

## **Patterns of Social Alignment: A Case Study of Hakka Associations in Singapore**

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### **Introduction**

Individuals could not have survived; but the Chinese immigrants were saved by their extraordinary capacity for mutual help. [T'ien 1953: 6]

The society built up by Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia has always been remarkable for its wealth of voluntary associations. [Freedman 1960: 25]

These quotations pinpoint one of the main factors contributing to the successful settlement of Chinese communities in different parts of the world: their capacity to form various types of associations for mutual help. Chinese associations have long been common wherever their formation and continued existence are not restricted.<sup>1)</sup> From the founding of modern Singapore in 1819, many associations were established and have continued to survive until today, while an unknown number have disappeared. Several general theories have been offered to explain this proliferation. Freedman [1960] suggested that the increased scale and complexity of society were basic factors and Willmott [1970] pointed out that the government's recognition of a given organisation as spokesman or mediator could lead to the formation of other associations. Examples of associations elsewhere might also induce those who had not yet done so to form their own associations [Cheng 1985: 35-40]. The circumstances and factors contributing to the formation of the various types of Chinese association are thus many and complex. Originating largely from the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian in southeastern China,

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1) From 1960 to 1985, the Chinese clan association movement was in abeyance resulting partly from the saturation effect and partly from government discouragement. There were over 300 Chinese locality/dialect and surname associations in Singapore as of 1976 [Cheng 1985: 41]. Since the mid-1980s, while some old clan associations have been dissolved for various reasons, a few new clan associations have emerged, indicating a turn-around in government policy with regard to the roles of clan associations. The latest Chinese clan association is the Seng Clan Association (成氏公會) formed on 3 March, 1993. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Seng Clan Association, Dr. Ker Sin Tze, Minister of State for Information and the Arts and Education, announced that if there were people whose surnames had not been grouped into clans and wished to do so, the government would help them form their own associations [*The Straits Times*, 4 March, 1993: 25].

early Chinese migrants in Singapore were heterogeneous. Dialect differences and unintelligibility together with strong locality and kinship consciousness and keen competition in the colonial laissez-faire commercial setting resulted in strong exclusiveness within each dialect group. The result of such a development was the emergence of a *bang*-structured Chinese society which is characterised, to a certain extent even today, by the spatial concentration of dialect groups in the city area and by trade specialisations [*ibid.*]. Among the various Chinese dialect groups in Singapore, the Hakka community has always been a minority, although they were among the earliest Chinese migrant groups. Over the years the Hakkas established several associations to help them settle in the country. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate the factors and circumstances leading to the formation of the various Hakka clan associations with particular reference to those in the nineteenth century.

### Sub-divisions, Numbers and Settlement of the Hakka Community

The Hakkas are very widespread in China, stretching from Jianxi and Hunan in the lower reaches of the Yangzi River to Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, and Guangxi in the south, and Yunnan in the southwest; and from Taiwan in the east to Sichuan in the west [Luo 1989: 57-58]. The early Hakkas in Singapore are known to have come mainly from the old



Fig. 1 Urban Centres of the Main Hakka Area in Southeast China

Source: Adapted Luo Xiang Lin [1989: 57-58]

**Table 1** Main Areas of Hakka Emigration to Singapore by Province, Prefecture/Zhou, and District

Province	Prefecture/Zhou	Pure Hakka-Speaking Districts
Fujian	Tingzhou (汀州)	Yongding (永定)
		Shanghang (上杭)
Guangdong	Jiayingzhou (嘉應州)	Meixian (梅縣)
		Xingning (興寧)
		Wuhua (五華)
		Pingyuan (平遠)
		Jiaoling (蕉嶺)
		Chaozhou (潮州)
		Dabu (大埔)
		Fengshun (丰順)
		Guangzhou (廣州)
		Chixi (赤溪)
		Huizhou (惠州)
		Heping (和平)
		Longchuan (龍川)
Zijin (紫金)		
Heyuan (河源)		
Lianping (連平)		
	Gaozhou (高州)	
	Lianzhou (廉州)	
Guangxi		

Jiayingzhou (嘉應州) Prefecture (Guangdong province), the Dabu (大埔) and Fengshun (丰順) districts in Chaozhou (潮州) Prefecture (Guangdong province), the Yongding (永定) and Shanghang (上杭) districts in Tingzhou (汀州) Prefecture (Fujian province), and Huizhou (惠州) Prefecture (Guangdong province). The Hakkas from Leizhou (雷州), Gaozhou (高州) and Lianzhou (廉州) were relatively late comers and their numbers were, and still are, small; while the numbers of Hakkas from Jianxi and other areas of China are negligible. Fig. 1 shows the urban centres of pure Hakka-speaking districts in Southeast China and Table 1 depicts the major areas of origin of the early Hakkas in Singapore. The term "Hakka" is a Cantonese pronunciation of "kejia" (客家), meaning "guest family." The Hakkas call themselves Keren, but are called Ke by the Hokkiens, Teochews, and Hainanese. It is from the word Ke that the terms Kheh and Khe are derived. In the early censuses of Singapore, the Hakkas were classified as Khehs or Khes, showing the predominance and importance of Hokkiens and Teochews whose dialects are mutually intelligible and whose combined population has always accounted for more than half of the total Chinese population since the early years.

Singapore's early settlement was centred on both banks of the lower reaches of the Singapore River, near the river mouth. Subsequent developments show that the right or south

bank of the river was devoted to commercial activities, while the north or left bank, except for a narrow stretch of land given to warehouses, was largely reserved for government administration buildings. The area to the south of the river was later developed to become the hub of commercial, financial, trading and shipping activities and to be known as "Dapo" (大坡) by the Chinese. The commercial area subsequently developed to the north of the river bank as an extension of "Dapo" has been known as "Xiaopo" (小坡).

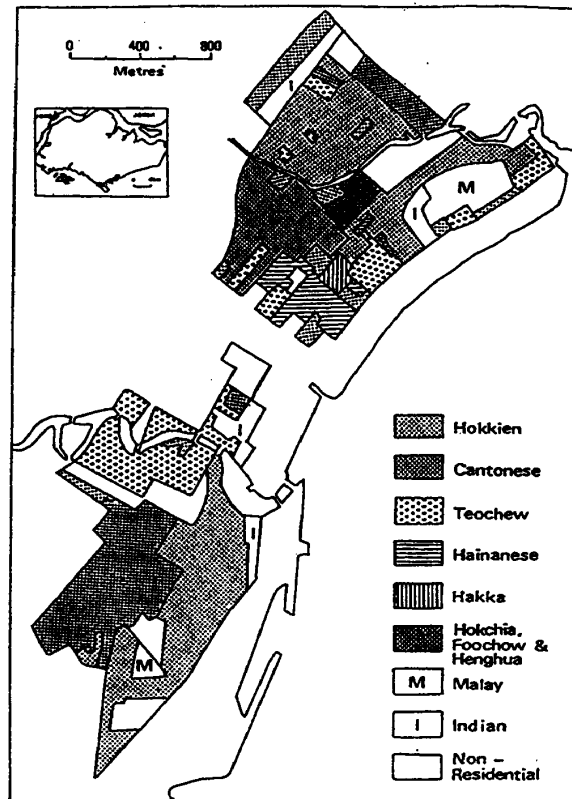


Fig. 2 Ethnic and Dialect Groupings in the Central Urban Area of Singapore, 1952  
After [Hodder 1953: 35]

The development of "Dapo" into distinctive ethnic and dialect quarters (Fig. 2) shows that the instructions given by Raffles to segregate different ethnic and dialect groups were well executed [Cheng 1985: 28]. Raffles' plan of dialect segregation was realised by the tendency of the early Chinese migrants to concentrate spatially on the basis of lineage, clan, dialect, home village, district, prefecture, province and occupation. Although the Hakkas were among the earliest Chinese migrants to settle in Singapore, there was an absence of any significant visible Hakka concentration in "Dapo." This was so despite the fact that the first known Hakka association, the Huizhou Company (now known as Wui Chiu Fui Kun, 惠州會館) was established in 1822 in Pickering Street. The Jiayingzhou Hakkas appear to have formed the

largest and financially strongest Hakka sub-group in the early years, evidenced by the 1823 formation of Ying Fo Fui Kun ( 應和會館 ) in Telok Ayer Street, the centre of Hokkien concentration. Even the establishment of Qing Shan Ting ( 青山亭 ) at Ang Siang Hill (Maxwell Road, the present headquarters of the Ministry of National Development), a cemetery jointly set up by the Hakkas and Cantonese in 1823, has failed to show any significant spatial concentration of the early Hakkas in "Dapo." We are forced to conclude that in the early years the Hakkas were either a minority or not mercantile-oriented, or both.

**Table 2** The Hakka Population in Singapore, 1881-1980

Year	Number	As % of Total	
		Chinese Pop.	Sex Ratio (No. of Males per 100 Females)
1881	6,170	7.1	913
1891	7,402	6.1	777
1901	8,514	5.2	575
1911	11,947	6.6	391
1921	14,572	4.6	266
1931	19,222	4.6	266
1947	39,988	5.5	190
1957	73,072	6.7	115
1970	110,746	7.0	107
1980	137,438	7.4	104

Sources: 1881: [Merewether 1892: 46]  
 1891: [Merewether 1892: 43]  
 1901: [Innes 1901: 29]  
 1911: [Marriott 1911: 63]  
 1921: [Nathan 1922: 186]  
 1931: [Vlieland 1932: 81]  
 1947: [Del Tufo 1949: 294]  
 1957: [Chua 1964: 148]  
 1970: [Arumainathan 1973: 33]  
 1980: [Khoo 1981: 59]

Indeed, available census data show that the Hakkas have always been a minority among the Chinese dialect groups. Table 2 shows the growth of the Hakka population and sex ratios from 1881 to 1980. Although the Hakka population grew in tandem with the total population, its share has remained fairly constant, being in the range of 4.6 to 7.4 per cent of the total Chinese population. Furthermore, like the total Chinese population, the transient character of the Hakkas in the nineteenth century was reflected in the unbalanced sex ratio which stood at 913 males

per hundred females in 1881.<sup>2)</sup>

Despite their linguistic bond, the Hakkas were split in terms of geographical origins. Small numbers, weak mercantile orientation, and strong consciousness of geographical origin might have accounted for the lack of a Hakka spatial concentration in "Dapo."<sup>3)</sup> Information gathered in the field suggests that the early Hakkas settled largely in Pasir Panjang, Lim Chu Kang, Chua Chu Kang, Kampong Bahru and Jurong, indicating their rural orientation.<sup>4)</sup> This might have also accounted for the Hakkas' declining share in the total Chinese population in Singapore from 1881 to 1931, with the exception of 1911, possibly resulting from an outflow from Singapore to Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia.<sup>5)</sup>

It is not possible to give a breakdown of the present Hakka community by geographical origin. However, an examination of the available souvenir magazines published by the various Hakka associations shows that the Jiayingzhou Hakkas appear to be the largest group, followed by the Dabu Hakkas. The numbers of Hakkas from Fengshun, Huizhou, Yongding, and Jiexi (揭西), a new district created after 1911 by the combination of the western part of the former Jieyang (揭陽) district of the old Chaozhou Prefecture and part of the Lufeng (陸丰) district of the old Huizhou Prefecture, are much smaller, while those from other areas are the smaller still.

#### Associations: Formation, Alignment and Differentiation

In the *bang*-structured Chinese society of the nineteenth century Singapore, the provision of social, religious and economic services and social control within each dialect group was left to successful and public-spirited dialect leaders [Cheng 1985: 23-34]. Based on the two traditional principles of locality (i.e., geographical origin) and kinship/surname, various clan associations have been formed to cater to the needs of the various social groups.

After the founding of Singapore, traders and migrants of all kinds flocked to Singapore, and the population increased by leaps and bounds, from an estimate of about 1,000 [Turnbull 1989: 5] to 10,683 in 1824 of which the Chinese accounted for 31 per cent [Saw 1970: 57]. The Chinese share increased to 50 per cent of a total of 35,389 in 1840, and by 1901, they

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- 2) Since then the sex ratio has progressively improved but only in 1980 was a balanced sex ratio achieved.
  - 3) The small concentration of Hakkas in "Xiaopo" as shown in Fig. 2 appears to have emerged in the twentieth century after they had successfully carved a niche in commerce.
  - 4) This rural inclination was also evident among their compatriots in Peninsular Malaysia where, until the end of Second World War, the Hakkas were found to be the most rural among the various Chinese dialect groups [Del Tufo 1949: 76].
  - 5) In contrast to their minority status in Singapore, the Hakkas in Peninsular Malaysia were the third largest Chinese dialect group, constituting 21.1 per cent of the total Chinese population there in 1947 [Del Tufo 1949: 292-293]. The Hakkas were the largest dialect group in the Federated Malay States (i.e., Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang) in 1911, accounting for 33.1 per cent of the total Chinese population [Nathan 1922: 78]. During the early years of the Emergency in Peninsular Malaysia (1948-1960), there was an influx of rural Hakkas to Singapore, thereby swelling their share in the total Chinese population from 5.5 per cent in 1947 to 6.7 per cent in 1957.

constituted 72 per cent of a total population of 226,842 [*ibid.*]. Chinese society of nineteenth century Singapore was highly unstable. The poverty-stricken working class, male-dominant and transient in nature, formed the overwhelming majority of the population. The majority of the new arrivals from China, whether indentured coolies or free labourers, faced great difficulties in the fierce competition to eke out a bare living in a new tropical environment. Language complexity and frequent experience of mutual unintelligibility effectively served as a barrier to inter-dialect and inter-ethnic communication. It was this situation that led to the emergence of various forms of voluntary associations providing shelter, food, clothing, jobs, and other social needs such as places for religious and ancestor worship, cemeteries, social interactions, and social control. After the long and risky junk voyage across the South China Sea to Singapore, one of the preoccupations of the new migrants was to pray to the Goddess of Mercy as well as other gods and deities peculiar to the various social groups for their safe passage as well as for future protection. For those unfortunates who passed away soon after their arrival, the need for a decent burial so as to placate their souls could not be over-emphasised. Such pressing needs must have prompted the various social group leaders to provide services on a proper footing, thereby leading to the initiation of mutual-help groups and thence associations. The early Hakka migrants proved no exception. In the early 1820s, the Hokkiens and Teochews, the two leading Chinese dialect groups from the early years, were among the first dialect groups to set up their own temples. Proceeds of the temples were expended for charity, including the establishment of exclusive cemeteries which in turn could generate income. It was this exclusiveness in cemeteries exhibited by the stronger dialect groups which prompted other lesser dialect groups to provide social services of their own [Cheng 1985: 30-32].<sup>6)</sup> Hailing from different areas of China, the early Hakkas were split at different territorial levels, a consequence of the interplay of at least three factors: the numerical and financial strengths of each sub-group, the territorial proximity and continuity of abode in China, and parochial concerns. The early Hakka leaders tended not to cater to the Hakka community, a factor which was closely linked with their financial strength. Weak mercantile orientation appeared to be the main constraint in forcing the early Hakkas to provide for themselves on a limited territorial basis, which in turn led to the division of the Hakkas based on territoriality.<sup>7)</sup>

Presently, the Singapore Hakkas can be divided into seven groups: Jiayingzhou, Dabu, Fengshun, Huizhou, Tingzhou, Gaoliangui (高廉桂, for Gaozhou, Lianzhou and Guangxi), and Hepo (河婆), each with its own locality association(s) (Table 3). While common territoriality forms the basis for a locality association, such a principle is flexible. Jiayingzhou, with its five pure Hakka-speaking districts, provided a convenient basis for forming a dialect cum locality

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6) Nevertheless, one should not conclude that had it not been for the exclusive cemeteries set up by the major dialect groups, the lesser dialect groups would not subsequently have formed their own associations.

7) This was so despite the formation of The Nanyang Khek Community Guild in 1929 under the drive and leadership of the late Aw Boon Haw (胡文虎, 1882-1954), probably the wealthiest and most dynamic Hakka leader in Singapore in the period from the 1930s to the early 1950s.

Table 3 Locality Associations of the Hakkas in Singapore

Prefecture/ Zhou/Province/ Community	Association	Year Estab./ Registered	Level
Jiayingzhou	Ying Fo Fui Kun (應和會館)	1823	P
	The Kah Khiu Assn. (嘉侨同鄉會)	1947	P
	Nanyang Ng Fah Assn. (南洋五華同鄉總會)	1947	D
	Kar Yen Five Districts	1957	P
	General Association (嘉應五屬公會)		
	Singapore Shing Neng	1957	D
	Fellow Countrymen Assn. (新加坡兴寧同鄉會)		
	The Federation of Ka Yin	1973	P
	Chiu Assn. of Singapore (新加坡嘉屬會館聯合會)		
Chaozhou	Char Yong Association (茶陽會館)	1858	D
	Fong Shoon Fui Kuan (丰順會館)	1873	D
	Hopo Corporation <sup>1)</sup> (新加坡和婆集團)	1981	D
Huizhou	Wui Chiu Fui Kun (惠州會館)	1822	P
Gaozhou			Inter-P &
Lianzhou Guangxi <sup>2)</sup>	Sam Foh Whai Kuan (三和會館)	1883	Prov.
Tingzhou	Eng Teng Association (永定會館)	1916	D
	Singapore Nanyang Shang	1932	D
	Hang Thung Hsiang Hui (新加坡南洋上杭同鄉會)		
Inter-District	Fung Yun Thai Association (丰永大公會)	1882	Inter-D
Community-wide	The Nanyang Khek Community Guild (南洋客屬總會)	1929	C
	Bukit Panjang Khek	1937	Local
	Community Guild (武吉班讓客屬公會)		

Sources: [Chin 1991?; Peng 1983; Char Yong Association, Singapore 1958; Sam Foh Whai Kuan, Singapore 1984; *Singapore Kwong Wai Siew Peck San Teng 118th Anniversary Souvenir Magazine* 1988; The Nanyang Khek Community Guild, Singapore 1956; 1967; Wui Chiu Fui Kun, Singapore 1980; Ying Fo Fui Kun, Singapore 1965], Interview.

Notes : P = Prefecture; D = District; C = Community.

1) According to one informant, the association was advised to register as a corporation rather than as a traditional 'hui kuan' or 'association' so as to promote investment and development rather than being concerned with the promotion of welfare and solidarity of the Hakkas from Jiexi whose main town is known as Hepo.

2) Guangxi province is located to the west of Guangdong.



association, though evidence from the stone inscriptions commemorating the second renovation of the Ying Fo Fui Kun in 1844 shows that the early Jiayingzhou Hakkas were far from united [Chen and Tan 1972: 171]. In contrast, the Hakkas from Dabu and Fengshun were minorities in the Teochew-dominant Chaozhou; thus they were excluded from the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan (潮州八邑會館), the supreme association of the Teochews in Singapore. The Hakkas from Yongding and Shanghang in Fujian province were also excluded, in the nineteenth century, from the Hokkien Huay Kuan (福建會館), the most wealthy, powerful, and influential association in Singapore and the supreme association of the Minnanren (閩南人, Southern Fujian people). The Hokkien Huay Kuan also claims to be the supreme association for people from Fujian province, though it is generally perceived as an institution representing Hokkien-speaking people. The Hakkas from Huizhou appear to occupy an intermediate position between the Hakka bloc on the one hand and the Cantonese bloc on the other. This is because of the geographical location of Huizhou with its Hakka-speaking districts bordering Jiayingzhou in the north, and the mixed Hakka-speaking districts bordering the Cantonese-speaking Guangzhou Prefecture (Fig. 1). The Hakkas from Gaozhou and Lianzhou, being small in number, had aligned themselves with the Hakkas from the southern part of Guangxi province. Finally, there are the Hakkas from Jiexi whose district capital was formerly known as Hepo.<sup>8)</sup>

The initially noted flexibility in utilising the principle of locality is further reflected in the following three instances: (a) the formation of the Fung Yun Thai Association (丰永大公會, for Fengshun, Yongding and Dabu); (b) the alignment of Huizhou with the Cantonese from Guangzhou and Zhaoqing (肇庆) Prefectures into a Guanghuizhao (廣惠肇) bloc; and (c) the grand alignment of Jiayingzhou, Fung Yun Thai, and Guanghuizhao to provide joint cemeteries and temples before the 1850s. Fig. 3 gives a schematic presentation of the major alignments started in the early years of settlement. Prior to registration or construction of premises, there was a period of preparatory work. For instance, the formation of Wui Chiu Fui Kun dates back to 1822, but it was not officially registered until 1870. The Fung Yun Thai Association must have been in operation since the 1820s, long before its registration in 1873.

Compared with the Hokkiens and Teochews in the early years, the Hakkas and Cantonese were financially much weaker. This prompted the peoples from Jiayingzhou, Fung Yun Thai, and Guanghuizhao (known as the group of seven for Hakkas and Cantonese) to set up Qing Shan Ting in 1823, a 20-acre cemetery located at Ang Siang Hill. The second joint cemetery of this group of seven was the 23-acre Loke Yah Teng (綠野亭) established at Bukit Ho Swee in 1840. Prior to this, the Guanghuizhao had set up their Hok Tek Chi (福德祠) at Telok Ayer Street in 1824, whose location was, and still is, only a stone's throw from the Thian Hok Keng (天福宮)

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8) The sudden increase of Jiexi Hakkas resulting from their outflow from Peninsular Malaysia during the 1950s (Field interview) coupled with their subsequent growth in financial strength gave rise to the emergence of the Hopo Corporation in 1981.

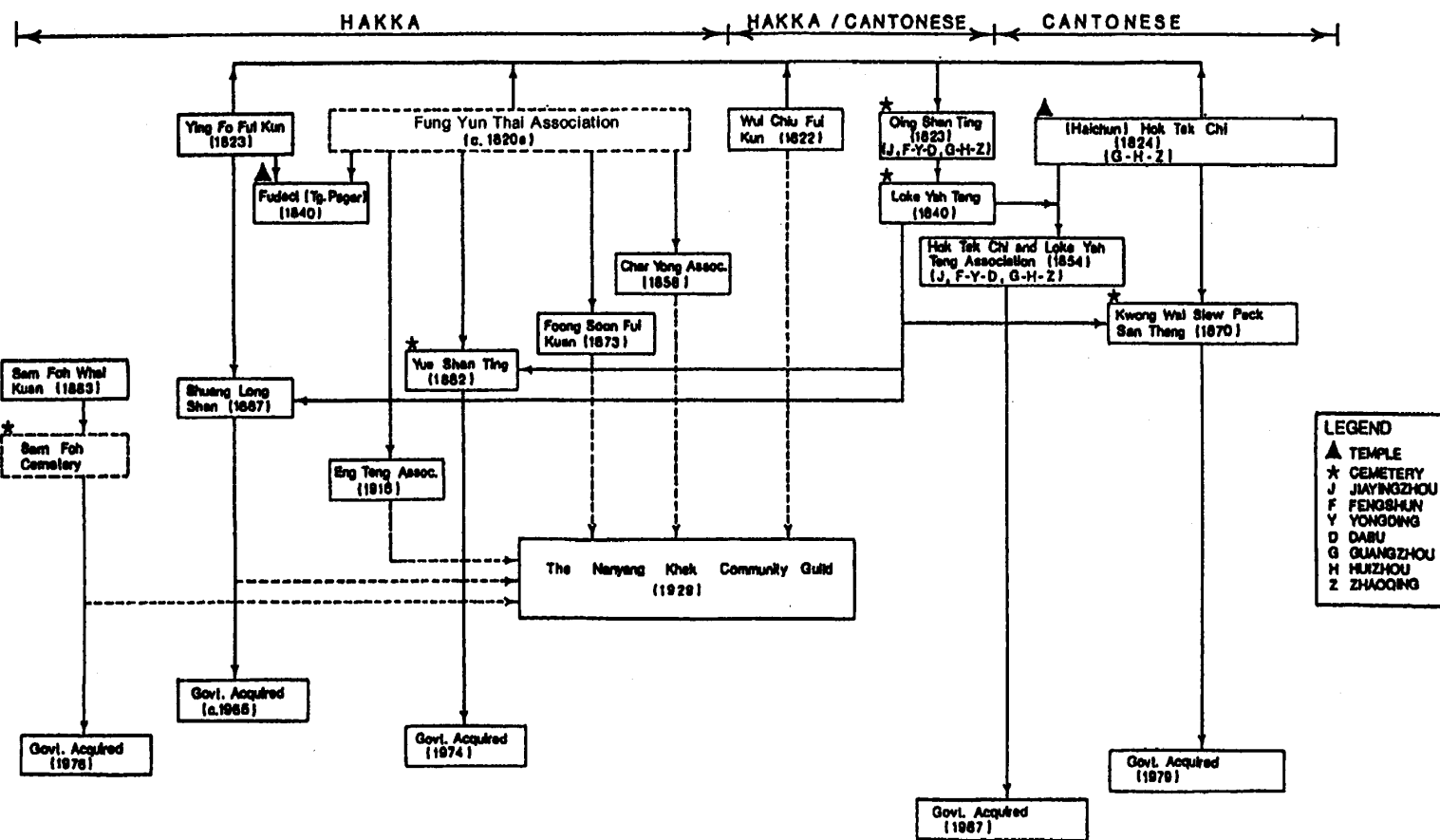


Fig. 3 Major Hakka Associations and Alignments in Singapore, c.1820-1992

Note: The year showing the particular date of establishment for an association refers to either its official registration date or the completion of the association building, whichever is known to be earlier.

of the Hokkien Huay Kuan on the same street.<sup>9)</sup> When the Hok Tek Chi was renovated in 1854, assistance received from the Jiayingzhou and Fung Yun Thai [Lim 1975: 26] led to the creation of the Hok Tek Chi (temple) and Loke Yah Teng (cemetery) Association (福德祠暨綠野亭公所) in 1854, indicating the third major joint venture of the group of seven.<sup>10)</sup> Apart from the above alignments, the Jiayingzhou and Fung Yun Thai had also joined hands in 1840 to set up the Fudeci (福德祠) in Palmer Road, Tanjong Pagar.

By the 1870s, with the Loke Yah Teng fully occupied by graveyards, the groups of Jiayingzhou, Fung Yun Thai, and Guanghuizhao had also developed to such a position as to set up their respective exclusive cemeteries. The Guanghuizhao took the lead in establishing their Kwong Wai Siew Peck San Theng (廣惠肇碧山亭) in Braddell Road in 1870, followed by the Fung Yun Thai's Yue Shan Ting (毓山亭, covering 143 acres and located at 7 1/2 milestone of Holland Road) in 1882, and the Jiayingzhou's Shuang Long Shan (雙龍山) in 1887 (covering 90 acres and located at 5 milestone of Holland Road; see Fig. 4). The divergent development of the group of seven into three blocs (Jiayingzhou, Fung Yun Thai, and Guanghuizhao) since the 1870s has continued until today. Meanwhile, the Hakkas from Lianzhou, Gaozhou, and Guangxi had been left out by the main Hakka blocs. The formation of Sam Foh Whai Kuan (三和會館) in 1883 had later enabled them to set up their Sam Foh Cemetery. Temples were also established at the cemeteries. One such temple, San Yih Ci (三邑祠), housing the tablets of the ancestors of the Fung Yun Thai Hakkas, was established at Yue Shan Ting, and another at Shuang Long Shan for the Jiayingzhou Hakkas. The most important deity worshipped at the main hall of Ying Fo Fui Kun is Guang Gong (關公), the god symbolising brotherhood, harmony and righteousness and hence a patron god of wealth. At both the Hok Tek Chi and Fudeci, the main god is Da Bo Gong (大伯公), the Local Earth God (土地公) who is a patron of wealth. Compared with other dialect groups, the Hakkas do not appear to have their own exclusive gods and deities [see *ibid.*]. The practice of ancestor worship is an important traditional value among the various Chinese dialect groups in Singapore. Group solidarity is promoted through the holding of Spring and Autumn Worship as well as the observance of the birthdays of the patron gods and other traditional festivals. Proceeds from the temples, cemeteries, donations, fund-raising campaigns, and other activities were expended on social services and charity as the need arose. Apart from providing temporary accommodation for newly-arrived fellow countrymen, the associations in the early years also introduced jobs, rendered financial and other assistance to the destitute, the sick, and the deceased. In the field of medical services, the Cha Yang Hui Chun She (茶陽回春社) started in 1890 by the Char Yong Association (茶陽會館) is most noteworthy. An attempt was also made by the Ying Fo Fui Kun to set up a pauper hospital

9) The land on which the Hok Tek Chi is located has been acquired by the government and the temple will soon be demolished for urban redevelopment.

10) This third venture was managed by a committee of 20 members in 1982/83 represented by 8 members from Guangzhou, 5 from Jiayingzhou, 5 from Fung Yun Thai, and one each from Zhaoqing and Huizhou [Peng 1983: L-120].

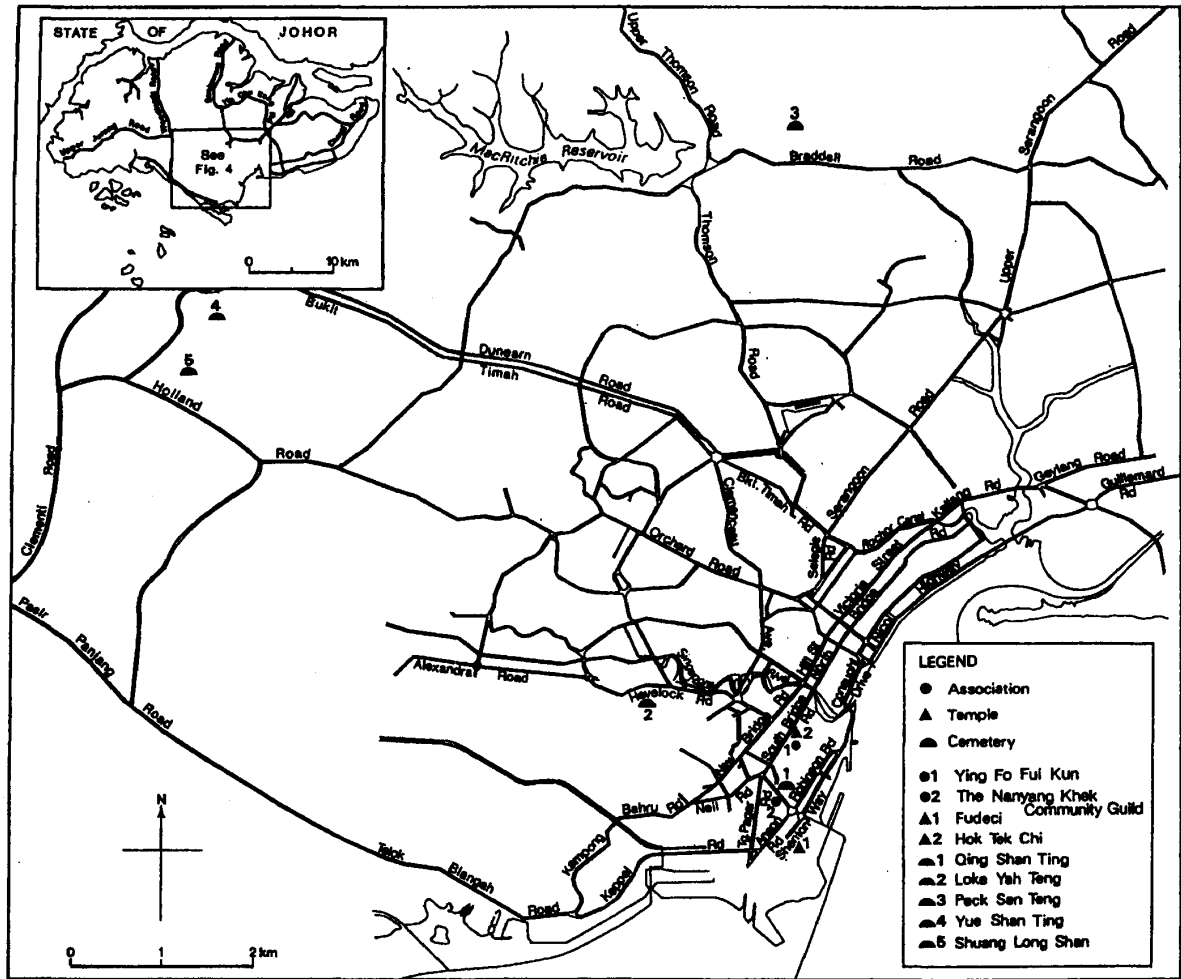


Fig. 4 Distribution of Selected Principal Early Hakka Associations in the City Area and Suburbs of Singapore

for the Jiayingzhou Hakkas at the Shuang Long Shan, though it did not materialise because of the Great Depression in the early 1930s [Ying Fo Fui Kun 1965: 11-12]. After the turn of the century, the need to provide education for the burgeoning numbers of children was recognised. Table 4 shows the schools established by the Hakkas in Singapore. Except for the later stage of Khee Fatt School which grew to accommodate over one thousand pupils, most of the Hakka schools were small and short-lived compared with the many schools run by other *bangs*, reflecting, *inter alia*, their weaker financial power. Judging from the origins of the founders of Hakka schools and the provision of medical care, it appears that the Dabu Hakkas were the wealthiest group among the Hakkas.

**Table 4** Schools Established by the Hakkas in Singapore, 1905-1970s

Name of school		Year	Sponsoring Association/ Group of Hakkas
Ying Xin School	(應新學校)	1905-1969	Ying Fo Fui Kun
Khee Fatt School	(啟發學校)	1906-1984	Char Yong Association
Lam Thong Public School	(南同學校)	1927-1977	Fung Yun Thai
Tung Hua School	(東華學校)	1933-1941	N.A.
Min Zhong Free School	(民衆義學)	1935	Aw Boon Haw & The Nanyang Khek Community Guild
Lichi Public School	(勵志公學)	1938-1941	Dabu
Yih Chi School	(一志學校)	1938-	Dabu
Poi Chai School	(培材學校)	1939-1976?	N.A.
Sam Foh School	(三和學校)	1946-1968	Sam Foh Association
Tai Keou School	(大橋學校)	1948-1970s	Dabu
Wen Hsuan Public School	(文選學校)	1949	Dabu

Sources: Various souvenir magazines of the Hakka associations as listed in Table 3.

These development patterns of the different sub-groups of the Hakkas have had a long-term adverse impact on the dialect-wide unity of the Hakkas vis-a-vis other dialect groups. The Hakkas remained divided until 1923 when a general association was first mooted, and eventually materialised with the completion of the building of The Nanyang Khek Community Guild in 1929. Apart from individual members, this Guild comprised the various Hakka prefectural, district, surname, as well as other cultural, recreational, and mutual help associations. Since all the associations are structurally and functionally independent, the Guild, while representing the interests of the Hakkas, does not affect the continued parallel development of the different Hakka blocs.<sup>11)</sup>

Parallel to the locality associations are the surname associations. According to the stone inscriptions commemorating the renovation of Ying Fo Fui Kun in 1844, there were 15 surname groupings among the donors [Chen and Tan 1972: 176-183]. This indicates that several Hakka clan groupings might have been formed earlier than their locality associations. This was possible because a surname grouping could be established on a more restrictive kinship or lineage basis. Small membership and the parochial nature of activities did not warrant the registration of these small groupings in colonial days. Geographical mobility of members might also have accounted for the demise of those surname groupings without premises. Table 5, which is not exhaustive, shows the present Hakka surname associations. Most of the surname

11) It is interesting to note that The Nanyang Khek Community Guild was a prime mover in establishing several general Hakka associations in Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia in the 1950s [The Nanyang Khek Community Guild 1956: 63-64].

associations were registered after the Second World War and have been concerned with the observance of the Spring and Autumn Worship, provision of mutual help, bursaries and scholarships.

**Table 5** Hakka Surname Associations in Singapore, 1992

Association	Year Registered
Nanyang Lai Clan Association (南洋賴氏公會)	1931
Singapore Khek Community Wong Clan Assn. (星洲客属黃氏公會)	1939?
Khek Community Teng Association (客属鄧氏公會)	Before 1945
Nanyang Khek Community Chin Sih Assn. (南洋客属陳氏公會)	1947
The Khek Lim Clan Association (客属林氏公會)	1950
Singapore Khek Community Lieu Clan Assn. (新加坡客属鄧氏公會)	1951
The Nanyang Loh Clan Association (南洋羅氏公會)	1952
Singapore Nanyang Khek Community Pow Soo Association (南洋客属宝樹同宗社)	1957
Singapore Ka Yin Chong Association (嘉應張氏公會)	1958
Cha Yong Ho Clan Association (新加坡茶陽何氏公會)	1963
Singapore and Malaya Khek Leow Clan Assn. (星馬客属廖氏公會)	1964
Singapore Yong Sze Association (新加坡楊氏公會)	N.A.
Kaying Lee Clan Association (嘉應五属李氏公會)	N.A.
Nanyang Kee Hsian Chin Sih Association (南洋莒鄉陳氏公會)	N.A.
Keshu Yanling Gonghui (客属延陵公會)	N.A.
Keshu Xu Shi Dong Hai Tang (客属徐氏東海堂)	N.A.

Sources: Various Hakka souvenir magazines as listed in Table 3; [Peng 1983].

Note: Most of the surname associations were in operation long before their registration.

### Discussion

It has thus become clear that the social milieu in the nineteenth century Singapore conditioned group behaviour in a social alignment. The formation of various types of association through the flexible utilisation of the principles of locality and kinship enabled individuals to join social groups and so establish themselves in a foreign land. Several features reflected by the Hakka associations outlined above can be summarised as follows:

First, the level of utilisation of the principles of locality and kinship to initiate an association varied according to numerical strength and the contingencies of the situation giving rise to the formation of an association. In imperial Qing China, most of the rural areas of emigration were inhabited by a particular dialect group which in most cases belonged to one or a few surnames [Freedman 1958; See 1976: 205]. Thus in imperial China, there was a great

deal of overlapping between locality and surname at the village level. The combination of locality and kinship principles would enable a surname rather than a locality association to be established in the first place. In cases where such a restrictive basis was not sufficient for the formation of an association, the principles of surname and locality could be broadened, whether individually or jointly (e.g., The Khek Lim Clan Association 客属林氏公會, and the Singapore Ka Yin Chong Association 嘉應張氏公會; see also [Hsieh 1989; Cheng 1990: 57-59]).

Second, as observed by Peng [1983: L-17], despite the boundary changes to the various administrative units in China over the dynasties, there had been a tendency for prefectural associations in Singapore to be based on boundaries demarcated during the Ming or Qing Dynasty.<sup>12)</sup>

Third, the existence of a locality association at a certain level does not preclude the formation of others at the same level. Thus apart from the Ying Fo Fui Kun for the Hakkas from Jiayingzhou, there are two other similar local associations, namely, the Kah Khiu Association (KKA) (in Seletar) and the Kar Yeng Five Districts General Association (KYFDGA) (in Bukit Timah).<sup>13)</sup>

Fourth, three different development patterns of the Hakka associations can be identified. (a) The 'split-parallel' pattern as represented by the associations of the various Hakka blocs. (b) The convergent pattern as reflected in the formation of The Nanyang Khek Community Guild and the Federation of Ka Yin Chu Association of Singapore. (c) The divergent pattern as shown by: (i) the formation of the various locality associations at the inter-district and district levels by the Jiayingzhou Hakkas after the establishment of Ying Fo Fui Kun in 1823; and (ii) the formation of Char Yong Association, Foong Soon Fui Kuan, and Eng Teng Association subsequent to the Fung Yun Thai alignment formed in the 1820s.

Fifth, the great number of Hakka locality associations, especially those of the Jiayingzhou Hakkas, reflects two important factors related to the proliferation of clan associations. (a) The existence of a 'small-group mentality' which is related to the prevalence of 'institution-oriented' personality [Cheng 1985: 52]. Membership of one association did not preclude the joining of other similar associations, and participation in several associations enhanced a person's social and business networks. In other words, the leader of an association could also be a member or office bearer of one or more associations. This is because nearly all the associations

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12) The demarcation of a former imperial district into smaller divisions after 1911 may give rise to the formation of one or more new locality associations based on the smallest and/or latest divisions, in addition to the old district association already in existence. The latest such example is the Hopo Corporation established in 1981.

13) Causes for the formation of these two local Jiayingzhou associations are interesting. The predecessor of KKA was the "Jiu Xiang Hui" (救鄉會, i.e., Save Home-village Society), formed in 1937 by the Jiayingzhou Hakkas living in Seletar in order to raise funds for home village refugees resulting from the Japanese invasion [Chin 1991?: 127]. KYFDGA owed its formation to the high concentration of Jiayingzhou Hakkas in Bukit Timah after the Second World War [*ibid.*: 121], indicating the inadequacy of the Ying Fo Fui Kun to cater to the 'new needs' (e.g., building of premises) of the Jiayingzhou Hakkas in Bukit Timah. Similarly, the formation of The Nanyang Khek Community Guild (BPKCG) in 1937, again arising from spatial concentration.

are independent institutions structurally and functionally. (b) The initial location of an association is essentially population oriented. New spatial concentration may give rise to the formation of another association in a new location, KKA, KYFDGA and Bukit Panjang Khek Community Guild (BPKCG) being cases in point.

Sixth, there exists a hierarchy among the Hakkas' clan associations. At the apex is The Nanyang Khek Community Guild which represents the whole Hakka community in dealing with other dialect groups, though the Guild is more a dialect grouping than a locality organisation. The locality associations of the various Hakka blocs assume an intermediate position; these associations also play leading roles in providing social services to the various sub-groups of Hakkas. The bottom layer is made up of the various locality associations at the local level—the minor district associations and the surname associations.

Seventh, during most of the nineteenth century, Chinese social life in Singapore was strongly influenced by secret societies [Comber 1959]. Before the outlawing of the secret societies in 1890, many Chinese locality and surname associations which had existed under different names are believed to have been associated with secret society activities. Many of these associations have survived, changed and developed with the years, while an unknown but probably large number have disappeared. Many nineteenth century clan associations were thus in existence long before their registration as societies.

Eighth, Chinese voluntary associations take various forms and names, ranging from locality and surname, through mutual help, temple, cemetery, school, hospital, recreational/musical/athletic and friendship club, to company and corporation. Nevertheless, most locality associations are known as *hui kuan* (會館) at prefectural and district level or *tong xiang hui* (同鄉會) at village level, while most of the surname associations are called *gong hui* (公會) *she* (社) or *tang* (堂). Among the associations that emerged before the twentieth century, many operated as 'kongsis' (公司, companies). The registration of the Hepo Hakkas' locality association as a corporation is a case in point, reflecting the official policy of discouraging the further proliferation of Chinese clan associations up till the early 1980s.

Finally, a voluntary association was, and still is, essentially mutual-help oriented, necessarily initiated by financially strong and public-spirited leaders, who were willing and able to make generous contributions of money and time. Once established, the provision of social services followed and tended to escalate as resources permitted. The types of services varied with time and the level of social commitment of each association. Generally speaking, most dialect-wide and some prefectural as well as district associations competed to provide temples, cemeteries, schools, clinics and hospitals, in addition to their various contributions to local society and home villages in China. The social commitments of the majority of the lower-level locality and surname associations were limited and parochial, each catering only to a small group of members and their dependants.<sup>14)</sup> These varied social services and activities have promoted group solidarity, identity, loyalty, and traditional values, thereby helping the members of the group to survive, settle, develop, and prosper in Singapore.



While the reasons for the Chinese to form associations in various parts of the world as given by Freedman [1960] and Willmott [1970], among others, provide us with certain insight into the phenomenon, this case study has, nevertheless, shown that the circumstances and factors which contributed to the formation of the various Hakka associations in Singapore were several and complex. The Chinese capacity for forming associations is due to their flexibility in using their various social relationships or *guanxi* (關係), as a member of family, clan, village, hometown, district, prefecture, province, country, dialect group, community, society, institution, occupation and trade. The flexibility of using one or more of these relationships has facilitated the mushrooming of voluntary associations catering to the various needs arising from population increase, social mobility and diversity of society.

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- 14) One such scheme was the "Old-age Scheme" (老人會) by which subscriptions were collected from members and distributed for their funeral expenses. This was important when there was a lack of social welfare services and the society was poor. Since the Second World War, apart from mutual help, provision of bursaries and scholarships for members' children, and cash handouts for the destitute and the aged at the Lunar New Year have been common activities. Most of the associations still also practise Spring and Autumn Worship for their ancestors and deceased clansmen, celebrate the traditional festivals, and organise various cultural, musical, and recreational activities.

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