

川流不息：歷史中的川龍¹

RIVER OF TIME:

CHUEN LUNG IN HISTORY¹

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鳥瞰川龍——四百年的老村，經歷了怎樣的歷史？

A bird's eye view of Chuen Lung — what has the 400-year-old village gone through in the course of history?

川龍位於水源充沛的大帽山上，座落荃灣（前稱淺灣/全灣）之北，遠眺青衣及大嶼山，環境優美。一個有趣的問題是，為何川龍村民選擇定居於農地較少、交通不便的深山之中？原來有迫不得已的原因。早年由於海盜盛行，荃灣沿海一帶經常被海盜滋擾，部分村落因而遷到地勢較高之處聚居。後來海盜威脅減少，又重回海邊發展。部分村落則因為來到荃灣定居的時間較晚，因此只能聚居於邊遠的山區²。

川龍村為單姓村，由曾氏客家族人組成。地理上亦與荃灣、城門、葵涌一帶的村落及海上的水上人家為鄰。荃灣一帶的村落最早在明朝開始出現。清朝年間，朝廷為斷絕沿海一帶對台灣明朝遺臣的支援，頒布「遷海令」（1661至1669年）強制沿海居民必須向內陸遷徙。及後准許居民復界，客籍人士受到朝廷鼓勵，來到廣東省沿海包括新安縣一帶定居。大部分在英國管治新界（1898年）之前位處荃灣的村落，也是在遷海令前後建立的³。根據川龍村曾氏族人的族譜，他們的祖先原籍山東，南宋後期遷至廣東，後人繁衍於龍川、興寧、河源、陸豐、翁源、英德及新安一帶⁴。依曾氏族人所言，其中一房於明朝永樂年間（1403至1424年）遷至荃灣木棉下，後因海盜騷擾搬到大帽山川龍⁵。他們其後在荃灣開枝散葉。除了川龍之外，部分遷到葵涌及大帽山甲龍一帶定居⁶。有一說指曾氏族人希望紀念從廣東「龍川」南遷到荃灣一事，故將大帽山居住一帶改名為「川龍」。

川龍村雖然位處山腰，但沒有阻礙村民與其他地區的聯繫。荃灣是水陸兩路的交通樞紐，於十九世紀初設有墟市，並與青衣、元朗以及英國管治的香港島有商貿往來⁷。當時川龍村民會走到荃灣墟及元朗新墟滿足日常生活需要⁸，亦有村民將農產品拿到港島售賣⁹。於1860年代，川龍村民協助解決了區內一場持續三年的大規模械鬥。根據一名當地居民的說法，當時城門村與荃灣一眾村落衝突，結果互有死傷，起因各有說法。一名富有的曾姓川龍

村民為平息紛爭，自願作為中間人，分別向雙方訛稱受敵方指派來求和，因而促成雙方談判，結束了對峙局面，以智慧平息干戈¹⁰。

從茶樹園到西洋菜基地

今時今日，川龍比較有名的是清甜可口的西洋菜，不過在這處種植西洋菜只是近六十年間的事，而且是由新移民移植到川龍的。十七世紀末到二十世紀初，由於香港的緯度跟雲南出產茶葉的地區相近，高山的氣候亦適合種植山茶，因此在船灣、大帽山城門一帶曾經出現大規模商業種植的茶樹園¹¹。基於川龍附近的山麓上亦有種茶的痕跡，歷史學家科大衛（David Faure）估計川龍村民早年曾以種茶為生，但1920年代後，茶園已經荒廢¹²。另外，村民會在山上斬柴割草，以供水上人家日常生活及船家清潔船隻之用¹³。當時川龍、油柑頭、柴灣角附近有很多腐竹製作工場，事實上當時荃灣的豆製品亦薄有名氣¹⁴。日本佔領前，川龍村民亦會種植稻米，但僅夠供給自己村民食用¹⁵。川龍村民明白「靠山吃山，靠水吃水」的道理，充分利用川龍的天然資源。

二次大戰結束後，香港旋即捲入冷戰的夾縫之中。1949年共產主義陣營的中華人民共和國成立，為資本主

義陣營的港英政府帶來嚴峻挑戰。而且，大量由內地湧入的難民為社會帶來不穩，令港英政府甚為頭痛。為了維護政權，港英政府推出了不同的政策盡量讓糧食和食水自給自足，減少對中國的依賴¹⁶。在這背景下，港英政府於五十年代開始加強支援新界農業發展，成立蔬菜統營處，穩定蔬菜供應¹⁷。當時與政府關係密切的嘉道理兄弟亦提供資金和技術協助政府盡快發展新界農業。在一次大帽山的考察中，羅蘭士·嘉道理（Lawrence Kadoorie）意外發現大帽山上荒廢了的英資洋行茶場，因而開始考慮在陡峭的高山上種植的可能性，並在錦田一帶建立了實驗農場，幫助新界農民改善耕作技術，後來成為廣為人知的「嘉道理農場」¹⁸。

同時，政府亦加強新界的基礎建設，由起初為了防範共產中國軍事入侵，到後來用於發展香港經濟。川龍村旁邊的荃錦公路正是好例子。大帽山作為香港境內最高的山峰，地理位置具有重要的戰略價值。日治時期，川龍居民已被日軍徵召修築大帽山通往荃灣的公路，好讓軍車駛過¹⁹。戰後港英政府積極建設位於大帽山的石崗軍營與新界重要地區的交通網絡，並於1949至1952年期間興建行車路，由石崗通往大埔、錦田、粉嶺及荃灣，促成了今天的荃錦公路²⁰。荃錦公路建成初期只限軍用，直至1961年港英政府跟英軍達成協議，正式轉為民用²¹。川龍村受惠於公路帶來的便利，不論農產品運輸還是遊人也日益增加。

另一方面，港英政府戰後著手改善地區管治。五十年代為免瘧疾傳播，禁止在市區一帶種植水種為主的西洋菜²²。另外，六七十年代開始，政府又積極在荃灣、觀塘、沙田等建設新市鎮。葵涌一帶因配合發展而興建公路及地下鐵路，政府收回當地的西洋菜田，驅使部分農民遷到川龍。這些政策間接為川龍成為西洋菜基地創造有利條件。

五六十年代開始，川龍的原居民到市區工作或到海外謀生。同時，愈來愈多新移民從內地來到川龍定居，從原居民手上租下被廢棄的稻田嘗試種植蔬菜。經過一名羅姓農民不斷嘗試後，終於成功在川龍種植西洋菜²³。1962年9月份香港受到有史以來最強的颱風溫黛吹襲，本地蔬菜大受破壞，但據說在川龍的西洋菜竟然在風災後長出了幼苗，成為一時佳話²⁴。不但如此，人們更發現改良後的西洋菜品種在川龍得天獨厚的環境中生長得特別好，吸引很多農民爭相仿效種植，因而令川龍成為優質西洋菜的產地。當時川龍的西洋菜很受歡迎，連泰國及東南亞國家也派農業專家來到研究種植方法²⁵。西洋菜原種植於溫帶，香港的天氣在夏季特別炎熱，因而需要獨特的地方留種²⁶，川龍由於高海拔而且水源充足，長年保持合適溫度，非常適合作為西洋菜留種的地方。夏季時農民除種植通菜增加收入外，更重要的是保留西洋菜種。中秋過後，上水、元朗、粉嶺一帶的農民便會來到川龍購入菜種。銷售菜種亦成為部分川龍農民重要的收入來源²⁷。就這樣，西洋菜意外地成為代表川龍的「名物」。不過，夕陽無限好，只是近黃昏。新界農業現時式微，在川龍種植西洋菜及保留菜種的農民也日漸減少。

在拜上帝與祖先之間

川龍村另一特色是全村曾經也信奉天主教，並擁有一所磚地木板搭建的天主教小聖堂，該小聖堂於1932年建成及祝聖，戰後因破損而被拆毀²⁸。到底為何早於1930年代初川龍村已經擁有自己的小聖堂？這要從香港島成為英國殖民地說起。

自1841年起，羅馬天主教會把華南傳教的基地由葡萄牙管治的澳門遷到英國剛剛接管的香港島²⁹。天主教傳教士很快便以港島為起步點，向清朝管轄的地區傳教。早於1848年，他們已來到荃灣一帶向客家人傳教，並建立聖堂及學校。1860年代開始，他們再到達元朗、大埔、西貢等客家村落³⁰。有川龍村民憶述，祖父輩因為當年瘟疫流行而相信天主教³¹。事實上，當時的村民普遍認為宗教的力量可為他們消除疾病。1890年，荃灣一帶發生瘟疫，一群荃灣村民恭請天后出宮巡遊驅除瘟疫³²。數年後，香港及鄰近地區發生史上最嚴重的鼠疫。疫症起初在雲南爆發，1894年1月蔓延至廣州，再迅速傳到香港。五月，政府宣佈香港成為疫埠。當時在長洲、沙田等地有村民發起太平清醮、恭奉神像上街巡遊等儀式，希望神明保佑消災解難³³。另一方面，現有的土地契約顯示天主教會在英國管治新界前已經在川龍村擁有土地³⁴。這些證據也指出天主教在英國管治新界前已經傳到川龍村，並有若干信徒。

英國管治新界後，天主教及基督新教在荃灣迅速傳播。到了1930年代，川龍村亦正式籌建天主教小聖堂。在區鴻慈神父（Valva Diego D’Ayala）及穀祿師神父（Riccardo Brookes）的努力下，小聖堂於1932年3月13日正式開幕及祝聖³⁵。同年有超過50名村民歸信天主教³⁶。根據村民憶述，川龍村改信天主教後，曾氏家祠內的祖先神龕被移走，村民亦不再祭祖³⁷。這跟鄰近的金錢圍村數年後改信天主教的情況相似³⁸。氏族建立家祠代表著他們的經濟能力及人口已達到一定程度，希望在一個地方落地生根，並宣示在該地擁有居住權³⁹。客家族群亦有設立神龕供奉祖先及祭拜拜山的傳統。如果客家人要入教的話，基於羅馬天主教會有關「中國禮儀之爭」的決定，他們必須放棄這些傳統，有些時候甚至不能參與社區的宗教節慶活動，這可能與傳統社區勢力有所衝突，對他們來說不是容易的事⁴⁰。不過，天主教亦為川龍村帶來正面的影響。部分村民得到神父介紹獲得工作機會，亦有部分年幼村民到了天主教荃灣聖心堂旁邊的德聲學校接受教育⁴¹。除了天主教外，有記錄顯示基督新教在戰前傳到川龍，並在當地建立了基址⁴²。

戰後川龍村的人口與人心經歷巨大的轉變。據一名村民所言，1970年代天主教在川龍村得不到同等的重視，小聖堂亦改建為修女宿舍，修女離去後樓宇空置至今⁴³。村內餘下的信徒則到荃灣葛達二聖堂（前身為荃灣聖心堂）繼續慕道。至今村內仍有少量基督新教徒⁴⁴。1980年代川龍村恢復了祭祖，並擬定每年重陽節後舉行秋祭。秋祭當日早上，曾氏族人會到大帽山數處的祖墳拜祭。中午曾氏族人齊集家祠，在爆竹和添丁鑼的響聲下，他們不論男女老幼由舞動的麒麟帶領到家祠上香，並到家祠內「分豬肉」。晚上亦會在家祠外舉行盤菜宴招呼族人和朋友聯絡感情。有宗教信仰的曾氏族人亦可參與⁴⁵。在拜上帝與祖先之間，今日已經不再需要作出非此即彼的取捨。

結語

雖然川龍缺乏平坦的農地，交通亦較海邊地區不便，但是它緊靠水源充沛的大帽山，又有高山獨有的氣候。川龍善用自己的優勢及其他偶然的歷史因素，走出與荃灣其他地區不同的發展軌跡，為出產優質西洋菜提供合適的環境。即使現時農地已不復當年重要，大帽山清澈的山水依然川流不息，潤物無聲。不論你認為這裡是「川龍」還是「龍川」，當你經過的時候，也可以到茶樓喝一口山水泡的熱茶。在歷史的長河裡，就如本地一首廣東歌曲的歌詞上說：「天涯途上誰是客，散席時，怎麼分？」

<div><ol style="list-style-type: none">↑ 此文成稿前朱耀光先生曾多次與筆者討論，並給予寶貴意見，特此致謝。文中如有錯漏，概由筆者負責。 ↑ 荃灣區議會，《荃灣二百年：歷史文化今昔》（香港：荃灣區議會，1991年）。 ↑ 同上。 ↑ 曾欽堯編，《武城曾氏重修族譜（成都片區續修譜牒）》，第一卷（總系），成都片區曾氏宗親會，2017年，頁86。 ↑ 曾榮生，〈川龍村之史略〉，《川龍村公所落成啟用紀念特刊》，1980年，頁12。 ↑ David Faure, ‘Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan’, <i>Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>, Vol. 24, 1984, p.58. ↑ David Faure, ‘Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan’, p.49; James Hayes, <i>Tsuen Wan: Growth of a ‘New Town’ and Its People</i>, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.7. ↑ James Hayes, <i>Tsuen Wan: Growth of a ‘New Town’ and Its People</i>, p.71. ↑ 朱耀光，〈遊人離開、遊子歸來：曾道生先生口述歷史〉，《邂逅！山川人》（香港：康樂及文化事務署，2018年），頁90-101。 ↑ James Hayes, and T.A. Fraser, ‘Visit to Tsuen Wan Saturday, 10th Dec. 1977 “A Village War” ’, <i>Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>, Vol. 17, 1977, pp.185-198. ↑ P.H. Hase, J. W. Hayes, and K.C. Lu, ‘Traditional Tea Growing in the New Territories’, <i>Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>, Vol. 24, 1984, pp.264-281. ↑ Faure, ‘Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan’, p.70. ↑ Hayes, <i>Tsuen Wan: Growth of a ‘New Town’ and Its People</i>, pp.22-23. ↑ 同上，頁21。 ↑ Faure, ‘Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan’, p.71. ↑ 李家翹，〈香港為何依賴東江水〉，許寶強編，《重寫我城的歷史故事》（香港：牛津出版社，2010年）；鄭宏泰、黃紹倫，《香港米業史》（香港：三聯書店（香港）有限公司，2005年）。 ↑ 陳煜禮，《香港農業合作運動研究－以蔬菜產銷合作社為例》，未發表歷史課程哲學博士論文，香港中文大學，2007年。 ↑ 蔡思行，《戰後新界發展史》（香港：中華書局，2016年），頁52。 </div>

- ↑ 川龍村居民分享，川龍村，2017年10月28日。
- ↑ Hong Kong Annual Report, Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1949 and 1950.
- ↑ South China Morning Post, 26 May 1961.
- ↑ 葉靈鳳，〈西洋菜〉，《靈魂的歸來—葉靈鳳文集》（廣州：花城出版社，1999年），頁366。
- ↑ 李定，〈三十年來川龍村的演變〉，《川龍邨公所落成啟用紀念特刊》，1980年，頁14。
- ↑ 與「羅伯」訪談，《飲食男女》，2010年10月22日。
- ↑ 司馬龍，《新界滄桑話鄉情》（香港：三聯書店（香港）有限公司，1990年），頁247。
- ↑ 饒孜才，《十九及二十世紀的香港漁農業傳承與轉變：下冊，農業》（香港：天地圖書，2017年），頁137。
- ↑ 川龍村居民分享，川龍村，2017年10月28日。
- ↑ 朱耀光，〈遊人離開、遊子歸來：曾道生先生口述歷史〉。
- ↑ 夏其龍，《香港天主教傳教史 1841-1894（中文版）》（蔡迪雲譯）（香港：三聯書店（香港）有限公司，2014年），頁77–80。
- ↑ 夏其龍，〈香港客家村落中的天主教〉，劉義章主編，《香港客家》（廣西：廣西師範大學出版社，2005年），頁156-157。
- ↑ 朱耀光，〈遊人離開、遊子歸來：曾道生先生口述歷史〉。
- ↑ Faure, ‘Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan’, p.50.
- ↑ 蕭國健，《探本索微—香港早期歷史論集》（香港：中華書局，2015年），頁150-154。
- ↑ 土地註冊處資料，於2017年11月28日查冊。
- ↑ 林運祥，〈川龍聖堂落成典禮誌喜〉，《公教報》，1932年4月1日。
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Chuen Lung is a beautiful village located at the water-rich Tai Mo Shan, north of Tsuen Wan (formerly known as Tsin Wan, which means shallow bay, or Tsuen Wan, which means whole bay), overlooking Tsing Yi and Lantau Island. It might seem interesting as to why Chuen Lung villagers had chosen to settle down in the mountainous areas with limited farmland and poor accessibility—in fact there were compelling reasons: a long time ago, the coastal area of Tsuen Wan was often harassed by pirates, forcing some villages to be relocated to higher areas. Later, when piracy became less of a threat, some villagers returned to the coastal area; those who arrived later could only settle in the remote mountains.²

Chuen Lung Village is a Hakka (literally ‘guest people’) village inhabited by the Tsang clan. Geographically, it is close to the villages in Tsuen Wan, Shing Mun and Kwai Chung as well as the boat people living in the sea. Villages in Tsuen Wan first appeared in the Ming dynasty. During the Qing dynasty, since the imperial government wanted to cut off support from the coastal areas to Ming-dynasty loyalists in Taiwan, ‘The Great Clearance’ (1661 to 1669) was therefore enacted, forcing coastal residents to migrate inland. The residents were later allowed to de-border and the Hakkas were encouraged by the court to settle in the coastal areas of Guangdong Province including Xin’an County. Most of the villages that existed in Tsuen Wan before the British administration of the New Territories (1898) had been established before or after ‘The Great Clearance.’³ According to the genealogy book of the Tsang clan in Chuen Lung Village, their ancestors were originally Shandong residents who later moved to Guangdong during the late Southern Song period (1127–1279); after that, their descendants multiplied in the areas of Longchuan, Xingning, Heyuan, Lufeng, Wengyuan, Yingde and Xin’an.⁴ A branch of the Tsang clan migrated to Muk Min Ha Village in Tsuen Wan during the Yongle Era of the Ming dynasty (1403–1424) and later moved to Chuen Lung in Tai Mo Shan due to the threat of the pirates.⁵ They proliferated in Tsuen Wan and some also settled in Kwai Chung and Kap Lung area in Tai Mo Shan.⁶ The Tsangs attribute the naming of the village to a wish to commemorate the southward relocation from Longchuan (literally ‘dragon river’) in Guangdong; the Tai Mo Shan settlement was thus named ‘Chuen Lung’ (literally ‘river dragon’).

Although Chuen Lung Village is located on the mountainside, villagers still managed to connect to other areas. Tsuen Wan is a transport hub of both land and water traffic. Markets were operated there in the early nineteenth century. It also had business links with Tsing Yi, Yuen Long and the British-administered Hong Kong Island.⁷ At that time, Chuen Lung villagers would go to Tsuen Wan Hui and Yuen Long San Hui to run daily errands;⁸ some villagers also brought their produce to Hong Kong Island for sale.⁹ In the 1860s, Chuen Lung villagers helped resolve a large-scale armed fight that lasted for three years in the area. According to a local resident, there were clashes between Shing Mun Village and some Tsuen Wan villages at that time, resulting in deaths and injuries. Different eyewitness accounts were given for the cause of the fight. To settle the dispute, a wealthy Chuen Lung villager volunteered as a go-between, claiming to both sides that he had been appointed by the other side to make peace. This facilitated negotiations between the two sides and ended the confrontation with wisdom.¹⁰

FROM TEA PLANTATIONS TO WATERCRESS FIELDS

Today, Chuen Lung is famous for its fresh and tasty watercress; though it has only been 60 years or so since the first watercress was transplanted there by new immigrants. From the late seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, large-scale commercial tea plantations were seen in the area of Plover Cove (Shuen Wan) as well as Shing Mun of Tai Mo Shan,¹¹ thanks to Hong Kong’s compatible latitude to that of Yunnan’s tea production area where the high mountainous climate is suitable for the growth of tea plants. Based on traces of tea planting on the foothills around Chuen Lung, historian David Faure estimates that Chuen Lung villagers used to grow tea to make a living in the early years, but had later abandoned the tea plantations since the 1920s.¹² In addition, the villagers chopped wood and dried grass in the mountains. According to the records of the former Tsuen Wan District Officer James Hayes, a business-savvy Chuen Lung villager once bought land in Chai Wan Kok of Tsuen Wan from the Government to build a warehouse, selling hay to the boat people for daily use and boat cleaning.¹³ At that time, there were plenty of bean curd factories in Chuen Lung, Yau Kom Tau and Chai Wan Kok; the soy products in Tsuen Wan were quite famous then.¹⁴ Before the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, Chuen Lung villagers also planted rice, which was only sufficient to feed the village.¹⁵ They were experts in making a living with what were locally available and utilising natural resources.

After the Second World War, Hong Kong was immediately caught up in the Cold War. The founding of the communist People’s Republic of China in 1949 posed a severe challenge to the capitalist British Hong Kong Government. Moreover, the massive influx of refugees from Mainland China also brought social instability and caused trouble to the Government. To safeguard its sovereignty, the Government introduced various

policies to make food and water as self-sufficient as possible, so to lessen Hong Kong’s dependence on China.¹⁶ Under such circumstances, the Government began to step up its efforts in supporting agricultural development in the New Territories in the 1950s by establishing the Vegetable Marketing Organisation to stabilise the supply of vegetables.¹⁷ The Kadoorie brothers, who were closely connected to the Government at that time, also provided financial and technical assistance in developing agriculture in the New Territories. In a field trip in Tai Mo Shan, Lawrence Kadoorie accidentally discovered an abandoned British-owned tea plantation field. He started considering the possibility of planting tea on steep mountains and later set up an experimental farm in Kam Tin area, helping farmers in the New Territories improve their techniques. It then became the well-known Kadoorie Farm.¹⁸

At the same time, the Government also enhanced infrastructure in the New Territories, initially to prevent military invasion by communist China, subsequently to boost Hong Kong’s economy. Route Twisk (Tsuen Kam Road) next to Chuen Lung Village is a good example. As the tallest peak in Hong Kong and Tai Mo Shan’s geographical location is of strategic importance. During the Japanese occupation, Chuen Lung residents had been recruited by the Japanese army to build a road from Tai Mo Shan to Tsuen Wan for military vehicles.¹⁹ After the war, the British Hong Kong Government actively constructed the transport network between Shek Kong Barracks in Tai Mo Shan and key areas of the New Territories. Carriageways from Shek Kong to Tai Po, Kam Tin, Fanling and Tsuen Wan were built from 1949 to 1952, which became today’s Route Twisk.²⁰ Initially built only for military use, Route Twisk was officially open to civilians in 1961, after the British Hong Kong Government reached an agreement with the British Forces.²¹ The road gave Chuen Lung Village good access for transporting agricultural products and developing tourism.

On the other hand, the British Hong Kong government took steps to improve district governance after the war. In the 1950s, hydroponic planting of watercress was prohibited in urban areas to avoid the spread of malaria.²² In the 1960s and 1970s, the Government actively constructed new towns in Tsuen Wan, Kwun Tong and Sha Tin. Watercress fields had to give way to highway and railway constructions in Kwai Chung. Some farmers were thus driven to Chuen Lung. All these policies indirectly created favourable conditions for Chuen Lung to grow into a base for watercress.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, many Chuen Lung inhabitants had begun to work in urban areas, or had moved abroad to make a living. At the same time, more and more Mainland Chinese immigrants came for settlement and rented abandoned rice fields from the indigenous inhabitants to grow vegetables. After many trials and errors by a farmer surnamed Law, watercress was grown in Chuen Lung successfully.²³ In September 1962, Hong Kong was hit by Typhoon Wanda, the most powerful typhoon ever recorded in the city. Most local vegetables fields were severely damaged, whereas watercress seedlings were said to have managed to grow in Chuen Lung afterwards and became talk of the town.²⁴ Furthermore, people found the improved watercress varieties grow particularly well in the unique environment of Chuen Lung. The method was adopted by many farmers, and Chuen Lung earned a reputation for its high-quality watercress. At that time, Chuen Lung’s watercress was so popular that agricultural experts from Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries had paid visits to study the planting method.²⁵ Watercress is originally planted in temperate regions. The weather in Hong Kong is especially hot in the summer, so farmers need to keep the dormant plant in a suitable place. Due to its high altitude, sufficient water supply and moderate temperature even in summer, Chuen Lung is therefore well-suited for the plant to survive dormancy.²⁶ In addition to planting water spinach for sale in summer, keeping watercress seedlings is a more important task for the farmers. After the Mid-Autumn Festival, farmers from Sheung Shui, Yuen Long and Fanling would come to Chuen Lung to purchase seedlings. This was a great source of income for some Chuen Lung farmers.²⁷ In this way, the watercress becomes an icon of Chuen Lung. However, good times don’t last: agriculture in the New Territories is declining, so does the number of farmers who plant watercress in Chuen Lung.

BETWEEN WORSHIPPING GOD AND ANCESTORS

Another characteristic of Chuen Lung Village is that its residents were once Catholic and there used to be a Catholic chapel built of brick and wood planks. The chapel was

constructed and consecrated in 1932 and was demolished after the war.²⁸ Why did Chuen Lung Village have its own chapel in the early 1930s? The story has to be told from the time when Hong Kong Island became a British colony.

Since 1841, the Roman Catholic Church has relocated their missionary base of South China from Portuguese-ruled Macau to Hong Kong Island, where Britain had just taken over.²⁹ Catholic missionaries quickly started off from Hong Kong Island and reached areas which were under the ruling of the Qing dynasty. As early as 1848, they came to Tsuen Wan, preached to the Hakkas there and built chapels and schools. Since the 1860s, they had reached Hakka villages in Yuen Long, Tai Po and Sai Kung.³⁰ Some Chuen Lung villagers recalled that their grandparents had converted to Catholicism due to the prevalence of plagues.³¹ At that time, the villagers generally believed that the power of religion could eliminate diseases. In 1890, a plague occurred in Tsuen Wan and a group of Tsuen Wan villagers held a Tin Hau (also known as Mazu, a Chinese sea goddess) street parade to expel the plague.³² A few years later, the most severe plague in history occurred in Hong Kong and the neighbouring areas. It had first broken out in Yunnan, spread to Guangzhou in January 1894 and then to Hong Kong rapidly. In May, the government declared Hong Kong an epidemic zone. Some villagers in Cheung Chau launched ‘Tai Ping Ching Chiu’ (now known as Cheung Chau Bun Festival, a Taoist ritual) and in Sha Tin a ceremonial parade with effigies of the deities to drive away disasters.³³ On the other hand, the existing land lease shows that the Catholic Church had owned land in Chuen Lung prior to the British administration in the New Territories.³⁴ These shreds of evidence show that Catholicism had spread to Chuen Lung Village before the British administration of the New Territories and had some followers.

Catholicism and Protestantism spread quickly in Tsuen Wan following the British administration of the New Territories. A Catholic chapel was built in Chuen Lung Village in the 1930s. With the efforts of Father Valva Diego D’Ayala and Riccardo Brookes, it was officially opened and consecrated on 13 March 1932.³⁵ More than 50 villagers converted to Catholicism in the same year.³⁶ According to the villagers, the ancestral shrine in the Tsang family ancestral hall was removed and the villagers stopped ancestral worship after converting to Catholicism.³⁷ This is similar to the case of their neighbour Kam Tsin Wai Village, which converted to Catholicism a few years later.³⁸ The establishment of an ancestral hall indicates a certain degree of economic sufficiency and population of the clan. It is also a sign of taking root and a proclamation of the right to reside in that place.³⁹ The Hakka community also has a tradition of setting up ancestral shrines and worshipping their ancestors. The Roman Catholic Church’s decision on ‘Chinese rites controversy’ required the Hakka people to abandon these traditions. Sometimes, they were not even allowed to participate in religious festivities in the community if they were Catholics. This might conflict against traditional communities and authority, and thus made their conversion a less easy one.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Catholicism has impacted Chuen Lung Village favourably. Some villagers got job offers through the church fathers’ referrals. Some young children received education at Tak Sing School next to Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Tsuen Wan.⁴¹ In addition to Catholicism, there are records of Protestantism spreading to Chuen Lung before the war and setting up a base there.⁴²

After the war, both the population and inclination in Chuen Lung Village underwent a tremendous change. According to a villager, Catholicism receded from prime attention in the 1970s. The chapel was turned into a nuns’ dormitory, and has been vacant since the nuns left.⁴³ Catholics in the village switched to SS Cosmas & Damian Church (formerly Tsuen Wan Sacred Heart of Jesus Church). There are still a small number of Protestants in the village today.⁴⁴ In the 1980s, Chuen Lung Village restored the ancestral worship ritual and held an autumn worship after Chung Yeung Festival every year. In the morning of the autumn worship, the Tsang clan would visit the ancestral graves at several sites in Tai Mo Shan. At noon, all clan members would gather in the ancestral hall, follow a dancing Hakka qilin to pay tribute to their ancestors by offering incense amidst the sound of firecrackers and gongs. Then they would ‘share the pork’. In the evening, a *poon choi* (Chinese casserole) feast would be served outside the ancestral hall for families and friends. Clan members with different religions can also participate.⁴⁵ Today, they no longer need to choose between God and ancestors.

CONCLUSION

Chuen Lung lacks flat farmland and is less accessible than the seaside area, but it enjoys the water resource and the unique mountain climate of Tai Mo Shan. Villagers make good use of the place’s advantages. In a series of historical coincidences, it has got on a track that is totally different from other areas in Tsuen Wan and becomes a sanctuary for high-quality watercress. Even agriculture today is not as robust as it was in the past, the clear water of Tai Mo Shan keeps flowing and nurturing the species. You may think of it as Chuen Lung or Longchuan; whenever you pass by, you are always welcome to enjoy a cup of hot tea, brewed with mountain water, in the restaurants there. In the long course of history, it is like the lyrics of a local Cantonese song, ‘when life is a drifting journey, you can’t tell the host from the guest, by the time when the banquet ends.’

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