LIETUVOS ETNOLOGIJA

LITHUANIAN ETHNOLOGY

STUDIES IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY

FRAGMENTUOTI IDENTITETAI IR SOCIOKULTŪRINĖS MAŽUMOS
Sudarytojai VYTIS ČIUBRINSKAS ir JONAS MARDOSA

FRAGMENTED IDENTITIES AND SOCIOCULTURAL MINORITIES
Edited by VYTIS ČIUBRINSKAS and JONAS MARDOSA

Lietuvos etnologija: socialinės antropologijos ir etnologijos studijos – etnologijos ir socialinės/kultūrinės antropologijos mokslo žurnalas, nuo 2001 m. leidžiamas vietoj tęstinio monografijų ir studijų leidinio „Lietuvos etnologija“. Jame spausdinami moksliniai straipsniai, konferencijų pranešimai, knygų recenzijos ir apžvalgos, kurių temos pirmiausia apima Lietuvą ir Vidurio/Rytų Europą. Žurnalas siekia pristatyti mokslo aktualijas ir skatinti teorines bei metodines diskusijas. Tekstai skelbiami lietuvių arba anglų kalba.

TURINYS / CONTENTS

Fragmented Identities: The Case of Penang's Malaysian-Chinese

Christian Giordano

The social organization of the Chinese diaspora in the Straits of Malacca has emerged as a very diversified phenomenon so that it is hard to speak of a coherent social and cultural community. Starting from the case of George Town, a port city once part of the British Empire and subsequently incorporated in present-day Malaysia, the article will illustrate the various forms of social organization developed by the Chinese in the *longue durée*. Through the notions of *network* and *corporate group*, I will examine the underlying modalities of organizational changes that occurred in this diasporic society.

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Christian Giordano, Chair of Social Anthropology, University of Fribourg, Pérolles 90, 1700 Fribourg, Switzerland, e-mail: christian.giordano@unifr.ch

Introduction

On first approaching Chinese immigration in the *Nanyang*, namely the *Southern Sea*, i.e. the vast Southeast Asian region stretching from Vietnam to the Philippines including Thailand, the Malacca Peninsula, Sarawak, Brunei, Sabah and the Indonesian archipelago, one might tend to view the many communities as a single diasporic entity, rather homogeneous both socially and culturally. This viewpoint, however, would be very inaccurate and may rightly be identified as a *methodological nationalism* (Wimmer, Glick Schiller 2002: 301 ff.), i.e. an essentialist slant by which continental and immigrant Chinese have always been considered a single unit.

The analysis presented in this article is based on my extended field observations over the past fifteen years in Penang, a port city located on the northern access to the Strait of Malacca and part of Peninsular Malaysia. Empirical data was collected from extensive socio-historical researches since I believe it is important to show the impact of the *past* in the present. Furthermore, I made intensive use of participant observation during manifestations concerning the demonstrative staging of diversity within the Chinese community, which point up the fact that

this is a *diaspora of diasporas* in an inherently diasporic city. Qualitative interviews, informal discussions and a systematic perusal of daily newspapers complement the above empirical techniques.

Through the analysis of these diverse empirical materials, we will illustrate the social and cultural complexity of the Chinese community, which to this day still represents the majority of the population of the city of George Town on the island of Penang (Giordano 2011: 59 ff.; Giordano 2013: 195 ff.). This cultural complexity is not typical to George Town alone since it is comparable to that of other Southeast Asian cities with substantial Chinese communities such as Singapore, Bangkok and Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) as we were able to ascertain through short-term observations.

From a theoretical point of view this entails accurately pinpointing the notion of diaspora since its definition is often taken for granted, thus often applied uncritically or inconsistently. On this point, we need only mention the more widely known though not always congruent or univocal conceptions of diaspora (Safran 1991; Cohen 1997; Clifford 1994: 302 ff.; Tölölyan 1991: 3 ff.; Tölölyan 2007: 647 ff.; Prevelakis 1996).

We have avoided using the term ethnicity (Barth 1969) especially to steer clear of the timeworn and by now redundant debate between essentialism, respectively primordialism on the one hand and constructivism. We have also sought to avoid the controversy between authors who view ethnicity as a collective phenomenon, i.e. of a group, and others, influenced by the new trends of *methodological individualism*, who strive, in vain in my opinion, to conceive an ethnicity without groups (Brubaker 2006).

Therefore, instead of dwelling on the system of representations and ethical-religious symbolic aspects that evoke the idea of diaspora as a closely-knit national community outside its original homeland, this article will focus on internal diversity, i.e. on forms of social organization created over the *longue durée* (Braudel 1977: 47 ff.) by the Chinese communities in the *Nanyang.* Accordingly, we will show how their social organization, according to the distinction put forward by a number of representatives of the Manchester School founded by Max Gluckman (Mitchell 1969), is essentially based on *corporate groups*, i.e. formal and institutionalized associations, *factions,* i.e. conflictual coalitions, and on extended *networks*, i.e. more informal, flexible and dynamic personalized configurations. These organizational elements have turned out to be a crucial resource for the undisputed economic success of the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora which gave rise to many animosities and envies in the other native and immigrant ethnic groups with whom it was in close proximity from a territorial point of view as well. It is a well-known fact that the Chinese success in this region led to bloodied persecutions culminating in full-fledged *pogroms* as in the May 13th

1969 incidents in Malaysia and the tragic events in Indonesia despite this country's renowned tolerance in terms of ethno-cultural diversity.

Ethnicity and Urban Territorial Organization in Penang's Society

George Town, by now known as Penang, was founded for strategic reasons by the British East India Company in 1786 on the island of Pulau Pinang (at the northern passage of the Strait of Malacca). During the entire colonial period, the British encouraged immigration from various continents (Chinese, Indians, Burmese, Malay, Thai, Javanese, Bugis from Sulawesi, Aceh from Sumatra, Arabs from Hadhramaut as well as Armenians, Jews etc.). Consequently, speaking about past and current Penangite society in terms of a society of diasporas is certainly accurate. Despite this impressive ethno-cultural diversity, from the onset the Chinese have been the numerically most relevant community in George Town's urban area.

Relations between the various groups were chiefly dictated by economic interests. Up until the end of the 19th century, the feeling of belonging to a specific ethnic group was barely unfolding. Ever since the founding of Penang in 1786, the British colonial empire had based its domination policy on the *divide et impera* doctrine by encouraging divisions amongst the various ethnic groups of Palau Penang's society and George Town in particular.

This separation policy was matched by the communities' territorial segregation, each one living in its own district managed by a *kapitan* who was overseen by colonial authorities and belonged to the corresponding ethnic group. Of either Chinese, Indian or Malay origin, the *kapitan* was very familiar with the situation within his own territory and acted as liaison officer between colonial powers and the community. In the end, he was also a representative of the Crown within the social and physical sphere of which he was in charge.

Therefore, Penang's socio-economic and cultural configuration had the following characteristics:
- a spatial separation among the system's various groups, each with its institutions and infrastructures within a specific territory;
- a division of labor on an ethnic basis that corresponded to social inequality among individuals. Especially in British Malaya and in the Straits Settlements, there was a strong correlation between ethnic belonging, social status and economic standing (Shamsul 1998: 142).

Chinese Cultural Complexities in Penang

Chinese immigrants to Penang came mainly from regions more or less associated with the southern coast of the vast empire. Yet, upon arriving in Penang,

Figure 1. Oldest Chinese Temple, Penang. 2006 (Photo by Christian Giordano)

their cultural and especially linguistic differences were highly noticeable and to a lesser degree still are to this day (Figure 1).

Nowadays, besides social disparities within the community that sprang from different causes linked both to their time of arrival and to their previous status in their society of origin, George Town Chinese belonged to five creeds (Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Muslim and Christian), and at least eight linguistic groups (Küchler 1968: 89).

In fact, there are at least five, better yet six major groups that to this day constitute Penang's Chinese diaspora. First of all, there the Hokkien from the southern part of the Fujian province who became and still are the largest group by far in Penang. Being Hokkien means being regarded as Han, i.e. an ethnic Chinese, but also one who speaks a specific language, distinct from Mandarin Chinese and from the neighboring vernacular idioms of the other groups that make up the Penangite diaspora. The written characters of everyday expressions, too, are not identical to Mandarin Chinese ones (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Hokkien Khoo Clan Temple, Penang. 2006 (Photo by Christian Giordano)

The second group in terms of numbers and economic importance in Penang's Chinese community is the Cantonese one. Actually, the term *Cantonese* is improper since they came not only from Canton but also from the entire province of Guangdong whose capital and most important city is Canton. Though unanimously regarded as ethnic Han, their language is not Mandarin Chinese, but a specific vernacular practically unintelligible to the other groups including the Hokkien. In short, communication between Penang's two most important Chinese groups is not that simple. If a Hokkien and a Cantonese wish or need to communicate, they will not be able to use Mandarin Chinese, unless they attended the more or less private schools where this language is taught. Communication will be in English or in Bahasa Malaysia, the two languages learnt at the public schools. Clearly, English will be the language of choice, probably with a Manglish (Malaysian English) connotation.

Linguistically speaking, the Teochew, originally from Chaoshan, a region in eastern Guangdong bordering with Fujian, are closely related to the Hokkien,

Figure 3. Teochew Regional Temple, Penang. 2006 (Photo by Christian Giordano)

although understanding each other may be difficult especially since current Hokkien is peppered with Malay expressions. In this case as well, the language commonly used to communicate with other groups is chiefly English. The Teochew are especially proud of their specific culture, which they regard as distinct from that of the other components of the Chinese community. Accordingly, they emphasize the characteristics of their opera compositions, music, gastronomy, embroidery etc. As with all the other groups, the Teochew display a strategy aimed at creating distinctions within the Chinese community via language and culture (Figure 3).

The Hakka may be regarded as migrants par excellence. The denomination Hakka itself points to this specific status since it means *visitor* and/or *wayfarer*. Originally from northern China and settling first in central China, through a series of migrations they reached southern China. From here, some moved on to the *Nanyang* thus arriving to Penang where they set up their own community. In fact, though the Hakka are regarded as ethnic Han, they have their own vernacu-

lar that is not understood by the other groups of Penang's Chinese community. They, too, have their own cultural specificities since the Hakka were chiefly farmers, an activity they continued to practice in Penang as well in accordance with their own traditions and customs. As migrants in the Guangdong, relations with the Cantonese had always been problematic and tense, although these frictions appear to be somewhat inconsequential in Penang. Some Hakka decided not to be farmers and went on to become successful merchants.

At this point, we also need to mention the Hainanese who at one time were fishermen along the coasts of Guangdong and Fujian and settled on Hainan Island. Despite their initial proximity with the Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew, their vernacular is unintelligible to these three groups. Renowned for their excellent culinary traditions, they were employed by the colonial elite as cooks and restaurateurs. To this day, Hainanese cuisine is highly regarded in Penang.

Finally, to this tentative classification of Chinese diversity in Penang we ought to add the Peranakan or Baba Nyonya. While the term Baba Nyonya is specific, Peranakan has more than one meaning. On the one hand it indicates the Straits Chinese or the Chinese of the *Nanyang*, while on the other hand it can simply indicate the first Chinese emigrants to the British colonies in the Strait of Malacca. In this context, we will use the narrower definition of Peranakan, i.e. as synonymous of Baba Nyonya. The first Chinese emigrants to Penang, i.e. the Baba, were chiefly young single men who married Malay women, i.e. the Nyonya, who were often of Muslim faith. These intermarriages generated a creolized cultural complex in which Chinese culture blended with the Malay one. Verbal expressions, culinary traditions and attire are only the more noticeable expressions of the blending of these two cultures. Having achieved a significant economic success, the Baba Nyonya or Peranakan became a highly elite group with a cosmopolitan lifestyle quite different and distinct from that of the so to speak average Chinese. Nowadays the Baba Nyonya are very proud of their specificity and diversity with reference to both the Chinese and the Malay culture, yet they acknowledge an undeniable kinship.

Several incidents confirm that relations between the various Chinese communities were frequently problematic, at times discordant and generally strained. The following example is emblematic. Up to the late 19th century, there was a harsh commercial rivalry between Chinese clans from the Hokkien province and those from Canton. This brought on recurrent conflicts, violent ones as well, between the two groups that disrupted public order in George Town's city center and caused quite a few headaches to the British colonial administration. Moreover, the historical fact is that during these out-and-out wars between Chinese clans the Aceh merchants repeatedly sided with the Hokkien entrepreneurs simply because the two groups shared well-tested commercial relations

that guaranteed steady dealings between Arabia and China, i.e. the vital corner-stone of this small Malay community's economic prosperity. Linguistic, religious and overall cultural differences were certainly not negligible, but were left in the background. In any case, the Buddhist-Taoist Chinese from Hokkien had no qualms about joining forces with Muslims from Aceh to foil the loathed and like-wise Buddhist-Taoist Cantonese, who responded however in kind.

Social Organization of the Chinese Diaspora in Penang: Corporate Groups, Factions and Networks

Given the still existing significant sociocultural differentiation, several characteristics of diasporic phenomena as defined by the most qualified experts can hardly be detected nowadays in Penang's Chinese community.

In fact, speaking about a *traumatic dispersion* from a place regarded as one's *homeland* towards two or more foreign countries would be excessive (Cohen 1997: 26). Present-day Chinese do not perceive their ancestors' emigration to Penang as the result of a violent persecution associated with a possible genocide threat. The current generations, on the contrary, retain an historical memory of a by now very remote emigration due mainly to economic reasons, which is both rather indistinct and rarely expressed, except by those specialists engaged in reconstructing the past. The Chinese community tends, instead, to underscore its subaltern political status compared with the Malays' within the current Federation of Malaysia. Yet, this discrimination is accepted, albeit grudgingly, by virtue of the *social contract* and *identity bargaining* on which the current balance of power between the various ethnic communities that form this nation of nations is based. We need to add, though, that after all the prime minister of the State of Penang is Chinese.

Penang's Chinese are conscious of their origins, thus, under this aspect, they also share a collective memory especially about their region (Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan etc.) and village of origin (Cohen 1997: 26). Yet, any reference to a myth and idealization of one's fabled or actual homeland would be a gross exaggeration. Therefore, there is no commitment to maintain, restore, safeguard and enrich it. For many generations now Penang has been the Chinese community's true homeland, as proven by the latter's endeavors to have George Town with its magnificent *Chinatown* inscribed in UNESCO's *World Heritage List* in 2008.

Amongst the various components of Penang's Chinese community, there is no trace of a plan for a collective return to the homeland (Cohen 1997: 26). After the transition in the People's Republic from Maoist communism to a capitalist free market economy, trips to this country are at most temporary and aimed at profitable business, with the advantage over others of knowing some of the local idioms (Mandarin Chinese, Hokkien, Cantonese etc.).

In Penang, as elsewhere, the Chinese certainly share a long-standing collective consciousness sustained by a feeling of distinction and the awareness of a common history and fate (Cohen 1997: 26). Yet, *Chineseness* is displayed essentially at a national level, especially in the political sphere, in order to underscore differences with the Malays or the other ethnic groups that make up Malaysia. On these occasions, belonging to the Chinese community is expressed via a *hyphenated identity*, i.e. with the term *Malaysian-Chinese*, thus underscoring not only one's Chinese descent, but also that one considers oneself a Malaysian citizen (Farkas 2009: 122). At a local level, instead, the tendency is to demonstratively stage regional differences from the Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew etc.

Penangites are undoubtedly aware of a kinship with Chinese in other immigration countries, yet this does not necessarily imply a transnational feeling of empathy and solidarity (Cohen 1997: 26). As an example, *Singaporean-Chinese* are regarded as being very different and, moreover, perceived as conceited, probably due precisely to their commercial success.

Finally, Penang's Chinese are alive to their cultural richness that finds expression both in architectural forms such as the clan temples and *shophouses* and in ancestral traditions such as New Year's celebrations as well as the Hungry Ghost Festival with its picturesque performances in George Town's various districts. They also take pride in their various traditional medicine practices showcased in a special museum. Therefore, they are aware of the specific enrichment they bring to Malaysian society, which, in turn, by defining itself multicultural and multiethnic, cannot but be attuned to tolerance towards diversity and cultural plurality. And yet, relations between the Malay majority and the Chinese minority are riddled with constant tensions, especially at a national level. Despite these troubled relations, Penang's Chinese community does not feel threatened by possible devastating events such as forced expulsion, ethnic cleansing or, worse still, physical annihilation (Cohen 1997: 26).

The Chinese community in Penang is a sui generis diaspora especially because of its internal diversity. Therefore, we shall now focus on its specific social organization by drawing upon the theoretic and conceptual notions developed at the Manchester School (Mitchell 1969; Boissevain, Mitchell 1973; Boissevain 1974). Examining the social organization, however, is tantamount to drawing attention to differentiations within a community.

In the past as well as in the present, this Chinese diaspora was and still is characterized essentially by three types of social organization: *corporate groups*, *factions* and *personalized networks*. Clearly, in a specific configuration a single actor could belong to all three since they intersect each other; therefore, all three types can be isolated solely in terms of ideal type.

In the past and to this day, Penang's Chinese have had an amazing number of powerful *corporate groups* represented by the *sworn brotherhoods* often located within or adjacent to individual temples. Whereas colonial power rightly or not regarded these associations as secret societies and European observers equated them to Western Freemasonry, they actually played a crucial economic role in the Chinese diaspora, even after British colonial administration formally abolished them in 1890 yet never truly succeeded in stamping them out. Strictly speaking, they did not disband but rather changed form (DeBernardi 2009; Musa 2007). In fact, in the 1960s Wilfrid Blythe still noted that it was practically impossible to eradicate the *sworn brotherhoods* by law since they are too deeply embedded in the Chinese cultural background (Blythe 1969: 11). This opinion is possibly too radical and Orientalistic, yet the fact remains that the *sworn brotherhoods* changed their names into *associations* whose members had *clanic* or *regional* ties (Tan 2007: 47). Although no longer as secretive as before, some of these *corporate groups* still play a considerable economic role in the Chinese diaspora, especially in the management of the lucrative business relations with China following the end of the Maoist era and the advent of a capitalist market economy.

Historically speaking, Penang's *sworn brotherhoods* appeared with the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants, since there is evidence that the first of these *corporate groups* was formally founded in 1801 (DeBernardi 2009: 57). These associations were established for charity purposes, self-defense and protection, as well as against the possible threat of evil spirits (DeBernardi 2009: 56). Soon enough, though, these *secret societies* started to operate also in Penang's economic sphere, especially by controlling illegal activities such as those linked to gambling, prostitution and later on to opium and alcohol trafficking as well. Consequently, the *sworn brotherhoods* were also linked to the world of contraband. In time, some of these secret societies turned into outright criminal associations, rightly or not regarded as akin to Mafia ones (DeBernardi 2009: 77).

Yet, these *corporate groups* should not be regarded as being active solely in the field of illegality since their main concern was in very diversified transnational commercial dealings, aside from the illegal ones, which, however, were not all that marginal.

Some authors have highlighted that during the 19th century and in the first decade of the 20th century, along with economic activities, there were also political ones with an anti-dynastic and anti-imperial agenda clearly aimed at the ruling Qing dynasty in China (Murray, Qin 1994: 142 ff.). Giving too much relevance to the Chinese secret societies' rebellious trait, however, would be a sheer exercise in methodological romanticism since they were definitely less politicized than other similar organizations. Yet, a closer look at the more recent political role of the *sworn brotherhoods* reveals that after World War II they had political

ties with the nationalist Kuomintang or with the Malayan Communist Party, thus substantiating that Penang's Chinese diaspora was ideologically divided (Leong 2009: 224 ff.).

But the main interest of the *sworn brotherhoods* was achieving economic prosperity, not necessarily via lawful means alone. Actually, in Penang these associations have been the means to amass considerable fortunes, especially for some of their most prominent members.

These *corporate groups* were associations, which, as Max Weber would say, were just barely open towards the outside (Weber 1956: 26). Full-fledged affiliation to a *sworn brotherhood* was preceded by complex initiation rituals characterized by grueling nighttime ceremonies so that the newcomers would be awed into respecting both the group's behavior code and the leaders' seemingly divine authority (DeBernardi 2009: 79). Being a member of a *sworn brotherhood* implied total obedience, though in return one could rely on a convenient safety net if need be. It is a known fact that ever since the first half of the 19th century these *corporate groups* arrogated to themselves the privilege of passing judgment on cases involving their own members. This led to an actual situation of legal pluralism much to the legal authorities' dislike.

These brief notes on the activities and social practices of the *sworn brotherhoods* illustrate that these associations undeniably played a key role in Penang's Chinese diaspora since due precisely to their strong internal social cohesion and their rigorous patriarchic discipline rooted in Confucianism they turned out to be a crucial resource for this community's enduring economic success. Along with the *sworn brotherhoods,* nowadays in Penang other *corporate groups,* such as the powerful *Chinese Chamber of Commerce* for example, also play a crucial role in the Chinese's economic activities (Tan 2007: 49). The Chinese diaspora's economic success had been noticed by observers ever since colonial times and construed with a derogatory connotation. Thus, Penang's Chinese were portrayed as greedy capitalists willing to do any type of business who, due to their hedonism, lacked the ethical substratum of Protestant asceticism (DeBernardi 2009: 68 ff.). The other ethnic communities that make up Penang's society, however, still have this negative perception, especially the Malays who as Muslims have rigorous business ethics, in principle at least.

Yet, we should not assume that relations among Penang's various *sworn brotherhoods* were harmonious; on the contrary, between some of them there were fierce rivalries and at times out-and-out conflicts. This is why with good reason we need also mention *factions* along with the *sworn brotherhoods* as important forms of social organization within Penang's Chinese diaspora. In line with Boissevain's conceptions, a faction may be defined as a temporary alliance between unconnected people or groups for finite purposes also in terms of time

(Boissevain 1974: 171). Accordingly, a faction is a specific type of coalition mustered by one or more notables for reasons strictly related to a political or economic conflict against rivals with a more or less equal social status. As a rule, the factions that emerged in Penang, primarily revolving around acknowledged leaders of the *sworn brotherhoods*, were extensions of the latter with a sheer economic purpose.

The personalized recruitment on behalf of the notables, who are also pivotal and influential characters within the faction, occurs chiefly in accordance with various criteria, which include family relationships (clanic in Penang), neighborhood and friendship relationships (if need be solely instrumental) and economic partnerships (Boissevain 1974: 192). All these forms of social relationships have been extremely significant in the formation of Penang's Chinese coalitions in conflict. Finally we need to mention the strongly personalized hierarchic ties between a faction's leader and his followers by which the latter are willing to mobilize the support of friends and acquaintances of their own network of relationships. Therefore, relations between faction-leaders and their acolytes are chiefly transactional, though moral-based ties are not uncommon (Boissevain 1974: 192).

The factions' role within the Chinese diaspora would come glaringly to the fore especially in times of open conflicts that jeopardized law and order. This occurred during the abovementioned Penang riots in 1864 when the age-old enmity and permanent tension between two *sworn brotherhoods* escalated into an armed conflict together with mutual acts of retaliation such as torchings, thefts, robberies and even beheadings (Musa 2007: 67). Yet, it was not a confrontation between two *corporate groups*, but rather a conflict between *factions.* The adversaries, in fact, included not only members of the two *sworn brotherhoods*, but also members of rival Malay secret societies who took active part in the riots in coalition with members of one or the other Chinese associations. Still, the conflict between factions that emerged during the riots is representative of the ongoing rivalry between the Hokkien (with part of the Hakka as allies) and the Cantonese (Musa 2007: 68).

Finally, we will touch on the role of *personalized networks* as the third essential type of social organization of Penang's Chinese diaspora. By networks we mean a system of social relationships beyond the confines of *corporate groups*, which instead are governed by strict membership criteria and clear-cut boundaries between members and non-members. A network has a more flexible structure, probably more temporary, thus less institutionalized in which, thanks to their chiefly personal links, the single actors generally trade information and carry out various types of transactions (Mitchell 1973: 23 ff.). Yet, *networks* and *corporate groups* are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Mitchell 1973: 34). In fact, there can very well be specific *networks* within a *corporate group*, while a *network* can

link together a number of *corporate groups,* for example via relationships between their leaders or emissaries.

As far as Penang's Chinese diaspora is concerned, Wong Yee Tuan has accurately shown how it was integrated into a very complex system of regional and likewise transnational networks, that was highly efficient in terms of commercial dealings (Wong 2007: 106 ff.; Wong 2008: 1 ff.). The basis of these networks is clanic affiliation in the first place, in this case affiliation with the five most powerful Hokkien clans in Penang, still known as the *big five*. These were the Khoo, Cheah, Yeoh, Lim and Tan clans together with their counterparts located in the vast region that from the Strait of Malacca stretched northeast of Sumatra (now Indonesia), southwest of Siam (now Thailand) to the southern part of Burma (now Myanmar) and *last but not least* to the small sultanates along the western coast of the Malay Peninsula. Though vying with each other, these networks are known to have practically controlled commerce in the entire region, amassing considerable economic fortunes. The presence of these networks, however, has also helped and continues to significantly help keep alive the Hokkien cultural specificities in this region.

Conclusion: on the Usefulness of the Notion of Diaspora

The notion of diaspora is currently widely popular, thus generating some confusion since it is often overtly or covertly tagged with both negative and positive ideological connotations. This article, instead, aims to show that the term diaspora may be very useful with a diversified conception. The almost classic example of a Chinese community, in this case Penang's community in Malaysia, helps drawn attention especially to its complex social organization, which internally is highly differentiated and not without tensions, rivalries and even open and at times enduring conflicts. Thus, the article avoids an essentialist vision based on a uniformity and cultural unity of these immigrant communities. An analysis free from conceptual mystifications, however, can be achieved solely with a longue durée ethnographic research, since at a first glance these diasporas, including the Chinese one, may appear to be strongly united communities characterized by social and cultural homogeneity. Empirical data, instead, confirms that this initial impression is deceptive if not indeed mendacious.

References

Barth Fredrick (ed.). 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Blythe Wilfred L. 1969. *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya: A Historical Study*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Boissevain Jeremy. 1974. *Friends and Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Boissevain Jeremy, Mitchell James Clyde (eds.). 1973. *Networks: Studies in Human Interaction*. The Hague, Paris: Mouton.

Braudel Fernand. 1977. Geschichte und Sozialwissenschaften. Die *longue* durée, Honegger C. (Hg.). *Schrift und Materie der Geschichte. Vorschläge zur systematischen Aneignung historischer Prozesse*: 47–85. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.

Brubaker Rogers. 2006. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Clifford James. 1994. Diasporas, *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3): 302–338.

Cohen Robin. 1997. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

DeBernardi Jean. 2009. *Penang: Rites of Belonging in a Malaysian Chinese Community*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Farkas Barbara. 2009. *Chinesische Einwanderer in Penang*. Frankfurt/M., Berlin, Bern: Peter Lang Verlag.

Giordano Christian. 2011. Investigating Migrations: From Diaspora Studies to Transnationalism, Čiubrinskas V. (sud.). *Lietuviškasis identitetas šiuolaikinės emigracijos kontekstuose*: 59–70. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas.

Giordano Christian. 2013. Corporate Groups, Factions and Networks: Social Organization of the Chinese Diaspora in the Straits of Malacca – The Case of Penang, Kokot W. et al. (eds.). *Diaspora as a Resource: Comparative Studies in Strategies, Networks and Urban Space*: 195–217. Berlin, Zürich, Lit-Verlag.

Küchler Johannes. 1968. *Penang. Kulturlandschaftswandel und ethnisch-soziale Struktur einer Insel Malaysias*. Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag.

Leong Yee Fong. 2009. Secret Societies and Politics in Colonial Malaya with Special Reference to the Ang Bin Hoey in Penang (1945–1952), Yeoh S. G. et al. (eds.). *Penang and its Region: The Story of an Asian Entrepôt*: 224–243. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Mitchell James Clyde. 1969. *Social Networks in Urban Situations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press for the Institute of Social Research, University of Zambia.

Mitchell James Clyde. 1973. Networks, Norms and Institutions, Boissevain J., Mitchell J. C. (eds.). *Networks: Studies in Human Interaction*: 15–35. The Hague, Paris: Mouton.

Murray Dian H. (in collaboration with Qin Baoqi). 1994. *The Origins of Tiandihui: The Chinese Triads in Legend and History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Musa Majani. 2007. *Malay Secret Societies in the Northern Malay States, (1821–1940)*. Bandar Puchong Jaya: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asian Society.

Prevelakis Georges. 1996. *Les réseaux des diasporas*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Safran William. 1991. Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return, *Diaspora* 1(1): 83–99.

Shamsul A. B. 1998. Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" in Postwar Malaysia, Gladney D. C. (ed). *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*: 135–150. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 135-150.

Tan Kim Hong. 2007. *The Chinese in Penang: A Pictorial History*. Penang: Areca Books.

Tölölyan Kachig. 1991. Preface, *Diaspora* 1(1): 3–7.

Tölölyan Kachig. 2007. The Contemporary Discourse of Diaspora Studies, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 3: 647–655.

Weber Max. 1956. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck.

Wimmer Andreas, Glick Schiller Nina. 2002. Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences, *Global Networks* 2(4): 301–334.

Wong Yee Tuan. 2007. The Big Five Hokkien Families in Penang: 1830–1890, *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 1: 106–115.

Wong Yee Tuan. 2008. The Big Five Hokkien Families of Penang and their Connections with Southeast Asia in the 19th Century, *Notes of the Symposium The Evolution of Sino-Southeast Asian Communities*: 1–8. Penang: Wawasan University.

Fragmentuoti identitetai: Penango Malaizijos kinų atvejo analizė

Christian Giordano

Santrauka

Malakos sąsiaurio kinų diaspora socialiniu ir kultūriniu atžvilgiu yra neabejotinai viena kompleksiškiausių. Pažymėtina, kad ypač devynioliktajame amžiuje imigrantai iš žemyninės Kinijos kėlėsi į įvairius prekyba užsiimančius britų ir olandų kolonijų miestus Pietų Kinijos jūros regione.

Migracija į Nanyangą vyko per keletą fazių, užsitęsusių ilgiau negu šimtmetį. Šios aplinkybės jau signalizuoja pastebimą socialinę, ekonominę ir kultūrinę įvairovę tarp skirtingų imigrantų grupių. Šiame straipsnyje aptariamu Penango atveju pirmoji migracijos banga iš esmės buvo sudaryta iš vyrų, kurie ilgainiui vedė vietines moteris (taip pat priklausančias ir musulmonų tikėjimui), dėl to susiformavo hibridinė kultūra. Ši grupė šiandien yra žinoma kaip *Peranakan*, arba *Baba Nyonya*, kuri Penange atpažįstama kaip išskirtinio identiteto elitinė grupė, demonstratyviai atskirianti save nuo kitų kinų bendruomenių. Kitos grupės, kurios atvyko iš Kinijos ir kurios labiau tapatinasi su savo kilmės sritimis, nėra kultūriškai homogeninės. Jos kalba skirtingomis kalbomis.

Išskiriamos penkios grupės, kalbančios skirtingais vietinės kalbos dialektais, kurios tik iš dalies kalba mandarinų kalba, t. y. oficialia dabartinės Kinijos kalba. Penango atveju tai yra ypač teisinga kalbant apie *Hokkien* grupę iš pietinių Fudziano (Fujian) provincijų, nes jos atstovai apibūdinami pagal jų lingvistinį specifiškumą. Kantoniečiai (The Cantonese) atstovauja antrai didžiausiai grupei po Hokkien, nors kantoniečių pavadinimas nėra tikslus, nes jie skelbiasi esą kilę ne tik iš Kantono miesto (dabartinis Guangdžou (Guangzhou) miestas), bet ir iš visos Guangdongo (Guangdong) provincijos. Santykiai tarp Hokkien grupės ir kantoniečių visada buvo itin problemiški, lydimi smurtinių konfliktų protrūkių, kylančių dėl nesuderinamų ekonominių interesų tarp šių grupių. Trečioji pagal gausumą bendruomenė sudaryta iš *Teochew* grupės, kilusios iš Chaoshan regiono rytinėje Guangdongo provincijoje, besiribojančioje su Fudzianu.

Teochew ir Hokkien grupės yra lingvistiškai artimos, nors dabartinis vietinis Hokkien grupės atstovų dialektas yra taip perpildytas malajų kalbos žodžiais, kad komunikacija tarp šių grupių yra gana sudėtinga. Šiuo atveju anglų kalba tampa praktiškiausia ir labiausiai paplitusi, ją vartoja šios dvi grupės tarpusavyje bendraudamos. *Hakka* – ketvirta grupė. Kaip pati skelbiasi, kilusi iš Šiaurės Kinijos, ši tikroji migrantų bendruomenė pirmiausia persikėlė į centrinę Kiniją, vėliau į Pietų Kiniją, o iš ten į Malakos pusiasalį. Hakka žmonių grupė kalba

savita, kitoms bendruomenėms nesuprantama kalba. Jų papročiai ir tradicijos labai skiriasi nuo anksčiau minėtų trijų grupių tradicijų. Skirtingai nuo kitų grupių, kurių atstovai daugiausia vertėsi prekyba, Hakka grupės žmonės tradiciškai užsiėmė žemdirbyste. Vis dėlto dalis jų sėkmingai sukūrė savo verslą ir sukaupė nemažus turtus. Be anksčiau minėtų skirtumų, santykiai tarp Hakka ir kitų grupių visada buvo problemiški. Taip pat reikia paminėti *Hainanese* grupę, kalbančią kitiems Penango kinams nesuprantamu vietiniu dialektu. Hainanese grupės žmonės dažniausiai užsiėmė žvejyba saloje, iš kurios kilo. Jie yra pagarsėję kulinariniais gebėjimais, ir šiais laikais Hainanese virtuvė yra labai vertinama.

Socialinė kinų diasporos organizacija susiformavo kaip itin nevienalytis reiškinys, taigi sunku kalbėti apie vientisą socialinę ir kultūrinę bendruomenę. Pradedant Penango uostamiesčio, seniau priklausiusio britų imperijai ir ilgainiui inkorporuoto į dabartinę Malaizijos teritoriją, atveju, straipsnyje iliustruojamos ilgainiui kinų išvystytos įvairios socialinės organizacijos formos. Naudojantis Mančesterio mokyklai būdingomis „socialinio tinklo" (angl. *network*) ir „korporatyvinės grupės" (angl. *corporate group*) sąvokomis bei dinamine analize, užtikrinančia atidumą specifiniams istoriniams procesams, straipsnyje analizuojami pagrindiniai organizacinių pokyčių, vykusių šioje diasporinėje visuomenėje, modalumai.

Apibendrinant reikėtų paminėti, kad pastaruoju metu išpopuliarėjusi „diasporos" sąvoka gali kelti tam tikrų nesusipratimų, nes ji dažnai atvirai arba paslėptai pažymima tiek teigiamomis, tiek neigiamomis konotacijomis. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama parodyti, kad „diasporos" sąvoka gali būti labai naudinga kalbant apie įvairiapusiškai konceptualizuotą diasporos sampratą. Beveik klasikiniu tapęs kinų bendruomenės Penange pavyzdys ypač atkreipia dėmesį į sudėtingą socialinę organizaciją, kuri yra labai diferencijuota iš vidaus ir pasižymi įtampomis, konkurencija ir netgi atvirais ir kartais užsitęsiančiais konfliktais. Šiame straipsnyje vengiama esencialisto įžvalgos, kuri yra pagrįsta šių imigrantų bendruomenių vienodumu ir kultūrine vienove. Vis dėlto nuo konceptualios mistifikacijos išlaisvinta analizė gali būti pasiekta tik per ilgalaikį etnografinį tyrimą, nes iš pirmo žvilgsnio šios diasporos, tarp jų ir kinų diaspora, gali pasirodyti kaip suvienytos bendruomenės, pasižyminčios socialiniu ir kultūriniu homogeniškumu. Empirinė medžiaga patvirtina, kad šis pirmasis įspūdis yra apgaulingas, jeigu iš tikrųjų ne klaidingas.