in specific illicit business that is controlled by triad society – for example, Macau VIP rooms (Lo and Kwok, 2016) – triad membership is still required. When one triad confronts another from a different triad society, or when a triad faction's power is incapable of generating sufficient protection, triads still need to rely on membership to obtain headquarters' financial and manpower support. Since the headquarters are the ultimate backup and support, triad factions cannot be sustained on their own. Therefore, triad membership is still important for operating large-scale illicit business and establishing networks with entrepreneurs and people outside the triad community.

10.5 Dor, Face and Triads' Collaboration

The fourth research question of the present study is what constitutes the reputation of triads and whether the reputation of violence alone is sufficient in seeking criminal collaborators and maintaining collaborations, as well as how reputation transforms into criminal collaborations. Reputation is a distinctive feature of criminal organisations (Finckenauer, 2005; Gambetta, 2000, 2009). Gambetta (2009) has argued that reputation of organised crime operators and criminal organisation signifies the ability and credibility of criminals, which helps to differentiate the quality of products and services between different providers (p. 43), and serves as a guide for product and service buyers. Therefore, reputation is a valuable asset, which facilitates criminals in generating profit, soliciting business opportunities and establishing collaborations (Gambetta,

2009).

The reputation of criminal organisation refers to “the ability to intimidate, ultimately to use violence effectively” (Gambetta, 2009: 216). The reputation of violence is important for soliciting and securing collaboration with clients and other organised crime operators, ensuring compliance and fencing off competitors (Campana and Varese, 2013; Gambetta, 1993, 2000, 2009; Varese, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). When it is established, it can decrease the use of violence and save on violence production costs. Therefore, it is important for triads’ survival and the maintenance of their illicit business, especially protection (Campana and Varese, 2013; Gambetta, 1993, 2009). It is accepted that violence is the dominant apparatus for triads to gain profit (Chu, 2000: 128). Although triads are unlikely to monopolize the illicit market, as the protector in the underworld, the reputation of violence they possessed renders them privilege in gaining access to illicit markets and opportunities to collaborate with illicit entrepreneurs to conduct business (Chu, 2000: 128).

The present study reveals that Dor and face are important criminal credentials for triads in choosing potential collaborators in the triad community. The sources of Dor include (i) violence, (ii) possession of and ability to mobilize manpower, (iii) financial power, (iv) seniority and (v) track record and norm compliance. The first four elements constitute criminal credentials to signify the ability, power and status of triads. The last element signifies trustworthiness of triads. Face shares similar properties with Dor, signifying the power and resources possessed as well as the status of triads and used as criminal credentials for establishing criminal collaborations and triad social capital. From the triads’ perspective, both criminal credentials and trustworthiness are prerequisites of criminal collaborations. As face and Dor are both triad assets that signify their reputation for

claiming and securing their interest and territory, losing face and Dor leads to losing both benefits and social capital generated from Dor. Therefore, the preservation of face and Dor is equally important.

10.5.1 Reputation of violence and reputation of trustworthiness

The findings of the present study indicate that reputation of violence remains crucial for protecting triad territories, illicit business and vested interest. It was particularly important to triads when they started establishing Dor in the triad community in the early stages of a triad's existence. This includes conquering virgin land and establishing the reputation of individual triads within the triad community. It also serves as a backup mechanism by which to secure criminal collaboration, especially for when trust between collaborators is not yet established or is low. Therefore, reputation of violence is an important factor contributing to the Dor of triads.

Gambetta (2009: 193) argues that committing serious crimes and showing toughness and resilience in fighting can generate the reputation of violence in the underworld. To some extent, this is only applicable to Hong Kong triads in the past, as these tactics did attract followers and potential collaborators in previous times. However, violence, particularly irrational ones (see Lo and Kwok, 2016), have become less attractive nowadays. Since ability and readiness in exercising aggravated violence depend on the possession of and ability to mobilize large number of foot soldiers, what ultimately contributes to the reputation of violence is the hierarchy positions of triads, which is determined by seniority and financial power.

The present study also reveals that the importance of the reputation of violence in criminal collaboration depends on other factors. First, the nature of organised crime determines the

importance of the reputation of violence. This reputation cannot attract collaborators in high-risk organised crime, such as human smuggling (e.g. Zhang and Chin, 2003) and drug-related business (as indicated in the data) because it attracts the attention of the police and rivals (Gambetta, 2009), hence increasing the risk of disruption in organised crime operations. Second, the change of triads' business nature and the tightening law enforcement control of triads resulted in the decline in the actual use of violence, which resulted in the decline of the reputation of violence for drawing collaborators.

Nevertheless, following the footprint of the Italian mafia (Paoli, 2003), financial power is becoming more crucial in determining the chance of successful collaborations among triads in the modern triad community. Due to the decline of emphasis in brotherhood, financial incentive has become the predominant factor in determining the possession and mobilization of manpower, which is crucial for both traditional (e.g. protection) and new forms (e.g. land acquisitions) of triad business. The present study also supports the idea that ability to provide both financial rewards and profit-making opportunities is crucial to the choice and maintenance of collaborations among triads. Financial power is vital in determining opportunities for promotion and winning office in elections within triad societies, which helps to enhance the hierarchy and status in the triad community and hence increase the access to triad resources for organised crime operations.

Contrary to Gambetta (2009) and Varese and Campana (2013), who emphasize violence as the dominant element in securing collaborations, the present study discovers that a reputation of trustworthiness is far more important in triads' collaboration, especially in the operation of high-risk crime, such as the drug business. This is because a reputation of trustworthiness generates

trust and credibility, important for soliciting and securing criminal business opportunities and collaborations. Without a reputation of trustworthiness, simply possessing a reputation of violence or other sources of Dor may help in establishing cooperation in the beginning, but it is insufficient for maintaining Dor and criminal collaborations in the long run. Therefore, maintaining good practice and keeping their word is crucial to triads for protecting their reputation and thus securing criminal collaborations (Misztal, 1996; von Lampe and Johanson, 2006). Because face and Dor are important in establishing credibility and trust, the triads give up some of their liberty for the sake of keeping their Dor and face – for instance, they cannot easily break their promise or betray their business partners and collaborators. Dor and saving face have become important devices for maintaining collaborations, while violence is only used as a last resort or when these credentials are seriously threatened.

10.5.2 Face, Dor and triads' collaboration

Previous literature in the study of the reputation of criminals is mainly oriented to Western culture, while the question of how Chinese culture influences the relationship between reputation and establishing criminal collaboration among Chinese criminals remains unaddressed. The present study incorporates the concept of face, a distinctive feature of Chinese culture, in relation to how triads transform reputation into criminal collaboration and social capital through face-work.

Face-work serves as a mechanism by which to transform reputation into social capital for obtaining personal benefit or personal purposes. For instance, face-giving can be used as an apparatus by which to pressure other triads for obtaining resources and securing cooperation. On the other hand, face-giving maintains and stabilizes collaborative relationships between triads of equal hierarchy.

Face-acquiring also helps to demonstrate triads' power and status, which enhance the quality of relationships between triads and pave the way for establishing valuable social capital with powerful and senior triads.

Dor and face are valuable assets and important consideration in screening collaborators. Different from the criminal credentials (or "signals") as discussed by Gambetta (2009) that are costly and difficult to reproduce, Dor and face are less sophisticated to produce and easier to mimic by other non-credential holding triads. Therefore, they are unlikely to be reliable. For instance, many triads have attempted to use superficial face-work, including showing off wealth and valuable social capital, to establish Dor, while the perception projected is deliberately constructed for the sake of soliciting potential valuable collaborators and may not truly reflect the reality. The Dor circulation methods also reveal that Dor and information are often spread through gossip among triads. This may lead to distortion, which discounts the reliability of Dor.

If trust is an essential basis of cooperation (Gambetta, 2000: 219), then reputation is primarily regarded as a means for establishing foundation of trust; further evaluation and observation on criminals' credibility are more important for maintaining this trust (von Lampe and Johanson, 2006: 17). This statement is also applicable to the present study. Reputation (as in face and Dor) only serves as a guiding reference and provides the foundation of trust, influencing triads' decision of whether or not to continue spending time and energy to further cultivate the relationship for establishing collaboration. If they want to further develop the social network into criminal collaborations, then additional measures are required to verify these triad credentials through a variety of strategies, including (i) questioning and observation, (ii) gathering intelligence through

triad structural networks and (iii) trials in order to enhance levels of trust. Ultimately, trust and collaborations are determined on the basis of criminal information, which is only available to triads. This is why triad territories and the triad structural networks are important in facilitating criminal collaboration, which is the true value of the triad identity and network. Without these, reputation cannot be spread or known to potential collaborators – thus, Dor and face become meaningless.

10.6 Triad Territory and Triads' Collaboration

If Dor, face and seniority are important elements for establishing collaborations among triads, then how do these credentials spread in the triad community, in order to seek credible and reliable collaborators? The answer to the final research question (How does a triad territory function in facilitating their collaboration?) gives us the answer.

Marketing and communication are important aspects in any form of business transaction, including illicit ones. Due to the illegal nature of triads' identity and activities, promoting one's reputation and communication between individuals is difficult (Reuter, 1983; Gambetta, 1993, 2009). Communication over distances is cost-ineffective and inefficient; the reliability of information obtained is also compromised (Gambetta, 1993: 37, 251; also see Spapens, 2010; Reuter, 1983; Polo, 1997). Due to communication constraints, the reputations of criminals and organisations are local in scope (Reuter, 1985; Gambetta, 1993), and require long-term relations, such as “independent network of kinship, friendship, and ethnicity” (Varese, 2010:14; see also Chin, 2003; Chu, 2000; Gambetta, 1993; Hill, 2003; Varese, 2001) for spreading reputation. Although exercising violence and mobilizing large numbers of foot soldiers in a public area can help to spread the reputation of criminal organisations (Chu, 2000; Gambetta, 2009; Varese, 2010), these

tactics also require a tangible and long-term presence in the territory to sustain (Varese, 2010: 26). Thus, the vigorous law enforcement and low tolerance of criminal organisations hinder the use of these violent tactics for promotion. In this regard, the triad network and territories become an important platform for communication and marketing.

Criminal networks do not exist at random, but “often obey the laws of social and geographical distance” (Kleemans and Bunt, 2008:195), producing a certain kind of clustering based on geographical proximity and similar social backgrounds. This argument best describes how triads utilize triad identity and triad territories to establish criminal networks. Both the interview data and ethnographic study support the conclusion that triads heavily rely on triad structural networks, or the spider webs, within the triad society and triad territories as major channels for the circulation of criminal information among triads, facilitating the establishment of criminal collaborations.

Triad societies are firmly entrenched in the territory that they dominate. Their activities and businesses are territorial-based (Chin, 2000; Chin and Fagan, 1993; Chu, 2000; Gambetta, 1993; Varese, 2010; Zhang and Chin, 2002, 2003). Triad territory is an important “offender convergence setting” (Fleson, 2006: 98–99), providing a venue for social activities and criminal information exchange among members of triad societies. Since it is common for triads within the same faction to operate in the same territory, the factional membership and working relationship in the functional territory also provide the basis for the emergence and continuation of criminal networks among triads.

The present study also reveals that some triad hotspots, which consist of numerous triad-controlled

territories (e.g. Jordan, Mongkok and Yau Ma Tei, as indicated in the present study), function as a marketplace for triads from different triad societies to search for potential collaborators, promote themselves and exchange criminal information. The work and social space of triads coincide in triad territory. In addition to illicit business operations, triads often spend a long time for social eating in specific restaurants within territories for the purpose of maintaining relationships with their followers and other triads within the territory. Such social interaction enhances familiarity, and thus the trust between participants (Fukuyama, 1999; Hearn, 1997; Misztal, 1996), which is an essential element to facilitate the growth and continuation of relationship. Therefore, triad territory not only gives rise to short-term but also to longer-term endeavours.

The importance of territory in establishing triads' collaboration is further supported by triads' preference in the choice of criminal collaborators. The present study indicates that triads prefer selecting collaborators within triad territories due to several reasons. First, triad territory provides a platform from which triads can observe the performance and personality of other triads, which is essential in terms of determining the ability and trustworthiness of potential collaborators. Second, intelligence gathering on the track record of triads within the same territory is more effective and likely to gather reliable information about their activities and business transactions. Third, as a result of the close monitoring of triads' collaborators through their physical presence, the risk of embezzlement would be lower and sanctioning of perpetrators would be efficient and effective (Varese, 2010: 14).

Social interaction among triads is not only restricted to triad territories. An environment for maintaining and establishing criminal contacts, exchanging criminal information, and self-

promotion is also created by social eating among triads, such as during Fa Pau Wui, weddings, birthdays, festive banquets, or even funerals. In addition, the present study indicates that triad social eating and banquets also provide a platform for triads to establish and maintain social networks with individuals who are not part of triads, such as community members and legal professionals; this provides another arena for forming criminally exploitable ties between the illegal and legal spheres of society.

Given that triad Dor is an important credential for facilitating criminal collaboration, Dor needs to be advertised and other criminal information is required to support the establishment of networks; the spider webs of information that exist fulfilled both purposes. Although it is well-accepted that triad societies are unable to exert monopolistic control over illicit markets (Chu, 2000; Zhang and Chin, 2003), triad identity and networks provide a valuable channel for self-promotion, networking and obtaining credible criminal information, all of which provides individual triads advantageous position and better opportunities both to acquire criminal resources from networks and to team up with entrepreneurs to run illicit business compared with non-triads.

10.7 Empirical and Theoretical Contributions of the Study

10.7.1 Empirical contributions of the study

The empirical contribution of the present research is that it fills a research gap in the existing triad research. Much triad research presumes that all triad societies are centrally organized, and sharing the same structure. The hierarchy of authority is determined by rank, with those positioned at the top of the organizational structure possessing the highest authority and degree of autonomy in controlling the distribution of and access to resources. They presume that violence is the major source in determining the status, power, and reputation of triads. They also assume that violence is the major solution to conflict. The present research debunks these preconceptions of triad societies through empirical investigation in triad operational structure.

Triad societies are not centralised. They are undergoing a process of decentralisation. However, they are not completely disorganised, and hierarchy still remains. Although decentralisation has undermined the power of headquarters, it still possesses some residual power and resources, such as power of adjudication and coordination between triad factions, as well as the control of some triad societies' business such as protection. The centralised headquarters still plays an important role in maintaining the function of coordination in a decentralised structure. In addition, the degree of decentralization and the format of centralisation vary between three sample triad societies.

Although the centralised structure and process of decentralisation vary between different triad societies, there are several common features. First, they are organisations based on seniority and financial power. Second, they are faction-based organisations, constituting the spider-web structure that links up numerous generations of triads through the Dai Lo–Lang Chai relationship.

Third, their operation is rooted in triad territories, which provide a social platform for criminal collaborations, and the circulation of criminal information.

In triad societies – hierarchical criminal organisations – the triad structure and hierarchical positions significantly influence their members’ access to triad resources. The present study reveals that two hierarchical systems co-exist in modern triad societies. Under the traditional seniority-based system, the access to and possession of triad resources is determined by seniority, achievement and contribution to triad societies. Under the financial-power-based system, the hierarchy is determined by the economic capital possessed by individual triads. Thus, two systems are correlated. On the one hand, seniority leads to resources and social capital, which eventually leads to economic capital. On the other hand, economic capital leads to resources, which gradually leads to seniority.

Second, the change of subculture in triad societies influences the triad structure. As triad societies are undergoing transition, on the one hand, some of the traditional values still influence the hierarchy of triads. Seniority still plays an important role in determining the access to and mobilization of triad resources. The traditional triad norms, such as brotherhood and loyalty, and the Confucian Five Codes of Ethics, including respect for seniority and seniority as prerogative, also renders senior, experienced triads the authority to exploit the triad norm and structural position to manipulate triad resources, leading to self-empowerment. On the other hand, we also witness the rise of emphasis on economic capital in parallel with the traditional seniority-based triad structure. The evidence from the examination of Dor reveals the positive relationships between Dor and financial power. The money-assisted election system in Wo Shing Wo also supports the

notion that financial power is gradually replacing seniority and honour.

Third, Dor and face are important credentials for reflecting triads' ability, status and credibility. They are important triad assets because their interest protection and criminal collaborations all depend on these credentials. Dor and face are positively related, as Dor Heung leads to having face. Face-work serves as a mechanism to transform Dor into social capital and hence other forms of capital, and facilitates the maintenance of triad social capital. Seniority and financial power contribute to both Dor and face, which can be used as credentials for establishing trust and hence facilitates the establishment of bridging social capital (between different triad societies) in the triad community and the linking of social capital with the upperworld, such as entrepreneurs (Lo, 2010; Lo and Kwok, 2016). Although violence remains crucial in establishing reputation and power, its importance is gradually fading and replaced by financial power.

Fourth, violence only served as last resort when conflict arises between triads or between triad societies. The present research reveals that violence often helps in establishing Dor in the early stage of triad career and territory development. Once reputation and territories are developed, they prefer using negotiation rather than violence for conflict resolution. Violence is often used as backdrop for negotiation and last resort when negotiation breaks down. This research reveals that clashes between triad societies may sometimes occur (two cases noted on pp. 146 and 265 also address the conflict between two triad societies regarding the territorial issue), even though there is a clear boundary between triad territories. In most circumstances, even if triad societies operate in the same district, they still maintain a harmonious relationship (p. 277-8). This is because the outbreak of violence will result in police disrupting their existing businesses, which will be harmful

to both parties. If conflict aroused between triad societies, it was often resolved through negotiation between two dominators. The “shining horse” is a common practice adopted during the course of negotiation (as noted on p. 146). The purpose of the shining horse is to demonstrate the power of triad society for increasing bargaining power. Violence would break out only when negation fails. However, it does not happen often nowadays. Instead, triads prefer sharing a portion of business with another in order to reach a win-win situation. In the case of clashes between Wo Shing Wo and 14K in a Disco (mentioned on p. 146), the resolution of the conflict between the two parties was that 14K needed to share the valet parking and drug dealing business of the Disco with Wo Shing Wo in order to continue their Disco operation in Wo Shing Wo’s territory. These data reveal the changes of triad practice and operation of triad societies under the changing triad subculture.

10.7.2 Theoretical contributions of the study

The structural-social capital perspective

The present research extends the hierarchical perspective beyond the scope of organizational structure in terms of triad-related organized crime operation. It discovers the connection between two paradigms in the study of organized crime – the people-oriented approach (i.e. referring to criminal organization/ “OC”) and criminal activity-oriented approach (i.e. referring to “crime that is organised”/ “oc”) – through the proposed concept of “structural-social capital”.

The concept of structural-social capital is developed based on two approaches in the study of organised crime: the hierarchical approach, which focuses on the structural network of criminal organisations and the social capital approach, which focuses on the development of social capital

and network for organised crime operations. Structural-social capital refers to how criminal organization members utilize structural features and networks of criminal organizations to generate social capital for organized crime operations. Different from the conventional social capital approach adopted in the study of organized crime, which focuses on how criminals utilize conventional social networks such as kinship, ethnic ties, and occupational ties for generating resources and opportunities for crime operations (Coles, 2001; Kleemans and de Bunt, 1999; Kleemans and de Poot, 2008; Shelley 2007; Wang, 2014), the structural-social capital approach focuses on how triads utilize structural networks of triad societies and triad community to develop social capital, resulting in acquiring criminal resources and opportunities embedded in the structural networks for organized crime operations.

Importance of structural network of triad societies and triad community

The triad structural network provides an important platform for resources sharing and exchange resources possessed by each individual triads, as well as access to triads' aggregated resources possessed by triad societies for organised crime operations. Triad identity, hierarchical positions and Dor are important for gaining access to, and the mobilization of criminal resources embedded in triad networks. Triad societies serve varieties of roles to achieve the listed purposes. They provide a breeding ground for young criminals to accumulate criminal skills and experience, and to obtain triad resources and criminal opportunities through their Dai Lo. These elements are important for establishing Dor and accumulating criminal networks in the triad community. Triad societies provide a hierarchical ladder for triads to accumulate power, resources and Dor. Triad territories and their daily activities provide a networking platform for triads to circulate criminal

information, promote themselves and obtain information about potential collaborators for Dor verification. Without the triad identity, it is difficult to establish a triad network and enter triad territories. Even if someone who is not a triad member needs to utilize triad resources to operate illicit businesses or for other personal purposes, they still need to rely on a triad as the gateway to connect to the triad community, in order to identify the suitable and reliable triad collaborators and gain access to triad resources. As evident in Chu's (2000) triad study, the possession of the reputation of violence, the organised power for exercising violence and the ability to provide protection render individual triads privilege in establishing criminal collaboration with illicit entrepreneurs (p. 126–8). Therefore, access to and ability to mobilize triad resources is important in determining the triads' opportunity in criminal collaborations between individual triads as well as non-triad criminals.

Social capital establishment for organised crime operations

The research finding supports the idea that the operation of triad societies and triad community, as well as triad collaboration, is similar in various aspects to the concept of social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Lin, 2001; Coleman, 1988, 1990). First, social capital refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1985: 248). Social capital consists of closed systems of networks inherent in the structure of relations between persons and among persons within a collectivity (Coleman 1988, 1990; Portes and Sensebrenner, 1993). The concept of social capital implies that members can acquire resources embedded in in-group social networks for personal purpose through the common membership; and the access to

resources and networks is exclusive to members who share the same membership. The triad community shares similar attributes with social capital, as triads can utilize their triad identity and triad faction member identity to obtain criminal resources and opportunities embedded in the triad structural networks. The access to the network and resources is exclusively for the members of the triad community – the triads.

Second, the importance of social structure is emphasized in the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990), as it determines the opportunities in gaining resources from the social network (Lin, 2001). The conceptualization of social capital is based on an assumption that the social structure constrains or facilitates an individual's access to social resources which, in turn, affects his or her status or power. It also assumes that the positions in the hierarchical structure and the weaker and stronger ties can influence the access to and use of social resources (Lin, 2001:12).

The present research reveals the structure and hierarchy of triad societies and the triad community. Access to these resources is not equal to all triads, depending on the hierarchical position of triads in the triad structure, including Dai Lo Lang Chai relationship and factional networks. The hierarchical position of triads in the structural network is determined by rank, seniority, and financial resources possessed, and the bonding with those powerful senior triads. The format of triad structure, clear division between junior and senior triads in the seniority-based stratified community, and the seniority subculture shared among triads shaped the opportunities of access to criminal resources. Such a structural pattern of triad societies and the community constrains junior triads in access to criminal resources. Those positioned in the higher levels of the hierarchy in triad societies and triad community tend to have better access to and control over criminal resources

and opportunities, which in turn, enable them to maintain their status and power in triad community.

On the other hand, the relationship and bonding with triads of higher strata or position influences the access to triad resources. Under the decentralised triad structure, the bonding of triads is mainly embedded in triad factions. Triads need to rely on their senior members within the same faction to obtain triad resources. Those who have closer proximity and bonding with these powerful triads – in particular, those within their faction and their direct followers – would have a better chance to acquire criminal resources than those who have not. The quality of relationship and social ties between the triads and those in higher hierarchical positions, such as triad faction leaders, also determines the opportunities to access to criminal resources and crime opportunities. Thus, triad factional membership becomes the important credential for displaying the social ties and associations to faction leaders.

The access to triad resources also depends on a triad's specific position in the structure of a triad society. If the proximity between a faction head and the headquarters is close, members of this faction can connect easily with triad leaders at the headquarters, including Lo Shuk Fu, Cho Kun, and territorial bosses, thus receiving more triad resources and profit-making opportunities. As a result, those who are members of the powerful factions are more likely to gain access to triad resources than those in the weaker ones.

The third dimension in understanding organised crime – “Oc-oc”

The current study has attempted to search for the missing puzzle between “OC”, referring to

organized crime committed by criminal organizations (Hagan, 2006), and “oc”, which refers to “crime that is organized” (Finckenauer, 2005), through examination in how triad societies are structured and operate, and how features of triad societies facilitate their members in accessing to criminal resources and information for organised crime operations, as well as in establishing criminal collaborations. Although neither scholar further defined the term “OC”, Gambetta’s (1993) concept of protection (regarded as the core business of criminal organization) and Chu’s (2000) research in triad business provided some insights in defining the term “OC”. The term “OC” should restrict to organized crimes that can be controlled, or monopolized by a single criminal organization – that is protection, instead of referring to all forms of organised crime committed by criminal organisations.

The present research reveals that not all triad-related organized crime is regarded as “OC” as further defined above. In between “OC” that is exclusively controlled by a single criminal organization and the “oc”, which requires a certain degree of coordination between criminals from a variety of backgrounds, there is a form of organized crime not under the control of triad societies (which is not “OC”), but led by individual triads, or operated by individual triads from different triad societies, often involving non-triad members and operations across different regions (e.g. between Hong Kong and China), which indicates the nature of “oc” as defined by Finckenauer (2005) and Hagan (2006). The operation of casino VIP rooms in Macau is the best example (Lo and Kwok, 2016). First, they are operated by triads from different triad societies, mainland criminal syndicates, and businessmen. Reputation of triads is an important criterion in determining the eligibility of VIP room operation (Lo and Kwok, 2016). Chu’s (2000) research in triad business also supports the idea that many triad-related organized crimes are not controlled by a single triad

society and its headquarters, such as drug dealing, prostitution, and illicit gambling, but operated by a group of individual triad members and non-triad entrepreneurs (p. 126). The triad identity and reputation render them privilege in entering these forms of organized crime (Chu, 2000). Varieties of triad-related organised crime mentioned in the present study including prostitution, drug dealing and drug den management, armed robbery, counterfeit product sales, and cross-border loan sharking and debt collection are some examples of “OC-oc” operated by individual triads from different triad societies. These organized crimes operated by individual triads should be regarded as a third form of organized crime between the two dichotomies, which I coin it as “OC-oc”.

The term “OC-oc” refers to organized crimes led by individual members of criminal organizations (i.e. individual triad members), involving members from different criminal organizations (i.e. members from different triad societies) and sometimes involving individuals who are not members of criminal organizations. Some of this type of organized crime may involve operations across different territories (e.g. Hong Kong, Macau, and China). The existence of “Oc-oc” needs to be supported by triad Dor, triad structural networks, and triad-social capital, or they cannot survive otherwise. The proposed concept of “structural-social capital” is to explain “Oc-oc”, but not all conventional forms of “oc”, such as human smuggling and drug trafficking noted in Zhang and Chin (2003).

Distinguished from “OC”, “Oc-oc” (i.e. triad private businesses) are not controlled by the headquarters of triad societies or controlled by a single triad society, nor are they regarded as a triad society-owned business (see pp. 216-7). Distinguished from “oc”, “Oc-oc” does not emerge randomly through family or conventional social networks generated from neighbourhood,

ethnicity or origin as “oc” does (Zhang and Chin, 2003). The operation group and business opportunities of “OC-oc” are generated from triad structural social capital. Triad identity and Dor are important for entering the triad structural networks and gaining criminal resources and opportunities through them. Since the structural features serve as a foundation to support “OC-oc” operations, “OC-oc” has a higher degree of continuity than the pure form of “oc” operated by people from diverse backgrounds who do not share a common identity.

The collaboration between triad societies in “OC” is not prevalent in Hong Kong. Triad societies are similar to other criminal organizations addressed in the existing criminal organization literature (e.g. Gambetta, 1993; a series of publications of Varese in extra-legal governance), that is, they have a tendency to monopolize the protection business. As addressed in the thesis (p. 143, and a case mentioned on p. 265), triad protection takes place in triad territories, and the size of each territory varies, depending on the format of triad structure. Very often, several triad societies control the same street or district with a clearly identified boundary. The co-existence of triad societies on the same street or in the same district does not imply that they are collaborating to provide protection. The collaboration between different triad societies often takes place in “Oc-oc”, and collaboration often happens between individual triads.

It is true that the proposed “structural-social capital” may not be applicable to some types of “oc” such as human smuggling and drug trafficking (Zhang and Chin, 2002, 2003). However, if some stages of operation in transnational organized crime (which is regarded as “oc”), such as the destination of sex-trafficking or a transit point, occur inside triad territories, it is very likely that triads would be involved. The triad may provide protection or become a collaborative partner, so

as to give the intruder the right to operate in the triad territory. Under this circumstance, the proposed “structural-social capital” can be applied – operators need to rely on local triads to search for reliable triad collaborators through triad structural networks; and Dor becomes an important criterion in searching for reliable protectors.

10.8 Final Remarks

The present study is based on a wide variety of sample triads ranging from Sze Kau members to Lo Shuk Fu and former Cho Kun, and covered eight different triad societies in Hong Kong, including the three major triad societies. However, empirical findings of the present study should not be misinterpreted as findings from a representative sample. Yet, from a theoretical point of view, these findings provide insight into bridging the criminal organisation and organised crime operations.

The hierarchical approach constantly faces fierce critics, in particular those based upon the enterprise model (Albini, 1971; Smith, 1975; Reuter, 1983), who argue that it is impractical and lacks empirical realities to explain organised crime (Kleemans, 2014: 34), and who neglect the influence of criminal organisation in organised crime operations. Nevertheless, the present study discovers that the triad society plays an important role in facilitating organised crime operations in Hong Kong.

To some extent, the triad community is a gateway to the underworld, and the criminal resources and network hub of the underworld in Hong Kong. The triad structure – the spider webs and triad factions – turned the individual resources and power into aggregate resources for individual

purposes. The established triad networks provide an exclusive social platform for criminal collaborations. In addition to the protector role and reputation of violence as important assets of criminal organisations that are commonly advocated in organised crime literature, my study found that the genuine value of triad societies is the triad identity and status that offer an opportunity to access the resources in the criminal underworld through the structural hierarchical network in the triad societies.

10.9 Limitations and Future Research

Since the study is centred on triad societies, and the findings are almost exclusively generated from adult triad ex-offenders, the findings of the present study also pose several limitations. First, “triadised” youth gangs and juvenile triads are excluded from the present study, although they may provide useful information about the most updated phenomenon about the lower strata triads. The author can only rely on those adult triads to provide retrospective information about the lowest level of triads, which may be different from the current situation.

Second, the major source of information about high-level triads and headquarters are provided by a few key, less-active senior triads (e.g. Lo Shuk Fu and ex-Cho Kun); although they still keep in contact with active senior triads and are sometimes involved in triad management, some of the data provided may only describe phenomena in the past rather than the most updated situation. Although the findings also include data from active triads for triangulation, the very limited number of active senior triads may not be representative enough to generate the most up-to-date phenomena.

Third, the author is aware that the findings may scale towards some large triad societies due to the number of samples available. Finally, the importance of triad societies in facilitating organised crime operations and collaboration may not be generally applicable to all types of illicit businesses. Since the study is centred on triad societies rather than illicit markets or criminal activity, the importance of triad societies may vary between different types of criminal business.

The present research contributes to the building block of the “structural-social capital” concept through discovering the hierarchical structure of the triad societies and triad community, and how triads utilize this structure for generating social capital, criminal resources and opportunities. In order to complete the development of the proposed concept, further research on various aspects is needed.

Further research should examine the shift from the triads’ perspective to the non-triad illicit entrepreneurs to investigate the types of illicit business that are more likely to rely on triad societies’ resources and networks, as well as which circumstances are more favourable for this. I hope the present and further research can integrate both the criminal organisation and enterprise model to obtain a more complete picture of triad organised crime.

Another interesting area that is worth further study involves which factors contribute to the cooperation between triads. The present study offered insight that Dor and face can be used as mechanisms for maintaining cooperative relations. Given that triad values, such as brotherhood

and honour, are gradually fading, what factors other than economic capital fostering triad social capital and criminal collaborations are worthy of further research.

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Appendix 1

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Screening

1. 請問你所屬的社團是什麼，你在黑社會是什麼職級？

What triad society do you belong to, and what is your triad rank?

2. 請問你有沒有曾經經過正式入會儀式加入所屬社團？

Have you attended a triad initiation ceremony?

3. 請問你有沒有一位已正式入會的黑社會成員作為你的保家？

Have you pledged loyalty to any formal initiated triad member as your protector?

Sample Interview Questions

A) Organizational Structure of Triad Society

1. 請你簡介一下你的社團的架構。例如社團內有些什麼職級，而這些職位有些什麼角色呢？

Would you please introduce the structure of the triad society that you belong to? What are the roles and functions of these positions in triad society?

2. 這些職位是怎樣產生出來嗎？〔坐館，話事人，職員〕請問你做這些職位有什麼要求

嗎？有什麼考慮因素？

How are these positions selected? What are the selection criteria of these positions?

3. 這些職位有什麼權力？在社團內可以控制到什麼，控制不到什麼？

What power do they have? What can/cannot they control in the triad society?

4. 當這些職位有什麼福利或好處，同時又有什麼責任呢？

What are the benefits and responsibilities of these positions? What kind of welfare are they entitled to?

5. 老叔父是指什麼人？他們是怎樣產生出來？在社團內有什麼功能？是不是所有老叔父都有投票權？他們有什麼權限，可以控制什麼，又控制不到什麼？

What do “Lo Shuk Fu” refer to? How are they selected? What roles they perform in triad society?

Do all “Lo Shuk Fu” have the right to vote in Cho Kun selection? What can/cannot they control in the triad society?

6. 你認為社團可以為會員提供什麼福利，資源，或支援？有什麼條件決定會員可以得到這些福利或支援？

What kinds of benefit, welfare, resources or support that a triad society can provide to its members?

What are the criteria to determine the members’ entitlement to receive such welfare and support (i.e. who get what)?

7. 請問你可以講一下社團的資源是如何分配？是誰有權力決定分配的方法？有什麼是屬於社團資源，生意，和財產，有什麼是屬於會員自己的呢？如何界定什麼是屬於社團的，什麼是屬於會員自己的？

Would you please tell me how the triad society resources are distributed? Who has the authority to determine the distribution of these resources? What are the criteria to distinguish between triad society's resources/businesses, and individual triad members' private resources/businesses?

8. 如果成員或勢力範圍間有爭議，你們會如何解決爭議？

If conflicts arose between triads/triad factions, how are they resolved?

9. 社團成員是怎樣入會的？由跟大佬做掛藍到正式會員是需要多久，什麼情況或條件下才可以成為正式會員？由跟大佬做掛藍到做正式會員的過程是怎樣，可以講解一下嗎？

How do people join triad society? How do they get promoted from “Holding the Blue Lantern” (probationary member) to 49 member, and how long does it take? What are the criteria to get promoted as 49 member?

10. 什麼情況或條件下才可以成為職員？可以講解一下提升職的過程是怎樣嗎？

How do they get promoted from 49 member to triad officers, and how long does it take? What are the criteria to get promoted as triad officer?

11. 你覺得在社團中什麼要素決定了成員的權力？理由是什麼？

What are the criteria used in determining the authority of triads in triad society? Why?

B) Interpersonal Relationship among Triads

1. 請問你什麼年紀開始跟大佬，什麼時候正式入會？

When did you start following your “Dai Lo”? When did you get initiated as 49 member?

2. 可以分享一下你加入黑社會的原因和過程嗎？

Would you please tell me when and why you joined a triad society?

3. 你和大佬和兄弟們平日做些什麼？平日依靠做什麼維生？

What did you do with your “Dai Lo” and triad brothers? What did you do for a living after following your “Dai Lo”?

4. 你和大佬的關係是怎樣的？你會怎麼形容你和大佬間的關係？什麼情況下你會找你的大佬？他會幫到些什麼？大佬會在什麼情況和條件下幫忙？

How is your relationship with your Dai Lo? How do you describe your relationship with your “Dai Lo”? Under what circumstances would you seek support from him? What kind of support would he offer? Any conditions do you need to fulfill in order to get his support?

5. 你什麼時候開始有自己的「口靚」？選擇「口靚」時有什麼選擇要素？

When did you start having your own followers? What is the criteria for the selection of followers?

6. 你會怎麼形容你和「口靚」之間的關係？什麼情況下你會找你的「口靚」幫助？

你會要求他們怎樣幫你？有什麼條件嗎？

How do you describe the relationship between you and your followers? Under what circumstances would you seek assistance from them? What would you expect them to offer? Any conditions do you need to fulfil in order to get their assistance?

7. 在你大佬與「口靚」之外，你還經常接觸到社團裡的什麼人？你和他們的關係如何？

Apart from your “Dai Lo” and followers, who did you frequently contact within the triad society? How do you describe your relationship with them?

8. 除了社團裡常接觸的人，你會和其他社團的人有往來嗎？你是怎樣和為什麼要接觸他們？你們關係又如何呢？

Did you have frequent contact with triads from other triad societies? Why and how did you know them? How do you describe your relationship with them?

C) Triads' Collaboration

1. 在選擇合作夥伴時你有什麼考慮因素？

How did you select your collaborators? What would you consider?

2. 憑什麼令你覺得他們可信？你又如何令他們覺得你可信？

What made you trust them? What made them trust you?

3. 你們如何維持合作關係呢？

How would you maintain the partnership with your collaborators?

4. 什麼情況你會選擇終止合作？

Under what circumstances would you terminate the partnership?

5. 你是用什麼方式尋找合作夥伴？理由是什麼？

How did you find your collaborators? Why?