

Working Paper No. 38

# THE SUBURBANIZATION OF RURAL VILLAGES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, HONG KONG

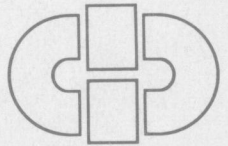
R.D. HILL, Kathy NG and TSE Pui Wan

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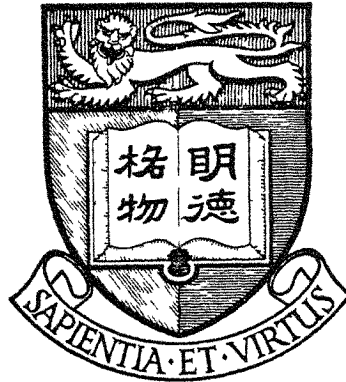
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# THE SUBURBANIZATION OF RURAL VILLAGES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, HONG KONG

by

**R.D. HILL, Kathy NG and TSE Pui-wan**

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Working Paper No. 38

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## Abstract

Suburbanization basically refers to the process whereby rural villages change their character as a result of incorporation within an urban area either physically or functionally or both. In Hong Kong, examples of physical incorporation include Sha Tin and Yuen Long where old dwellings laid out in rows contrast with the more modern buildings, often less formally laid out, which surround them. Such incorporation represents a late stage of the process which has its early expression in spatially discrete village settlements in which the inhabitants no longer engage in agriculture but in urban occupations to which they commute. These are increasing joined by other urban workers who prefer to reside in a rural or semi-rural environment, either permanently or temporarily.

The speed and intensity of village suburbanization are related to accessibility from the urban core and also to the degree to which indigenous villagers have been or are willing to tolerate the presence of outsiders, though these factors have not been measured systematically. Along the central axis from Sha Tin virtually to the border and on the western plains, suburbanization was earlier and more intense than in the east where significant numbers of village dwellings were still empty in the late 1980s. More generally, it is clear that where villages are accessible by road, especially by regular bus services, villages remain viable through commuting and/or because of an influx of 'non-indigenous' residents.

The authors present details of change in occupancy levels in 39 villages in eastern Sai Kung which clearly show that those with road access have to some degree revived as a result of commuter penetration. Such penetration is reflected in internal spatial segregation, with the older village core being inhabited by 'indigenous' people and the periphery (or a secondary core) by 'non-indigenous' people. This segregation is marked, in part by differences in residential architecture as well as contrasts in terms of demographic, socio-economic and mobility-pattern parameters. Such measures as age of household head, mean dependency ratios, household size, income and education show clear differences between 'natives' and 'foreigners'. The only measures not to show differences were modes of transportation and car ownership, (so far as these were investigated) though 'journey to school' did exhibit some differences.

Also presented are data on the reasons why people move to villages. Amongst these, 'pleasant environment' ranked highly whereas lower land costs or house rentals compared with urban areas did not rank highly as pull factors.

Many of Hong Kong's villages thus conform to Connell's model of the metropolitan village. While comparable to high status 'purpose-built' suburbs, they contain significant numbers of new or renovated buildings and show striking internal demographic, social and economic discontinuities.

## INTRODUCTION

The suburbanization process has many facets but scholarship discerns these with rather varying degrees of clarity. Thus much more is known about the dimension of population growth than about spatial expansion of the city where basic problems of definition, not to mention difficulties of data sources, have hindered the precise delimitation of successive stages of growth. Even here, rather more is known of the spread of suburbs into hitherto rural areas than the less-obvious but equally-important process by which small towns and villages on the metropolitan fringe are drawn into the functional fabric of the city, often while still remaining spatially separate.

The incorporation of such settlement units is by no means a new phenomenon. In the 1820s, a village called Brooklyn became a dormitory for Manhattan. In West London, the British one, Acton was incorporated into the growing conurbation in the 1860s. But in the nineteenth century suburbs were essentially of two kinds: the detached villas of the very wealthy and the working-class 'faubourgs' (Thorns, 1972, 59). This distinction has remained to some degree despite the rise of the 'mass suburb' based upon rapid transit of one kind or another, for some of the relatively-wealthy still seek the perceived benefits of a semi-rural life. Such people may be the harbingers of further change to mass suburbia which ultimately submerges, even obliterates the former rural settlement node as Dobriner's minor classic has indicated (summarized in Dobriner, 1972). Just how many such 'invaded villages' there may be, and to what degree they are part of an overall suburban assault there is no knowing. In Japan, for example, Allinson (1979, 17) has suggested that few if any suburbs have developed on virgin soil for there has nearly always been a rural hamlet in the vicinity acting as the focus of settlement growth and itself being transformed by the invasion of 'outsiders'.

## FORMS AND PHASES OF TRANSFORMATION IN HONG KONG

This situation certainly typifies many parts of Hong Kong's New Territories where many villages and hamlets are experiencing suburbanization as 'outsiders' come to settle in them, transforming them spatially, architecturally, and socially. This transformative process takes two basic forms and represents the latest in a series of phases beginning in the 1950s.

Government in Hong Kong, while operating within a basically *laissez-faire* capitalist system, has nevertheless long retained tight control of land use and land alienation. In general, suburban development has been deliberately planned with the aims of housing a growing population, preferably with the provision of employment in the suburbs, and of reducing residential population densities in sometimes-deteriorated inner-city zones. Such planned development has led to the transformation of once-rural service centres such as Tuen Mun and Yuen Long in the west together with Sha Tin, Tai Po, Sheung Shui, along the territory's central rail axis into New Towns, each occupied by several hundred thousand persons at densities somewhat but not markedly below those of the existing urban core (Figure 1).

A less-obvious form of transformation typifies many of the 600 or so once-rural villages in the New Territories. In these, much land has remained under the control of 'indigenous' villagers, who in recent times have seen the opportunity to generate income for themselves from city-dwellers seeking permanent residence or a second, recreational home in villages which in many cases have long lost their former function as the place of residence of farmers and rural artisans.

Until the late 1940s and early 1950s, most villages were largely or entirely agricultural, relying upon the double-cropping of rice, fishing where location permitted and likewise some intensive market-gardening, usually integrated with pig and poultry production, where road or rail access to urban markets permitted. The 1950s saw





substantial immigration from the north and the stream of migrants included significant numbers of experienced farmers who either rented or bought land for farming. With rapid growth of both population and wealth the market for vegetables, pigs and poultry expanded together with the area required to provide them. This expansion favoured those areas which were quickly accessible to the city. In these rice-growing was rapidly replaced by more intensive forms of cultivation. Elsewhere, rice-growing was steadily abandoned, to be replaced, if at all, by haphazard, low-intensity cattle-rearing. In the 1960s and the early 1970s these developments were paralleled by and strongly influenced by migration from the villages, not merely to urban Hong Kong and Kowloon, but abroad, to Britain especially.

The result of such changes in remoter areas, especially to the east, was widespread depopulation, even village abandonment, as people in the working age-group moved abroad, often leaving the elderly behind, people who were in no position to work the village lands even if it had been economically worthwhile to do so. These vicissitudes have been documented in a number of field studies, with the exception of that by McGee and Drakakis-Smith (1972) on the Sap Say Heung, mostly unpublished. Yue (1981), for example, traced change in three villages in the eastern Sai Kung district, Tai Mong Tsai, Sha Kok Mei and Ho Chung. In 1958 these were occupied by 1149 people comprising 235 households. By 1971 the population had declined slightly despite the fact that Hong Kong's total population had roughly doubled, and eight percent of the dwellings lay empty. A field survey in 1981 showed that the number of 'indigenous' households (i.e. those extant ten years earlier) had fallen to only 63 while a new group of 36 households had come in. Forty-four percent of dwellings were intact but vacant or in ruins. Another study, of 11 villages in a valley west of Tai Po showed that in 1971, 17 per cent of the dwellings were vacant (Ho, 1978, 7). More recently, surveys by Ng Pui Suk (1977) and by the senior author (this study) of 39 settlement nodes in the Sai Kung district showed that in 1977, of 637 dwellings enumerated, 34 percent were unoccupied compared with 44 percent of 776 dwellings in the same villages in 1987. In the same years, a

further seven and 17 percent respectively were only periodically occupied. In the same district, Yeung's study of the Sap Say Heung (14 villages) showed that in 1980 only 29 percent of 234 persons surveyed were in full-time employment (Yeung, 1980, 28). Many of the remoter villages were, and some remain, little more than decaying homes for the elderly who could not or would not move.

By contrast, villages near the urban core or with good access to it, had long become suburban in character. Poon (1968, 18-19) spoke of Sha Tin as a 'semi-town' characterized by the presence of more than two social groups differing in historical origin and 'mentality', the co-existence of two different income groups with great differences in income levels and architecturally, a mixture of traditional grey-brick village houses and modern dwellings of which the latter already comprised 70 percent. In the same area, Wai (1975, 20) reported that only a quarter of the household heads surveyed in eight villages worked in their home village or in a neighbouring one. Across to the west, in Lo Wai, a village close to Tsuen Wan, only half of the household heads worked in the village in 1968 (Cheng, 1968). Even in villages on the far west coast, suburbanization, again as measured by work- place, had substantially penetrated by 1976 with 43 percent of villagers at Ha Pak and Nim Wan and a two-thirds of villagers at Wong Nai Tun commuting daily to Yuen Long, the destination of the sole bus service (Ng Hon Ying, 1976). Suburbanization, as measured by the presence of 'non-indigenous' residents in the villages, has even spread to the out-lying islands where Yip (1980, 44) reported that they comprised eight percent of the residents of South Lantau. There was a sprinkling of 'non-indigenous' commuters even in Tai O, a two-hour (one-way) journey from Hong Kong's C.B.D.

The suburbanization process in Hong Kong has thus varied greatly depending largely upon accessibility but also in some areas, the Sap Say Heung is one, upon the degree to which indigenous villagers have been willing to tolerate the presence of 'outsiders'. Where villages are accessible by road, and especially where regular bus services developed, they tended to remain economically viable as employment, especially for young women, became accessible through

commuting. Economic viability was sometimes maintained despite significant out-migration of indigenous villagers. The latter point has been emphasised by Sin (1971) whose study of the Man-clan village of San Tin showed that the migration of Man clansfolk to Britain was compensated by an influx of non-Man Chiuchow and Shanghainese migrants newly-resident as tenants. About half of these worked locally, mainly in agriculture. By contrast only a third of the indigenous Man people worked in the village (Sin, 1971, 52).

Broadly speaking, this pattern of maintenance or expansion has applied to villages in the west and centre of the New Territories. To the east, however, the pattern was rather different. Accessibility was often difficult. The small market town of Tai Po was accessible from villages on the southern shores of Tolo Harbour by a twice-daily ferry and long walks to piers were the norm. Sai Kung town was connected to Kowloon by road only in the late 1940s and it was not until the early 1970s that a road reached the Sap Say Heung. Further eastwards, roads were constructed only after substantial depopulation had occurred and even today traffic beyond Pak Tam Chung is confined to buses, residents' and other specifically-permitted vehicles, for much of the area forms part of a Country Park and is thus designated for recreational purposes.

Nevertheless, this eastern zone is experiencing suburban development. Along the Clearwater Bay Road and along Hiram's Highway to the vicinity of Tai Mong Tsai this takes the dual form of internal transformation of pre-existing settlement nodes plus small-scale suburban housing developments. Elsewhere, where change has taken place at all during the last 10 years, it has been mainly by internal transformation, suburban development being represented only by individual villas constructed for rent adjacent to older village cores or by the renovation or reconstruction of individual village houses.

## CASES IN THE EASTERN NEW TERRITORIES

The remainder of this paper is focussed in the second zone where suburbanization is just beginning in the more accessible villages thus reversing a trend of depopulation and abandonment which, however, substantially continues in villages not accessible by road. The discussion draws largely on recent studies by Tse (1986), whose study is confined to a single village on the Clearwater Bay Road and by Kathy Ng (1986) who focussed upon the distance factor as related to suburbanization in her study of five villages near Sai Kung. The Sai Kung area totals about 100 km<sup>2</sup> of steep, broken terrain with small valleys, once used for rice cultivation, formerly extended upslope by terracing. The settlements on the islands had some orientation towards fishing, especially Tap Mun, the island to the north which remains an active centre for this activity. The Clearwater Bay area is topographically similar but being long-since linked with Kowloon and closer to it, twenty years ago was less agriculturally-oriented than eastern Sai Kung and today shows substantially greater suburban development.

In the eastern Sai Kung area the overall pattern of change has been to some degree measured by the senior author's partial replication in 1987 of a study by Ng Pui Suk (1977). The earlier study was based upon a census of living quarters in the villages, classifying intact dwellings into those permanently occupied, those periodically occupied and those unoccupied. This measure gives an indication of abandonment and also of suburbanization since periodical use, as holiday homes, may be regarded as a 'suburban' characteristic in the Hong Kong context. Increases in the proportion of permanently-occupied homes from 1977 to 1987 also indicate suburbanization since such have not been occupied by agriculturalists but, as Kathy Ng's more detailed study shows, by suburbanites. The results of the surveys of 39 villages are set out in the following table.

Occupance Status of Dwellings in 39 Eastern Sai Kung  
Villages 1977 and 1987

	<u>1977</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>% change</u>
Permanently-occupied	374	58.7	301	38.8	- 20
Periodically-occupied	44	6.9	131	16.9	+ 19.8
Unoccupied	219	34.4	344	44.3	+ 3
Total	637	100.0	776	100.0	

Source: Ng Pui Suk, 1977, and a survey by N.L. Hill, R K. Hill and senior author, May 1987

More detail is given in Figure 2A & B showing the proportion of living quarters unoccupied in each village. A comparison shows that in 1977 most villages had less than a fifth of their living quarters unoccupied even many of those accessible only by foot-path. By 1987, the levels of occupance had fallen substantially (Certain villages, mostly on Tap Mun Chau, were not re-surveyed and are therefore not shown on Figure 2B).

A further development has been the penetration of purpose-built holiday camps and bungalow complexes, some operated as commercial concerns, others by charitable organizations. These cluster particularly in the vicinity of Tai Mong Tsai which has seven, the largest, near Pak Tam Chung, holding close to 300 holiday-makers.

Although the proportion of permanently-occupied dwellings has fallen overall in the eastern Sai Kung area, this disguises stability, even some rise, especially in villages accessible by road where village houses have been renovated or reconstructed, where new dwellings have been erected close to the village core for rent to outsiders (Figure 3). (Sale is, by law, usually possible only to members of families with land rights in the same village). Figure 2B clearly shows the continued decline of most villages distant from road access as well as the decline

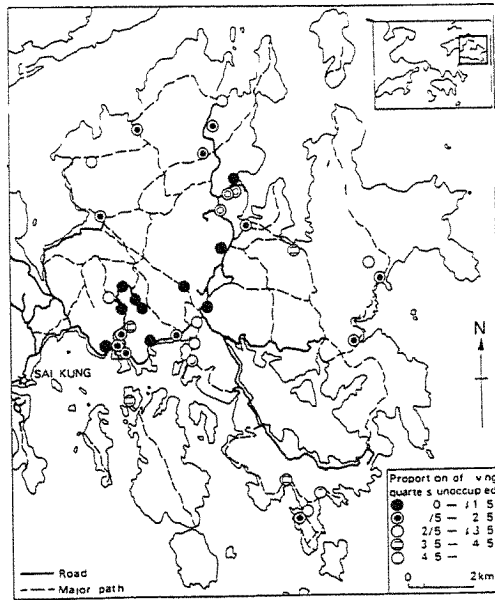
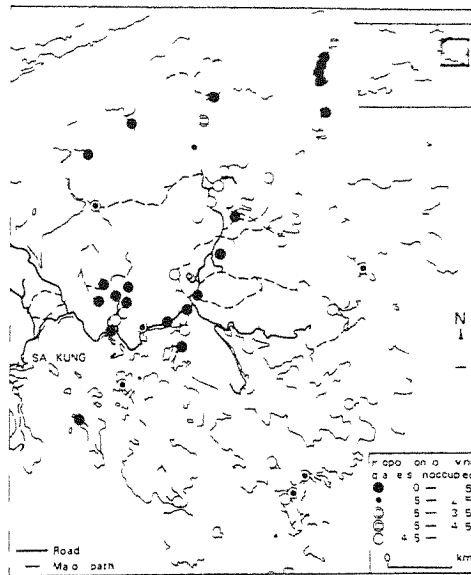
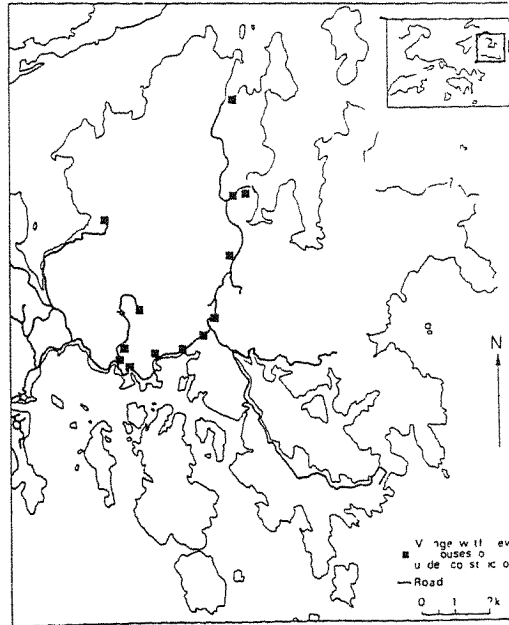


Figure 2 - Sai Kung Villages. Proportion of Living Quarters Permanently Unoccupied, 1977(a) and 1987(b)

of a few along roads which are not likely to be attractive to outsiders either by reason of location and amenities (sewerage notably) or because villagers do not wish to have outsiders living near them



*Figure 3 - Sai Kung Villages with New Houses or Houses Under Construction, May 1987*

### **SPATIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND MOBILITY PATTERN CONTRASTS**

Villages in the region generally possess a simple form. Very small ones comprise a single row of dwellings, some detached, others not, frequently located at the piedmont. With greater size further rows are added to form a loosely-rectangular pattern. Modernization has generally not greatly altered this form for it reflects the pattern of land ownership. With reconstruction, row-houses often give way to two- or three-storey detached houses which remain closely-packed. In the village of Tai Po Tsai Tsuen studied in detail by Tse (1986) this layout is very clear even in the relatively-new extension of the village to the west (Figure 4). There may be some tendency to greater dispersal and



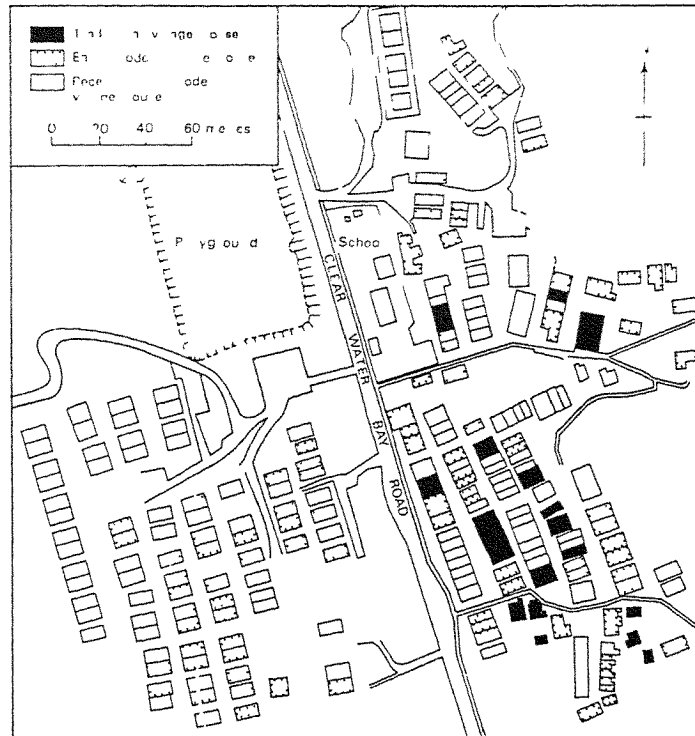


Figure 4 - Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 1986: Spatial Patterns of House-types

varying orientation of residential units outside the village core in other villages. Kathy Ng has mapped the location of villagers' and suburbanite's homes. Nearest-neighbour analysis applied to data from Tai Wan, Wong Chuk Wan and Tseng Tau showed that in each village villagers' and suburbanites' homes formed spatially-distinct clusters (Kathy Ng, 1986, 99-104).

This spatial segregation is paralleled by a whole host of other differences - demographic, socio-economic and behavioural. At Tai Po Tsai Tsuen differences in the age/sex structure are not particularly marked (Figure 5) probably because the indigenous villagers have themselves to a degree been drawn into the urban economy and the village has not suffered emigration and depopulation. In the three

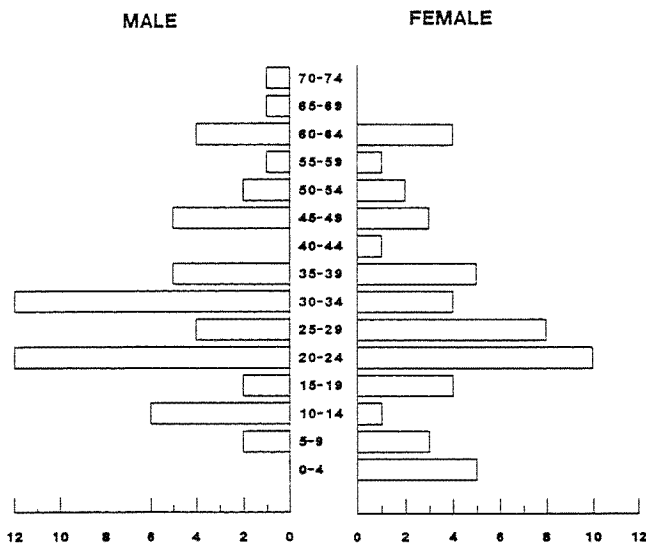
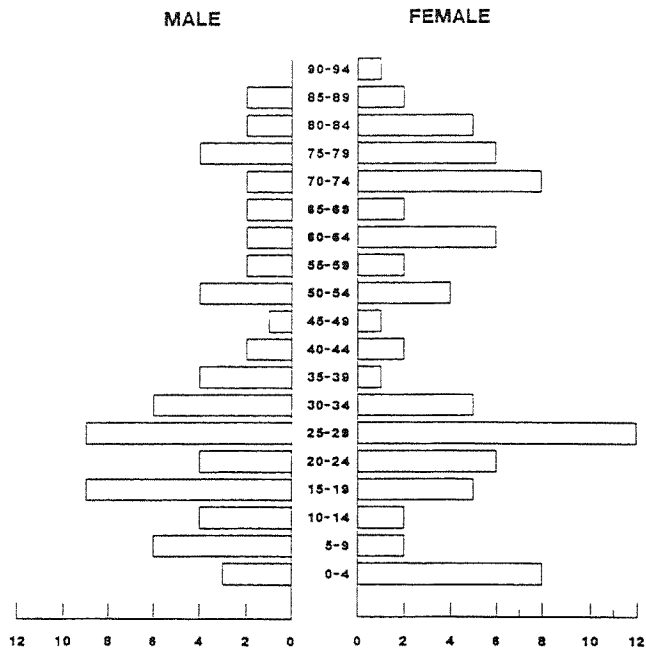


Figure 5 - Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 1986: Age/Sex Pyramids for 'Indigenous' Residents (above) and for 'Non-indigenous' Residents (below)

eastern Sai Kung villages containing significant numbers of suburbanites, however, the age/sex pyramids are strikingly different with a much higher proportion of elderly persons amongst indigenous villagers. Both groups share the characteristic of few children, the suburbanites because many are young married couples yet to reproduce and the elderly for obvious reasons.

If at Tai Po Tsai Tsuen the age/sex pyramids do not show major differences between indigenes and newcomers, the age of household heads certainly does for here the modal value is 66 years or above for indigenes compared with the 36-40 age-group for the non-indigenous people who in moving into the village have in many cases, either left members of the older generation behind or, as likely, do not consider such to be household heads (see Figure 6). Similar analysis was not carried out by Kathy Ng who gives data on functional age groups, however. These indicate that at Tai Wan and Wong Chuk Wan where there are significant numbers of suburbanites, the mean number of dependants (ages 14 and below plus 65 and above) per person in the working age-group was only 0.4. At Ma Kwu Lam and Cheung Muk Tau, where there were virtually no suburbanites, the dependency ratios were well over 1.0, still not a high figure admittedly (Kathy Ng, 1986, 59).

Household size is another common social indicator and again differences emerge. At Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 'indigenous' households tended to be larger than the 'non-indigenous' families amongst whom very large families were notably lacking (See Figure 7). According to Tse (1986, 28) half of the indigenous families here were two-generational whereas two-thirds of the non-indigenous families comprised only two generations. In the eastern Sai Kung villages large families were absent but there too significant differences emerged. In Tai Wan and Wong Chuk Wan, the 'suburbanite-dominant' villages, the modal family size was only two persons with averages of 3.3 and 3.6 persons respectively. One-person households were dominant at Tseng Tau which is also a 'suburbanite' village, though there quite a few are not permanently resident. (Half of the dwellings are second homes or are for recreational rental). By contrast, one-person

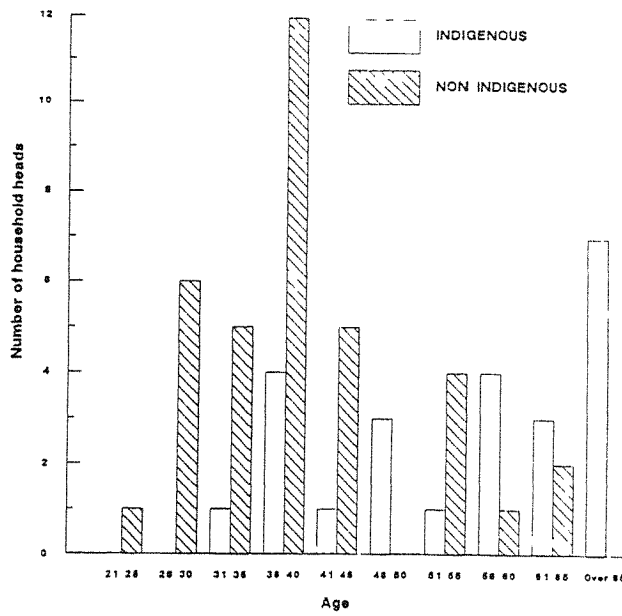


Figure 6 - Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 1986, Age Distribution of Heads of Household

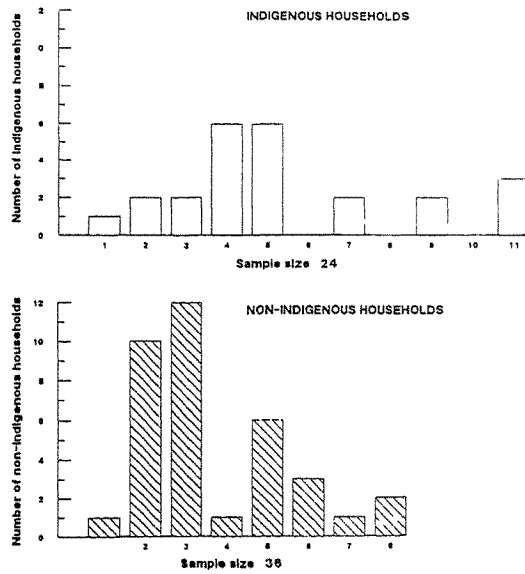


Figure 7 - Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 1986: Distribution of Household Size by Group

households were commonest in the remaining 'indigenous-dominant' villages which had average household sizes of 2.4 persons (Kathy Ng, 1986, 63, 65)

While the reporting of income amongst Hong Kong households is probably unreliable there is no reason to believe that the degree of unreliability is any greater amongst villagers or by suburbanites though it may be suspected that the latter may be more attuned to the objectives of social enquiry. Both at Tai Po Tsai Tsuen and in the three suburbanite-dominated Sai Kung villages were there clear and striking differences between the two groups. At the former only a fifth of the indigenous group had monthly incomes in the H.K.\$6,000-11,999 (U.S.\$770-1,715) range, compared with half of the suburbanites whose monthly incomes fell into this bracket and amongst whom, furthermore, close to a further third had household incomes in the HK\$12,000-23,999 (U.S.\$1,715-3,077) range (Tse, 1986, 47-48 See Figure 8). A similarly-contrasting pattern emerged in the villages of Tai Wan, Wan Chuk Wan and Tseng Tau which have significant suburbanite components in their structure.

These striking differences in household income reflect differences in levels of education investigated in some detail by Tse at Tai Po Tsai Tsuen. She found that amongst 124 indigenous respondents 40 percent had only completed primary school with only three percent having tertiary-level qualifications. By contrast, amongst 126 suburbanite respondents 15 percent had only a primary education while 30 percent had a tertiary-level qualification including 13 percent with university degrees (Tse, 1986, 48. See Figure 9).

So far as behavioral aspects are concerned two may be detailed - choice of house-type and mobility patterns, the former having been investigated by Kathy Ng (1986, 89-90) for Tai Wan, Wong Chuk Wan and Tseng Tau. Whereas in the West it has become fashionable for middle-class people to live in thoroughly- renovated older homes, this is generally not the case in Hong Kong though in the villages of Uk Tau and Pak Sha O for example, westerners have renovated traditional row-houses for use as second homes. Rather the usual

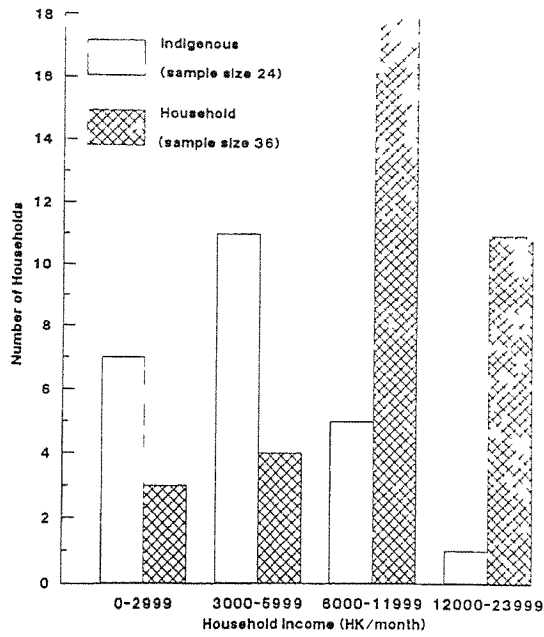


Figure 8 - Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 1986; Income Distribution by Group

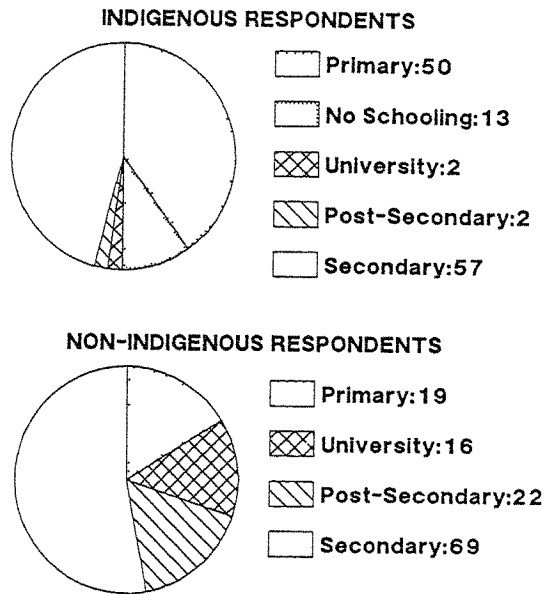


Figure 9 - Tai Po Tsai Tsuen, 1986: Education Level by Group

pattern is that suburbanites live in new houses, 95 per cent of them in Ng's study area. About two thirds of these are in what has come to be known as 'Sai Kung Spanish' style. The size of living quarters also differs between the two groups. Kathy Ng (1986, 88-89) found that not only was the average floor area of dwellings greater in villages distant from Sai Kung (possibly reflecting lower land costs) but also that suburbanites, commanding greater wealth and choosing to live at a distance from the city where costs per unit of space are lower, had somewhat larger homes than indigenes. They also had more personal space because of smaller family size, at least at Tai Wan and Wong Chuk Wan where their households averaged 2.3 and 3.3 persons respectively, compared with 4.1 and 4.0 persons respectively for indigenous villagers.

Analysis of mobility patterns and car ownership was carried out by Tse at Tai Po Tsai Tsuen which, however, showed no major differences between the two groups so far as place of employment, recreational and shopping trips were concerned though children of non-indigenous families tended to travel further afield to school. Half of this group had a one-way journey to school of between half an hour and an hour whereas only a fifth of the children of indigenous families had such a long journey, the rest travelling for less than half an hour (Tse, 1986, 56-57). This pattern clearly reflects the recency of the influx of 'non-indigenous' villagers as parents are often reluctant to remove children from schools in which they are well-established. Nor were modes of transportation or patterns of car ownership very different between the two groups though on the whole residents in this village have notably fewer cars (about a third of the families owned a car) than in more distant suburbs such as Fairview Park or Hong Lok Yuen where in excess of four-fifths of families owned a car (Fung in Tse, 1986, 53).

## CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of middle-class people taking up residence in the urban fringe, whether permanently or in secondary homes,

seems to be near-universal as increasing wealth permits and as perceptions of the balance between costs of relocation and commuting on the one hand and benefits of a semi-rural life-style on the other happen to change. In Hong Kong, New Towns, though they have population densities substantially below those of the urban core, are nevertheless high-rise 'concrete jungles' even though they provide good amenities. Low-rise developments comprising semi-detached houses or bungalows with gardens on the western pattern tend to be expensive to buy (rarely below HK\$2.0 million (U.S.\$256,000)) and are costly in terms of transportation. The larger ones, such as Fairview Park and Hong Lok Yuen, provide a wide range of amenities and are thus self-contained suburbs in the western sense.

Thus far, the question of why people move to a village rather than to purpose-built suburbs has not been investigated but the reasons for relocation given by new residents in both suburbs and suburbanized villages are probably similar. In the new middle-class suburb of Fairview Park, for example, unpleasant physical environment at the place of previous residence was seen by 73 of 129 respondents (56 percent) as the most important 'push' factor. A perceived pleasant physical environment at Fairview Park was reported as the prime factor by 97 of 199 respondents i.e. 49 percent (Lam, 1979, 51, 62). Thirty-nine suburbanites in the three Sai Kung villages of Tai Wan, Wong Chuk Wan and Tseng Tau were asked to rate various 'pull' factors on a scale of one to five, one being 'very important'. 'Good natural scenery' ranked first with a mean score of 1.1 and the successively-ranked mean scores for 'less crowded', 'fresher air' and 'more spacious' were 1.3 or less. Interestingly 'better environment for bringing up children' did not rank particularly highly, probably because just over two-fifths of the respondents did not have children (Kathy Ng, 1986, 49). Significantly, both at suburban Fairview Park and in the three Sai Kung villages, lower land cost or rent did not rank highly as a 'pull' factor (Lam, 1979, 62; Kathy Ng, 1986, 49).

Despite not having shops, or at best shops providing drinks and snacks, despite the frequent need to install septic-tank sewerage to meet urban standards of disposal, despite possible hostility to the



presence of outsiders, villages clearly are attractive to suburbanites. Suburbanites are also attracted to increasing number of villagers for they represent income and the prospect of the village remaining a viable entity rather than being abandoned as their elderly inhabitants pass away. In the suburbanization process, however, there can be little doubt that road access, preferably with a bus service, is a key factor

Where good access does not exist, suburbanization, where it has begun at all, has taken a different form as both organizations and individuals seek bases for recreation. Thus on islands, for example at Yim Tin Tsai, part of the village is being renovated as a holiday camp whilst at Kiu Tsui a tiny village has been totally extirpated in favour of a garish recreation club. At the isolated ocean beach of Sai Wan, boaters and walkers provide sufficient base for a hotel and several restaurants. The only other activity to provide some bulwark against further decay and eventual abandonment is fishing and fish-rearing. In the Sai Kung area, the northerly villages of Tap Mun Chau continue to thrive and in the south Sha Kiu Tau has become a small-scale base for a fishery based upon supplying cage-reared live fish. The redevelopment of coastal villages as suburbs dependent upon water transportation seems some way off whilst the future of villages distant both from road and water looks bleak. The remaining villagers have insufficient political clout to insist upon improved access which is not, in any case, government policy in these park areas.

Many of Hong Kong's villages now conform to Connell's model of the metropolitan village (Connell, 1974, 80 ff). As 'small, detached portions of suburbia' their distribution clearly relates to accessibility from the urban core. They are comparable to high status suburbs, contain significant new or renovated buildings and exhibit striking internal demographic, social and economic discontinuities. Though Connell (1974, 93) has asserted that co-existence rather than integration is characteristic of metropolitan villages the truth of this statement has yet to be tested in the Hong Kong context. The presence of 'outsiders' has brought benefits as well as costs. As the village representative at Tai Po Tsai Tsuen shrewdly remarked, '*... their migration into the area has also helped to bid up the price of houses here*

*in return. Such a relationship enables the outsiders to live with us harmoniously... [In any case] the degree of intimacy between villagers has been decreased in recent years.* (quoted by Tse, 1986, 56).

The traditional function of Hong Kong's villages was to house its farmers. Though in the west and north particularly, farming survives, elsewhere it has been abandoned or displaced. Yet the residential function remains and in some villages that were close to abandonment five years ago it is beginning to expand. But this survival and this expansion now have very different bases.

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