Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

G. WILLIAM SKINNER

We know surprisingly little about urban structure in late imperial China—despite the existence of abundant data for hundreds of cities—because few scholars have done the kind of detailed microstudies on this subject that exist for so many other areas of Chinese studies. As a result, generalizations have been insufficiently grounded in hard data, and plausible assertions have become received wisdom through repetition. Into this vacuum social anthropologists have brought models from research on urban Chinese communities overseas, and the assumption was sometimes too quickly made that what was common to Chinese social structure in various overseas cities necessarily derived from a common heritage of premodern Chinese urbanism. It is hardly surprising, then, that the papers on urban social structure in this book represent a movement back to the relevant sources and reflect a preoccupation with accurate contextual description. Although it is not possible in this introduction to attempt a wide-ranging synthesis, I would like to review what this book has to say about the internal structure of traditional cities and relate its contributions to several themes that hold interest for sinologists and urbanists alike.

The papers of Part One, my own excepted, all treat in one way or another the effect of ideology on urban forms: the manifestation of cosmological notions and ideological norms in planning imperial capitals is central among the topics treated by Wright and Mote; and the studies of Lamley and Chang make it clear that peculiarly Chinese ideas about the city affected urban ecology at all levels in the hierarchy of administrative centers in late imperial times. In addition, Chang's treatment of urban geography serves to define the spatial setting of urban social structure, and raises questions about ecological variation within and between
cities. Lamley's case studies have important implications for the structure of urban leadership. Was the effective cooperation they document among officials, merchants, and gentry in getting a capital city properly launched a first step in developing an informally instituted mode of "municipal" governance? Or, with their immediate objective achieved, would the various elites of the new city once again pursue narrower objectives within parochial sectors of urban society? One is led to wonder if citywide leadership structures might not be intermittent in nature, with city formation merely the first of the crises—periods of heightened activity and mobilization in response to exceptional threats or opportunities—that would periodically breathe life into otherwise latent political forms? My paper on regional urbanization, in pointing out the systematic nature of variation in city sizes (and the wide range of that variation) poses anew the classic question of how size and population density condition social structure. Can the Chinese case tell us anything about the sociological consequences of population concentration per se?

Most of the papers in Part Two speak even more directly to issues of internal urban structure. My paper points to differences in the social structure of cities that stemmed from particular combinations of economic and administrative central functions; it raises the question of how the migrations shaped by regional systems were reflected in the social composition, residential patterns, and organizational structure of cities. Watt analyzes the yamen as an urban institution; Shiba devotes a long section of his paper to Ningpo as an urban system; Elvin alerts us both to the intense interest of many townspeople in keeping open the vital transport routes on which their livelihood and their city's survival depended and to the political significance of the institutional arrangements for managing waterworks; Grimm shows us the importance of academies for the urban elite and points to the role of academies as yet another focus of competition and cooperation among the differentiated constituencies of a large city; and Baker is primarily concerned with the forms of kinship organization in urban settings.

In the first of the five papers in Part Three, Professor Golas discusses the development and nature of guilds from late Ming to the 1860's, when many declined or dissolved in the face of mid-century rebellions and when Western manufactures and manufacturing techniques had their initial impact on guild organization. He sees the "modern," origins of guilds in the organizational activity whereby urban sojourners of all kinds, scholar-officials as well as merchants, formed fraternal organizations on same-native-place lines. Golas naturally takes common economic activity as the touchstone of a guild, and of the two features that were
from the burner in the mother temple. Feuchtwang finds that tablets, memorialism, officials, and kin ritual went together in the official religion, forming a contrasting set to the images, magic, priests, and god ritual of the popular religion. At the same time, he emphasizes the cosmological elements on which both drew, the complex ways in which the one shaded into the other, and the senses in which elements of one can be seen as transformations of counterparts in the other. These subtleties are explored by comparing one of the major official sacrifices with the Taoist rite of cosmic renewal and community purification, and by exploring the dual role of the City God. The latter was represented by a tablet in the austere official rites held at a suburban altar, but was worshiped by the urban masses as an image in his own yamenlike temple, where his seal, the other-worldly counterpart of the magistrate's, was considered an instrument of magic.

By incorporating superior gods from the popular pantheon and specifying the limits of orthodoxy, the official religion exercised a form of control over both lower gods and people. As such it was an element in the mechanisms of social control treated by Dr. van der Sprenkel in her paper. She distinguishes enacted law, administered by the yamen, from the customary law and practices centered in guilds, native-place associations, neighborhood hui, and temples. Van der Sprenkel's focus is on matters relating to commerce and industry. She first accounts for the relative insignificance of enacted law for business: on the one hand, yamen courts were not designed to adjust business disputes or capable of doing so; and on the other, the government rarely had recourse to court action in enforcing its economic policies. The government's toleration of guilds and native-place associations was probably related not only to their competence to resolve altercations between guild members that might otherwise have overburdened the criminal dockets in the magistrate's court, but also to their wholly complementary function of adjudicating commercial disputes arising from conflicts of interest or claims for loss or damages. Van der Sprenkel stresses the importance of establishing a personal relationship as a precondition of any important commercial transaction, though this tended to concentrate business relations within particularistic channels, it also accounts for the great importance of the institutionalized middleman in the Chinese business world. Her sophisticated treatment of this role illuminates the customary law of contract and agency, makes it clear why professional guarantors were required by law to be guaranteed by another, and helps account for the scale and complexity of commercial and financial transactions in Chinese urban markets. In the final section of her paper, van der Sprenkel suggests ways in which control mechanisms might be expected to vary from one city to another in accordance with position in the economic and administrative hierarchies.

The last two papers in the volume are case studies of two Taiwanese cities, Tainan and Lu-kang. As T'ai-wan-fu, Tainan had been the island's chief political and economic center ever since the Ch'ing conquest in the late seventeenth century. Lu-kang, also a port city on the west coast, became important only in the eighteenth century as the Changhua Plain, its immediate hinterland, was brought under cultivation by mainland settlers. From the 1780s to the 1820s, Lu-kang was a flourishing center of trade, the backbone of its overseas commerce being the export of rice to the ports of Ch'uan-chou, directly across the Strait. According to my analysis of economic central places as of 1843, Tainan [T'ai-wan-fu] ranked as a regional city, the only one on the island, whereas Lu-kang ranked as one of Taiwan's two greater cities, the other being Meng-chia, the port city in northern Taiwan that figured heavily in Lamley's account of the rise of Taipei. Like many large regional cities on the mainland, Tainan was the capital of both a circuit and a prefecture; by contrast, Lu-kang's administrative status was lower than might be expected from its commercial importance, being not even a county capital but rather the seat of subofficials posted there to regulate and tax the trade. With this much background, let us turn to the not unremarkable findings of these two quite different case studies—first Professor DeGlopper's analysis of social structure in Lu-kang and then Professor Schipper's analysis of religious organization in Tainan.

In reconstructing nineteenth-century Lu-kang, DeGlopper paints a fascinating picture of a city in which native-place ties counted not at all (the entire population considering itself to be of Ch'uan-chou origin), of overlapping groups recruited on different principles and defined in different ways, and of balanced oppositions and exchanges. One set of segments into which the city's population was divided were surname groups, whose interrelations were marked by a pervasive low-keyed hostility. A second set of segments were neighborhoods, each focused on the incense burner of a deity and hosting at least one annual festival on the occasion of that deity's birthday. In some instances, several neighborhoods cooperated in the support of a single "higher-order" temple. Festivals during the seventh month linked all neighborhoods in ritual exchange, competition, and emulation, and a moity structure became evident every few years when competitive street processions were staged between Uptown and Downtown.

Although neighborhoods and surname groups provided significant
categories for the social intercourse of all townspeople, they were mobilized as effective groups only intermittently. By contrast, guilds were enduring corporate groups; and the eight guilds of Lu-kang together dominated the city’s economic and political life. DeGlopper’s vivid description of the growing pressures in Lu-kang to acquire the full complement of capital-city emblems and to be designated the capital of its county is reminiscent of the developments in cities farther north already described by Lamley; with its ambitions in that regard thwarted to the very end, Lu-kang stands as something of a foil for Lamley’s three success stories. DeGlopper concludes by comparing and contrasting Lu-kang’s guilds with lineages, and Lu-kang’s urban structure with that of overseas Chinese communities.

Schipper’s study of the larger and older city of Tainan is closely focused on religious organizations—neighborhood cult associations in particular. He shows that in the 1870s Tainan was subdivided into over 70 neighborhoods (streets and combinations of streets rather than blocks), each organized as the lu-hsia (those “under the incense burner”) of a particular Tu-ti-kung (Earth God). Like other communal associations in Chinese society, the Tu-ti-kung hsi was formally organized, with a charter, a defined set of members, clearly designated officers, and explicit finances; and as with other associations, the rationality of the arrangements was embedded in religious idiom. The annual festive banquet that cemented group solidarity was held to honor the deity, and the theatrical performances that accompanied it were for the deity’s entertainment. Officers were selected by the deity, by means of throwing lots before his image, and fees, dues, and levies were all given euphemistic religious designations. Schipper shows that these associations were concerned with keeping the neighborhood clean and peaceful, with controlling unseemly behavior, and with preventing construction that might upset the neighborhood’s feng-shui, but even these policing activities were carried out in order to avoid offense to the deity. The essential autonomy of urban neighborhoods was underlined by a feature distinctive to Tu-ti-kung: whereas other cults were usually related by fen-hsiang to mother temples elsewhere, Tu-ti-kung was unaffiliated, his burner typically being filled with rice. Schipper explores the mythological origins and symbolic associations of Tu-ti-kung and discusses the other religious associations that were often organized within the neighborhoods defined in the first instance as the lu-hsia of that deity. Schipper then shows that conventional groupings of adjacent Tu-ti-kung hsi, normally clustered around certain deity temples, served to define another, more inclusive level of urban community; it was for

Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch’ing China

wards at this level, for instance, that the la chiao (the great Taoist rite of community purification) was held every twenty years or so. The effective territories of guilds, which also took the form of religious confraternities, cut across the territorial hierarchy already described. Finally, Schipper mentions the San-i T’ang, a federation of the three guilds that encompassed the city’s major overseas traders. When the T’ang was established early in the nineteenth century, it took as its headquarters the Temple of the Water Immortal in the western suburb; the temple was rebuilt and refurnished on a greatly enlarged scale, and with the income from its endowments the San-i T’ang not only organized several of the largest citywide religious festivals but provided most of Tainan’s “municipal” services.

Urban Ecology

The first of the issues I wish to raise in the remainder of this introduction concerns the nature of social differentiation within traditional Chinese cities, and in particular its relation to the partitioning of urban space. I sense a tension among, first, descriptive analyses of particular Chinese cities (including the case studies of this volume), second, the generalizations frequently encountered in the sinological literature, and third, the theoretical predictions of urban geographers and sociologists. Take the location of business enterprises. Sen-dou Chang has called attention to the “dispersed distribution of shops and markets” within cities, and C. K. Yang has argued that the Chinese city had “no counterpart to the central business district of a Western city.” The disciplinary literature, on the other hand, leads one to expect that in premodern cities a central business district would normally develop at “the point of most convenient access from all parts of the city,” at which point land would have its highest value. The impression one gets from the studies in this book is different still. Business activity appears to climax in a district that is never central but instead sharply skewed in the direction of the city’s main commercial trade routes. In nineteenth-century Ningpo (see the map on pp. 406–7), the business district was focused on the two eastern gates, with land values and commercial activity if anything higher in the extramural Chang-hsia and Yung-tung districts than within the walls. In nineteenth-century Tainan, the business center of gravity was far off center in the direction of the port. The map of Tainan on p. 955 shows most of the west wall torn down, but when it still stood in the 1870s the Great West Gate was by far the most important for commercial traffic, and the largest wholesalers and major guilds were located in the western suburb. The aerial photograph of Soochow on p. 15 proclaims to the
practiced eye that the "central" business district of that great city was focused on the northernmost gate in the west wall. We need hardly be told that "the commercial and banking concentration" extended along the Grand Canal in the suburbs west of that gate. In Chou-chia-Kou (see the map on p. 82), the great merchant houses and their guildhalls were concentrated along the river in the southeastern of the three walled settlements. In his paper for The Chinese City Between Two Worlds, Winston Hsieh has shown that during the Ch'ing period urban development in Shih-ch'i (a county capital in the Canton Delta) was heavily concentrated in the western suburb between the wall and the nearby navigable river, and the map accompanying his article (p. 128) is as telling in this regard as any in this book.

A second area of discrepancy concerns socioeconomic differentiation. "It is rare," we are told by C. P. Fitzgerald, "to find Chinese cities divided into a rich and a poor quarter. The large houses of the well-to-do, with their many courtyards and gardens, jostle the small single-courtyard houses of the poor in the same lane." Mote echoes the point in his study of Soochow, insisting that traditional Chinese cities lacked "fashionable quarters, or slum quarters, as those have existed in the West. All residential streets looked the same, more or less, masking the life of individual homes behind uniform walls." C. K. Yang once modeled the traditional Chinese city as a congeries of essentially similar, internally differentiated "neighborhood units," each containing both business firms and residences, both rich and poor, and a minimal complement of production enterprises, markets, temples, and schools. "Under this spatial arrangement," he argued, "it was possible to work and live in one neighborhood with minimum contact with other parts of the town." For the most part, these views are greeted with skepticism by the comparative urban sociologist, for whom the question is not so much the existence of residential concentration by social class as the way in which it was patterned. The consensus is that in premodern cities social class is inversely related to distance from the center. "The preindustrial city's central area is notable . . . as the chief residence of the elite . . . The disadvantaged members of the city fan out toward the periphery, with the very poorest and the outcasts living in the suburbs." Is this pattern (which appears to hold for an impressive number of preindustrial cities in Europe, Latin America, and India) wholly invalid for late imperial Chinese cities?

A third area of discrepancy concerns population gradients. In this respect, too, generalizations about Chinese cities tend to minimize differentiation, the usual view being that echoed in Chang's Part One paper, where he posits a relatively uniform population density within the walls.

Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

On the other hand, Mote (in his Part One paper) notes that even as densely populated suburbs expanded outside the gates of such cities as Yangchow and Soochow, some of the land within the walls was devoted to agriculture; and in another context Chang argues that many capitals were designed to contain "within their walls large stretches of cultivated land" in order "to produce food for the population in case of siege." On this point, comparative urban geographers generally consider the tendency for density to decline with distance from the city's central area to be virtually universal, but they argue that the gradient was particularly steep in premodern cities because of their less efficient and less flexible transport and (once again) the prevailing preference of the elite for centrally located residence.

Although I can hardly resolve all these issues here, I should like to clarify them with some additional examples and suggest a few hypotheses to guide future research. Let us begin with Peking, hardly a typical Chinese city, to be sure, but one whose very size and multifunctional importance can be used to strengthen part of the argument. Figures 1 and 2 show two districts of the city as depicted on an incredibly detailed large-scale map of the city prepared ca. 1750. We see clearly every chien, the basic architectural module of both shops and residences; and the enclosed compounds and interior courtyards to which Mote has already called our attention are everywhere apparent. Although the spatial arrangements are unmistakably Chinese in both districts, they nonetheless suggest strikingly different cityscapes. In Figure 1, buildings and compounds are small, the street pattern compact, and a high proportion of the buildings are shop-homes fronting alleyways. In Figure 2, the layout is more spacious in all respects, and fewer buildings front the street. I submit that we are looking at wards that were sociologically quite distinct, and I should like to tease out of data from a much later period what those differences might have been. The locations of the two districts within the city are shown upper left in Figure 3. The ward in Figure 1 was situated in the southern or Outer City near the heart of what was (in the 1910's as in the 1750's) Peking's "central" business district; the ward in Figure 2 was located east of the Imperial City in what was (in the 1910's as in the 1750's) an area favored by aristocratic and gentry families. Data collected by Gamble in 1917-18 put these wards in ecological context.

Figure 3 reveals (upper right) sharp differentiation in population density within the walls, varying from 8,000 persons per square mile in the southeastern corner of the Outer City (where cultivated fields were still to be found in 1917) to a high of over 80,000 persons per square
miles in the heart of the business district. In 1917, the density of the ward shown in Figure 2 was approximately half that of the Figure 1 ward, and if anything one would have expected the discrepancy to have been greater during High China. From the plotting of sex ratios (lower left in Figure 3), we see that in general the most densely populated areas showed the greatest disproportion of males. In the ward of Figure 1 there would have been only one female for every three males, whereas in the Figure 2 ward the ratio must have been much more favorable: at least three females for every four males. At the lower right in Figure 3 yet a third variable is plotted, the proportion of households classified by the police in 1918 as "very poor." Here we see that both the business districts of the Outer City (illustrated by Figure 1) and the areas south and east of the Imperial City (illustrated by Figure 2) were characterized by an absence of extreme poverty. Impoverished households were concentrated most heavily in the southeastern bulge of the Outer City walls, and they were relatively numerous along the north and west walls of the Inner City and the west wall of the Outer City. The relatively high level of poverty as of 1918 in the Imperial City itself (the two central
police districts) and to some extent in the districts to the north and west of it doubtless reflects the impoverishment of Manchu stipendaries that had been accelerating throughout the second half of the Ch'ing period, so that this feature of the distribution would not have obtained in 1750.

The situation in Ch'ing Peking illustrates a model of urban ecology that may have held generally for late imperial Chinese cities. It was characterized by two nuclei, one the center of merchant activity, the other the center of gentry and official activity. The business district was dominated by shop-houses (in large cities these were normally two-story buildings) in which the salesrooms of stores and the workrooms of craftshops doubled as dining rooms and sleeping rooms for the largely male employees. Quarters were cramped because of high land values, the normal desire of businessmen to keep nonessential overhead down, and the frugality of sojourners cut to save as much as possible of their income. The sex ratio was sharply skewed because of the high proportion of sojourners who had left their families behind in their native places and the large number of young unmarried apprentices. In the “central” business district the guilds and other mutual-aid associations led by merchants were at peak effectiveness, and the indigent unemployed were either dispatched to their native places at “public” expense, adequately cared for by benevolent institutions, or denied lodging in the area. The location of the business nucleus appears to have been determined more by transport costs of the merchants than by convenience of access for consumers, and it was typically displaced from the geographic center of the walled city toward (or to or even beyond) the gate or gates affording direct access to the major interurban transport route. (Peking’s business district had grown up outside the three gates in the south wall of the original Ming city long before 1652, when the Outer City wall was built to enclose it and the official southern altars.)

Residences of the urban gentry tended to cluster near the official institutions of greatest interest to them. Sen-dou Chang has called attention to the pattern whereby academies, bookstores, stationery shops, and used-book stands favored locations near the Confucian school-temple (hsüeh-kung) and examination hall,14 and in general the gentry nucleus of the city tended to be on the school-temple side of the yamen. In the special case of Peking, the gentry-official nucleus lay in the eastern third of the Inner City, between the T'ai-hsiëh (the imperial school-temple) in the north and the great examination hall in the south. The gentry district was characterized by a high proportion of residences with spacious compounds, by relatively many complex families (those with more than one conjugal unit) and relatively many complete conjugal units

---

**FIG. 3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PEKING, 1917–18, showing population densities, sex ratios, and an index of poverty, by police districts. Source: Sidney D. Gamble, Peking: A Social Survey (New York: Doran, 1921), pp. 300, 412–13, 466.**
Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

(those with husband, wife, and children all present), and by a female population swelled by the concubines and maidservants of gentry households. Sex ratios, though far less extreme than in the business nucleus, were still unbalanced because many of the yamen clerks were sojourners and because of the concentration in this area of sojourning (male) students and, in high-level capitals, of expectant officials. It was in this part of the city that the charitable institutions and mutual-aid associations typically under official sponsorship and gentry management were most effective in providing for the deserving poor; and in general the police, together with the sentries of official buildings, kept the district clear of beggars and other undesirable elements.

Data for Canton in the late nineteenth century lend support to the binuclear concept. A general description is provided by Edward J. M. Rhoads: "In Canton, the division between merchants and gentry could virtually be drawn on a city map. Most of the commerce and handicrafts, and most of the merchants, were concentrated in the western half of the city, especially the Western Suburb. . . . The eastern half of the city, on the other hand, was the stronghold of the gentry. The old examination hall, the prefectural Confucian temple, . . . and many of the old-style academies (ch'ü-yuan) . . . were located there." Though the geographical focus of each nucleus could be specified with greater precision, there is little point in doing so here—for the 1895 statistics that I wish now to pin to Professor Rhoads's description are already overaggregated for the purpose at hand, the entire Old City and the entire New (southern) City being undifferentiated. Even so, when the Old City and Eastern Suburb (which together encompassed the gentry nucleus) are compared with the New City and its adjoining Southern and Western Suburbs (which together encompassed most of the business nucleus), they present significantly different profiles. The sex ratio in 1895 was 168 males per 100 females for the northeastern "gentry" districts of the city, and 224 males per 100 females for the southwestern "merchant" districts. Moreover, the proportion of "multiple-family households," i.e., complex families, was significantly higher in the gentry-dominated portion of the city (13.8 percent) than in the merchant-dominated portion (7.7 percent). (See Figure 4 for a glimpse of a street near the heart of Canton's business district as it appeared in the 1890's.)

Apropos of the contrast being made here, we might recall the clear distinction drawn by Shibahara between the "ward near the official residences" in Ningpo and the "centers of business activity," and we might note the remark made in passing by Lien-sheng Yang in a paper on urban merchants that in late imperial times one of the few restrictions on the

Fig. 4. CHIANG-LAN CHIEN, a business street in the southwestern suburb of Canton, in the 1890's. The first store on the left (Ch'ien Chi Hao) sold ink and other writing materials; the second (Chang Chi Tang), wax-cased pills. The first on the right (Tien I) sold table covers and cushions; the second (Yung Chi), imported "swallowed" nets. The photographer noted that each shop on the street had a small shrine like the one at lower left "dedicated to the god who presides over the tradesman and his craft." John Thomson, Through China with a Camera (Westminster, Eng.: Constable, 1898), pp. 67-70.
location of shops was that they should not be "too near the yamen to spoil its dignity."

This model differs from that initially enunciated by Gideon Sjoberg (and recently restated with some rigor by Walter F. Abbot) in having two nuclei, at least one of which was off-center geographically, instead of a single nucleus that ipso facto defined the city center. It also differs in that the urban periphery bears no spatial relation to wider concentric circles. Rather, the sociological periphery in Chinese cities was to be found in "purest" form at those corners of the intramural area that were least accessible from the more important gates. Moving from the twin nuclei toward the isolated corners of the walled city, one found in ever greater numbers the hovels and shacks of the urban poor—porters, sedan-chair carriers, transport coolies, and dockworkers; hawkers, peddlers, and such other itinerants as cooks with portable kitchens and craftsmen with portable repair shops; medicine men, fortune-tellers, sorcerers, storytellers, musicians, and acrobats; prostitutes ejected from the lowest-class houses; "mean" people peculiar to particular cities (such as the To-min of Ningpo and Shao-hsing-fu); lepers; and, above all, beggars. Those who grew vegetables on vacant land in the remotest corners were often squatters. In many cities the dwellings of the poor were built up against the wall—or even in it, by scooping out "caves."

This formulation retains some vestige of the general proposition that in premodern cities social status declined with distance from the center, but it would clearly be misleading to assert for Chinese cities that the poorest elements were "in the suburbs," for, as we have seen, certain suburbs lay squarely within the business nucleus. I would venture two additional propositions that appear to have some validity for late imperial cities of any appreciable size. First, we have already noted the pattern whereby wholesalers in the same line, retail specialty shops, and craftsmen of the same type were concentrated along one or more streets. I suggest that spatial differentiation within the business district was such that capital-intensive lines—including banks and trading companies specializing in low-bulk, high-value products—tended to lie at the center of the business nucleus, whereas labor- and land-intensive lines were at a greater remove from the center. The lowly crafts requiring heavy labor (e.g., tin-heating in connection with the manufacture of religious paper) or open space (e.g., dyers and furniture makers) were often located in quite peripheral neighborhoods. Second, the area between the two nuclei (no more than a narrow strip in some cities) tended to be heterogeneous as between gentry and merchants and as between shop- houses and residences in the strict sense, but rather more homogeneous.

Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

in terms of per capita wealth than the business district per se. It was in this zone that one was likely to find the temples and other public institutions that were jointly sponsored by merchants and literati.

Having emphasized what I take to have been the overall ecological structure of late imperial cities, we may now place in perspective the within-block diversity that Western observers generally considered exceptional. The several statements by sinologists quoted at the beginning of this section largely reflect a preoccupation with distinguishing Chinese from Western cities. Shops were more widely dispersed in traditional Chinese cities than in modern Western cities, and it is doubtless true that the kind of social homogeneity found in an upper middle-class suburb or a central-city slum in the United States had no counterpart in traditional China. In one Peking district that covered some 80 acres, the population along eight business streets was over 82 percent male, whereas that along two interior residential streets had a balanced sex ratio. Mote conveys the correct flavor when he writes: "One might not know, before stepping through a gate and around a screen wall to look into the courtyard beyond, whether he would find a mansion or a soy sauce factory, or a mansion being used as a factory." But he would surely agree that the probabilities of finding a factory would be high in certain districts and low in others—and that the likelihood of being surprised would be greatest in districts lying between the city's two nuclear areas. As for the intermingling of rich and poor residences, the range was undoubtedly great in certain urban neighborhoods, with many a courtyard occupied by families that would be poor by present-day Western standards. But the majority of the urban poor to which I addressed myself above—numbering, most likely, between a tenth and a fifth of the entire urban population—did not live in "residential neighborhoods"; few had gates to be stepped through.

Naturally, one expects the relative importance of the two nuclei to reflect a city's position in the administrative and economic hierarchies. This is not the place to ring the changes in this regard or to muster evidence, but it is worth recording my general impression that the gentry nucleus was by no means absent from the urban ecology of nonadministrative central places. The papers in this book make it clear that the more important nonadministrative cities were likely to support a subofficial yamen (Watt), an academy (Grimm), and/or a Wen-wu miao (Feuchtwang); the gentry nucleus was likely to have been focused on one or more of these institutions. Even in the standard market town I studied in Szechwan, a gentry nucleus could be identified in the neighborhood of the local benevolent society, a fu-yüan ("Confucian hall") located on
a quiet side street at a decent remove from the business center, whose central focus was the bustling courtyard of the town's major temple.

Sojourning and Urban Associations

It is easy to get the impression that in late imperial times most urbanites were sojourners. From the sixteenth century on, Chinese writers on particular cities have emphasized the numerical importance of natives with characteristic hyperbole. One Ming source claimed that nine out of ten persons in Lin-ch'ing, a flourishing port on the Grand Canal, were merchants from Hui-ch'ou. Another asserted that in Yangchow "natives are outnumbered by immigrants one to twenty." In the nineteenth century, Western travelers picked up the refrain. Of Hangchow, Frederick Cloud wrote that only a tenth of the population were natives, "the remainder being made up of sojourners from every province of the empire." In the early 1870's Richthofen, an experienced and judicious observer, wrote of Kalgan in northern Chihli: "Of the resident population, the greater part consider themselves as visitors on a long term, and have their families in some other place or province." Guild regulations often provided for sending indigent members back to their native places, and a favorite recourse of yamen officials was to deport troublemakers to their places of origin; it seemed to be taken for granted that every gildsman or every unruly urbanite had a native place somewhere else.

In fact, of course, every city had its permanent residents—those whose native place was the city in question—and their numerical strength vis-à-vis sojourners varied within a wide range. Why some cities attracted sojourners and others did not, and why sojourners dominated some cities but not others are questions to which I shall return below. But for the moment let us grant that a sizable proportion of the population of most cities were nonnatives and focus on their place in urban society. Three related points are often made about the sojourner component of city populations: (1) that they were occupationally specialized by place of origin, (2) that they typically organized themselves along native-place lines, and (3) that their native-place identities were slow to erode.

On the first point, Cloud's characterization of Hangchow may stand for hundreds like it concerning a wide range of cities. "Practically all the carpenters, wood-carvers, decorators, cabinetmakers, and medicine dealers are from Ningpo. The tea and cloth merchants, salt dealers, and innkeepers are from Anhwei. The porcelain dealers are from Kiangsi, the opium traders from Canton, and the wine merchants from Shaohsing. Many of the bankers and money-changers are also from Shaohsing, as well as many of the blacksmiths; . . . Soochow furnishes a large number

Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

of the official class, the 'sing-song' girls, and restaurant keepers." The second point is dramatically illustrated by reference to Peking, where the number and diversity of Landsmannschaften (associations based on common place of origin) were truly phenomenal. In his classic 1966 study, Ping-ti Ho identified 391 such associations in nineteenth-century Peking; but a manuscript acquired by Niida Noboru that has recently come to light in Tokyo lists no fewer than 528 native-place associations of various types, including hsiang-t'zu (compatriot's temples). Almost all served the natives of particular counties, prefectures, and provinces, or conventional combinations of contiguous units at each of these administrative levels. Ho's analysis called attention to the fact that many of these associations limited their membership to scholars, and he emphasized the role of most of them as hostels for examination candidates. By contrast, Niida's research emphasized their commercial aspects, showing inter alia that merchants and artisans also used many of the hui-kuan that catered primarily to scholars and that the membership of scores of native-place associations was limited to those pursuing a particular line of business (such as the Yen-Shao Hui-kuan, limited to paper merchants from the adjacent prefectures of Yen-p'ing and Shao-wu in Fukien, and the Che-Tz'u Hui-kuan, limited to tailors from Tz'u-ch'i hsien, Ning-po fu, Chekiang).

The third point is really a cultural matter: native place was an essential component of a person's identity in traditional Chinese society. Strangers thrown into contact would in their initial conversational exchange invariably ascertain one another's native place as well as surname. A person's native county commonly appeared on doorplates (and invariably appeared on tombstones) and was used in correspondence and belles lettres as a surrogate given name for prominent figures. The normative pattern was clear: a young man who left to seek his fortune elsewhere was expected to return home for marriage, to spend there an extended period of mourning on the death of either parent, and eventually to retire in the locality where his ancestors were buried. Even when these expectations were not realized, the son born to a sojourner inherited his father's native place along with his surname. Residences were immutabile, as we shall see, but within the span of a few generations native place must be seen as an ascribed characteristic.

Sojourning was seldom an individual matter. The man who left to try his luck in the city normally did so as a "representative" of his family, his lineage, and his native place. He was "selected" to go. For reasons that are obvious to students of Chinese society, "only sons" almost never emigrated; sojourners were selected from sets of sons, and relevant cri-
teria—ambition, venturesomeness, intelligence—played a role in deciding who should go. There was often a period of testing and tempering in local schools or small-town enterprises operated by kinsmen or others from his native place. A promising young man received help and support at every step of the way from kinsmen and native-place fellows, and such assistance was conceived not only as a moral obligation but also as an investment calculated to yield benefits for corporate groups of variable inclusiveness. I have elsewhere analyzed sojourning in terms of mobility strategies—that is, as a form of maximization by families, lineages, villages, marketing communities, counties, and even prefectures. Particular localities cultivated specific occupational skills for “export” to the cities where opportunities were concentrated. The men who climbed the central-place hierarchy to take advantage of those opportunities for the most part followed one of two tracks—they went either to exploit business opportunities in economic central places, or to take advantage of the opportunities for education and bureaucratic service in administrative central places.

Success in the latter track was the more prestigious, and the preferred mobility strategy was to groom young men for academic success. In the paradigmatic case a local system selected the brightest of its boys and provided the resources to support them through the early years of study in a bid for academic degrees and bureaucratic office. The odds were long, but the rewards of success—placing a native son in office—were overwhelming and comprehensive. The benefits returned included power with which to protect the local system and further its interests, wealth to enhance its living standards and productivity, and, above all, prestige, which by enhancing the community’s reputation yielded specific payoffs for families throughout the local system. Despite the lower prestige of business in comparison with academic achievement, the cultivation of specialized business talent for export was also a widespread maximization strategy. The importance of regionally based merchant and financial entrepreneurs was discussed in Part Two, where Shiba addressed many of the relevant factors in analyzing the case of Ningpo merchants. Even more widespread than strategies involving the scholar-official or the merchant-financier tracks were local-system specializations in the export of craftsmen, semiprofessionals, and the purveyors of services. The potential for spectacular success was, of course, more limited, and most such specializations were focused on opportunities within a particular city or the market towns and cities of a circumscribed subregion. The low respectability of a calling was no necessary barrier to local-system specialization: the security of an occupational niche in the city was an important consideration for a village or marketing community with limited resources; and in any case, the techniques for converting wealth to respectability were well understood. Though this is not the place to pursue the matter, it goes without saying that the importance and type of sojourner strategies were strongly conditioned by the local system’s place in the overall structure of territorial systems—particularly with respect to cities at different hierarchical levels and to the transport routes linking the cities within an urban system.

Sojourning strategies, predicated on native-place loyalties, were furthered by the organization of urban sojourners on the basis of common origin. Native-place associations in Peking and the various provincial capitals improved the competitive position of local systems with respect to the imperial examinations and official appointments, and the native-place associations in economic centers were a manifestation of the struggle to monopolize or control an occupational niche. These instrumental objectives should, however, be seen in the context of the particular advantages of the tung-hsiang (same-native-place) bond as a principle of organization. Of these was that it encompassed a large proportion of the other types of particularistic relationships (kuan-hsi) that were considered by the Chinese to be potential bases for the development of trust. As Baker points out, the number of kinsmen in a city was seldom large enough to afford an organization of any appreciable size or power, but in practice both affinal and consanguineal relationships were subsumed by and reinforced tung-hsiang ties. Many if not most of the experiential kuan-hsi of potential importance in Chinese society—being students of the same teacher, taking the county examinations at the same time, going together on a religious pilgrimage, crossing the Strait in the same junk, and so on—were likely to have been shared with those whose residences were fairly nearby. Thus, these too were encompassed by native-place ties and served to strengthen them.

A second advantage stemmed from the hierarchically cumulative nature of the tung-hsiang bond. Community membership necessarily entailed membership in the higher-order local and regional systems in which that community was located. This gave tung-hsiang remarkable flexibility as a principle of urban organization. The relevant units for cumulating native-place ties ranged from subcounty townships-cum-marketing communities up to conventional groupings of provinces. The inclusiveness of membership was, of course, a function of the relative numbers of sojourners from various local systems as well as of the com-
petitive situation. Time and again, sojourners from local systems within a trading system or an administrative unit joined forces at whatever level in the hierarchy was necessary to claim a prize in a distant city and to deny it to similar alliances elsewhere. We have seen the principle in operation repeatedly in the case studies of this volume. Natives of Nan-hui hsien (Fukien) were variously organized (1) at the county level, (2) at the level of San I, a conventional grouping of three counties, (3) at the level of Ch’üan-chou prefecture, or (4) at the provincial level. Ningpo merchants were variously organized in associations limited to those from Ning-po prefecture, to those from the two adjacent prefectures of Ning-po and Shao-hsing, to those from Chekiang province as a whole, or to natives of the four adjacent counties covered by the designation San-chiang.

A third advantage of t’ung-shiang as an organizing principle is that it cut across class and other vertical bonds (including those of many experiential kuan-hsi, which tended to be class-specific). This commended it in particular to the rich and powerful, who were able to utilize an ostensibly egalitarian principle to institute within the organization a division of labor that left the “dirty work” to lower-class members, and who were able to define association objectives in terms that served the interests of their own enterprises. At the same time, the context of t’ung-shiang solidarity was ideal for socializing and supporting the upwardly mobile greenhorn.

Golas’s paper points out the difficulties in disentangling the guilds from native-place associations in Ch‘ing cities. The generic terms used for “association” or “hall” (kung-so, hui-kuan, tien, kung, and so forth) are wholly unreliable indicators, and we know from both Ch‘ing and Republican materials that an association whose name specified only a place might function as a guild (e.g., the Shang-yüan Hui-kuan in Hankow, named for one of the metropolitan counties of Nanking, which in fact served as a guild for traders from that city specializing in dry goods and groceries), and that an association whose name specified only an economic specialization might in fact be limited to natives of a particular locality (e.g., the Cold-beaters Guild in Wen-chou-fu, which was monopolized by natives of Ning-po fu). The extent of economic specialization by native place is likely to be underestimated on two other counts. First, when sojourners from a given local system pursued more than one economic specialization in a particular city, they might organize as a native-place association with specialized subdivisions acting as guilds. We have seen in Shiba’s paper a rather special instance of this arrangement: one subdivision of Ningpo’s overarching Fukien provincial asso-

*Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch‘ing China*
ton's regional-city trading system; and those known as San I Kung-so (associations for the three contiguous counties of Nan-hai, Fan-yü, and Shun-te, known in Cantonese as Sun Yap) were limited to traders from Canton's local-city trading system.

The pattern of economic specialization by native place that prevailed in late imperial cities can be profitably analyzed in terms of an ethnic division of labor. There is no difficulty whatsoever in viewing the "colonies" of extraregional traders in Chinese cities as ethnic minorities. "The Cantonese is as much an alien in Shanghai," Morse pointed out, "as the Portuguese was in Spain when Philip II was sovereign over both countries."43 Anhwei merchants in Chungking, Ningpo merchants in Peking, Hokkien merchants in Hankow, Ningpo merchants in Canton, Shansi merchants in Foochow—all spoke languages unintelligible to the natives and practiced customs that appeared outlandish at best. But if recent studies of ethnicity have taught us anything, it is that ethnic solidarity is no simple function of cultural distinctiveness;44 slight accents and even minor mannerisms may serve as ethnic markers if either side finds it advantageous to maintain or erect ethnic boundaries. There is no want of samples in Chinese cities of economic specializations by local systems in their near vicinity. The pig brokers in Peking were natives of an area 75-30 miles to the northeast (Mi-yün and Shun-i counties),45 and in Hankow the specialists in the manufacture and trade of tobacco pouches were natives of Huang-p'o, less than twenty miles north of the city.46 Was the difference between Hui-chou and Huang-p'o traders, both of whom found it worthwhile to maintain a guildhall in Hankow, one of kind or of degree? Were the mechanisms for keeping a grip on their respective economic niches basically different? Did Huang-p'o traders, too, find it advantageous to emphasize their cultural distinctiveness? Future research may find it useful to consider these questions in the framework of a hierarchy of regionally based ethnicity and subethnicity.

This brings us to the matter of assimilation, to which Golas rightly calls our attention in accounting for the trend he discerns during the Ch'ing period away from economic specialization by native place. The maintenance of ethnic boundaries and of economic specializations was naturally easiest when the sojourning community maintained continuing close relations with its native area. So long as Hsing-hua retained a comparative advantage in the production of tung-yen for the Ningpo market, one would expect the Hsing-hua community to be ethnically renewed from one generation to the next and its monopoly of tung-yen wholesaling to persist. But China's regional economies were subject to continual flux, and local systems were everywhere poised to respond to opportunities created by changed circumstances. If Hsing-hua lost its comparative advantage to another region, or if Hsing-hua merchants in Ningpo found it advantageous to diversify into lines unrelated to their native prefecture, then in time one would expect the Hsing-hua community to assimilate and the Hsing-hua Pang either to atrophy or to change its character. The life expectancy of a Landsmannschaft-cum-guild was apparently not long in late imperial China; few lasted for more than two or three generations without reorganization. And the historical record is clear that in particular cases hyphenated associations became guilds tout court. What is less clear to me than to Golas, however, is that such cases added up to a secular trend away from economic specialization by native place. It is just possible that the reverse may have been true prior to the onset of modernizing change: that increased competition for occupational niches in Chinese cities led to more frequent displacement of one territorially based "ethnic" group by another, speeded up the developmental cycle of urban associations, and accelerated the assimilation of urban ethnicities. The evidence for any trend appears inconclusive.

I have in passing directed attention to the likelihood that many urban natives were the residuum of successive waves of sojourners. From our knowledge of overseas Chinese communities, we may assume that the wholly unsuccessful—those unable to keep up remittances, to afford return visits, to repay the loans of tung-hsing benefactors—often failed to return; in many cases they had, out of considerations of face, cut themselves off from their native-place compatriots in the city and died an anonymous and ignominious urban death. Traveling in North China in the 1870's, Williamson noted that "one can form an idea of the size of a city by the number of graves that lie immediately outside its walls. These will be graves of the poor and of strangers."47 Failed sojourners were among those buried in such paupers' graves. Since few would have had offspring in the city, their contribution to the urban population cannot have been great. The many cemeteries maintained by Landsmannschaften, however, tell a rather different story. In an ideal Chinese world, sojourners would have returned to their native places by the onset of old age, and those unfortunate enough to die in the city would have been sent back in coffins. According to Morse, Landsmannschaften "invariably have a mortuary, in which may be deposited the coffin bodies of... members, waiting... for the accomplishment of the desire of all Chinese, that their bones may be taken back for burial in their ancestral home."48 For sojourner communities that did not maintain their own mortuaries,
public institutions of the same type were to be found in all major cities. Morse accounts for same-native-place cemeteries in terms of poverty: provincial clubs, to use his term, "invariably have their own cemetery, in which they grant graves for their poorer members, in order that their bones may lie in ground which is a substitute for their native soil." We may also surmise that such cemeteries, some of which date back to Ming times, were used by the assimilating descendants of sojourners, regardless of socioeconomic status.

The very dynamics of sojourning, then, account for part of the variation in the relative size of the native urban population. Commercial cities whose trade was expanding attracted many sojourners, those whose trade was contracting attracted few. The most dramatic contrast should be provided by cities whose economic centrality changed so radically that they moved up or slipped down a notch in the economic hierarchy. During the nineteenth century, Shanghai's trade and population more than quadrupled and its status changed from a regional metropolis—one of several in the Lower Yangtze—to that region's dominant central metropolis. Little wonder that in the late nineteenth century natives were swamped by sojourners. Kalgan in Chihli was growing rapidly at the time of Richthofen's visit in the 1870's; it was a greater city in the process of acquiring the additional economic centrality of a regional city. Hangchow, whose domination by outsiders at the turn of the century was so graphically described by Cloud, had for the preceding forty years afforded exceptional opportunities for sojourners, as it recovered from the devastation wrought during the Taiping Rebellion. On the other hand, both Lin-ch'ing and Yangchow, noted in late Ming as cities dominated by sojourners, were in decline by the late nineteenth century. Both had slipped a notch in the economic hierarchy, and in both urban natives—largely the residuum of past sojourners—had become numerically dominant. An even more extreme case is Lu-kang, whose decline as a port during the nineteenth century left it a city devoid of sojourners.

Of course, not all urban natives were the descendants of sojourners in any strict sense. The native gentry of cities consisted of the descendants not only of successful sojourners but also of landlords who had gradually changed their residence from more rural settlements in the city's immediate hinterland. And the urban poor included not only unsuccessful sojourners but migrants from the countryside who lacked community roots in any village or town. With no native place, they were the ultimate "dependables" of society, and their only hope for security in an urban setting was acceptance into the ranks of beggars.

Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

Urban Associations and "Municipal" Governance

I raise as a final issue perhaps the most important question posed by the papers of Part Three: How was urban society managed? We know only enough to be certain that the answer varied from one city to another and that for most cities the Ch'ing period was one of marked institutional change in this regard. The papers below help define an area where additional research would be richly rewarded. To what extent was the late imperial city an integrated sociopolitical entity? What municipal services were provided and through what institutional arrangements? How was the political power of officials, gentry, and merchants exercised and mediated? In what senses could it be said that the city was governed at all?

We might start with an organizing principle not previously mentioned in this introduction, namely place of urban residence. It appears to have been generally true that in cities of any appreciable size the population was organized into neighborhoods, normally defined in terms of streets rather than blocks. This was so in every city treated in any detail in this volume—Ningpo, Canton, Nanking, Peking, Taipei, Tainan, and Lu-kang. From Schipper's article, it is apparent that neighborhood associations took responsibility not only for the ritual purity of the area but also for its general order, harmony, and cleanliness. C. K. Yang, generalizing from his study of nineteenth-century Fo-shan, holds that "normal collective operations of urban life such as fire prevention, garbage removal, ... maintenance of ... order in the street neighborhood, certain types of ... charity and religious celebrations, were all traditional parts of the neighborhood associations, which were self-governing bodies entirely independent of ... the li-chia system." He also points out that disputes between residents of the same neighborhood were normally mediated within the association.

It would be rather surprising if sociologically marginal elements of the city population were in fact incorporated in organized neighborhoods—the beggars who slept under bridges, for instance, or the squatters whose shacks were built against the city wall—but there is no reason for doubting that the "households" (i.e., shop-houses and residences) of sojourners were included. Schipper's Tainan data reveal fairly rapid turnover in the composition of a neighborhood, and the mechanisms he describes for incorporating newcomers into the neighborhood corporation must have been important in the adjustment of sojourners to urban life. Although we know that shops and stores in the same line of business were concentrated along particular streets and that particular lines of busi-
ness were often dominated by regional ethnicities, the implications of these facts for neighborhood organization appear to be unexplored.

As Shibata points out, and as Schipper's article dramatizes, group interests were normally given religious expression in traditional cities. There is no reason to doubt that urban neighborhoods throughout China took the form of religious corporations along the lines described by Schipper for old Tainan. The neighborhood cult of Tu-ti-kung (or Fu-te Cheng-shen) appears to have been ubiquitous in both the cities and the countryside of China; and John Kerr's remark that in nineteenth-century Canton every street had its Fu-te Tu-ti might, with an appropriate discount for its sweeping character, have been made about almost any other city. The great virtue of Schipper's analysis is that we now have a basis for summing what those shrines in Chinese cities implied about urban social order.

It is also a safe generalization, I believe, that in all late imperial cities certain temples were the focus of territorial units uniting several neighborhoods. Whereas Tu-ti-kung hui were inward looking, with the annual feast limited to association members, the sectors or wards of the city centered on deity temples were outward looking, their festivals designed to attract visitors from other wards and to provide occasions for hosting kinsmen, tung-hiaung fellows, business associates, and friends residing elsewhere. DeGlopper's case study emphasizes the integrative effects of competition and exchange among sections of the city defined as the lu-hia of particular temple deities, and it is clear that in all but the largest cities particular temples (sometimes only the Ch'eng-huang miao) were seen as servicing the entire city and certain religious festivals as expressing the distinctive spirit of the city as a whole. Many of the cults that appealed to particular subsets of the population had adherents residing throughout the city, and when it is realized that both guilds and native-place associations were normally organized as religious corporations, it is clear that DeGlopper's image of a hierarchy of crosscutting allegiances has much to commend it in terms of religious organization alone.

The various case studies of this volume indicate that at least by the nineteenth century many if not most urban services were provided by nongovernmental corporate groups and financed through assessments and dues or the income from corporate property. Whether the same pattern held during the earlier centuries of the late imperial period I must leave to the historians, but the example of the San-t'ang in Tainan suggests that relatively undifferentiated religious corporations had the capability of providing a wide range of municipal services even in the

Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

absence of guilds and Landsmannschaften. In the extreme long run, of course, we see a sharp retrenchment of the yamen's role in the governance of cities, but it is unclear to me how closely it was synchronized with the rise of guilds and native-place associations, which became characteristic features of the institutional landscape only in the eighteenth century.

One can, I think, discern two lines of development toward citywide leadership structures that coordinated urban services. One grew out of merchant associations, the other out of gentry institutions (though, as we shall see, the two were never wholly independent and became increasingly intertwined during the nineteenth century). On the merchant side, the first significant development was the extension into the public realm of services initially provided by guilds and native-place associations for their members alone. The significance of this development is underscored by Nida Noboru in his study of Hung-chiang, a regional city in Hunan dominating the upper Yüan Basin, where ten hui-kuan were established. In the case of certain functions taken on by particular guilds—fire fighting and policing, for instance—the benefits that may have been derived primarily for members were inevitably enjoyed by others within the quarter. It made no sense for a guild's fire brigade to ignore a conflagration just because it began in a non-member's shop. DeGlopper makes it clear that the militia operated by the Ch'üan-chou guild in Lu-kang was designed to protect the city as a whole. In all probability competition for prestige and power was a major factor in the extension of services to the general public. When the Hsin-an Hui-kuan took the initiative in establishing a citywide system of fire stations in Nanking, it was at once a demonstration of financial power, a declaration of public-spirited concern for the native population, a means of placing the entire business community in its debt, and an assertion of supremacy among the various business associations of the city. Guilds that operated charity schools, infirmaries, and dispensaries for their members alone could easily gain a reputation for stinginess, especially when others following a more open policy were able to pose as exemplars of Confucian virtue. It was a short step to cooperation among guilds in these matters, or at least to a division of labor among them. A case in point is the Ai-yü Shan-t'ang, founded in Canton in 1871 jointly by the leading guilds: it was a charitable institution that "provided free outpatient care to the indigent sick, financial support for destitute widows, and free coffins for the poor; it also supported several free primary schools for the children of the poor."

Institutional historians of the Ch'ing period have emphasized the sig-
Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China

by some historians between cities with formally constituted merchant federations and those without. Effective cooperation among associations does not require a separate office or a formal charter. The need for standardizing weights and measures within a city, for mediating disputes between members of different guilds or native-place associations, for repairing the wharves and dredging the channels on which the entire trading community depended, and for avoiding costly duplication and injustice in charitable activities must have been felt in scores of other commercial cities for which we have no record of merchant federations.

The political structure of overseas Chinese urban communities is instructive in this regard. In many Southeast Asian cities, Chinese merchant leaders of different guilds and associations joined forces to establish and manage temples, schools, hospitals, cemeteries, and charitable foundations. Even when no single association was dominant, formal federation was not a precondition of joint action. Leaders of the seven Chinese hui-kuan of Bangkok (whose constituencies theoretically encompassed all regions of origin in China) came together whenever a crisis arose affecting the interests of the community as a whole (or its dominant mercantile segment), but there was no joint office and no written charter—not even a name for the informal institution. I do not find it surprising that the guilds of Canton jointly founded a comprehensive charitable foundation 28 years before we have any record of formalized cooperation (namely the "formation" of the Seventy-two Guilds in 1899); nor can the absence of such formalization be taken as prima facie evidence of "little or no cooperation among guilds, even for economic purposes."

Lawrence Crissman has argued that urban Chinese in China and overseas faced a similar situation in that both had to "govern themselves without having noticeable governmental institutions." If it was generally true that "noticeable governmental institutions" would have been regarded with suspicion by bureaucratic officials in the yamen of late imperial cities, then one would expect formal confederation to have occurred only in the exceptional circumstances where it served the interests of the yamen and was specifically encouraged by the officials. It is notable in this regard that Hung-chiang, Sha-shih, Lu-kang (if we may legitimately include it in this context: the degree of formalization of the Eight Guilds is not apparent from available data), and Swatow were all major commercial centers whose economic centrality far outweighed their administrative status. All were "governed" from another city, although a hui-chuen was posted to each to oversee the trade. In these circumstances, harried officials might be expected to have welcomed the
convenience of dealing with an overarching federation that could assume responsibility beyond the capacity of bureaucratic government. That this was true in Lu-kang is implicit in DeGlopper's account, and Niida explicitly argues that the Ten Guilds of Hung-chiang were requested by officials to assume particular governmental functions and that the federation cooperated closely with the yamen in both Hui-tung and Ching-chou, the capitals of the county and the autonomous department to which it was administratively subordinate.\[24\] Chungking, the capital of a circuit and a prefecture, was a very different case, but even here its emergence in the nineteenth century as the central metropolis of the Upper Yangtze region meant that its economic centrality surpassed that of most provincial capitals elsewhere in China. In this case, too, our authority is explicit that officials pressured the confederation to assume governmental responsibilities during the hectic years of the Taiping Rebellion.\[25\] Guild confederations, then, may have appeared in China only when they were specifically encouraged by bureaucratic officials, but this does not mean that informal arrangements amounting in effect to a sub rosa municipal government were necessarily absent from commercial cities where officials saw no necessity for risking the potential threat of formally consolidated merchant power.

Comparable developments involving the consolidation of gentry power have been ably analyzed by Mark Elvin in his paper in The Chinese City Between Two Worlds.\[26\] The three relevant trends he discerns all involved a measure of official-gentry cooperation. One was the establishment of specialized local boards partly run by “gentry directors”; the first such case in Shanghai was the Shanghai Board for the Sea Transport of Kiangsu Tribute Grain, founded in 1825. The second innovation was the assembly of local gentry called together by the magistrate; the first documented instance in Shanghai was an assembly called in 1854 to advise the county magistrate on water conservancy. In this regard, Kung Yu-wei called attention to “public boards” in capital cities “where the gentry and scholars meet for discussions. If there are important matters [to be discussed] the Hall of Human Relationships in the Confucian Temple is opened for a public debate, and the authorities usually send a deputy to attend it.”\[27\] The third trend was the proliferation of gentry-run charities, of which the first in Shanghai was the Hall of Infant Care, established in 1710. “What was distinctive about the new gentry-run charities ... was that they represented a modest form of institutionalized gentry power in the domain of public affairs. They were endowed with considerable grants of land, and often received official subventions.”

Certain of their functions “were of a kind that one would not normally

\[\text{Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China}\]

have expected of a charity”: fire fighting, policing, street cleaning, and the lighting of thoroughfares.\[28\] From C. K. Yang we learn that even in Fo-shan, a nonadministrative industrial city, there existed in the nineteenth century a “semiformal” gentry association known as the Ta-k'uei Tang, which provided leadership for public events, trusteeship for nonofficial public property, and advice to officials on request.\[29\]

Finally, we must note the interpenetration in many cities of merchant and gentry leadership structures. Guild leaders and local gentry not infrequently served together on the managing committees of temples and the organizing committees of major festivals. In Canton “the gentry and officials gave assistance” to the merchant organizers of charities,\[30\] and in Shanghai the gentry-run charities were supported by merchant contributions as well as official subventions. In Chungking, the leaders of most hui-kuan included degree-holders, the Fukien Association in particular being noted for the number of former officials on its managing committee.\[31\] A text of 1888 refers to the “gentry and merchants of the Ten Guilds” in Hung-chiang,\[32\] and we learn from DeGlopper that in Lu-kang the Eight Guilds and a group of local degree-holders cooperated with the subprefect in establishing an academy. Can one speak of the consolidation of a new urban elite that transcended the boorish social distinctions between gentry and merchant? Probably not. But future research might well verify a widespread social process that would eventually have transformed the sociopolitical structure of Chinese cities quite apart from any Western influence. What a strictly Chinese municipality might have looked like is one of the intriguing what if's of history.