

their *qiaoxiang* links, the options were limited. One was to remain in the destination living the life of an aging bachelor.

For many, perhaps as they felt death approaching, the decision was made to return, perhaps when considerations of shame and prestige were no longer so important. Assisting the poor, sick, or elderly to return to their *qiaoxiang* was a role taken on by many associations of the *huaqiao*. The provision of such assistance, for example, was part of the proposed rules of a Chinese Vegetable Growers Association in Sydney.⁷⁹ But, in Sydney, the most organized assistance for those needing help returning to their villages was through the Lin Yik Tong (聯益堂), a merchant organization formed in 1896. The Lin Yik Tong organized discount tickets with shipping companies for those in need. Such applicants required two guarantors of eligibility and were liable for a £20 fine if fraud was discovered, the discovery being encouraged by the offer of a £10 reward.⁸⁰ How common fraud was is difficult to say, but the demand for discount passages was high enough that, in 1901, Chinese merchants wrote to the shipping companies to request that one passage in four be allowed for such tickets.⁸¹ The Honolulu Chinese Chamber of Commerce got a 25% discount fare in the 1920s and 1930s for “old people”, and, in 1928, fifty-eight “old men” were able to take up this discount.⁸² In both Sydney and Hawaii, the merchant organizations “recommended” persons who would receive such discounts.

Departed friends

While most *huaqiao* visited or at least retired to their *qiaoxiang*, inevitably some died before this was possible. Death in the destinations, however, was not necessarily the end of the wish to return to the *qiaoxiang*. Death can come at any time and this possibility led many to ensure that the return of at least their bones would still occur. The shipment of bones, which took place from at least 1855 until the mid-twentieth century, is the most consistent behaviour pattern of the *huaqiao* and one that demonstrates attachment to the *qiaoxiang* as well as changes to this attachment over time.⁸³ Local Zhongshan newspapers regularly announced the arrival of “departed friends” (先友, *xianyou*) via Hong Kong’s Tung Wah Hospital, for collection by relatives.⁸⁴

79. This association wished to limit its obligations and its rules also stated that membership fees would not be returned on departure to China, nor would assistance with legal fees be given. *Tung Wah News*, 19 July 1899, 2.

80. *Tung Wah News*, 12 September 1900, 3.

81. *Tung Wah News*, 31 July 1901, 3.

82. Lun Chock, “Chinese Organizations in Hawaii”, in *Chinese of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Overseas Penman Club, 1936), 23, and Glick Archive, Box 1: Theodora Ching Shai, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 24 May 1930, 8.

83. A shipment of seventy dead to China was recorded in San Francisco in May 1855; Dorothy H. Huggins, *Continuation of the Annals of San Francisco* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1939), 43. For Australia, see Williams, “Sojourn in Your Native Land”, and, for Hawaii, see Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 247.

84. Such as the 仁言報 [*Renyan News*], 2 June 1925, 8, and 香山南報 [*Xiangshan Southern News*], 8 November 1924, 4.

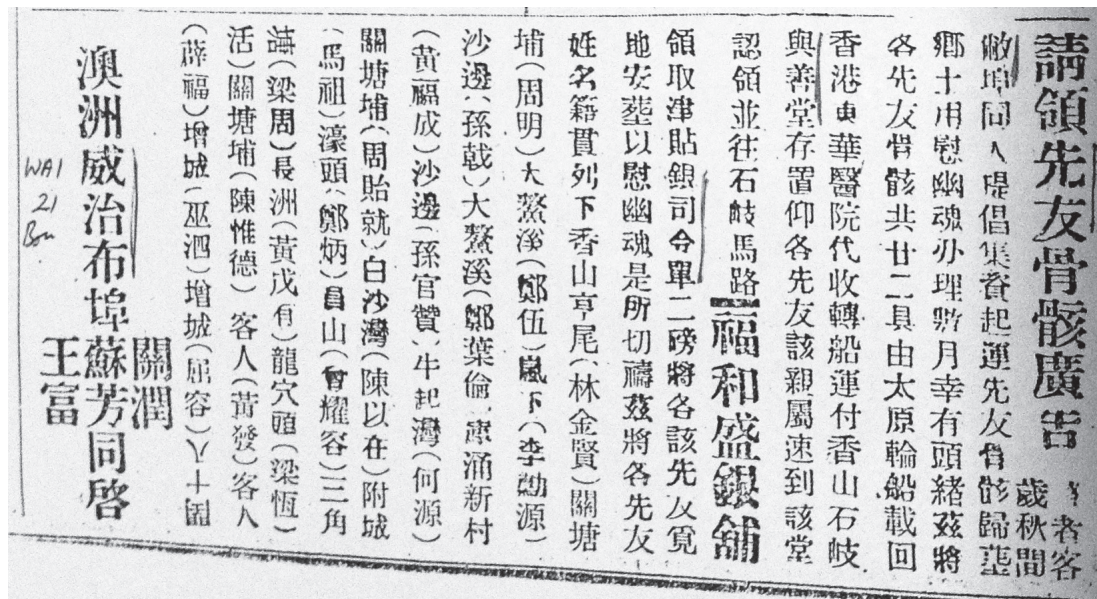
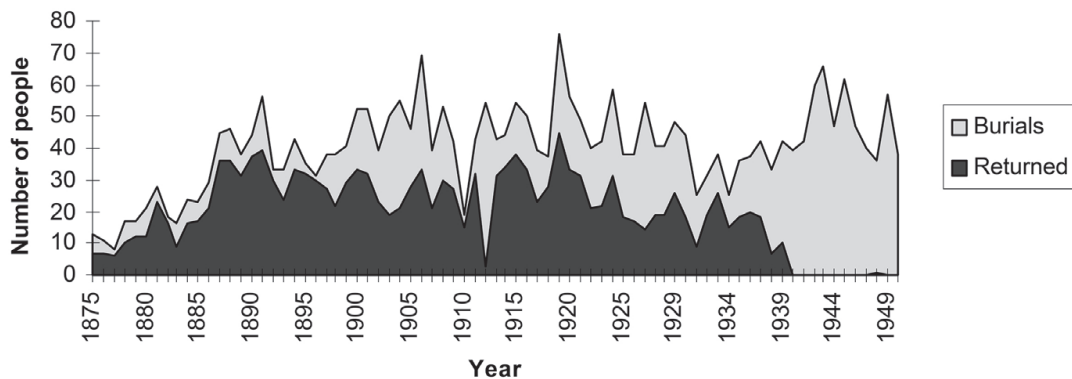


Photo 5.1
Local Zhongshan newspapers regularly announced the arrival of “departed friends” via Hong Kong’s Tung Wah Hospital for collection by relatives. Source: *Renyan News*, 2 June 1925, 8.

Figure 5.1
Huaqiao burial and returns to China, 1875–1950



The clearest record concerning the return of bones over a long period comes from the “Old Chinese Section” of Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney. At the period of most active exhumation and shipment of bones, from 1875 to the late 1930s, a peak of 75% of burials in the “Old Chinese Section” were “returned to China”, with an average of 55% to 65%.⁸⁵ The royal commissioners were told, in the 1890s, that it cost “£10 to remove a man’s bones from the country” and that Way Kee’s society (Dongguan and Zengcheng people) paid £529 19s. 2d. to “raise 84 bodies”.⁸⁶

85. “Returned to China” was written in red ink to indicate exhumed plots. Anglican Trust, Rookwood Cemetery: Register of Burials in the Necropolis at Haslem’s Creek, under the Necropolis Act of 1867, 31st Victoria, No. 14, “Chinese Section of General Cemetery”.

86. *Report on the Royal Commission on Alleged Chinese Gambling*, 15, lines 486–87 and 57, line 2232.

In both the other Pacific Ports, the concern for “departed friends” was just as great, although such clear statistics are not available. As in other matters, organizational detail could also vary. In Sydney, the *huaqiao* used a section of cemetery controlled by a Christian church, while in San Francisco the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (中華總會館) directly controlled the Chinese cemeteries located at first in the city and, later, at Colma to the south. These cemeteries were divided into sections according to the “companies” or *tongxianghui* (同鄉會), which made up the membership of this umbrella organization. Between 1856 and 1876, a total of 7,782 bodies were reported having been shipped from San Francisco, including 600 by private friends.⁸⁷ In Hawaii, cemeteries, like the *huaqiao* communities themselves, were scattered around the islands. The burials at two cemeteries near Honolulu were predominately of Zhongshan *huaqiao* and distinguished according to Hakka and non-Hakka.⁸⁸ In 1931, the cost of arranging an exhumation in Hawaii, including storage until ready to send to China, was \$20.⁸⁹

Statistics from Sydney’s Rookwood Cemetery show an increase in exhumations in the last decades of the nineteenth century. After this, there is a gradual reduction in the proportion of burials that were returned as well as a fall in total burials, as the *huaqiao* population declined in the 1920s and 1930s. There was a tapering off of returns after 1930; after 1938, there were very few removals until after World War II. Many of those who died after 1931 were exhumed between 1946 and 1948, after which only ten more were removed in 1950, with the last recorded exhumation from this section of Rookwood Cemetery in 1962.⁹⁰ These statistics on “departed friends” can be seen to follow the general pattern of *huaqiao* history, growing as the *huaqiao* become more organized in the destinations, declining with their demographics, disrupted during the Japanese occupation, and experiencing a final period of renewal just before the abrupt severing of links in 1949.

Bones rather than bodies are always referred to, as the usual practice was to bury a body for several years before the bones of a number of *huaqiao* were collected at the same time, to be “returned to China”. The Lung Doo (Long Du) Society in Hawaii sent bones back every five years until the board of health made seven years the rule. The Long Du Association of Sydney published regular requests in the *Tung Wah News* in order to keep a register of burials for exhumation at regular intervals.⁹¹ Those who were buried in Sydney sometimes had to wait quite a time to return to the *qiaoxiang*. Ah Chung was buried in 1892 but not returned until 1923, while Ah

87. Benjamin S. Brooks, *Appendix to the Opening Statement and Brief of B. S. Brooks on the Chinese Question* (San Francisco: Women’s Co-operative Printing Union, 1877), 117.

88. These were the Manoa Cemetery and that near the Punchbowl, which also includes Hakka from San On County. Personal observation by author, July 2000.

89. Glick Archive, Box 2: Clarence E. Glick, Malihini observations at Ching Ming, Manoa Chinese cemetery, 5 April 1931, 9.

90. Anglican Trust, Rookwood Cemetery: Register of Burials “Chinese Section of General Cemetery”.

91. *Tung Wah News* 東華新報, various ads 1904–1910.

Sing, who was buried in 1884, was finally removed only in 1946.⁹² However, the average time in the ground for those whose bones were exhumed from Rookwood, at least, was six to seven years, though ten or fifteen was not unusual. An alternative to this wait, for those who could afford it, was to be embalmed, as Hong Wong was in 1901, his body being accompanied to the home village by his sister Ah Ching.⁹³

Various accounts of the procedures followed in exhuming bodies have been given. According to an eyewitness account from Hawaii in 1917,

Taking mouthfuls of wine, the man [hired to do the exhumation] sprayed it all over the area as a purification ritual before he removed bone by bone and wrapped each with a piece of white cloth amidst burning incense. He labelled the bones as he went along in order that the remains would be in their proper positions when reburied in a sitting position in a large urn.⁹⁴

Clarence Glick reported observing a much less careful exhumation in 1931.⁹⁵ From Sydney come other details such as that “the bones would be washed, wrapped in blankets and placed in an iron coffin about one metre long and 30 centimetres high” and that “the bones were known by Gaoyao county people as *xianyou* [仙友, friends of the immortals].”⁹⁶

Having left the destination, the remains were sent to Hong Kong, where the Tung Wah Hospital had, from the 1870s, handled the return of most bones to their *qiaoxiang*.⁹⁷ In the *qiaoxiang* themselves, organizations such as the Xingshan Tang (興善堂) in Shekki would be responsible for collecting bones from the Tung Wah Hospital and distributing them to the families, often by notices in the newspapers. Names and villages would be listed under the title “Departed Friends”; a relative would then pick up the bones for return to the village and a ritual internment.⁹⁸ When twenty-two sets of bones were sent from Vegetable Creek (Emmaville) in NSW to the Tung Wah Hospital in Hong Kong and then onto Shekki, a *se ling dan* (司令單), or note for £2, was also given to the relatives.⁹⁹ The system seems to have

92. Anglican Trust, Rookwood Cemetery: Register of Burials, “Chinese Section of General Cemetery”, Ah Chung, 1892 and Ah Sing, 1884.

93. NAA (NSW), SP42/1; C47/2369, Wellington Wing Ning, Charles Wong Wing Kau, statutory declaration by Ah Ching, December 1914.

94. Lew, “A Sentimental Journey into the Past of the Chan and Jong Families”, 118–19.

95. Glick Archive, Box 2: Clarence E. Glick, Malihini observations at Ching Ming, Manoa Chinese cemetery, 5 April 1931, 4.

96. Ann Stephens, *The Lions of Retreat Street: A Chinese Temple in Inner Sydney* (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, Hale & Iremonger, 1997), 70, interview with Harry Chong Choy.

97. *Report of the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese Gambling*, 105, line 4169: “they send some money to the Chinese Hospital in Hong Kong, the Tong Wah Yee Yuen”. Sinn, *Power and Charity*, 6, refers to general *huaqiao* links; 71n119, mentions links with Sydney in 1887; and, at 73, refers to membership by Australian organizations.

98. 香山仁言報 [*Zhongshan Renyan News*], 15 November 22, 8; 香山南報 [*Xiangshan Southern News*], 8 November 1924, 4, and interview Young Koon Nuen, 20 May 2000, Long Tou Wan, Tape 1, (10).

99. 仁言報 [*Renyan News*], 2 June 1925, 8. See also 仁言報 [*Renyan News*], 3 June 1925, 7, for a notice of thirty bones being returned from Japan.

worked even better than the families anticipated on occasion and at one point, the remains of 104 *huaqiao* were uncollected and remained waiting in the Shekki Xingshan Tang.¹⁰⁰

Tongxianghui (同鄉會)

The links provided between the *qiaoxiang* and the destinations by letters, visits, remittances, and even bones were not a matter of individual effort. A major aspect of the *qiaoxiang*-destination links was the regionally organized associations or *tongxianghui*.¹⁰¹ There was much variation among the destinations, but in general the *tongxianghui* served to provide support to members bound by a localized sense of identity. They performed specific functions such as the return of the bones of the dead, sometimes enforced the collections of the debts incurred getting to the destinations, and played a significant role in “keeping *huaqiao* focused on their obligations to their families in the village”.¹⁰² This last was a factor of some importance, given the length of time many *huaqiao* were separated from their families.

On arrival in a destination, therefore, to which fellow *qiaoxiang* members had preceded him, the young *huaqiao* found organizations and businesses able to assist him both in the destination and in maintaining links with his *qiaoxiang*. Two examples, widely separate in distance but both from the 1850s, illustrate the practical nature of this assistance. In Melbourne, new arrivals could, according to Rule 11 of the Siyi or Four Counties Association, borrow sufficient money to enable them to get to the goldfields.¹⁰³ Similar arrivals in San Francisco could find not only accommodation in the Yeung-Wu Association building but were entitled to store their “baggage” for a maximum of three years.¹⁰⁴

People from the same *qiaoxiang* would form their own associations and while there was some flexibility and variations in the specific *qiaoxiang* that could form an association, once set up the groups were exclusive. The royal commissioners of the 1890s in Sydney needed to have the “exclusiveness” of the societies explained to them on a number of occasions. Way Shong told them that “Moy Ping is not of my community—he would not subscribe”, while Sam Tin explained he was denying he was a member of the Loong Yee Tong, not because it was a gambling society, but because “as I do not belong to that part of the country they would not let me in it”.¹⁰⁵

100. 香山仁言報 [*Zhongshan Renyan News*], 15 November 1922, 8.

101. Literally, “same native place association”. See Sinn, “Xin Xi Guxiang”, 375–97, and Yong, *New Gold Mountain*, Chapter 11, 189–95. For a study of the role of *tongxianghui* in Shanghai, see Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

102. According to Sinn, the purpose of such societies was also to express longing and to remind members of their obligations. Sinn, “Xin Xi Guxiang”, 375.

103. “Rules of a Chinese Society, 1854”, in McLaren, *The Chinese in Victoria*, 46.

104. “New Rules of the Yeung-Wu Ui-Kun” (1854) in Speer, *The Oldest and the Newest Empire*, 559.

105. *Report of the Royal Commission on Alleged Chinese Gambling*, 69, line 2697 and 117, line 4665.