

The Secret History of the Hakkas: The Chinese Revolution as a Hakka Enterprise*

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Few China scholars or Chinese citizens know one of the most basic facts about Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhu De, Chen Yi, Guo Moruo or many other modern leaders: they are all Hakka. Most popular and official histories, in China and abroad, ignore this basic ethnic bond. The title of this article is used ironically, in deliberate parody of the genuine *Secret History of the Mongols*. The subtitle points toward an ironic but serious effort to illuminate a major facet of revolutionary history which remains almost entirely unexplored.

The Paradox of Hakka Obscurity and High Political Position

The Hakka are an impoverished and stigmatized subgroup of Han Chinese whose settlements are scattered from Jiangxi to Sichuan. Socialist revolution meshed well with the Hakka tradition of militant dissent, so that their 3 per cent of the mainland population has been three times more likely than other Han to hold high position. Six of the nine Soviet guerrilla bases were in Hakka territory, while the route of the Long March moved from Hakka village to Hakka village. (Compare Maps 1, 2, 3 and 4.)¹ In 1984, half the Standing Committee

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1. Map 1 is based on Li Lugeng and Zhang Luhong (eds.), *Zhongguo lishi ditu tianchong lianxi ce: Zhongguo lishi: di san ce* ("Fill in the Blanks" Map Workbook for Chinese History: Chinese History Series, Workbook Three) (Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 2nd ed., 1987), p. 7. Hakka areas are added according to *Zhongguo da baike quanshu: yuyan wenzi* (*The Great Chinese Encyclopedia: Languages and Writing Systems*), Vol. 19 (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1988), p. 238. These are supplemented by Luo Xianglin, *Kejia yanjiu daolun* (*An Introduction to the Study of the Hakka: Ethnicity, History, and Culture*) (Taipei: Shijie keshu di er ci keqin dahui [1933], 1973), pp. 57–58. Places names are added according to *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo fen sheng ditu* (*Province-by-province Maps of the People's Republic of China*) (Beijing: Ditu chubanshe, 1977). For topographic maps see *The Times Atlas of China* (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), pp. 4–5. Photographs of base areas and the Long March route appear in Anthony Lawrence, *China: The Long March* (London: Merhurst Press, 1986). Map 2 is also based on Li Lugeng and Zhang Luhong, "Fill in the Blanks" Map Workbook, p. 7, supplemented by *Zhongguo da baike quanshu: jun shi* (*The Great Chinese Encyclopedia: The Military*), Vol. 32 (in 2 vols.) (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1989), Book 2, Maps 2 and 3, pp. 1300–303; and by "Zhongguo gong-nong hong jun Chang Zheng tu" ("A map of the Long March of China's workers, peasants and Red Army"), *Ci Hai* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1979), endpaper to Vol. 1. Map 3 is adapted from Li Lugeng and Zhang Luhong, "Fill in the Blanks" Map Workbook, p. 9, with Hakka areas added as in Map 1. Map 4 is also based on this, itself a simplification of "A map of the Long March." See also the detailed Map 3 in *The Great Chinese Encyclopedia: The Military*, Vol. 2, facing p. 1303. Compare with maps in James Pinckney Harrison, *The Long March to Power: A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921–72* (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 240–41; and in Warren Kuo, *Analytical History of the Chinese Communist Party* (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, 1970, Vol. 3), endpaper.

of the Politburo were Hakka, and the People's Republic and Singapore both had Hakka leaders, Deng Xiaoping and Lee Kwan Yew, joined by Taiwan's President Lee Teng-Hui in 1988.

Hakka political history remains almost entirely undiscussed, and Chinese sources virtually never use the word "Hakka," but a vital subset of political alliances appears as soon as Hakka networks are decoded. Hakka solidarity also illuminates how a small sub-ethnic group can gain significance when it meets an historic opportunity. In the early 20th century Hakka poverty made land reform worth fighting for at precisely the moment when socialist organizers desperately needed the traditional Hakka strengths: mobility, military prowess, strong women and a strategically-useful common language. After 1949 Hakka history from the Long March era was reified as an icon of dissent which Deng Xiaoping's faction promoted as an alternative to Maoist invocations of Yan'an. Since the Beijing massacre of 1989 Deng's allies have reprocessed these Hakka-based images yet again to praise the military and solicit overseas investment.

The importance of Hakka connections. Chinese traditionally avoid public discussion of sub-ethnic ties. The all-important backgrounds and personal connections of the leadership remain largely hidden, even though nominal political position often understates actual clout, given the underdeveloped legal and legislative systems. Analysts spend decades tracing the alliances forged by shared province, home town, alma mater, intermarriage, military service and political patronage. "Connections charts" made popular posters during the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 democracy movement. But even these analyses do not mention ethnicity.

Hakka ethnicity, in fact, predicts high office more reliably than native province, Long March veteran status or military factions based on field army loyalties. One list of 11 "national heroes" is 27 per cent Hakka, nine times the chance rate.² They include Zhu De, Chen Yi, and Song Qingling, daughter of a Hainan Hakka.³ The Central Committee has often been disproportionately Hakka.⁴ And Hakkas appeared at triple their chance rate among the 105 leading politicians at the level of minister (*buzhang*) or above profiled in 1989.⁵ Many

2. *Xin bian dubao shouce (A New Handbook for Newspaper Readers)* (Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2nd ed., 1988), pp. 278–281.

3. Sterling Seagrave, *The Soong Dynasty* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), pp. 17, 53. Another three heroes are Hunan natives from the Xiang sub-ethnic group of Han Chinese: Mao Zedong (Xiangtan County), Peng Dehuai (Xiangtan County) and Liu Shaoqi (Ningxiang County). The non-Hakka, non-Hunan heroes are: Li Dazhao (Leting, Hebei), Qu Qiubai (Changzhou, Jiangsu), Zhou Enlai (Huai'an, Jiangsu) and Dong Biwu (Huang'an, Hubei).

4. S. T. Leong, "The Hakka Chinese of Lingnan: Ethnicity and Social Change in Modern Times," in David Pong and Edmund S. K. Fung (eds.), *Ideal and Reality: Social and Political Change in Modern China 1860–1949* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), p. 314.

5. Li Gucheng, *Zhonggong zui gao lingdaoceng (China's Highest Leaders)* (Hong Kong: Mingbao chubanshe, 1988).

would expect a Deng Xiaoping–Sichuan connection to inflate the number from Sichuan, but these appear at one-third their chance rate. And two of the three Sichuanese are probably Hakka.

The obscurity of Hakka roots. Most mainland Chinese have no idea that leaders such as Deng are Hakka. “What’s a Hakka?” asked a Beijing intellectual when I mentioned Deng. Others protest, “Deng can’t be a Hakka! He’s from Sichuan!” These responses are understandable. The only Hakka frequently identified as such in the Chinese media is Ye Jianying, a native of the Hakka “capital” at Meixian in eastern Guangdong, and he is invoked as a token, much as the Panchen Lama served as a token Tibetan. Confining the official image of Hakkas to Ye Jianying as an individual, and to Meixian as a location, obscures the importance of the 33 million mainland Hakkas whose settlements stretch all the way to Sichuan. Efforts to combat Han chauvinism account for some of this silence, which contrasts dramatically with the routine highlighting of national minorities, such as Long Marcher Wei Guoqing who is proudly labelled as a Zhuang. Ye Jianying is the only leader identified as Hakka in a dictionary of revolutionary figures, and in a 41-volume set of biographies of Party heroes.⁶ Autobiographies and memoirs are equally silent. The 1979 edition of the officially-sanctioned *Ci Hai* dictionary devotes only nine lines to the Hakka people and eight to their language. In contrast, West Lake in Hangzhou receives 18 lines, while the Zhuang, Miao and Yi minorities receive 17–19 lines each, with an additional 12–14 lines on their languages. Chinese ethnographic dictionaries include many entries under “Han,” but none for “Hakka,” “Min” or other Han subgroups.⁷

However, Chinese leaders may bring up their Hakka roots with foreign reporters who have little idea what they mean. Yang Shangkun, who has known Deng Xiaoping for 75 years, described Deng’s Hakka roots to Harrison Salisbury.⁸ Deng, born in Xiexing Village, Guang’an County in central Sichuan, is descended from Meixian Hakkas.⁹ Zhu De told Agnes Smedley about his poor Hakka family in northern Sichuan’s Yilong County.¹⁰ Roy discusses Guo

6. Zheng Fulin (ed.), *Zhongguo geming he jianshe lishi shiqi renwu cidian* (*A Dictionary of Historical Figures from China’s Revolutionary and Socialist Construction Eras*) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1988); Fan Si and Ding Jiaqi, “Ye Jianying,” in Hu Hua (ed.), *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* (*Biographies of Chinese Communists*), Vol. 40 (of 41), (Xian: Renmin chubanshe, 1983), pp. 1–116.

7. *Zhonghua minzu fengsu cidian* (*A Dictionary of Ethnic Customs in China*) (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988).

8. Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March: The Untold Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 136. Hakka sources also claim Yang Shangkun as a Hakka.

9. Rewi Alley, “Guang’an, birthplace of Deng Xiaoping,” *Eastern Horizon*, Vol. 19, No. 8 (1980), p. 8; Chi Hsin, *Teng Hsiao-ping—A Political Biography* (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1978), p. 4; Uli Franz, *Deng Xiaoping* (Boston: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 11; Li Gucheng, *Chinese’s Highest Leaders*, p. 264.

10. Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956), p. 14.

Moruo's Hakka family from western Sichuan's Leshan.¹¹ And Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-t'ao), who was born in Jishui, Jiangxi and raised in Pingxiang County, quotes his mother as saying that she didn't know why their Hakka ancestors had moved to the mountains on the Hunan–Jiangxi border during the Ming–Qing transition.¹²

Some Caveats

Taboo topics tempt researchers toward conspiracy theories and reductionism. Consideration of Hakka ties helps to clarify the view of modern China, but they are never explanatory in isolation. The high tide of Hakka leadership appears to rest on revolutionary status as much as ethnicity. The Hakka are only one of hundreds of subgroups which won the revolution, and ethnic bonds compete with dozens of other demands, even for Hakka politicians. Additional caveats include the difficulty of tracing ethnicity by birthplace, degrees of assimilation to dominant Han culture, and individual variations in world view.

Difficulty of tracing ethnicity by birthplace. Explicit proof of Hakka roots is elusive, a problem Vincent Shih faced in writing Taiping history.¹³ Chinese biographies virtually never mention Han sub-ethnic ties, but they do scrupulously list birthplace, so Hakka insiders can decode a network of Hakka genealogies. Birthplace in one of the 33 countries which were pure Hakka in 1933 very strongly implies Hakka background. For this study, I count as Hakka people born in a pure Hakka or partial Hakka county who have supplemental Hakka documentation. Chen Yi, for example, chronicled his genealogy to his oldest son. Their ancestors left southern Hunan (Xinning County on the Guangxi border) in search of good land during the Qing transition, eventually settling in Sichuan, at Ma'an Village near Lezhi City in Yilong County, just a few kilometres from Zhu De's native village.¹⁴ Most Sichuan Hakkas migrated along precisely this route at the same time. Hakka historians claim Chen Yi as Hakka, and print his probable family tree in a Hong Kong compilation of Hakka genealogies.¹⁵

I define probable Hakkas as natives of pure Hakka counties, or of

11. David Tod Roy, *Kuo Mo-jo: The Early Years* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 19.

12. Chang Kuo-t'ao [Zhang Guotao], *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party 1921–1927* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1971), Vol. 1, p. 23.

13. Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 305.

14. Chen Yi, "Xuanzi geming de daolu" ("Choosing the Revolutionary Road"), in Nie Yuansu, Chen Wusu, Zhou Zuxi and Guo Guilan (eds.), *Chen Yi zao nian de huiyi, he wengao* (*Chen Yi's reminiscences on his Youth and his Early Literary Works*) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, [1963] 1981), pp. 27–28.

15. Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1965), pp. 22–23; Luc Xianglin, *Kejia shiliao huibian* (*Historical Sources for the Study of the Hakka*) (Hong Kong: Zhongguo xueshe, 1965), pp. 94–97; Luo Xianglin, *An Introduction*, pp. 35–36.

the additional 150 strongly-Hakka counties, for whom I find no additional documentation.¹⁶ Eighty years ago, most Hakkas grew up in ethnically isolated villages. (Central Guangdong Hakkas were more likely to live in mixed Cantonese and/or southern Min districts.)¹⁷ Impoverished background, early revolutionary activity in Hakka districts, ability to speak Hakka and life-long alliance with Hakka leaders reinforce the likelihood of Hakka roots. Explicit confirmation would require raising direct, often taboo questions with relatives or contemporaries.

Deeper investigation can document some probable Hakkas as definitely Hakka. Hu Yaobang, for example, was a poor peasant from Hunan's majority Hakka Liuyang county. At the age of 14 Hu walked 600 kilometres south to the overwhelmingly Hakka Jiangxi Soviet to do youth and propaganda work, tasks for which Hakka dialect would have been almost indispensable.¹⁸ Wang Zhen, another Liuyang County native, left home at 13, fought as a guerrilla in Hunan's strongly Hakka Pingjiang County, then rose in communications and propaganda work in the Central Soviet before joining the Long March.¹⁹ Liu Binyan, the *People's Daily* reporter, confirms that Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, Hu Yaobang and Wang Zhen are all Hakka.²⁰

Variable degrees of assimilation. Hakka identity varies. Ethnicity is classically defined by common race, religion, customs, and language. But Hakkas are genetically the same as other Han, and share very similar religion and customs.²¹ Comparing Hakka identity with Jewish identity can be illuminating. In the United States Jews are scattered by diaspora and tiny in numbers (less than 2 per cent of the population). Individual Jews vary in assimilation and politics, from Christian convert Felix Mendelssohn to Zionist Chaim Weitzmann to feminist Gloria Steinem. Yiddish, which transcended political boundaries, once provided the very name for European Jewish solidarity, *Yiddishkeit*. And language is the most important Hakka unifier, even though many Hakka have long been multilingual. Ye Jianying himself attended a Cantonese primary school, then spoke Mandarin at the Yunnan Military Academy.²² Zhu De used Mandarin to study for the

16. Counties are listed in Luo Xianglin, *An Introduction*; listed and discussed in Mantaro J. Hashimoto, *The Hakka Dialect: A Linguistic Study of its Phonology, Syntax and Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 6–13; revised in *The Great Chinese Encyclopedia: Languages and Writing Systems*, pp. 237–39; supplemented by *Fujian sheng shi xian cheng qu tu ce* (*Maps of Fujian Cities, Counties, and Municipal Districts*) (Fuzhou: Fujian sheng ditu chubanshe, 1985).

17. Jerry Norman, *Chinese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 188.

18. Hu Yaobang's Hakka identity is discussed in Yang Zhongmei, *Hu Yaobang: A Chinese Biography* (trans. William A. Wycoff, ed. Timothy Cheek) (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1988), pp. 160–65. I found this book only after I had written about Hu as a "probable Hakka."

19. Li Gucheng, *China's Highest Leaders*, pp. 11–15.

20. Personal communication, Portland, Oregon, 22 June 1991.

21. C. Fred Blake, *Ethnic Groups and Social Change in a Chinese Market Town* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981), pp. 63–66.

22. Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark, *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Communism 1921–1965* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 1009.

imperial exams (which he passed as a *xiuca*), when he studied physical education at normal college, and in military work in Yunnan. Deng Xiaoping learned Mandarin and French at his Catholic middle school.²³ Currently most Hakkas under 60 years old in the People's Republic and Taiwan speak some Mandarin; virtually all Hong Kong Hakkas also speak Cantonese.²⁴

Other Hakkas are more assimilated still. Charlie Soong, from Hainan's Wenchang County, changed his name and married a rich Shanghai Christian. Their children, Song Qingling, Meiling, Ailing, and T.V., were most unlikely to have spoken Hakka, for they grew up as highly assimilated cosmopolitans. Hakkas may even be unaware of their ancestry. Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui, who speaks Mandarin and southern Min, did not know about his Hakka ancestry until a mainland reporter traced his genealogy.

Individual variations in world view. Hakka roots do not guarantee a particular world view. Educational, professional and political alliances are likely to outweigh ethnic ties among revolutionaries. Nor do ethnic ties ensure co-operation. Hakkas fought the civil war among themselves as well as other Han. Many warlords, Nationalist military and politicians were Hakka. The Nationalists made Hakka Shaoguan City its Guangdong capital from 1937–45; nearby Lian County became a model Nationalist county.²⁵ The role of Hakkas among the Nationalists must remain beyond the scope of this study, but it will probably prove even more hidden than in socialist accounts. Certainly Chiang Kai-shek's inner circle of fellow Zhejiang natives formed a major barrier to Hakka political aspirations.

The Roots of Hakka Obscurity

First studies of taboo topics can only sketch lines for future inquiry, as early feminist, gay and black history were forced to do. The secrecy surrounding Hakka history means that many findings must be given tentatively, in terms of "probable" Hakkas and "contributing factors." No other Han subgroup approaches the Hakka combination of diaspora, stigma, pride and silent solidarity against outsiders. The Worldwide Hakka Federation has many members outside the mainland, but its anti-communist and Christian constituencies are reluctant to discuss Party history. Non-Chinese sources often openly discuss ethnicity, but are all too often uninformed or vague.

Why are Hakkas so obscure? Revealing the concentration of Hakka leaders would certainly fuel charges of nepotism. But other, more neutral trends mask Hakka importance: Han unity, bad fit with official historical categories, and the stigma of rootlessness. This stigmatized subculture of migration and self-reliance produced many

23. Franz, *Deng Xiaoping*, p. 14.

24. Blake, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 111–13.

25. Ezra F. Vogel, *One Step Ahead in China: Guangdong under Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 229–230.

precedents for reforms which the communists later promoted nationwide as modern and revolutionary.

The ideal of Han unity. Seamless cultural unity is a Han ideal which the Hakka share. Chinese traditionally abhor public discussion of sub-ethnic divisions as encouraging the all-too-frequent blood feuds and civil wars. Ordinary people share this reticence, as when an elderly Hakka villager in Hong Kong's New Territories told an anthropologist, "I really don't like to talk about the Hakkas and other Chinese. This issue has disturbed the unification of the Chinese race."²⁶ Hakkas who achieve national success glory in their achievements as Chinese; ethnic labelling seems factional and graceless. Rulers from the Qinshi emperor to Mao Zedong are hailed for unifying the empire, whatever the cost.²⁷

Sun Yat-sen, who despairingly called China a "plate of loose sand," provides the ultimate example of a national leader whose Hakka roots, if any, cannot be documented securely. Non-Hakka southerners would be horrified if they were, for Sun is always discussed as a national hero, "The father of the country" (*Guo Fu*). "Sun the silent," as his biographer called him, did not refer to himself as Hakka, but Hakka historians claim him as their own.²⁸ Details from Sun's life are provocative. His family were recent migrants to the multi-surname village of Chong Hung (Mandarin: Cuiheng), in a mixed Hakka-Yue Cantonese area of the Pearl River Delta. Local Hakkas were quite assimilated, but marauders frequently attacked the fortress-like village houses. Sun attended a village school which admitted girls. The schoolmaster, a Taiping veteran, inspired Sun with tales of Hong Xiuquan. Most Chong Hung men worked overseas, and at 13 Sun joined his older brother in Hawaii, was said to have spoken Hakka there, and was nicknamed "Hong Xiuquan." Sun described how when on trips back to his home village, "the first matter for my care was to see my rifle was in order and to make sure plenty of ammunition was still left. I had to prepare for action for the night."²⁹

26. He also described how the British had used ethnicity to divide and conquer. Nicole Constable, personal communication, 27 November 1990. Japanese imperialists also manipulated Hakka-Cantonese animosities.

27. Myron Cohen, "Being Chinese: the peripheralization of traditional identity," *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, Daedalus, Vol. 120, No. 2 (1991), pp. 113-134; David Yen-ho Wu, "The construction of Chinese and non-Chinese identities," in *The Living Tree*, pp. 159-180.

28. Luo Xianglin, *Guofu jishi yuanliu kao* (*An Investigation into the Ancestry of the Father of our Country*) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, [1943], 1954), *Historical Sources, An Introduction*, pp. 263-65.

29. Luo Xianglin's *Investigations*, p. 15 cite a copy of partial family tree supplied by Sun's older sister. But they also rely, bizarrely, on Sun's English monolingual biographer's romanization of Sun's ancestral village (in Paul Linebarger, *Sun Yat Sen and the Chinese Republic* (New York & London: Century, 1925), p. 37). Luo, unable to find anything corresponding to a "Kung Kun" on the East River, argues that Sun followed a traditional Hakka taboo on identifying one's ancestral village to outsiders, and so referred to the village by a nickname. Yang Zhongmei also claims Sun as a Hakka in *Hu Yaobang*, p. 160. Recent migration from Linebarger, *Sun Yat Sen*, p. 37; mixed surname village, men overseas, p. 38, "river pirate" attack on fortress houses,

The chief evidence against Sun's being Hakka is a reconstruction of his genealogy as definitely non-Hakka.³⁰ The other is Sun's mother's refusal to unbind his sister's feet. Sun quoted her exclaiming in horror, "Would you have your sister as a Hakka woman or a Chinese woman? Would have have her as a stranger or as one of us?"³¹ Linebarger, Sun's biographer, interviewed him at length. He devotes an entire chapter to the footbinding, and makes much of a family photograph in which Sun's mother and two sisters-in-law have bound feet.³² Yet Linebarger does not discuss two other women relatives in the same portrait whose feet are unbound. The controversy over Sun's ethnicity probably cannot be resolved. He may have come from a mixed background, or possibly was Yue Cantonese.

The rigidity of official categories. Official history is centralized in China, commissioned from northern capitals. The basic historical categories, dynasty and province, can render migratory people "borderline," or "marginal." Local history is often literally "provincial." A study of Fujian revolutionaries, for example, may omit all mention of Jiangxi or Guangdong, completely ignoring important movements which cross provincial boundaries. The claim that Deng cannot be Hakka because he is Sichuanese testifies to the strength of traditional categorization. But Hakka diaspora scattered successive waves of migrants athwart half a dozen provincial boundaries. Skinner analyses Chinese economic organization in terms of eight regional subsystems organized around lowland market and transit hubs.³³ Hakkas straddle the mountain boundaries at least five of these subsystems (Maps 1 and 3).³⁴ And even explicit histories of the Hakka

footnote 29 continued from page 943

pp. 57–62, "Sun the Silent", p. 246. Girls in village school from Harry Bond Restarick, *Sun Yatsen Liberator of China* (New Haven: Yale, 1931), p. 5. Teacher a recently demobilized Taiping from Harold Z. Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen: Reluctant Revolutionary* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), p. 22. Hong Xiuquan nickname, able to speak Hakka in Hawaii, from Leo J. Moser, *The Chinese Mosaic: The Peoples and Provinces of China*, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985), p. 247. Sun's self-defence from a 1923 speech to Hong Kong University students, quoted without further attribution in Alfred Schinz, *Cities in China* (Berlin: Gebruder Borntraeger, 1989), p. 369.

30. Tan Bian, "Sun Zhongshan jiashi yuanliu jiqi shangdai jingji zhuangkuang xin zheng" ("New evidence on Sun Zhongshan's ancestry and his ancestors' economic status"), *Xueshu yanjiu (Literary Research)*, Vol. 3 (1963), pp. 32–38.

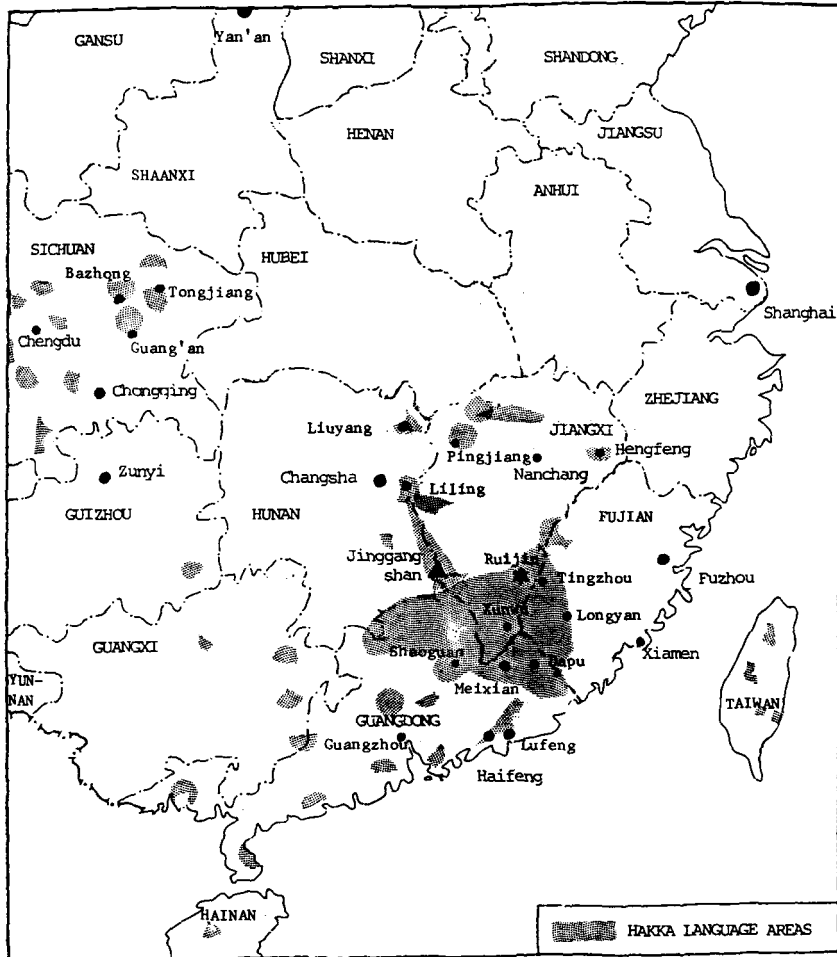
31. Linebarger, *Sun Yat-sen*, p. 81.

32. *Ibid.* pp. 25–31. Photograph faces p. 25. A lavish 1981 mainland photographic biography of Sun reprints the portrait, but cuts the picture off at the knees.

33. G. William Skinner, "Cities and the hierarchy of local systems" and "Regional urbanization in nineteenth century China," in G. William Skinner (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), pp. 212, 216.

34. The South-east Coast Subsystem includes the Hakka homeland including north-east Guangdong and western Fujian. The Lingnan Mountain Subsystem has Hakkas scattered throughout Guangdong. But they are especially concentrated in the northern uplands of the Lingnan Mountains and the rockier coastal areas, including Hong Kong. The Middle Yangze Subsystem includes Hakkas who live on the Fujian–Jiangxi border. In the Upper Yangtze Subsystem, Hakka settlements are south-east of Chongqing. In the North-west Subsystem, Hakka settlements ring Chengdu, and are scattered about the mountains on the Shaanxi border.

Map 1: Hakka Language Areas

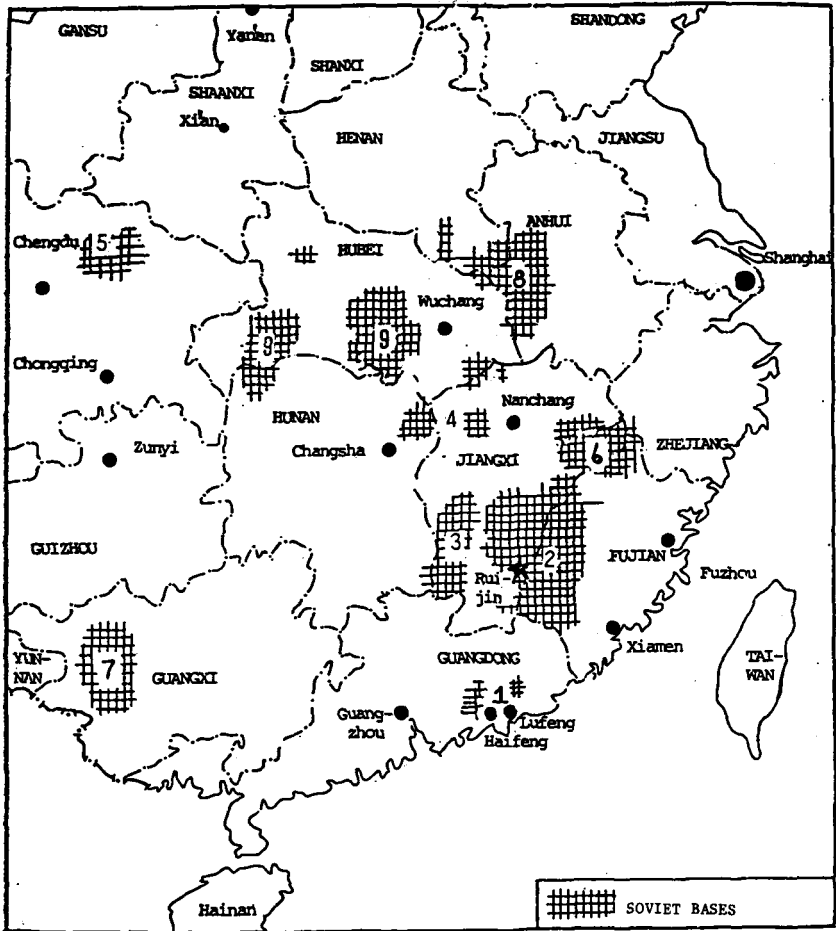


obscure the record under archaic, incorrect or confusing terminology, such as referring to them as “the Cantonese.”³⁵

Migration and the stigma of rootlessness. Dominant Han tradition worshipped the native place, and the Min and Yue Cantonese disdain

35. Until this century, Meixian was called Jiaying (Kiaying), and Changting called Tingzhou. Hakkas are also called “newcomers” (*xin ren*) or “arrivals” (*lai ren*). They are often called “Cantonese,” especially in Taiwan, Hunan and Sichuan. Hakka dialect is also called “dirt Cantonese” (*tu Guangdonghua*); “newcomer talk” (*xin min hua*); or “rough border talk” (*ma jie hua*) (see Cui Rongchang, “Sichuan fangyan de biandiao xianxiang” (“The making of the Sichuan dialects”), *Fangyan (Chinese Dialects)*, Vol. 1 (1985), p. 10). Japanese imperialists referred to Hakkas as “Cantonese” even when writing ethnography or developing a Hakka writing system using *kana*. English readers may be further perplexed by references to the Hoklos, who are not Hakka at all but people of southern Fujian ancestry living in Guangdong. (Hoklo is the Cantonese pronunciation of *Fu lao*, from “Fujian” and *lao* “fellow”; Blake, *Ethnic Groups*, p. 72.)

Map 2: Soviet Bases



Notes:

1. Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet (1927-28)
2. Central Soviet (southern Jiangxi, western Fujian; Min-Yue-Gan)
3. South-west Jiangxi Soviet (Gan-Xi-Nan)
4. Hunan-Jiangxi Soviet
5. East Sichuan Soviet (Chuan-Shaan, 1932-35)
6. North-east Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet (Gan-Min-Wan)
7. West Guangxi Soviet (Zuo-You Jiang)
8. Hubei-Henan-Anhui Soviet (E-Yu-Wan)
9. West Hunan-Hubei Soviet (Xiang-E-Xi)

the Hakka as rootless. Four mass migrations shaped Hakka identity. In the first the Hakkas left Henan and Shandong during the chaos of the Jurchen attacks between the Tang and Song dynasties (907-959 A.D.), and settled around Changting (Tingzhou) in the underpopulated highlands of the Fujian-Jiangxi border. In the second they moved into north-eastern Guangdong during the period of the Song-Yuan dynastic transition (1127-1279), settling around Meixian

and the North River highlands. In the third many Hakkas claimed untended land on the south-east Guangdong coast during the early Qing (1644–1800). Others, like Chen Yi's kin, moved up to the Hunan–Jiangxi border. By 1800 Hakkas had also settled permanently in Guangxi, Hainan, Taiwan and famine-depopulated Sichuan.³⁶ The fourth migration came in the mid-19th century, after nearly a million died in the Hakka–Bendi land wars, and in the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). Hakkas dispersed further away from Guangdong, into Sichuan, Hong Kong and overseas.

The word “Hakka” is as blatant a brand of impoverished wandering as “Gypsy” or “Okie.” It was originally a hostile outside coinage, the Cantonese pronunciation of the characters for “guest family,” “settlers” (Mandarin pronunciation is *kejia*). “Guest” is often pejorative in Chinese. *Jia* is used in derisive names for minorities, but not for other Han except the even more benighted Danjia (Tanga, Tanka) boat people. Old population registers called migrants from outside a province *keji* “guest population.” Many *keji* are Hakka; Zhu De used this term to identify himself as Hakka.³⁷ (*Keji* can also refer to the impoverished “shed people” (*peng min*) migrants.³⁸) Long-settled Han call themselves “locals,” “natives” *bendi* (punti), literally “rooted in the soil.” In Guangdong *bendi* implies Cantonese. But long-settled Fujian and Jiangxi Hakkas also call themselves *bendi*. Other Hakkas have no special name for themselves, but, if pressed, describe themselves as “Tingzhou people,” for the small Fujian town which 90 per cent of Hakka forebears passed through. Guangdong and Hong Kong Hakkas prefer a more courteous “guest person” (*keren*) form.³⁹ Non-Chinese sometimes wonder whether the Hakkas are a national minority (*shaoshu minzu*), but this, implying that they fall outside the glories of Han civilization, outrages them. Guangdong Hakkas protested against a 1930s government publication which described them as “barbarous” and “speaking a bird-like chatter.”⁴⁰ Hakkas also complained about a 1958 Beijing University publication which referred to them as “a national minority.”⁴¹ Greater Han ethnicity as a “Han race/group” (*Han zu*) belongs to the “civilized and civilizing” Han 94 per cent of the population, an identity which exists only in opposition to small numbers of “real” minorities such as the Yao or the Tibetans. Han sub-ethnics typically refer to themselves simply as “people” (*ren*), specified as Hakka or Min or Wu.

36. Cui Rongchang, “The making of the Sichuan dialects,” p. 12.

37. Zhu De, “Muqin de huiyi” (“Remembering my mother”), *Wen xuan (Literary Selections)*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing yuyan xueyuan, 1981), p. 115.

38. Stephen C. Averill, “The shed people and the opening of the Yangzi highlands,” *Modern China*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1983), pp. 84–126; Moser, *Chinese Mosaic*, p. 239.

39. Blake, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 50–51, 60–62; Moser, *Mosaic*, p. 239.

40. Leong, “The Hakka Chinese,” p. 316.

41. Yin Meng, “Weishenme ba Kejiahua dangzuo shaoshu minzu yuyan?” (“Why should Hakka be considered a minority language?”), *Zhongguo Yuwen (Languages of China)*, Vol. 74 (1958), endpaper.

Stigmatized Cultural Traits Useful in Revolution

Hakka identity does not centre on birthplace but on ancestry and culture. Migrants repeatedly dug up their ancestors' bones and carried them in jars to new settlements. Hakkas, in fact, see themselves as more Chinese than other Han, as preservers of ancient northern Han culture. Thus Hakka associations are called "Associations for those who revere the true Chinese tradition" (*Chongzheng Hui* from *chongbai* "revere" and *zheng tong* "the true tradition"). The Yue and the Min deride the Hakkas as trouble-makers, as poor, stingy, crude fighters who overwork their women and remain hopelessly clannish. Hakka historians herald many of the same traits as adaptations to mobility, conflict and poverty, which yield strong women, military prowess, a useful common language and an openness to innovation, traits which they claim underlie both traditional Chinese culture and continued progress:

Carrying with them the culture of Central China the Hakkas have built a great mobile army, rich in the pioneer spirit. They have built roads where no roads went before. They founded homes in the wilderness. They have offered hope and promise. Thus, they do not have a narrow concept of territory and are not strongly tied to any one local region. Having a very cosmopolitan outlook, they feel at home anywhere in China.⁴²

The stigmatized traits merit further discussion, for socialist revolution eventually adapted many of them nation-wide, carefully avoiding any mention of parallels in Hakka tradition.

History of conflict. Chinese traditionally avoid discussing unresolved conflict. Northerners may not know what a Hakka is. But the Yue and Min do: their great-grandfathers fought them. Cantonese gazetteers often referred to Hakkas as "Hakka bandits" (*ke fei*), and Hakka gentry as "rebel chieftains" (*ke shen*) or "bandit chieftains" (*zei shou*).⁴³ Hakkas, as late migrants, often ended up with hilly, marginal land, or squatted on land deserted by war, famine or plague. Conflict was inevitable when the original owners returned. The central government, however, sometimes backed Hakkas when it feared sedition. When the Ming Taizu emperor feared rebellion in the border area between Hunan and Jiangxi, he drove the original population off with high taxes, and Hakkas later moved onto the vacated land.⁴⁴ The early Qing suppressed rebellion by evacuating the coast in 1660. Fujian and Guangdong were worst affected; as many as 90 per cent of the coastal Cantonese died. Few returned after resettlement was allowed in 1684, so the Hakkas moved in.⁴⁵ The Kangxi emperor paid south-eastern Hakkas in silver to repopulate

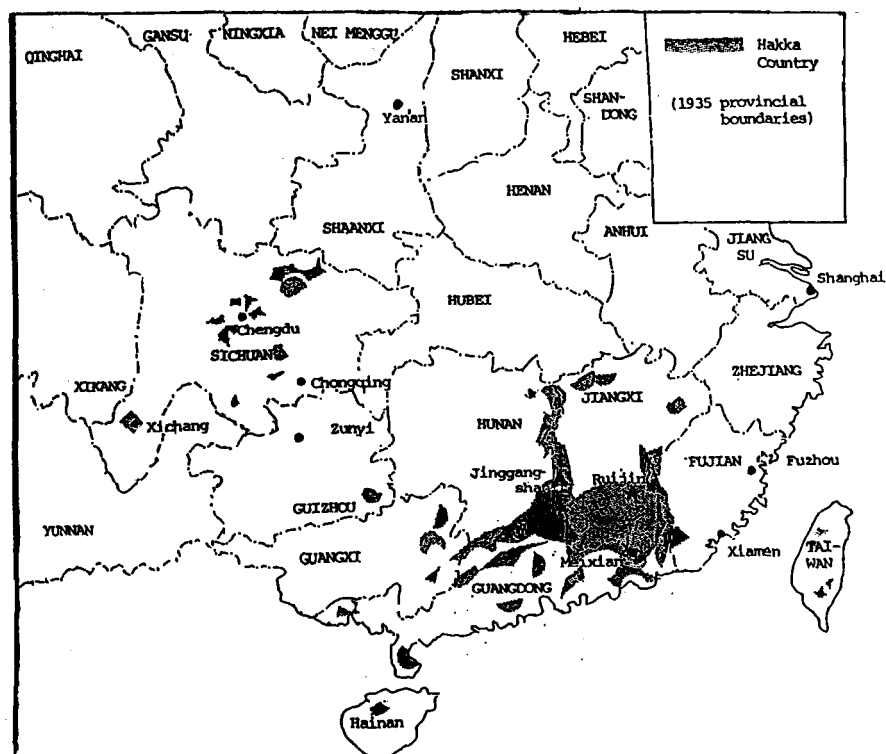
42. Yang Zhongmei, *Hu Yaobang*, p. 163.

43. Myron L. Cohen, "The Hakka or guest people: dialect as a sociocultural variable in south-eastern China," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1968), p. 275.

44. Yang Zhongmei, *Hu Yaobang* cites the Liuyang Gazetteer on pp. 161–62.

45. Cohen, "Guest people," p. 275.

Map 3: Hakka Country



Sichuan after famine, peasant rebellion and brutal Manchu reprisals decimated the population.⁴⁶

Poverty. Hakka migrants not only had bad land, but less time to develop the local connections so essential for accumulating wealth. In pure-Hakka western Fujian in the 1920s, 85 per cent of the population were tenant farmers who paid between 60 and 80 per cent of their crop in rent. Peasants ate rice for only three months of the year. More than 90 per cent of the men were illiterate, and more than 25 per cent were jobless wanderers (*liumang wuchan*), compared to 5 per cent nation-wide.⁴⁷ In the country as a whole Hakkas were much less likely

46. Han Suyin, *Crippled Tree*, pp. 20–23.

47. Zhonggong Longyan diwei dang shi cailiao zhengji yanjiu wenyuanhui (The Longyan Prefectural Party Committee for Historical Research Materials), *Minxi geming genzhudi shi (A History of the Revolutionary Bases of Western Fujian)* (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1987), pp. 2, 35, 185, 190.

to be landlords than other Han, and far more likely to work as miners, or making paper, salt or textiles.⁴⁸

Scholarship and open mindedness. The Hakka scholarly tradition is not widely known, but an unusually high number passed the imperial exams. Eighty per cent of Meixian males were literate a century ago, while many Hakkas studied in Europe or Japan. In 1934 even impoverished Xunwu County in the Jiangxi Soviet had 400 living *xiuca* scholars who had passed the imperial exam. Mao estimated that 40 per cent of Xunwu males were at least minimally literate, though he stressed that half of these knew only 200 characters.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Yan'an was only 1 per cent literate in the same period. Hakkas could also be more receptive than other Han to new, even heterodox, ideas. They continue to cherish their meticulously-kept family trees, but religion and ancestor worship are often less elaborate than among other Han. Families honour a single ancestor tablet, not a whole altar full. Hakka shamans also abounded, and Hakkas converted disproportionately to Christianity.⁵⁰ In the late 1920s Xunwu City, a market town of 2,600, had five churches (and 20 brothels); Shanghang, Fujian, had six churches which occupied one-sixth of the city land.⁵¹

Strong women. Hakka women adapted to their lifestyle with physical strength and self-reliance. Except for a few members of the upper class, they have never bound their feet. Women traditionally kept substantial cash reserves from their dowries, nursed their own children and worked for cash outside the home. Even today Hong Kong Hakka women often work in markets or on construction sites. Hakka tradition also strongly encouraged monogamy, and discouraged daughter-selling, concubinage and prostitution.⁵² Poverty often forced Hakka males overseas, so the women ploughed the home fields and handled the money. Women's self-sufficiency also promoted a relative freedom of association between the sexes, as well as a

48. Averill, "Shed people"; Stephen C. Averill, "Party, society, and local elite in the Jiangxi communist movement," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1987), pp. 279-303; James M. Polachek, "The moral economy of the Kiangsi Soviet (1928-1934)," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (1983), p. 810.

49. Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu: Translated, with Introduction and Notes by Roger R. Thompson* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 191, 194.

50. Cohen, "Guest people," pp. 164-65.

51. Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*, pp. 116, 211; Longyan Prefectural Party Committee, *Revolutionary Bases*, p. 4.

52. Shih, *Tai ping Ideology*, pp. 317-18; Elizabeth Johnson, "Great-aunt Yeung: a Hakka wage-laborer," in Mary Sheridan and Janet Salaff (eds.), *Lives: Chinese Working Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Han Suyin, *Crippled Tree*, pp. 27-28. Ono Kazuko with Joshua A. Fogel (eds.), *Chinese Woman in a Century of Revolution: 1850-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989) pp. 1-22; Blake, *Ethnic Groups*, pp. 43-44, 51-52; Elizabeth L. Johnson, "Grieving for the dead, grieving for the living: funeral laments of Hakka women," in James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (eds.), *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 135-164.

tradition of women's love songs, and public protest as voiced in bridal and funeral laments.

Military prowess. Military heroism is central to the Hakka tradition. Hakkas have often been under siege from their neighbours. Many still live in huge adobe or stone fortresses (*tulou*), elegantly-designed multi-storey circular complexes, some built as recently as the Cultural Revolution. Large central courtyards contain wells, granaries and animal pens, which allow several hundred residents to stave off attack for months.⁵³ Hakkas have long participated heavily in regional and national armies, as well as irregular troops. Land wars with the Bendi fuelled the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). Hong Xiuquan, a Hakka native of Hua County, Guangdong, led the rebellion, along with his fellow Hakka warrior, Shi Dakai. Taiping opposition to footbinding and opium smoking meshed with Hakka values, as did their promotion of women workers and officials. The earliest recruits were Hakka tenant farmers and miners, followed by soldiers, blacksmiths, barbers and masons, all disproportionately Hakka trades. Some 3,000 joined after defeat in a battle with the Bendi. (In Guangdong, however, many Bendi joined the Taiping, then tried to expel the Hakkas.)⁵⁴ After the Hakka–Bendi wars of 1864–67 killed nearly a million, including tens of thousands in Taiwan, the government moved many Hakkas out of Guangdong, and set Hakka quotas for military and civil service exams.⁵⁵

Hakka militance and separatism remained a serious problem in the Republican era. The Hakka warlord Chen Jiongming, a native of Haifeng, fought for the secession of eastern Guangdong and western Fujian in the 1920s. Chen had served as governor of Guangdong and commanded the Guangdong Army. His cousin, General Chen Jiongguang, backed the secession efforts before Sun Yat-sen deposed them.⁵⁶ Paramilitary fraternal organizations were especially common among the poorer hilltop Hakkas.⁵⁷ Many were Taiping admirers or descendants. Zhu De was a member of the anti-Manchu Older Brother Society (*Ge Lao Hui*), one of several brotherhoods which ran special “reception bureaus” in the Soviets.⁵⁸ The Hakka settlement at

53. Visit to several south-west Fujian *tulou* outside Shuyang Village in Nanjing County, 1 December 1989. The August 1989 issue of *Han Sheng* (*Echo Magazine*) is entirely devoted to the Fujian roundhouses. Photographs of similar fortresses in 1920s Xunwu City in Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*.

54. Luo Xianglin, *An Introduction*, p. 27; Shih, *Taiping Ideology*, pp. 49, 226–28, 305–306, 313.

55. Cohen, “Guest people”; Leong, “Hakka Chinese,” pp. 288–292, 295.

56. Howard Boorman and Richard C. Howard, *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 173–180; Fernando Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai and the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 37–38, 81–85; Leong, “The Hakka Chinese,” pp. 308–310.

57. Polachek, “The moral economy,” p. 814.

58. Smedley, *Great Road*, pp. 87–88, 114–15, 135–36; Stuart Schram, “Mao Tse-tung and secret societies,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 27 (1966), pp. 1–13.

Qionghai, Hainan, had produced communist guerrillas since 1927.⁵⁹ The revolutionary opera "The Red Detachment of Women," set at Qionghai, probably features fighting Hakka women.

Hakka Language as Ethnic Bond and Strategic Advantage

Language is the affiliation which produces the meaning of Hakka ethnicity. Urban occupations, schools and military mobilizations often subdivide on linguistic lines.⁶⁰ Guangdong Hakka tradition stressed language over surname with the slogan "acknowledge your dialect, not your surname" (*ren sheng, bu ren xing*).⁶¹ Guangxi Hakkas considered the refusal to speak Hakka as a betrayal serious enough to bar violators from ancestral halls and ban their names from family gravestones.⁶² Sichuan Hakkas still say, "You can sell your ancestral land, but never sell out your clan's language" (*neng mai zu tian, bu neng mai zong yan*).⁶³

Forty million people speak Hakka, including at least 33 million in the People's Republic (3 per cent of all citizens), two million in Taiwan (10 per cent), and sizeable enclaves in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.⁶⁴ Some cite the Hakkas' Shandong and Henan ancestry to support the erroneous claim that Hakka is closely related to Mandarin; indeed it has a similar vocabulary and fewer tones than Cantonese or Min. But a thousand years of residence south of the Yangze triggered extensive language change. Linguists class Hakka as a southern dialect, close enough to the Gan dialect of Jiangxi that they used to be classed as a single Hakka-Gan language.⁶⁵

Unlike Cantonese, Min and Wu, dialects which vary so much that

59. Luo Xianglin, *An Introduction*, pp. 57-58; Vogel, *One Step Ahead*, p. 309.

60. Cohen, "Guest people," pp. 217, 264; Gordon A. Bennett and Ronald N. Montaperto, *Red Guard: The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-Ai* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 5-6.

61. Cohen, "Guest people," p. 280.

62. "Betrayal" from Yang Huandian, Liang Zhenshi, Li Puying and Liu Cunhan, "Guangxi de Hanyu fangyan (gao)" ("Distribution of dialects in Guangxi (draft)"), *Fangyan (Chinese Dialects)*, Vol. 3 (1985), p. 184. After the Beijing massacre, outraged Chongqing students who were fellow natives of Deng Xiaoping's home village rushed to the Deng family graveyard to dig up the graves. They found two military detachments already in place to arrest them. Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger, "Voices from the protest movement, Chongqing, Sichuan," in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), p. 117.

63. Cui Rongchang, "The Making," p. 12.

64. Mandarin is the native language of 70% of mainlanders and some 10% of Taiwan. Some 9% of mainlanders speak the Wu dialect of Shanghai and Zhejiang. About 5% speak Yue, called Cantonese in English, and 5% speak Xiang, native to most of Hunan. Mao Zedong retained his almost impenetrable Xiang accent to the end of his days. About 3% speak Gan, mostly within Jiangxi Province. The Min dialects of Fujian are native to 2%. Northern Min is not mutually intelligible with the Southern Min spoken around Xiamen (Amoy) and by 80% of Taiwan. See Norman, *Chinese*, pp. 119-228; S. Robert Ramsey, *The Languages of China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 87-111; *Great Chinese Encyclopedia: Languages and Writing Systems*, pp. 89-93, 112-15, 237-242, 292-97, 408-411, 421-23, 500-504.

65. Norman, *Chinese*, pp. 210-13, 226-27; Ramsey, *Languages*, pp. 110-15.

one village often cannot communicate with its close neighbours, Hakka is clearly intelligible across its entire territory. Recent migration, frequent travel, and solidarity allow it to serve as a *lingua franca* as Yiddish once did. Sichuan Hakkas who visited Guangzhou in 1976 overheard some teenagers speaking a dialect identical to their own. They turned out to come from the Guangdong branch of the family which had migrated to Sichuan's Yilong County two centuries before. Zhu De's family had followed the same route.⁶⁶ Foreign scholars attest that Meixian Hakka is understandable in Sichuan.⁶⁷

Strategic uses for Hakka language. Hakkas have long used their language strategically. They developed an early written vernacular, an innovation especially valuable when classical style prevailed. The Taiping kings objected to linguistic barriers between scholars and commoners. Hakka vernacular strongly influenced Taiping documents, reinforced group identity and promoted literacy. The distinctive style also helped mislead the enemy, especially in coded military documents.⁶⁸ Communist reliance on Hakka as a common language helps explain how organizers from all over China managed to communicate with illiterate peasants in the linguistically-splintered south.

A Hakka-based underground railway supported an intelligence network in the Soviets.⁶⁹ Hakka women, long a familiar sight walking along the ridge tops to market, did extensive reconnaissance.⁷⁰ Messages went from Ruijin to Meixian to Shantou, and then by boat to Shanghai. No radio sets reached the Soviets until the early 1930s,⁷¹ and on the Long March code books were often missing, so messages had to be sent uncoded. Transmission in Hakka, with circumlocution, provided a partial shield, much as Navajo was successfully adapted for top secret American military dispatches during the Second World War. As the early Long March moved through the Hakka settlements, Hakkas were better able to question local people and beg favours. They also had more experience with minorities. Even today many of the She people in the south-east mountains speak Hakka.⁷²

Hakkas in Socialist Revolution

Hakka militance made many receptive to Marxism. Orthodox Marxists targeted the proletariat, and some of the earliest worker

66. Teenagers from Cui Rongchang, "Making," p. 12; Zhu De, "Remembering my mother," p. 115.

67. Myron Cohen, William Skinner, personal communications, San Francisco, 20 April 1990.

68. Shih, *Taiping Ideology*, p. 315.

69. Smedley, *Great Road*, pp. 301-302.

70. Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai*, p. 312.

71. Harrison, *Long March*, p. 226.

72. Ramsey, *Languages*, p. 285; *Great Chinese Encyclopedia: Languages and Writing Systems*, p. 239.

organizations developed among Hakka workers in southern cities far away from family ties. Many Guangzhou rickshaw pullers were Hakkas from Hai-Lu-Feng; Peng Pai organized them successfully.⁷³ Most members of the early anarchist-organized unions of barbers and tea-house clerks were also Hakka.⁷⁴ Many Hakkas were miners, and many of the most militant mined coal in pure-Hakka Shanghang, Fujian, and at Anyuan, Jiangxi, just five kilometres south of the heavily-Hakka Pingxiang City.⁷⁵ Mao went down the shafts at both sites, but Li Lisan was the most important labour organiser. Li was a probable Hakka, born to an impoverished family in Liling County, Hunan, just over the border from Anyuan. He organized the 13,000 Anyuan miners and mechanics for the 1922 strike which was one of the most important worker actions. Anyuan workers survived brutal reprisals to support the 1927 Autumn Harvest Uprising.⁷⁶ Li eventually became the main proponent of proletarian revolution at Central Party headquarters in Shanghai.

Peasant revolution struck orthodox Marxists as implausible if not absurd. But peasants were 80 per cent of the population, while workers were less than three-tenths of 1 per cent.⁷⁷ Hakka peasants were particularly receptive. Mao investigated rural Hunan in 1927, and reported that about half the peasants were organized. Hakkas were only 1 per cent of the Hunan population, but five of the 13 counties which Mao judged "almost completely organized" were heavily Hakka.⁷⁸ Mao could not speak Hakka, though he may have understood a good deal. His investigations relied on dozens of interpreters and consultants, including the activist Gu Bo, a native of Jiangxi's pure Hakka Xunwu County on the Guangdong border. Mao's *Report from Xunwu* includes glossaries of Hakka vocabulary and texts of Hakka songs.⁷⁹

In Guangdong Peng Pai worked with Lin Boqu to organize Peasant Associations across the province. Lin, a probable Hakka from

73. Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai*, p. 177.

74. Arif Dirlik, personal communication, 18 September 1990, refers to Ming Chan's work on labour history.

75. Liling County also has Gan speakers, but falls outside the Xiang dialect area. Other Hakka-Gan counties in Hunan include Pingjiang, You, Liuyang, Chaling, Guidong and Rucheng Counties (*Great Chinese Encyclopedia: Languages and Writing Systems*, pp. 92, 238, 421). Anyuan, the mining centre in north-west Jiangxi, should not be confused with the other Anyuan, a county seat on the Guangdong border near Xunwu.

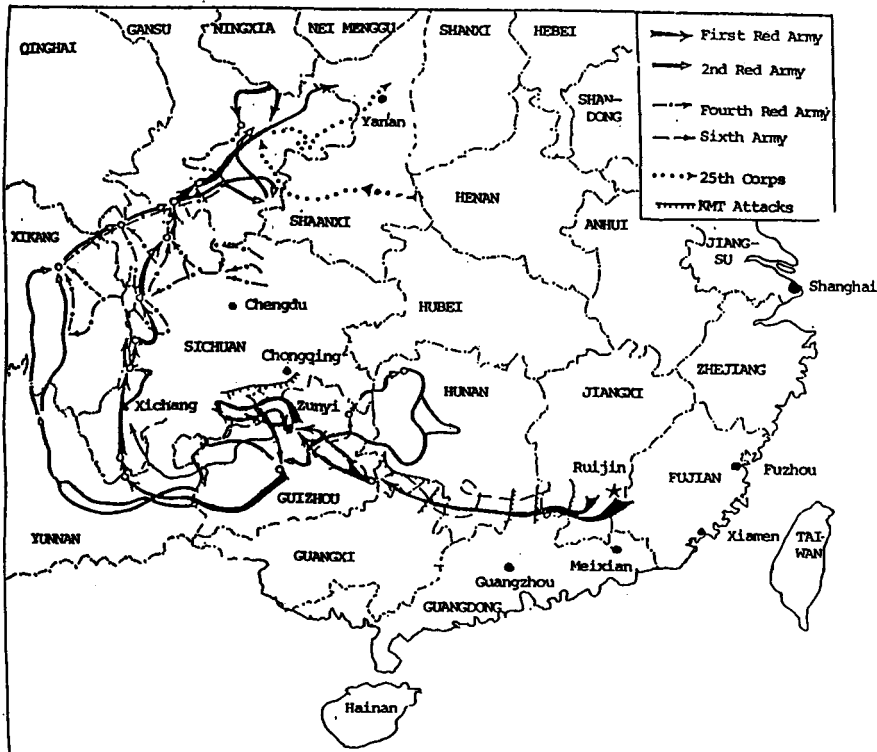
76. Lynda Shaffer, *Mao and the Workers: The Hunan Labor Movement, 1920-1923* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1982).

77. *Ibid.* p. 3.

78. Liuyang, Liling, Pingjiang, Leiyang and Chen Counties. Mao Tse-tung, "Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 1 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, [1927] 1967), p. 25.

79. Gu Bo should not be confused with Bo Gu, the alias of Qin Bangxin, a Wuxi native who became an important Moscow-educated "Bolshevik" party leader. For Gu Bo, see Thompson in Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*, pp. 54-55, 255; Xia Daohan, "Gu Bo," in Hu Hua, *Biographies*, Vol. 12, p. 283. Hakka vocabulary in Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*, pp. 37, 40, 164-65, 178, 254-55.

Map 4: Long March Routes



Hunan's Liling County, headed the Guomindang Peasant Department, then became a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party. The Peasant Associations attracted many disenchanted soldiers from Chen Jiongming's separatist army.⁸⁰ The leader of the Meixian Peasant Association, Gu Dacun, was a poor, semi-educated native of Anliu Village in pure-Hakka Wuhua County. Gu led a land reform which brought many landlords to trial, became military director of a short-lived East River Soviet, then survived its annihilation to lead 5,000 guerrillas.⁸¹

Soviet bases in Hakka country. Six of the nine major Soviet bases were in heavily Hakka areas (Map 2). The first successful base was the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet (1927–28, Number 1 on the map.) The Western Fujian Revolutionary Soviet controlled ten counties at its founding in 1929. Five were pure Hakka (Changting, Shanghang, Wuping, Yongding and Ninghua); the remainder had substantial Hakka populations (Qingliu, Guihua, Liancheng, Longyan and Jianning). In

80. Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai*, pp. 123–24, 126, 180–83.

81. *Ibid.* p. 210; Harrison, *Long March*, p. 142.

1931 the Central Soviet moved near this area (Number 2). The capital at Ruijin was in a pure Hakka county guarded by mountains 1,000 metres high. The Central Soviet eventually controlled 20 counties. Four were pure Hakka (Ruijin, Huichang, Anyuan and Xunwu); most of the remainder were heavily so (especially Yudu, Xingguo, Ningdu, Shicheng and Guangchang). Only two fell outside Hakka territory (Nanfeng and Liquan). "Provincial" Soviet capitals tended to be Hakka as well.⁸² The South-west Jiangxi Soviet at the Jinggang Mountains (Number 3) was strongly Hakka, (particularly Ninggang, Suiquan, Yongxin and Chaling Counties).⁸³ The Hunan-Jiangxi Soviet (Number 4) included the heavily Hakka Pingjiang and Xiushou Counties. The East Sichuan Soviet (Number 5), organized in Hakka country by Sichuan Hakka Zhang Guotao, centred around the miserably poor highland towns of Bazhong, whose residents were in rags, and Tongjiang, where 1,000 families supported 200 opium dens.⁸⁴ The North-east Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet (Number 6) fell largely in Min and Gan territory, although its capital at Hengfeng has many Hakkas. Soviets outside Hakka territory include the West Guangxi Soviet (Number 7) at some distance from the Hakka settlements in eastern Guangxi. However, many of its organizers, including Deng Xiaoping, moved to the Jiangxi Soviet, then made the Long March. The Hubei-Henan-Anhui Soviet (Number 8), and the West Hunan-Hubei Soviet (Number 9), are far outside Hakka country. Hakkas are not native to Yan'an or Shaanxi.

Ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict caused chronic problems. Mao's report from the Jinggang Mountains describes the Hakka-native conflict as "a peculiar feature" of the border counties, one which weakened the revolution because it undercut class struggle. Mao apparently could not bring himself to use the word "Hakka" (*Kejia*), and uses "settler" (*keji*) instead. (He may have been trying to avoid inflammatory language; or Beijing editors may have changed his wording.) The "settlers," Mao explained, lived on bad, hilly land, were oppressed by the "natives" (*bendi*), and had "never had any political rights. They welcomed the revolution, thinking that 'their day had come'." Conflicts were worst in Ninggang, Suiquan, Ling and Chaling Counties—each strongly Hakka. Landlords would claim that settlers were about to massacre the natives, and call in troops. When the Red Army left, the settlers would re-take native land. The Party had extreme difficulty making settlers return seized property:

In theory, this rift between the native inhabitants and the settlers ought not to

82. Capitals included: Changting (Tingzhou) for Fujian; Ningdu for Jiangxi; Jianning for Fujian-Jiangxi; Huichang for Guangdong-Jiangxi; Hengfeng for north-eastern Jiangxi; Lianhua for western Jiangxi; and Hongxin for the Hunan-Jiangxi border.

83. Leong, "The Hakka Chinese," p. 318.

84. Chang Kuo-t'ao, *The Rise*, Vol. 2, pp. 312-327; Benjamin Yang, *From Revolution to Politics: Chinese Communists on the Long March* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), p. 134.

extend into the exploited classes or workers or peasants, much less into the Communist Party. But it does, and it persists by force of long tradition. . . . Inside the Party, education must be intensified. . . .⁸⁵

In late 1927 the only real Red Army was the local, heavily Hakka Hai-Lu-Feng Army.⁸⁶ Its commander, Zhu De, joined forces with his old Berlin classmate, Ye Ting, a Hakka from Huiyang, Guangdong, who, like Zhu, had supported Chen Jiongming. After the defeat of the Nanchang Uprising, Zhu and Ye retreated with 2,000 troops, still under the Nationalist flag, to the pure Hakka Sanheba district between Meixian and Dapu, then south to the safety of the Hai-Lu-Feng Soviet.⁸⁷ By 1929 Zhu De, backed by Chen Yi, wanted to “enlarge communist operations” into the Hakka heartland of eastern Guangdong and south-west Fujian. Mao opposed this as bad strategy. Zhu carried out his raids alone.⁸⁸ But he was defeated in central Fujian, and Mao reasserted his power with his essay “On correcting mistaken ideas in the Party.”⁸⁹ By 1930 the Central Committee opposed setting up Soviets on the Guangdong–Fujian–Jiangxi border as a “conservative error.”⁹⁰

Western Fujian guerrillas defied orders with an attempt to liberate the Hakka heartland all the way to Meixian. They linked up with Fang Fang and the East River guerrillas, but were defeated by May 1931.⁹¹ Yet in June Li Lisan called for the liberation of all Jiangxi, then a march to Wuhan, and by July the Western Fujian Soviet vowed to liberate the whole nation, starting with Hakka country. They proceeded to attack on their own just over the Guangdong border at Dapu, but were defeated again, and by September their numbers had dropped from 3,000 to 400.

Yet Fujian rebels grew increasingly radical, particularly in Longyan, on the border between Hakka and Min country. Youth gangs forced women to bob their hair, banned incense and ritual candles, and forbade people to worship gods, sweep tombs or tell fortunes. A ban on extravagant weddings forbade dowries, banquets and gifts down to the bride’s parents’ gift of a chicken. Such moves, coming largely from Hakkas, disproportionately affected the more prosperous and ritually-active Min. Vigorous negative reaction led to a harsh purge.⁹² Even so, at the Ningdu revolt in December 1931, an entire Nationalist Army of

85. Mao Tse-tung, “The struggle in the Chinggang Mountains,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 1, pp. 93–94; Mao Zedong, “Jinggang Shan de douzheng” (“The struggle in the Jinggang Mountains”), *Mao Zedong xuanji* (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong*), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin dabanshe, 1969), pp. 73–74.

86. Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai*, p. 345.

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 254–266; Zhu De entry in Klein and Clark, *Biographical Dictionary*.

88. Harrison, *Long March*, p. 142; Lu Yongdi and Liu Zijian, “Fang Fang.”

89. Mao Tse-tung, “On correcting mistaken ideas in the party,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 1, pp. 105–116.

90. Kuo, *Analytical History*, Vol. 2, pp. 24–28.

91. Lu Yongdi and Liu Zijian, “Fang Fang,” pp. 323–368.

92. Longyan Prefectural Party Committee, *Revolutionary Bases*, pp. 137–39.

20,000 mostly-Hakka men defected to the communists.⁹³ Other rebels established a People's Revolutionary Government in Fuzhou (a northern Min area), which the Politburo suppressed.

Long March separatism and survival. Preparations for the Long March were minimal. Xiao Ke later recalled that his troops made the entire trek with just one map, a page torn from a high school history text.⁹⁴ Zhou Enlai did much of such planning as was done, along with Comintern adviser Otto Braun (Li De), Zhu De, and the guerrilla Su Yu. Zhou negotiated a relatively smooth evacuation with Hakka warlord Chen Jitang. Ren Bishi (a Hunan Xiang, like Mao) and Xiao Ke (a probable Hakka) scouted the early route around Xiao's native Jiahe, Hunan near the Guangdong border (Map 4). Xiao and Ren proposed establishing a new Soviet there, a plan which the Party Centre vetoed immediately.⁹⁵

The main flank of marchers left the Central Soviet on 18 October 1934. Zhu De led the First Army with 86,000 troops and supporters; Ye Jianying was chief of staff. An extremely high percentage of the foot soldiers were Hakka, including some 20,000 western Fujian locals. Mao, who had been exiled to pure-Hakka Wudu County in Jiangxi, joined the march when it passed through. Peasants along the route were often angry and out of supplies, but casualties remained low until the marchers moved outside Hakka territory at the Xiang River. Nie Rongzhen, a probable Hakka from Sichuan who had attended middle school with Deng Xiaoping, later described the difficulty of leading fractious troops while the leadership itself was split. As many as 25,000 marchers deserted before the first major battle; desertions were especially common among the heavily Hakka Eighth and Ninth Corps. Some 20,000 died in the fight to cross the Xiang River, leaving only 30,000. Morale improved briefly with a proposal to create a Guizhou-Yunnan-Sichuan Soviet, partly in Hakka country, but Nationalist attacks forced the march to continue.⁹⁶

Mao's faction gained control at the Zunyi Conference in Guizhou,

93. Benjamin Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, p. 64.

94. Salisbury, *Long March*, pp. 52–53.

95. Planners from Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, pp. 89–95; Harrison, *Long March*, p. 237; William W. Whitson with Chen-hsia Huang, *The Chinese High Command, A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927–71* (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 146. Xiao Ke and new Soviet from Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, pp. 101–103.

96. Hakka marchers from Rewi Alley, "Meixian, the great Hakka center," *Eastern Horizon*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (1977), pp. 16–30; Longyan Prefectural Party Committee, *Revolutionary Bases*, pp. 218–19. Mao joins march from Thompson in Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*, pp. 29, 238; Chen Changfeng, "With Chairman Mao on the Long March," in Liu Po-ch'eng et al., *Stories of the Long March* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1958); Chen Changfeng, *On the Long March with Chairman Mao* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, [1959], 1972). Nie memoirs from Nie Rongzhen, *Nie Rongzhen huiyi lu (Memoirs of Nie Rongzhen)* (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1983–1985), Vol. 1, pp. 234–35. General march from description in Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, pp. 100–106; desertions, *ibid.* p. 31. New Soviet from Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, pp. 282–83.

which may have been held there partly because it was away from Hakka territory and supporters. The conference called for linking up with Zhang Guotao at the Sichuan Soviet. But Zhang and his heavily Hakka Fourth Front Army had long been out of contact. Radioed with orders to link up, Zhang declared the Long March a failure, then marched out of range, vowing to establish a new Soviet in north-west Sichuan Hakka country to “dominate the heights above the rich Chengdu plain.” Zhu De mediated, but conflicts with the Party Centre continued.⁹⁷

The army split in August 1935. A newly-formed Right Route Army continued to march north with the Party Centre, Mao, Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping. They were uncertain whether a Shaanxi base even existed until Nie Rongzhen sent a clipping from a Nationalist newspaper about the location of a Shaanxi “red bandit extermination campaign.” Convinced, Mao denounced Zhang Guotao and justified the northern route as an anti-Japanese action. The newly-formed Left Route Army, under an all-Hakka high command, marched away with all the communications equipment, so communication with the Party Centre ceased.⁹⁸ Zhu De was general commander, Zhang Guotao the political commissar and Liu Bocheng the chief of staff. Liu was a probable Hakka, born to a travelling musician in eastern Sichuan’s Kai County.⁹⁹ Zhang Guotao proclaimed a new Central Committee and Politburo, then an All-Sichuan Soviet.¹⁰⁰ Zhu De and Liu Bocheng later rationalized their service on the rival Central Committee by claiming that Zhang had kidnapped them.¹⁰¹

Some 30,000 First Army troops stayed behind in the Hakka homeland near Ruijin. These were largely sickly, local men with just one gun for every three soldiers.¹⁰² The Central Committee may have found Hakka peasants more expendable, for it left orders that “those working personnel who were natives of the Soviet area should stay behind as much as possible to carry on the struggle.”¹⁰³ Their commander, Chen Yi, lacked the code to decipher the final message from the Party. In two months the Nationalists took over 16,000 prisoners.¹⁰⁴ Even so Hakka counties fared better than others in the resistance. Seasoned Nationalist troops from Guangdong had particular difficulty fighting there because they did not speak Hakka.¹⁰⁵ Hakka guerrillas, including Su Yu, Zhang Dingcheng, Deng Zihui, Gu

97. Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, p. 125; Harrison, *Long March*, pp. 226, 245–250.

98. Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, pp. 153–54, 167, 186.

99. Bi Hongxing, “Liu Bocheng,” in Hu Hua, *Biographies*, Vol. 41, pp. 1–88; “Liu Bocheng” in Klein and Clark, *Biographical Dictionary*; Liu Po-cheng *et al.*, *Recalling the Long March* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, [1959] 1978).

100. Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, pp. 192–93, 196–97.

101. Smedley, *Great Road*, pp. 330–31.

102. Gregor Benton, “Communist guerrilla bases in Southeast China after the start of the Long March,” in Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein (eds.), *Single Sparks: China’s Rural Revolutions* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), pp. 70–71.

103. Kuo, *Analytical History*, Vol. 2, p. 4.

104. Harrison, *Long March*, pp. 305–306.

105. Benton, “Communist guerrilla bases,” pp. 77, 82.

Dacun, Tan Zhenlin, Tan Cheng and Fang Fang, led raids in the mountains. Party leaders in Yan'an gave them up for dead, but in 1938 remnants of this force emerged to form the New Fourth Army.¹⁰⁶

Fewer than 20,000 Long Marchers reached Yan'an. Once there, the use of Mandarin cooled southern ethnic rivalries by putting all dialect speakers at a disadvantage.¹⁰⁷ Mao was probably ambivalent about Hakkas, grateful for their militance but relieved to have their power diluted. As Mao consolidated his power, he tried to integrate urban revolutionaries with the rural base. The 1942 rectification campaign also attempted to unify these factions. New rural investigations forced both Long Marchers and Shanghai intellectuals to focus on issues relevant to Yan'an, an area which Hakka guerrillas must have found almost as unfamiliar as Jiang Qing did.

Rectification also targeted abuses often associated with Hakka guerrillas: "adventurism" and "mountaintopism" (*shantou zhuyi*), the tendency for border region commanders to ignore central authority and stress their own importance. Only the armies of the highly-educated Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi consistently co-ordinated actions.¹⁰⁸ Zhang Guotao joined the Nationalists after a final dispute. Professional soldiers and the guerrillas were also divided. Soldiers from the Central Soviet "considered themselves intellectually and socially superior to the ruffians from the wilds of western Hunan."¹⁰⁹ Chen Yi urged the factions to learn from one another. Uneducated local volunteers tended to put local needs first, but were seasoned fighters. Soldiers from the Central Soviet might be formally trained, but they knew little about the local language, people or topography. Chen stressed that outsiders needed to study local customs and integrate themselves into the community.

Certain factional leaders remain as symbols of dissent even today. Deng Xiaoping supporters often invoke Ye Ting as a conveniently martyred hero. Ye Ting, an old friend of Zhu De's, became commander of the New Fourth Army despite a lack of guerrilla experience, partly because Chiang Kai-shek found him acceptable as a compromise United Front commander. But the New Fourth Army, composed of Jiangsu peasants supplemented by Fujian guerrillas, tended to be apolitical and unused to formal discipline. When Nationalist troops attacked and killed Red Army troops in the New Fourth Army Incident of 1941, Chen Yi court-martialled Ye Ting and imprisoned him until 1946. Ye Ting died in a plane crash soon afterwards.¹¹⁰

106. *Ibid.* p. 62; Harrison, *Long March*, pp. 242-43.

107. Leong, "Hakka Chinese," p. 285.

108. Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, p. 466.

109. *Ibid.* p. 106. The Western Hunan troops under He Long were not Hakka.

110. "Ye Ting" in Klein and Clark, *Biographical Dictionary*; Yang, *Revolution to Politics*, p. 160.

Post-1949 Political and Military Power

Chen Yi himself led the New Fourth Army in liberating east China. Shanghai vanity was shaken when Hakka commanders marched in with troops from the backwaters of northern Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Fujian. Under the new government many Hakka heroes gained high positions. Chen Yi became mayor of Shanghai (where even he needed an interpreter), and then Foreign Minister¹¹¹; Li Lisan became Minister of Labour; Ye Jianying held nearly every high post in Guangdong; Guo Moruo headed the Academy of Sciences.¹¹² Deng Xiaoping, a protégé of Liu Bocheng, administered Sichuan and assigned his own loyal subordinate, Hu Yaobang, to administer the north-east, including Deng's home county – much as Mao assigned his successor, Hua Guofeng, to administer Mao's native county in Hunan.

Hakkas were especially prominent in the military, particularly among the 4,000 Long Marchers who survived to 1950.¹¹³ In 1955 ten seasoned fighters became marshals, a rank above general. Three, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying and Zhu De, were indisputably Hakka. Two more, Liu Bocheng and Nie Rongzhen, were probable Hakkas.¹¹⁴ By 1966–68 some 500 Long March veterans were in the military elite, 80 per cent of them from central and south China.¹¹⁵ The highest-ranked Hakka below the marshals was probably Yang Chengwu (Changting, Fujian). Yang had served under Zhu De, helped lead the capture of Zunyi, then headed the heroic Dadu River crossing. After long service under Nie Rongzhen, he commanded the Beijing garrison, then became a colonel-general in the air force.¹¹⁶ Fang Fang, the former Meixian guerrilla, held many posts in the Southern Military District under Ye Jianying before transferring to Overseas Chinese liaison where his ability to speak Mandarin, Cantonese and Hakka was an important asset.¹¹⁷

The Cultural Revolution. Hakka power waned during the Cultural Revolution. Mao, Kang Sheng (Shandong) and Lin Biao (Hubei) promoted a Yan'an-style ideology, and may have felt some animus for

111. Chen Dinglong, “Zai Chen Yi tongzhi shenbian qi nian” (“Seven years at Comrade Chen Yi's side”), in *Renmin de zhongcheng zhanshi: nian huai Chen Yi tongzhi (A Faithful People's Warrior: Remembering Comrade Chen Yi)* (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1979), p. 570.

112. Neither Li Lisan nor Guo Moruo made the Long March.

113. Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, p. 432.

114. “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Guo Zhuxi shouyu yuanshuaijun xian he shou dong dianli longzhong juxing” (“In a grand ceremony, the People's Republic of China and the Chairman of the Nation confer the rank of marshal and other ranks”), *Da Gong Bao*, 28 September 1955.

115. Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, pp. 432–33; Ying-Mao Gao, *The People's Liberation Army and China's Nation Building* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1973), p. xlvii.

116. Klein and Clark, *Biographical Dictionary*; Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, pp. 339–340.

117. Klein and Clark, *Biographical Dictionary*; Lu Yongdi and Liu Zijiang, “Fang Fang,” pp. 323–368.

their Hakka co-workers. The military had certainly been relatively outside central Party control, but strictures tightened as the Cultural Revolution proceeded. Resistance proved difficult. Chen Yi, for example, rallied former guerrillas including Tan Zhenlin, to the “February Adverse Current” of 1967 which attempted to slow the tide and protect subordinates. But they were bitterly denounced as plotting to restore capitalism. Chen Yi talked back to a crowd of 10,000 Red Guards and kept his post, through he was forced into seclusion. Ye Jianying himself came under attack, and spent much of the era under PLA protection in Guangzhou. Zhu De, whom the *Ci Hai* later described as “ceaselessly struggling against Lin Biao and the Gang of Four,” died in 1976. Many other military leaders were dismissed after 1973. Zeng Sheng, former commander of the East River Guerrillas, and 1950s mayor of Guangzhou, was wounded and imprisoned.¹¹⁸

Deng Xiaoping ranked second only to Liu Shaoqi as a target for abuse.¹¹⁹ Deng was exiled to an old Jiangxi base area in December 1966, to an infantry school in Xinjian County, a Gan-Hakka area just north-west of Nanchang. There he oiled machinery every morning and played bridge every afternoon until he was rehabilitated in 1973. When he fell again in April 1976, Ye Jianying secretly flew him to safety in the Guangdong Military Region, hid him in Sichuan, and then continued to lobby the Central Committee on his behalf. After his second rehabilitation in July 1977, Ye Jianying and Li Xiannian strongly backed Deng against Hua Guofeng.¹²⁰ Hu Yaobang’s career mirrored the ups and downs of his patron.

Many Hakkas, of course, weathered the upheavals. Yu Qiuli was probably the highest-ranked Hakka below Ye Jianying to survive the Cultural Revolution without severe damage to his career. Yu’s story hints at how a skilled survivor might use a bit of ethnic solidarity to fortify an intricate combination of hard work, luck, and technical and political skill. Yu was born near the Jinggang Mountains at Ji’an, Jiangxi and made the Long March with Zhang Guotao. At Yan’an Yu backed Mao, but managed to remain allied with Zhou Enlai, Wang Zhen and Deng Xiaoping. He followed Deng to Beijing, and promoted the Daqing oilfields. During the Cultural Revolution, Zhou Enlai supported Yu even after Deng fell. After 1973 Yu realigned himself with Deng. By the 1980s, he headed the General Political Department of the PLA.¹²¹

As the Cultural Revolution proceeded, Mao’s faction invoked the Yan’an legacy with increasing fervour. Yan’an ideology had special resonance for the northern Party stalwarts who “went down” to work

118. Vogel, *One Step Ahead*, p. 22.

119. Ying-Mao Gao, *People’s Liberation Army*, p. liii.

120. Franz, *Deng Xiaoping*, pp. 211, 252–53, 258.

121. David M. Lampton, with Yeung Saicheung, *Paths to Power: Elite Mobility in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1986), pp. 151, 160, 184.

in the south, (the *nanxia ganbu*). After Mao died “localism” and other Long March era issues closely associated with Hakkas became code words for attacks on Deng. Hua Guofeng used a eulogy for Zhu De as a crypto-attack on Deng which denounced Zhang Guotao, the Sichuan Hakka general who defected in 1938, for “splittism” and betrayal.¹²² No one directly criticized Yan’an iconography, but a parallel iconography developed around Long March imagery and praise for Hakka heroes. Yan’an and Long March imagery alternate: they do not co-exist even in the patriotic tales selected for children’s books. Immediately after Deng’s rehabilitation, coded Long March imagery was used in a spate of biographies of Hakka heroes, including Zhu De, Chen Yi and Ye Ting. Speeches by Ye Jianying and others on the 50th anniversary of the PLA also lauded them.¹²³ And Ye Jianying himself delivered the much-edited official Party critique of Mao on 1 October 1979.¹²⁴

Deng cleverly highlighted his own role in early communism by using the Maoist legacy in 1981–82. Deng had worked in pure-Hakka Xunwu County, so he argued that both he and Mao had been there “seeking truth from facts.” He also published many rural investigations from 1934–43, including Mao’s report from Xunwu which had been omitted from the definitive 1967 edition of Mao’s *Selected Works*. Deng authorized a new edition to include the report, then published his own *Selected Works* in 1983. Officially-sanctioned histories elevated Deng’s role on the Long March, even claiming that “it never occurred to this old adherent of Mao’s to follow Zhang Guotao.” As Deng consolidated his power a flood of Long March memoirs appeared.¹²⁵ Ye Ting came to symbolize resistance to Maoist oppression. Popular posters showed him dressed in a long cape, writing poems on the wall of his prison cell and there was a flattering portrait and biography of him in the long-delayed 1979 *Ci Hai*. Newspapers published poignant accounts of reunions between Long March heroes and the children they had been forced to leave behind with Hakka peasants.¹²⁶

Fewer than 1,000 Long Marchers survived into the 1980s, but they

122. “Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 68 (1976), pp. 887–89.

123. “Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 72 (1977), pp. 859–863.

124. Vogel, *One Step Ahead*, p. 79.

125. Thompson describes refurbishing Deng’s reputation in Mao Zedong, *Report from Xunwu*, pp. 5–6, 31. Other pro-Deng publicity includes Alley, “Guang’an,” pp. 7–14, and Franz, *Deng Xiaoping*, p. 102. A biography of Gu Bo, the martyred Xunwu Hakka landlord’s son who had helped Mao, was written by his widow and appeared in the February 1981 *Hong Qi (The Red Banner Waves)*. Gu Bo is also profiled in the 41-volume series on Party heroes. Xia Daohan, “Gu Bo,” in Hu Hua, *Biographies*, Vol. 12, pp. 273–292.

126. Huang Ping, “Bei huan li he: Lu Dingyi xun er zhao nu wushi nian” (“Sorrow and joy, parting and reunion: Lu Dingyi’s 50-year search for his lost children”), *Baogao wenxue (Reportage)*, Vol. 7 (1988), pp. 34–38.

climbed back into power. Yang Chengwu, for example, a colonel-general in the air force who was purged in 1968, became commander of the Fuzhou military district by 1982.¹²⁷ The only non-Long Marcher on the 1984 Standing Committee of the Politburo was Zhao Ziyang. (The other members were Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Chen Yun and Li Xiannian, the first three being Hakka.) Seventeen of the 25 Politburo members were Long Marchers, four of them Hakka, as were four of the nine members of the Military Affairs Commission¹²⁸—that is five and 15 times their respective chance rates. Other probable Hakkas above the minister (*buzhang*) level in 1989 included Beijing mayor Chen Xitong (Anyue County, Sichuan), an early Deng associate. Liu Fuzhi, Deng Xiaoping's long-time secretary and later a top security official, was a Meixian native, as was Yang Taifang, a Ye Jianying protégé who headed postal and telephone communications.¹²⁹ The Hakka heritage of capable women is not apparent at this level, though Nie Li, the daughter of Marshal Nie Rongzhen, is a colonel-general.

Continued Poverty in Hakka Country

Despite the successes of individual politicians, Hakka districts remain bitterly poor. Peasant lifespan has doubled since 1949 and income has risen, but none of the Yan'an, Hakka or other inland peasants have prospered. Hakka leaders evidently avoided pumping gigantic sums into their home districts, and in any case the extreme poverty and population density of Hakka country overwhelmed whatever aid did arrive. Deng Xiaoping's home county, for example, has the only silk factory backed by foreign capital in the whole of China, as well as half a million dollars in foreign aid. But by official standards, it is still a poor county.¹³⁰ The only major investment which may have benefited Hakkas more than other peasants was the Third Front industrial development of 1964–71. Even then, the motive was not rural development but national security. China felt threatened by the USSR and the United States, and so built heavy industry in the interior far from coastal attack. Whole railway lines and factories were moved inland, largely to areas over 500 metres in altitude. The Sichuan highlands, including some of the remote western Long March route and the old Shaan-Chuan base, received

127. Leong, "Hakka Chinese," p. 323.

128. Yang Ben, "Long March Survivors," p. 19.

129. Li Gucheng, *China's Highest Leaders*, pp. 274–75, 230–31. Others among the 11 Hakkas and probable Hakkas in the 105 top leaders for 1989 include: Liu Ren, the second Beijing Party Secretary; Zeng Xianlin, an engineer; Song Renqiong, who did underground work, followed Zhang Guotao on the Long March, later edited *Hong Qi*, and chaired the Party's Central Organization Committee; Peng Peiyun, prominent in higher education and one of only two women above the *buzhang* minister level; and Cai Cheng, a security official.

130. Sheryl WuDunn, "Deng shuns Hometown, but still it's a Magnet," *New York Times*, 13 May 1991.

much of the earliest investment.¹³¹ Most of Guangdong's "little Third Front" centred on Shaoguan prefecture, twelve especially rocky, mostly Hakka counties on the Hunan border.¹³² Third Front investment also built factories in old Fujian base areas including Changting (Tingzhou) and Qingliu, counties so poor that land reformers had classed people as landlords if they had sweet potatoes to eat. Xiamen Red Guards made their way there in 1967 to recruit the peasants whom they had heard were "brave but ignorant, and therefore easier to command." But the city teenagers found the language barrier presented "the greatest difficulty," and became ill on the local diet. One banker's son delivered his ultimate insult: western Fujian was like "Black Africa."¹³³

By the 1980s many Third Front enterprises had closed. Investment had never been adequate and many enterprises were not viable economically. But their loss was a serious local blow, for little new investment appeared.¹³⁴ A PLA munitions factory in Changting moved to the more prosperous Min-speaking coast where it now makes motorcycle parts and brassieres. Every single Hakka worker and dependent eagerly relocated to Fuzhou.¹³⁵ Meixian prefecture also remained poor, for it includes three of the four poorest counties in Guangdong (Wuhua, Fengshun and Dapu). In the late 1980s, Vogel noted that many villages were still not connected by paved roads; even Meixian City was 12 hours from Guangzhou by car. (Air service began in 1987.) Meixian had no major hotel, and department stores did not stock towels because people dried themselves on rags. Meixian does have one of Guangdong's few key schools outside Guangzhou, thanks to Ye Jianying's patronage, but classes are very traditional. Meixian is also the single remaining inland area of Guangdong to export migrants. Overseas descendants outnumber current residents by 2:1, but the Hakka stress on professional rather than commercial success led sons and daughters to become soldiers, bureaucrats or teachers, with little cash to invest back home. Xiamen and Guangzhou have thriving overseas outreach and scholarship, but Meixian publishes few books on Hakka history, and had no research institute. However most Meixian people still speak Hakka.¹³⁶ The language does have some economic clout; Fuzhou and Xiamen newspapers advertise Hakka lessons for entrepreneurs with expanding businesses in South-east Asia.

131. Barry Naughton, "The Third Front: Defence Industrialization in the Chinese Interior," *The China Quarterly*, No. 115 (1989), pp. 351-386.

132. Vogel, *One Step Ahead*, pp. 36, 229-230.

133. Ken Ling, *The Revenge of Heaven: Journal of a Young Chinese* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1972), pp. 297-304.

134. Vogel, *One Step Ahead*, pp. 231-32.

135. Visit, personal communication, Manager Liu Guifa, 11 March 1989.

136. Vogel, *One Step Ahead*, pp. 242-47.

Current Decline of Hakkas in High Office

Hakka power is now on the wane. Vogel claims that "more than 20 high Beijing officials of deputy rank or higher are of Hakka descent," certainly an underestimate.¹³⁷ But the Hakka gerontocracy seems not to have spawned a new Hakka elite. The only probable Hakka on the 1989 Politburo was Yang Rudai (Renshou, Sichuan), who retired in 1992. No Hakka sits on the Standing Committee. Ye Jianying's son, Ye Xuanping, was governor of Guangdong in the 1980s. Chen Yi's son, Chen Haosu, was Deputy Minister of Radio, Film and Television, but was purged in June 1990, probably for anti-Li Peng activity.¹³⁸ This decline suggests a relative lack of corruption: in China southern peasants led the unification of their nation, which, paradoxically, opened up more high posts for northerners.

Public discussion of Hakka history is increasingly possible, now that Hakkas are no longer a threat. The highest Hakka leaders are dying off and the culture is being homogenized. The traditional Hakka militance and alternative common language are no longer in demand, even while the revolutionary ideals which once appealed disproportionately to land-hungry, iconoclastic peasants have steadily dimmed. Taiwan Hakka demands that the Nationalists "give us back our language" and share power undoubtedly shamed the mainland into more openness. But as traditional culture fades, the most reactionary central powers, Deng and the military, increasingly invoke Hakka iconography. Since the Beijing massacre of 1989, a burst of activities which benefit Hakkas has appeared. Many glorify the PLA, and thus indirectly justify Deng's role. Song and dance troupes visited long-neglected Hakka base areas on the Fujian–Jiangxi border to perform "local songs," "local plays," and opera for retired Hakka veterans. A propaganda poster to commemorate the founding of the Chinese Communist Party centres on a large portrait of Deng, surrounded by smaller images of Mao and other Long Marchers including Zhu De, all ringed by Long March scenery and the wild geese which symbolize exile and reunion.¹³⁹

The word "Hakka" came "out of the closet" and into the headlines of *People's Daily* for the first time in 1991 in a belated attempt to solicit overseas investment. Proposals included urban renewal for Meizhou, a research institute, a Hakka folk festival, and a Beijing

137. *Ibid.* p. 245.

138. Sheryl WuDunn, "A Deputy Culture Minister is removed by Beijing," *New York Times*, 13 June 1990.

139. Min Yan, "Fujian sheng jingxi tuan yanchu fendui shenru quan sheng ge di jinxing jinglao yongjun weiwen yanchu" ("Fujian's Beijing opera troop performs all over the province to show respect for the elderly and to support the military"), *Zhongguo Wenhua Bao (China's Cultural News)*, 20 August 1989; Zheng Hanming, "Min-Gan liang sheng shisi xian qunzhong wenhua jiaoliuhui juxing" ("Fourteen Fujian and Jiangxi counties set up mass cultural exchange associations"), *China's Cultural News*, 3 September 1989; Yang Guchang, "Qi Yi [xuanquan hua]" ("1 July [a propaganda poster]," *Renmin ribao* (overseas edition), 1 July 1991.

Museum of Overseas Chinese History which would prominently feature Hakka history.¹⁴⁰ Deng's Hakka ancestry was leaked to the Chinese public by a traditionally indirect and deniable route when a communist-sanctioned Hong Kong newspaper with considerable mainland circulation published the news as a "foreign expert's findings," in a summary of this article printed without my knowledge.¹⁴¹ But the iconography of Hakkas in patriotic dissent, now recycled to glorify geriatric central control, could backfire if it encourages a revival of stereotypes of Hakka crudeness. For now, it at least gets laughs. Even Party members parody Wang Zhen's rustic accent, while Deng Xiaoping, like the aged Mao, has his conversations re-rendered in the accents of his youth by a daughter who shouts in his ear.¹⁴²

Continuing Issues for Hakka Language and Identity

Hakka history clarifies the extremes of ethnic conflict, assimilation, and sacrifice for the national good. Of crucial importance was how the Hakka people used their language during a major transformation of broader Chinese society. Spoken Hakka is the primary unifier of what Benedict Anderson calls "the imagined community."¹⁴³ Seldom has a language so strongly defined ethnicity without other powerful ties of race or religion. Hakka dialect remains a powerful bond, even in a nation united beyond all others by a national written script. And seldom has an ethnic group or its language been so strategically placed to serve a political movement of world-wide significance. Twentieth-century Hakkas worked their way to centre stage in an era when national levels of literacy, partially modern communications and need for oral reconnaissance made Hakka literacy and vernacular writing, and its widely dispersed but partially shielded common language, exceptionally useful for guerrilla war. The low prestige and lack of formal instruction in Hakka render this achievement all the more impressive.

How powerful can Hakka identity remain as monolingual speakers

140. "Meizhou shi wei qunzhong ban shishi: Hongyang Kejia wenhua, cujin qiao xiang kaifa" ("Meizhou City carries out new projects for the masses: promote Hakka culture, encourage overseas Chinese development of the home counties," *Renmin ribao* (overseas edition), 6 May 1991; Nie Chuanqing, "Jianli Zhongguo huaqiao lishi bowuguan you biyao" ("We must build a museum of overseas Chinese history"), *Renmin ribao* (overseas edition), 6 May 1991.

141. Sun Shaozhen, "Fangyan wenhua he zhengzhi beijing de guanxi" ("The connection between ethno-linguistic subculture and the political alliances"), *Xin Wan Bao* (*The New Evening Post*) (Hong Kong), 22 May 1991.

142. Lu Min, "Zhang Haidi chengming de naoju" ("The farce of Zhang Haidi's struggles for fame"), *Zhengming* (*Contending*), Vol. 153 (1990), pp. 83–85; "Mei Dashi cheng can huitan shuo dianxia lianghao genji" ("American Ambassador says talks have set a good, solid foundation"), *Da Gong Bao* (Hong Kong), 11 December 1989.

143. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

disappear? Only 3 per cent of Chinese speak Hakka, but ethnic ties can endure even after a language dies, so long as a distinct identity remains useful, as the case of Irish Gaelic also shows. Many other issues remain unexplored. What is the role of ethnicity in Chinese socialism? How does Hakka ethnicity differ from other Han sub-ethnic bonds? How does Hakka culture relate to modern movements for women, to social organization, to anti-landlord movements and to the military? How does it differ within China, in Taiwan and overseas? What sort of Hakka factions survive in the army and the Central Committee? Did the First Front Army have more Hakka officers than other armies? Did Hakka factions play a role in later military district reorganizations? During the Cultural Revolution, did Hakkas disproportionately oppose Lin Biao and follow Ye Jianying? How do other personal ties interact with ethnic loyalty?

To what degree do Hakka connections still carry weight? Official China often sidesteps sensitive issues by publicizing a loyal individual. Ye Jianying was the token Hakka, but that position is too sensitive to be filled under the Deng regime. The government was not packed with Hakkas under Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping or Lee Teng-hui, but the struggle to balance ethnicity with equality continues.