

CHRISTINE INGLIS

WOMEN AND TRADE: A CHINESE EXAMPLE FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

THE theme taken up here relates to an early interest of Maurice Freedman in the nature of kinship and family in an overseas Chinese community. In particular, the discussion and data relate to the significance in Papua New Guinea of women's economic roles for the development of bilateral trends in kinship and an emphasis on the nuclear family.¹ Such kinship patterns are frequently associated with Western and industrial societies and, in the case of Chinese society, are said to have followed from contacts with the West. But the Papua New Guinea data are particularly interesting since, recalling Freedman's suggestion (1957) of comparing overseas Chinese patterns with those in urban areas of China, we should not rule out the possibility that similar trends may have existed in certain sections of Chinese urban society even prior to the development of extensive contacts with the West.

I begin by outlining some of the features of Chinese settlement and society in Papua New Guinea and then describe the economic roles of Chinese women and the way they are associated with family relations and the operation of the kinship system. The specific relations between women's economic position and the kinship system in Papua New Guinea are then used as a basis for discussing the complex interplay between

1. The fieldwork on which this paper is based was made possible by generous grants from the Myer Foundation, La Trobe University and the University of London. These grants allowed four field trips to be made to Papua New Guinea between 1969 and 1973 for a total period of some fifteen months. The use of the present tense in this paper refers to the situation in Papua New Guinea in this period.

economic roles and the characteristics of urban society which may contribute to the development of certain family and kinship patterns.

Chinese Settlement and Women's Economic Roles

After nearly a century of colonial rule under a variety of powers (Germany, Britain, and Australia), Papua New Guinea had four years before gaining independence in 1971 a Chinese population of 2,760, of whom some 500 were part-Chinese.² This population, which was less than 1 per cent of the total population of 2.5 million and 5 per cent of the total non-indigenous population, consisted primarily of locally born Chinese (some 72 per cent) who were the descendants of Chinese who had arrived as either indentured labourers or free migrants from the beginning of the colonial period. The pattern of Chinese immigration owed much to colonial policy which, particularly after Australia became involved in the administration of the whole country in 1914, was designed to limit entrance of Chinese (see Inglis 1972).

The economy of the colony was dependent on the plantation production of tropical cash crops such as copra, rubber and cocoa. The Chinese had initially been brought in to work as plantation labourers but, with the failure of the early plantations and the increasing need for skilled labour, they worked as carpenters, mechanics and tailors, and only a small number as traders. After 1945 the Australian government adopted a more positive approach to the colony's development, with increased government spending and activity which, in turn, drew increasing numbers of the indigenous population out of the subsistence sector and into the cash economy. Even so, by 1971 the census recorded only 31 per cent of the indigenous population as being employed in the money economy. Concurrent with post-war economic changes, there was a reduction in legal discrimination against the Chinese in such areas as citizenship, land ownership and residence. There was also a lowering of the more obvious social barriers which separated the Chinese from the population of European origin.

The economic response of Chinese men to these changes has been a large-scale movement away from the skilled trades and into commerce, which has expanded with the growth of the cash economy. The most common type of Chinese commercial activity involves running the ubiquitous 'trade stores', which cater specifically for indigenous customers. Chinese commercial activity, of which over half consists in the trade

2. In the discussion which follows on kinship and economic roles, the data cited refer only to full-blood Chinese and not to part-Chinese.

stores, is concentrated in urban areas where Chinese also operate various specialised stores such as pharmacies, supermarkets, and 'fancy-goods stores', which are like mini-department stores catering for non-indigenous customers, as well as cafés and wholesale stores which specialize in supplying trade stores. Chinese also operate trucking and small shipping companies. Manufacturing is little developed in the country, and the few Chinese manufacturing firms concentrate on the production of foodstuffs such as soft drinks and bread. Some wealthy Chinese have taken advantage of the lifting of restrictions on Chinese landholding to obtain plantations, but they are a small minority.

The occupations of Chinese men are closely related to their business operations, with 49 per cent employed in commerce and 14 per cent in transport and storage. This is a marked change from 1914, when 41 per cent of Chinese men were described as 'artisans' and only 14 per cent as 'business people' (presumably traders). Even in 1947, only 21 per cent of men were shown as being employed in commerce. The Chinese move into commerce reflects their assessment of the advantages which they see existing in the current economic and political climate. Although an estimate of the financial significance of the Chinese role in commerce is difficult to calculate, a conservative estimate is that in 1968-9 Chinese business was responsible for 10 per cent of the retail turnover in Papua New Guinea (Inglis 1978: 93-4).

The Chinese involvement in commerce is not confined to men: more than 70 per cent of Chinese women over fifteen work in the paid labour force, of whom over 60 per cent are involved in commerce, usually as owners or the spouses of owners, with smaller numbers involved in teaching, nursing and clerical occupations where they are employees. Over 60 per cent of Chinese married women work. Their participation in the labour force is facilitated by the easy availability of indigenous domestic servants, who are paid at rates far below those of non-indigenes. Because of these patterns, the present material offers a unique opportunity to examine Chinese women's participation in commerce and the links between commercial involvement and other aspects of economic activity. This is an area which has not previously received much attention, since most discussions of Chinese women's economic roles have focused on their involvement in agricultural production or manufacturing.

A detailed examination of women's occupational patterns highlights the way involvement in commerce is very much the prerogative of married women and widows rather than of single women. A survey of Chinese businesses in the four largest towns indicated that in only one case is a single woman the operator of a store, although in a few other cases single women work as employees in Chinese stores. The concentration of married women in commerce is not really accounted for by these women's lack of skills or discrimination against employing them in other

occupations. Certainly, some of the older women or those who have come from overseas find their limited English and lack of clerical skills or training a barrier. However, many of the younger women working in commerce once had clerical and professional jobs but left them after marriage, or at least after they had children. An adequate explanation of the reasons for this movement requires an understanding of the economic structures of the Chinese community and the Chinese views on women's economic roles as they relate to work and the family.

Among the Chinese, considerable emphasis is placed on the wife contributing to the future economic well-being of the family, especially the children. The strength of this expectation, which is reflected in the high labour-force participation rate of married women, is such that even in cases of very wealthy families, where there is no economic need for the daughters-in-law to work, they nonetheless put in token appearances at the family business. Often their actual contribution to the business operation is limited and involves little more than serving tea or coffee, but this limited use of their services further enhances the status of their husbands' families at the same time as it demonstrates their willingness to contribute their labour to the family's welfare.

Before marriage, women typically have few financial obligations and seek a well-paid, pleasant job which is not overly demanding of their time. Upon marriage, however, the concern with economic security and provision for the future becomes more pressing, and women express their willingness to undertake a greater commitment of time and effort and to accept less pleasant work if this will provide a better financial return. A common belief, supported by many examples of evident success, is that self-employment or working in the family-run business is the best way of obtaining the full benefit from such hard work. Such an arrangement also avoids the loss of prestige for a family where the wife is employed for wages outside, since this is taken as an indication that the family is unable to support her or provide opportunities for her to contribute to the family income in the approved fashion. The most likely form of business for a married woman to undertake, either alone or with kin, is the small trade store. This is because the extensive Chinese involvement in commerce provides them with knowledge about the operation of stores and the ways in which even a small amount of capital can be used to begin a tiny trade store which, with sufficient acumen and hard work, can be expanded to become a profitable enterprise. An additional attraction of running a store is that it is easy to combine with the rearing of children and supervision of various domestic tasks, since typically the store is attached to the house. Even where this is not so, the woman is still able to take the young children with her to the store in a way which is impossible in an office job. The main alternative form of work, which was once common and had similar advantages, was dressmaking, but the ready availability of

cheap goods from Asia has effectively ended this type of activity.

It becomes evident that Chinese women constitute three distinct groups: those who work in offices, those who work in trade stores and those who work in specialty stores or wholesalers. The differences between these three groups are related not only to occupation and employment status, but also to the social organisation of the work place.³

Offices, regardless of whether they are operated by Chinese or European private enterprise or by government, all follow the bureaucratic model familiar in industrial society. Chinese-operated stores do, however, have certain distinctive features which are largely derived from the application of 'rules of thumb' which the Chinese consider provide the most rational and economically sensible guides to their operation. These practices vary depending on whether the store is a trade store, or a specialty store or a wholesaler. All three types make use of indigenous labour.

In the case of the trade stores, the indigenes do most of the serving under the supervision of Chinese operators. The trade stores are usually owned and operated by a married couple, although occasionally a single owner, usually a married woman, or a group of kin, such as siblings, operates the stores.

The specialty stores, which are oriented to non-indigenous customers, make much more restricted use of indigenous sales staff and clerks, these places being filled by Chinese or other non-indigenes. Typically, a larger capital investment is required to start such a store and maintain the necessary stock, which has a slower turnover because of a more limited market. A somewhat similar set of characteristics apply to wholesale stores in terms of staffing and finance. These factors, and the higher profits they can yield, mean that both types of business regularly involve more owners in their operation than do the trade stores. They also, where necessary, supplement the owners with extra non-indigenous labour which may or may not include kin of the owners. Rarely, however, are such businesses owned by a partnership of non-kin. It is also uncommon for women to be included among the owners of this type of business.

The three groups of Chinese working women can thus be differentiated by their economic roles as a result not merely of occupation and employment status but also of the social organisation of the work place into employees, who are usually single office-workers, married women who operate a business either alone or with their husband, and married women who work in large and often diversified businesses with other kin of their husbands. Since the economic characteristics of these groups are important to an understanding of the women's role within the kinship

3. Chinese women's involvement in manufacturing, transport and construction enterprises is limited to their employment as office-workers: they are not managers or owners.

system, the main characteristics of the three groups will be briefly summarised.⁴

The employees generally have a limited involvement in decision-making concerning their day-to-day employment, but no involvement at all in decisions concerning broader areas of expansion and redevelopment. Employees, if they are single, have full control of their salary, and only when they live at home are they committed to paying their mothers a small amount of money to cover the costs of their board. Married employees usually pool their salaries with their husband's earnings to provide for household spending needs. Although employees' salaries are sufficient to allow them to be financially independent of their families, they are rarely adequate to allow investment in expensive and often very lucrative areas, such as the rotating credit associations (*bui* 會) or real estate.

The most economically powerful group of Chinese women in Papua New Guinea are those who operate stores, either alone or in conjunction with their husbands. These women take the major role in day-to-day business decisions concerning the purchase of stock and, by virtue of their central role in running the store, also play a major role in decisions concerning the allocation of profits and the development of the business. An acknowledgement of their importance is their legal status as owners or partners in the business and their usual inclusion as directors when the business is a legally registered company. These women do not receive a regular wage, but in practice they have at their disposal the often considerable financial resources of the business, which far outweigh the salaries of women employees. While the women often have valuable personal jewellery, they are more likely to own property and other assets in conjunction with their husbands. Similarly, where they belong to *bui*, it is usually in conjunction with their husbands rather than individually. The pooling of assets and funds does not detract from the wife's control of them, and decisions relating to their use may be a result of her initiative.

The experience of Agnes Seeto⁵ is similar to many women running trade stores who grew up in the 1940s and early 1950s, when opportunities for schooling in Australia and training for office jobs were more limited. What is slightly different is that her family was one of the better-off Chinese families. Agnes's father was brought to New Guinea to help his sister's husband, who was one of the most prominent Chinese before the Second World War. After the latter returned to China, her father set up his own business, which prospered. Agnes, like her sisters, worked in her father's store before her marriage. All the daughters received a salary from

4. A detailed description of the economic roles of these women is contained in Inglis 1978: ch.5.

5. As elsewhere in this paper, the name is fictitious.

their father and a dowry upon marriage. On their father's death, each daughter also received a relatively small amount of money from the *jia* 家 estate, with the other assets all going to the two sons. With her savings and dowry and a small gift of money and stock for a store from her husband Daniel's father, she and Daniel opened a trade store. The store was in a good location, and the business was expanded to concentrate on importing and wholesaling goods, such as food, to both indigenous and Chinese businesses. As a profitable sideline, Agnes also bought and dried copra, which provided extra income which she regarded as her 'pocket money', even though it all went back into the business. While Daniel took responsibility for collecting the stock from the wharves, clearing it through customs and making deliveries, Agnes selected the stock, supervised the indigenous staff and handled the finances, including bank overdrafts and membership in the rotating credit associations (*hui*). Although she was in charge of all those activities so important to running the store, everything was done in the joint names of herself and her husband. However, in her own view, the success of the business depended very much on *her* initiative and hard work.

Not every store begins with both husband and wife being employed in it. Often the process is for the wife to run a small store while her husband maintains his existing job. At the point where the business expands or an opportunity occurs to move to a larger business, the husband may join the wife in the store. The process of expanding business opportunities is illustrated in the following example.

Rosalie Liu had worked as a secretary in Hong Kong for her father, who did business in Papua New Guinea. On a visit, she met her future husband, Paul, who was a metal-worker. After their marriage, they rented a store and residence. Rosalie, although she could have got a secretarial position, ran the store while Paul retained his job. After some two years they also had the opportunity to lease a café, so Paul left his job to run the café. After six months, however, Rosalie and Paul left Rabaul to go to Lae, where they took over the more profitable store which had been run by Paul's brother Richard and his wife. This store was available because Richard and his wife were moving to what they believed would be a better store in another town.

Rosalie's background and knowledge of English meant that her outlook on working in a store was similar to that of the younger local Chinese women who also had worked in clerical and secretarial positions after completing their schooling. Most of these women, like their older sisters, perceive working in a store as tedious, boring and unsatisfying and certainly not the type of life they would wish on their own children. Yet, upon marriage, or else after having had their first child, most do become involved in running a store. The extra income is an important compensating factor that is remarked upon by many women, since it can help

provide for the future of their children and themselves. Also important is the source of economic independence and influence they derive from it.

The third group of women, those who work in business with kin other than their husbands, are not very influential economically, despite the often extensive wealth and resources of the family businesses with which they are associated. These women play only a limited part in business decision-making and are not very likely to be included among the owners or directors of the business. In some cases the wife, though not her husband, may be paid a regular salary, but this does not exceed that paid to ordinary non-indigenous employees. Where she does not receive a salary, she has only limited access to the finances of the business. The money available to the women in these businesses is insufficient to allow them to make extensive investments in either property or other sources of income. Potentially these women have access to considerable economic resources, but in practice the structures surrounding the business are such as to limit them so that they have no more, sometimes even less financial independence than women who work as employees individually.

Mary Chou is a woman in such a situation. She is married to the youngest son of one of the wealthiest Chinese families. After completing her secondary schooling in Australia she returned to Papua New Guinea, where she had a clerical job in a European company. After her marriage she left this job and, when we first met, she was still working in her husband's family's store business doing clerical work. In fact, most of the family's business, which was owned by a company consisting of the parents and four sons, involved real estate and agricultural investments, and the 'store' operated mainly to import items for the firm's various enterprises. All the sons (the family had no daughters) worked in the business, though the store was actually managed by an employee, as were the various plantations which the family owned. The wives of the two eldest sons, who had several children, did not work in the store, but Mary, who had one child, and her childless sister-in-law did. These two women received a wage for their work, as did the sons, but the women had no involvement in the actual operation of the business. At this time, Mary and her husband lived in a house attached to the store. Shortly afterwards, they moved to a newly built house in a residential area, whereupon Mary ceased working in the business, which she claimed did not really need her labour, nor that of her sister-in-law, who still continued to work there. When she stopped working she also ceased to receive a salary from the firm. Mary's own family were not well-to-do, for her widowed mother had raised her four surviving children by running a store. This store had been closed for several years, and the elderly mother spent the day with another married daughter. Although she had her own home, the old lady felt lonely by herself since her unmarried son who lived with her was often out, so she used to stay the night with Mary, her husband and son.

Apart from this continuing close relationship between mother and daughter, Mary had only limited contacts with her two married sisters and single brother, who was a tradesman. Certainly, there was no evidence of financial and other assistance being given to them, but her incorporation into her husband's family was indicated by the way she mentioned members of his family whenever she spoke of relatives.

Cultural beliefs and rules of thumb play an important part in determining women's economic roles. Thus ideas about the range of 'acceptable' occupations for married women and single women ensure that it is highly unlikely that single women will seek to become self-employed and so obtain the more extensive economic power and influence associated with this employment status. Similarly, the very clear rules of thumb which specify the 'economic' patterns of staffing for different types of business indirectly affect the chances for Chinese women to occupy different employment statuses. Yet it is important to point out that while some cultural attitudes and beliefs limit the range of options which exist for women, others, such as the widespread concern with economic gain and the security it can give, also encourage women to be involved in paid employment.

While the burden of this paper has been to emphasise the extent of women's economic power, it is obvious that men remain economically better placed than women in many areas such as business ownership, *hui* membership and land ownership. Nevertheless, since 1945 there have been clear changes in all aspects of women's roles, and these changes are very much the result of changes in the economic environment which have created new options for women within the framework of existing attitudes and beliefs. Some indication of these changes can be gained by comparing the proportion of all Chinese women in the work-force at the 1921 census, when it was 3 per cent, with the situation in 1947, when it was 9 per cent, and that in 1971, when it had increased to 50 per cent.⁶ The earlier figures may be underestimates which ignore women working at home on such income-producing activities as tailoring and dressmaking. Nevertheless, the recent expansion of the economy has provided more opportunities for women to obtain remunerative jobs, whether as employees or in their own businesses. Of special importance is the way the changes in the economy have created conditions for successfully starting a trade store and operating it profitably. As a result, many of the businesses which formerly provided employment for a number of kin have been divided up, as individuals have left to open their own trade stores. Apart from the husband and wife, the extra staff needed to run the stores is provided by employing

6. Statistics for the earlier periods do not allow female children or elderly women to be excluded, but because of immigration policy, the numbers of children and the elderly were probably no higher in 1921 than in 1947 or 1971.

indigenes. A major result of this proliferation of trade stores, which are the businesses which provide women with the greatest opportunities for economic power, is a general increase in women's economic influence and independence.

Kinship and Economic Relations

The discussion of women's economic roles has indicated how variations are, in part, related both to marital status and to the composition of business ownership groups. The existence of such relationships, with their potential implications for the *jia* or basic domestic group, indicates that links do exist between the kinship system and the economic system. The critical nature of the role of the economic base of the *jia* (its 'estate') in kinship relations highlights the potential relevance of women's changed economic roles to variations or departures from 'traditional' patterns of kinship. To explore these links further, it is necessary first of all to describe the patterns of kinship relations in Papua New Guinea.

Residence patterns are an important aspect of kinship relations, and the most striking feature of the residential patterns of the Chinese is the prominence of the nuclear family unit. Among a sample of men surveyed in the two largest towns, the majority (53 per cent) were living in nuclear family units, with a much smaller proportion in stem (16 per cent) or large extended family units (4 per cent). This does not result from either lack of space or demographic necessity, since in 78 per cent of the cases a stem, and 67 per cent of the cases a large extended family residential group, was demographically possible, as one or more parents were living. Yet in only 31 per cent of the cases was one or more parents already living with either the respondent or another married child. Even where stem families are formed, it is usually only after all the children have married and left home and a spouse has died that the surviving partner goes to live with one of the married children. Daughters-in-law's desires for independence from their mothers-in-law, whose potential role as child-minders can be filled by domestic servants, and the frequency with which children operate their own independent business enterprises are factors facilitating the shift to nuclear family residences. In the face of children's opposition to maintaining extended, or even stem, family residential groups, parents have in general been prepared to acquiesce in these developments and, in certain cases, have hoped that by so doing they can preserve intact the involvement of the large group of family members in a unified business operation.

The inability of parents to force sons to live with them after marriage indicates a breaking-down of the oft-vaunted patriarchal authority.

Another major bastion of patriarchal authority which has fallen is that relating to decisions about a child's future marriage partner. The practice of arranging marriages had ceased by the 1950s, when the younger generation's changed ideas and economic independence made them less dependent on parental financial support.⁷ Parents are still concerned to ensure that their child will find the right kind of marriage partner and may even go to considerable lengths in terms of offering financial inducements to prospective spouses or their own child, yet even this does not always achieve success. Financial expressions of parents' concerns are most evident in the case of their daughters. The inducements can range from offering a prosperous business to the man willing to marry a daughter to the offer of money as an attempt to 'buy off' a fiancé of whom the parents do not approve.

In other areas which are of more immediate day-to-day concern, the exercise of authority is limited, even though respect for the parents is still apparent. This is most noticeable in the degree of influence on the social behaviour of adult children exercised by parents, especially when the parents have ceased to be the family's financial managers. Wives are also frequently unwilling to accept their husband's actions or edicts and may cause them to change their actions, even when this involves the husband breaking with his own family. As one man expressed it, 'I have to live with my wife, not my relatives.'

An example of such action involved John Chan and his wife, who jointly run a trade store. The couple were well off, and the store had been inherited by John from his father. The couple were part of a friendship group consisting of John's brother and sisters and their spouses. One of John's sisters, Bessie, had been involved in various not very successful business ventures but had heard from her husband's sister of an opportunity to start a business in Port Moresby. John agreed to lend her a substantial sum of money so she could take up the opportunity. However, when his wife returned from a holiday and heard about the loan, she made John ask for the immediate return of the money. Such a situation is closely linked to the prominence of the nuclear family and the prominence of women in the family's economic well-being, which gives them a considerable say in a broad range of decisions.

The *jia*, which has been described as the 'crucial domestic unit' in Chinese society, need not be a co-residential unit (Cohen 1970: 36). Indeed, in Papua New Guinea, given the high incidence of nuclear family units, it

7. Young Chinese, particularly men, do sometimes seek a spouse in Hong Kong or elsewhere overseas, and in such cases extensive use may be made of personal introductions. However, the arrangement is very much dependent on the agreement of both the man and the woman. There are often also clearly agreed financial inducements for the potential overseas wife the overseas partner is nearly always the wife. These arrangements frequently involve financial support to the wife's family.

frequently is not. Cohen's work suggests that relations between *jia* members involve three key relationships focused on the *jia* estate. There are relations between those with inheritance rights to it (the *jia* 'group'), those who exploit it (the *jia* 'estate'), and those who, as well as exploiting the estate are also supported from a common budget (the *jia* 'economy') (ibid.: 27-8).

As the first relation stresses, inheritance rights are a critical aspect of the *jia*, and relations between members both before and after the division of the estate (*fen-jia* 分家) may be affected by it. The traditional Chinese pattern was to exclude the daughters from an equal share in the estate, although it was expected to provide them with a dowry. By contrast, a survey of estates granted probate since 1946 in Papua New Guinea indicates that in 13 per cent of cases, daughters have been included in their fathers' wills and have been given an equal share in their fathers' estates (Inglis 1978: 336-42).⁸ Discussion about existing *jia* estates indicates that it is now increasingly common for daughters to assume that they are being included as members of the *jia* group, and this belief is strengthened by the way in which they are made shareholders or partners in family businesses. Such a change in inheritance (and it is recognised as such) is perhaps best 'explained' by the frequently heard statement that 'you can rely on daughters'. In other words, whereas a married son may go off and lose contact with his parents and become more involved with his wife's family, the daughters in the family can, through the operation of this same process on their husbands, be relied on. The relevance for the operation of this process of women's domestic and economic influence over their husbands is obvious.

In many cases membership in the *jia* group does not involve participation in the *jia* estate's businesses. This situation occurs when either the business is insufficient to support all group members, or, as is more common, when non-participating members consider they have better economic prospects away from the *jia* estate's business. In practice, those individuals and households which are not involved in exploiting the *jia* estate also do not participate in the *jia* economy as characterised by the existence of a common budget. Indeed, not even all households involved in exploiting the estate, or individuals within such households, share a common budget.

Because of the wide variations in the *jia* relationships among the Chinese in Papua New Guinea, there exist, even prior to *fen-jia*, many different types of possible relationships between the kin involved. In some cases, the group members may enter into business partnerships, and in

8. In the absence of a will, the law provides for children, whether sons or daughters, to receive equal shares in their parent's estate. In practice, therefore, a larger percentage of daughters may have shared equally with sons in their father's estate.

others they may become an important source of financial and non-financial assistance. However, in all cases, an important prerequisite for economic relations is the existence of amicable personal relationships. Where these are absent, as often occurs when an individual has ceased exploiting the estate, then economic relationships rarely link the *jia* group members. Non-economic relationships, which, in the absence of extensive ritual practices in Papua New Guinea, are even more dependent on amicable personal relationships, are also curtailed and limited to joint participation in social celebrations such as weddings, which are not exclusively for kin. Since women are frequently members of the *jia* group, though less frequently involved in its exploitation of the estate, it is interesting to note that they may be involved in various other economic relations with group members, and this not infrequently takes the form of assistance being given by women to brothers. Here too, personal relations are an important prerequisite for the existence of both economic and non-economic ties. Yet, in the case of women initiators of assistance, there does seem to be an element of commitment to natal *jia* members which is less noticeable among men.

Although a variety of kinship roles is recognised in Papua New Guinea, only those associated with the *jia* are integrated into institutionalised or organised groupings. Lineages, so prominent in south-eastern China, where they performed economic as well as political, religious and welfare functions, did not become established in Papua New Guinea as ritual or property-owning entities. At one time, quasi-kinship groupings based on a shared surname did exist and performed ritual and welfare functions, which were in some cases financed by income from real estate, but these ceased to exist after the Second World War.

In this situation, the relationships existing between kin outside the *jia*, although defined in terms of the social closeness of the roles, are in practice largely based on the level of intimacy and sentiment which exists between particular individuals. This applies as much to former *jia* members as to others, for as Cohen has noted, once *fen-jia* has taken place the relationship between siblings becomes highly problematic (Cohen 1970: 35-6). Non-*jia* kin are rarely involved as partners or staff in a business, although such kin may often give financial and non-financial assistance in times of illness etc. The relatives providing the help are as likely to be kin of the wife as of the husband. Even where *jia* or former *jia* group members are involved in similar areas of business, they rarely work together to control prices or supplies, even where their numbers would have given them power to do so with considerable effect.

The problematic nature of economic co-operation between *jia* group members and other kin, even those who enjoy close affective relations, is illustrated by the business practices of the owners of cocoa fermentaries in the Rabaul district. Apart from an indigenous-owned co-operative, the

profitable business of buying and fermenting cocoa beans from indigenous producers is monopolised by Chinese businesses. Except for the operators of three smaller fermentaries, the Chinese fermentary operators are all closely related. Two are brothers (Paul and Peter Chan), while their cousin (father's brother's son) and his mother both operate fermentaries. Another fermentary is operated by the brother of Peter Chan's wife. Despite the close kinship ties and the fact that Peter, his brother-in-law and his cousin and their wives are members of the same friendship clique, good relations do not exist between all owners. In particular, Paul and Peter are not on good terms, even though the small *jia* estate is still intact. Even where the owners are on friendly terms, they do not co-operate to fix buying prices. The prices at which fermentaries buy the cocoa beans is determined in part by ruling world prices and the forward contracts the owners have with non-Chinese international firms. But within even the limits this allows, no agreement on buying prices exists. At the most, the co-operation achievable involves owners on good terms telling each other if they have decided not to buy cocoa beans at all on a particular day so that their fellow operator can prepare for a potential influx of produce sellers.

Outside the area of economic relations, the relations between kin who are not *jia* members appears entirely 'informal' and based on the closeness of the personal relations involved since, although in practice certain beliefs might be expressed concerning the ideal role of kin such as mother's brother, even these are rather vaguely stated and, especially in the absence of ritual observances, the role behaviour is seen as problematic and dependent on a variety of considerations.

A Trend Towards Bilateral Kinship Patterns

The customary anthropological way of describing the Chinese kinship system is as patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal, yet in Papua New Guinea practice frequently does not accord with that expected in such a kinship system. Instead, as the examination of various areas has illustrated, there is considerable emphasis on the importance of the individual nuclear family and its interests and concerns. These concerns, in the case of the wife, often involve her natal kin, and the existence of the emphasis on the nuclear family unit thus accompanies a shift towards more bilateral patterns of kinship.

The trend towards bilateral kinship practices is in part related to a family's economic resources. Thus among the smaller and less well-established businesses, or among those individuals aspiring to self-employment, there is, by comparison with the larger businesses, more

extensive involvement with kin, which results from the need of the family running the business for assistance in such areas as financial support or in providing staff while the owner takes a holiday. The larger and better-established businesses employ a number of *jia* members and, sometimes, other kin, usually agnates, their size being such that staffing shortages can usually be met without resorting to external help.

By comparison with the larger businesses, the smaller ones are more dependent on kin in meeting irregular needs. The kin who become involved come from a far wider range, including affines and such agnates as married sisters. The involvement of married sisters is associated with local marriage patterns as well as the economic power and authority of women. The tendency is for Chinese women to marry men of higher socio-economic status than themselves. Thus men rarely have the opportunity to better their financial position directly through their own marriages. As a result, if a man needs financial assistance and his own family is unable to help in any substantial way, his wife's family will also often be unable to give such assistance, since it will be less well-off than his own. The man's sisters may, however, be able to assist their brother if they have managed to acquire economic resources through marriage or subsequent business success in operating their own trade stores.

Many of the Chinese who initially moved to Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, were from poorer families who felt they had less to lose in the move. Their subsequent success in running large, profitable stores gave them the chance to assist other relatives to follow them. The importance of assistance provided through links with women, especially sisters, is illustrated by the case of George Wong, his wife and family.

George, who had been employed as a carpenter, was invited to move to Port Moresby and join a partnership which had originally been offered to the husband of his sister, June. June's husband could not accept it because of other commitments. They had moved to Port Moresby, where they had started a successful trade store. June had already encouraged another brother to migrate and take over a store she operated, and she told another sister of a store available for rental. June also rented a store to George's wife, Joyce, whose own brothers and mother were brought over subsequently to operate a business financed by herself and George.

Information was one element in this pattern of assistance, but it was also supplemented by provision of financial assistance in setting up the new enterprises. However, in Papua New Guinea, such assistance does not come from a sister who has married into a family with extensive business assets, since in these large extended-family businesses, the woman's economic power and authority is relatively limited.

The tendency among the small number of families with greater economic resources to be less involved in bilateral kinship relations is not in itself viewed by the Chinese as an indicator of higher social status or

prestige, which is based almost entirely on wealth. Rather, their more 'traditional' practices are viewed as merely a result of their economic situation, one which is not shared by the majority of the Chinese population, who make use of assistance wherever they can obtain it. This pragmatic approach is related to the way the actual ideology of kinship is only weakly articulated by individuals. While they are aware in an intellectual way of the various aspects of traditional Chinese kinship which have led to its description as patrilineal, patriarchal, and patrilocal, they are also aware of many departures from this model's precepts which occur locally and, what is perhaps more significant for defining ideology, they see these as being 'acceptable' rather than as 'deviations'. The acceptance of departures from a traditional model is associated with a pragmatic approach to using kinship relations for assistance in times of need. A consequence of this approach is that, if the most obvious kin (according to the ideological model) are unable to offer assistance or fulfil certain expectations without too much difficulty, then there is no bar on activating alternative kinship relations. Arising out of this pragmatism, there has been a gradual change in practices, as in the case of the move away from patrilocal residence, and the passing of time has legitimated the new practices.

An explanation of the existence of the bilateral trends in kinship and the related weakness of the patrilineal ideology must take into account the absence of cultural and structural supports which in China provided an important basis for the kinship system, but which are absent locally. For example, the Chinese community in Papua New Guinea has never contained members of the official or upper classes who in China were important bearers and supporters of the ideology. Furthermore, ancestor worship, which at the domestic and lineage level provided an important reaffirmation of the kinship system, has long ceased to be important, and many Chinese are Christians. Lineages are in fact of little social significance among the Chinese even in cases where it is realised that individuals are actually members of the same lineage in China. While cultural factors such as physical separation from their ritual and religious base may doubtless play a part in lineage decline, the lineages have never locally assumed an economic role which would give them an important and continuing basis for existence.

Economic factors are, indeed, extremely important in explaining the kinship system. Just as Cohen has demonstrated for Taiwan (1976), so too here, many of the departures from the usual model of the family are actually related to the nature of the economic ventures in which the family is involved. Because of the key role which wives play in the foundation and day-to-day operation of these stores, they acquire considerable economic influence and power which they can and do use to benefit their own agnates, even at the expense of their husband's kin. As a result,

relations between women and their agnates, which in Chinese society are usually characterized as latent and sentimental, are here strengthened through women's use of their economic power. It is this shift in emphasis towards the wife's kin which is the critical factor in changing the kinship system. The effects on the system are much greater than in the more usually discussed cases, where emphasis is placed on the economic influence of single women and the way it allows them to distance themselves from their agnates. While these single women in Papua New Guinea can and do gain significant economic independence from their own kin and so weaken patriarchal authority, they are not in a position to do more than set up alternative relations which co-exist with the patrilineal system, but never come immediately and directly to confront it.⁹

Another implication of relating economic structures to the kinship system is that, as the former change, changes in kinship can be expected. While detailed evidence on long-term economic and kinship structures in Papua New Guinea is scarce, it is obvious that departure from the practices associated with the patrilineal model has increased in terms of residence patterns, inheritance and patriarchal authority, and that this has occurred since the end of the Second World War, when opportunities for women to undertake direct, income-producing activities (whether inside or outside the family) increased.

Other factors, not just economic ones, encouraged the trend to more bilateral patterns of kinship in Papua New Guinea. One of these is residence patterns. On marriage, it is usual for a woman to continue to live in the same town as her parents. As a result, a woman's contacts with her mother and other agnatic relatives can continue to be close and frequent—in contrast to the situation usually described for rural areas of China, where village exogamy was common and associated with poor transport and communication facilities. Another possibly important factor is related to Wolf's (1972) thesis that women seek to attach their sons to themselves as a protective device within the patrilineal family. Such a strategy may well have existed among the China-born mothers of the locally born Chinese women, but not only with male children. Whereas daughters in rural areas of China would most likely have been married out of the village, their ties with parents and siblings being weakened, this has not happened in Papua New Guinea. As a result, a mother's ties with all

9. The importance of direct confrontation for establishing more bilateral patterns is illustrated in a study by Guldin of Fujianese women in Hong Kong (1986). In this extremely interesting study he documents the way in which Hong Kong resident wives of Fujianese men living in the Philippines acquire considerable autonomy and independence in their husbands' absence. However, this autonomy, and the associated bilateral patterns which emerge, are temporary and disappear when the husbands or the mature sons return. It is also significant that the women have tended to remain dependent on their husbands' remittances from abroad.

her children, and the children's ties with each other, especially those between brothers and sisters, continue uninterrupted.

A final factor to consider in accounting for the trend towards bilateral kinship is the effect of exposure to an alternative kinship ideology, especially that current in Western and industrial societies, with its emphasis on romantic love and the nuclear family. The Chinese, living as they do in a society where the European population broadly adheres to such an ideology, have been exposed to this ideology not only in social encounters, both locally and in Australia (where since 1945, many received their secondary schooling), but also in the media, which are accessible to those Chinese, mainly under forty, who have a reasonable command of English. The effects of this exposure are complex. On the one hand, there are many Chinese who react negatively to those kinship practices which they associate with the ideology, which to them typify the undesirable practices of Europeans, from whom they want to distance themselves as part of the process of maintaining their separate, and superior, ethnic identity. These practices, such as a high incidence of divorce, are those which indicate the fragility even of the nuclear family and a lack of concern and responsibility by both parents and children for each other. The ideology does have a definite appeal to young Chinese men and women, for whom it can provide a rationale for freedom from parental authority and control, especially in the selection of marriage partners. The ideology also stresses the greater equality of marriage partners and the importance of the couple's own family of procreation. In this sense, it certainly does not hinder the development of a more bilateral trend in relations with the wife's kin. However, while these beliefs may have made the strains experienced by individual *jia* economies and estates greater, it is significant that they are compatible with, rather than a cause of, the movement into joint husband-wife businesses such as trade stores which, I have argued, has been the key factor facilitating more bilateral patterns of kinship.

Conclusion

In accounting for the bilateral kinship trends which are described in Singaporean society, Maurice Freedman referred to the significance of changes in women's economic roles, especially as they produced changes in household relations. However, apart from brief references to the way women were experiencing increased opportunities to act as free economic agents because of the opportunities which existed for them to undertake wage labour, he did not elaborate on the exact nature of their critical

economic roles (1957: 42-3). In contrast to this emphasis on women's involvement in the paid labour force as the critical factor, the present material highlights that this is too simple a view, and, indeed, it is one which has recently been called into question in other studies (Parish and White 1978: 235-47; Salaff 1976; Salaff 1981: 7). The Papua New Guinea material indicates that the critical economic roles for changes in family and kinship relations are those of married women who are involved in economic activities which give them key roles in the division of labour found in the management of stores which they operate either alone or in conjunction with their husbands. Because of the key role that women play in these commercial enterprises, they can and do make decisions concerning the use of extensive resources in their control, even when these run directly counter to the wishes of their husbands. By contrast, the women who are single or employed outside family businesses are unable either to control such significant economic resources or to deploy them in a way which conflicts directly with patrilineal models.¹⁰ Women's extensive participation in these critical economic roles has come about as a direct consequence of the way the Chinese have responded to the economic opportunities which they saw resulting from changed development policies by the colonial government. In this sense, the power of women is an unintended consequence of the economic changes. Significantly, however, it is not a change which the Chinese have tried to resist. Rather, they have accepted it and adjusted their ideas about appropriate patterns of kinship behaviour accordingly. This willingness of families to react flexibly in taking advantage of perceived opportunities for economic gain was also noted by Freedman as characterising Chinese society in Singapore.¹¹

The kinship patterns and women's roles described here diverge from those usually associated with traditional Chinese society in such critical areas as participation in the *jia* estate, the control and ownership of property, and the nature of affinal relationships. The potential importance of affinal relationships in Chinese society is widely acknowledged but, in contrast to the data presented here, these relationships are viewed either as providing women with a group of female affines who can offer important sources of security and assistance where village exogamy is practised (Watson 1985: 33-6), or else as involving the women as merely passive

10. In contrast to this example, Topley (1975: 67-88) has described the economic independence of women involved in the marriage resistance movement of Guangdong. Her account, however, gives the impression that this marriage movement was incorporated into the local society but not in such a way as to counter directly the precepts of the patrilineal ideology. Thus significantly, the married women who participated in the movement contributed to the support of their conjugal rather than their natal family.

11. In his discussion he referred primarily to changes in household forms (1957: 54). Salaff (1976: 460) observed a somewhat similar flexibility in Hong Kong.

links between the men of their conjugal and natal families. In contrast, in Papua New Guinea, the women frequently play an active role in linking the two groups and in directing benefits to their natal family. Much of the recent writing on women's status in China has emphasised their total subordination to men in traditional society and, even where class differences are considered, they are rarely seen as significantly altering women's status. Such a view implicitly, if not explicitly, gives considerable weight to the dominance of a patrilineal ideology as the critical factor in women's subordination. A notable exception to this position was the work of Barbara Ward, which highlighted the considerable variation which may exist in the actual or 'immediate' models of ideal behaviour of groups of Chinese. In particular, she argued that considerable variation characterizes the immediate models of women's behaviour. The reason for this is that the official or 'ideological' model was largely irrelevant to the lives of many Chinese women whose socio-economic situation differed dramatically from that of women in the literati class (Ward 1965: 116).

In contrast to the discussion of women's status, the existence of widespread variation in the relationship of the ideological model of Chinese family and kinship structures has been long recognised, and it has been common to relate the variations to the economic characteristics of families.¹² Yet there has been little attempt to combine this awareness of variation in family structure with Ward's discussion of models of women's behaviour, although such an approach could provide a basis for determining how variations in women's economic roles relate to variations in family structure and immediate or ideological models of women's behaviour.

Evidence of the existence and causes of such variation can be culled from not only the work of Freedman in Singapore but from other studies of overseas Chinese communities. Salmon's work (1981, 1982) on the Malay-language literature of the Chinese in Indonesia illustrates how migration and urban residence in themselves are inadequate to produce change in the ideological models. A major theme in this literature during the twentieth century has been the process of Westernization and modernisation and their effects on women. Apart from one novel which depicted women as enjoying and benefiting from economic independence, the approach of both male and female writers was to present women's increasing social emancipation negatively and to depict its deleterious effects on both the women and their circle of contacts. It is noteworthy

12. The significance of changing economic roles to the historical position of Chinese women is described by Lang, who emphasised the importance of their institutional setting: 'The position of the woman at home has been changed not only by the fact of earning money but by the manner of earning it. Unlike her old-fashioned sisters, who do sewing or embroidery at home, or are servants in private houses, she works in a big city and is a member of a group which includes men as well as women' (Lang 1946: 204-5).

that this literature was the product of middle-class society, where women were rarely depicted as involved in independent economic activity except prior to marriage. Following marriage, if the women do participate in any work, it is as members of large family businesses which, as our data showed, was the mode of economic organization least conducive to the development of bilateral trends. The relevance of economic structure is further highlighted by Omohundro's work (1973, 1974) in the city of Iloilo in the Philippines, where the Chinese are heavily concentrated in commerce. Similar changes to those I have described for Papua New Guinea have taken place in business and the development of community endogamy. They have been followed by the increasing use of affinal relations in business. Women are not mere passive agents in the increasing development of affinal ties, for many married Chinese women are assuming considerable power in decision-making and the management of business operations (1974: 288 f.). While acculturation to Filipino business practices is a factor, it is significant that the Chinese, although considered conservative and 'old-fashioned', are extremely flexible in their utilisation of kinship arrangements (*ibid.*: 283). Consequent on these changes in economic organisation, Omohundro also reports the increasing status of women and their families' inclusion of them in inheritance of the family estate.

Evidence of variations in the organization and norms associated with family structures in contemporary Hong Kong and China also highlights the importance of structural factors. Lau's description of the normative aspects of Chinese families in Hong Kong in terms of flexible instrumental familism, with its emphasis on the primacy of familial interests and utilitarian considerations in the structuring of intra-familial relations and the recruitment of familial members, including affines, closely resembles the situation in Papua New Guinea. It is therefore significant that Lau's explanation for the emergence of this form of 'Chinese' familism identifies the importance of structural factors associated with immigration, institutional inadequacy and socio-economic development, all of which exist in Papua New Guinea. Another attempt to typify Hong Kong familism is Salaff's notion (1981: 258) of a 'modified centripetal family' characterized by economic co-operation and pooling of members' earnings to advance the family and the pride of place of all sons. This model is based on her study of single working women in Hong Kong. The continuing emphasis on the patriline in Salaff's model, which distinguishes it from that of Lau, may well be an artefact of her focus on female unmarried employees who, it is argued above, do not directly confront patrilineal norms, even if they acquire somewhat greater economic independence and influence.

Both Salaff and Lau acknowledge the elements of continuity in their descriptions of Hong Kong familism, as, indeed, do Whyte and Parish in their study of urban life in contemporary China. While urban women in

China have acquired greater equality, as evidenced by their role as family money managers and their property rights linked to responsibility for ageing parents, which betoken a more bilateral trend, Whyte and Parish also note the continued importance of corporate family interests and solidarity which, they argue, are at least partially sustained by the bureaucratic structures operating in urban China (1984: 221-3). What these contemporary studies of Hong Kong and urban China indicate is that, within major structural forms, a variety of mechanisms may produce similar trends in kinship and family roles. Thus, the mechanism for the increasing economic equality of women and consequent bilateral trends in China is the reduced levels of private property. This contrasts with New Guinea, where practices have changed, as economic circumstances favoured women gaining greater control of existing and expanding property resources. The lack of consideration of potential variation in women's roles across time, space and class in traditional China is related to the narrow database on which discussions of women's situation in traditional China have been able to draw (Croll 1978: 9-10). It has thus been necessary to rely almost entirely on data either from women in rural areas and in agricultural occupations or from women in the gentry class. Even the two recent detailed studies of women's situation and economic roles in Chinese society from an anthropological perspective have relied on data from rural areas of Taiwan. Data on women in urban areas of traditional China is far more limited and usually relates to those participating in occupations created in the wake of nineteenth-century industrialisation.

The limited data on women's economic roles in traditional Chinese urban society indicate that any attempt to make a comparison with overseas Chinese society, as Freedman suggested, is highly speculative. Nevertheless, for this very reason, the comparison is potentially valuable since, through extrapolation from overseas Chinese society, it may be possible to obtain new insights into the urban situation. In the case of the Papua New Guinea data, this involves directing attention to the existence of certain trends away from the patrilineal pattern and towards bilateral patterns in the urban areas of traditional China. As the following brief summary shows, certain structural bases for such trends can be found both in the urban economy and in non-economic areas of urban society which resemble the situation already described for Papua New Guinea and contemporary urban China.

The most significant non-economic similarities are related to the extensive presence of migrants in urban areas. Their presence is very much linked with a desire for economic betterment which, in overseas Chinese communities, is associated with a flexible approach to family patterns. As a result of migration, lineages and family groups may often exist in urban areas in incomplete forms. One effect is that a woman in an urban area may live with her husband away from the direct influence of his family,

and this independence can provide her with the opportunity to strengthen her ties with, and benefit, her own kin (Guldin 1986; Strauch 1984). Even if she and her husband live patrilocally, the wife's contacts with her own kin may be far more extensive than in rural areas, since many of the factors underlying the practice of village exogamy do not occur in urban areas.

An important indicator of a woman's ties with her family is her inclusion in the group which inherits the *jia* estate. It is therefore interesting to find Topley (1969: 209) reporting that daughters are more likely to share in the *jia* inheritance in urban than rural areas in Hong Kong. She suggests that in addition to daughters maintaining closer ties with their parents in urban areas, this pattern of inheritance is also related to the likelihood that the estate does not consist of agricultural land whose management could create problems for a married-out daughter. This reference to the nature of the *jia* estate highlights one way in which the urban economy can affect the economic situation of women. Another way is through the relatively greater variety of opportunities in urban areas for women to participate in money-earning activities. The critical urban occupations must be those which give women control of extensive economic resources. In traditional Chinese urban society, as in Papua New Guinea, where industry was also of limited significance, women involved in commerce seemed most likely to obtain such economic control. Unfortunately, there are only very limited data on the proportion of urban women who worked or who were employed in commerce. The general impression is that only a small proportion of women, and then from the lower classes, worked in traditional urban Chinese society. Among non-Han Chinese in Yunnan, Hsu (1967: 67-72) found that trade was an extremely important occupation for women (also Omohundro 1974: 283-5). Boserup (1970: 67-72), in contrast, extrapolating from other data showing that before the communist revolution only 7 per cent of the work-force in trade were women, argues for a 'deep-seated cultural resistance to women's participation in trade'. Even though her figures may underestimate women's involvement in trade because they exclude women who work unpaid in family business, it is clear that, in contrast to Papua New Guinea, the proportion of women with control of relatively extensive economic resources was limited in traditional Chinese urban society.

Despite the many obvious differences between Chinese society in Papua New Guinea and in urban areas in traditional China, the attempted extrapolation supported by some highly diverse data on Chinese society indicates that there existed in traditional Chinese urban society many of the structural characteristics which in Papua New Guinea were associated with the extensive development of bilateral kinship patterns. It is clear that such patterns were not dominant in traditional Chinese society. However, it does appear highly likely that in certain sections of society and, in

particular, the lower-class groups, women's economic roles and family patterns were such as to sustain a sub-culture whose immediate model of women's behaviour and family relations was very similar to that found extensively in Papua New Guinea. A similar argument for the existence of an indigenous sub-culture which contained a more positive view of women's status than that found in the dominant ideological model is developed by Ropp on the basis of literary sources from the early to mid-Qing period. Although the major examples of writing he cites are all by men, he emphasises how a sub-culture developed in urban entertainment areas where women workers gained a certain degree of economic and personal independence. The existence of such sub-cultural patterns accords with the observation that Chinese urban areas were most receptive to the newer-style patterns of kinship (Ropp 1976: 5-23). Whereas the usual explanation for this is the effects of the introduction of Western education and industrialization, it may well also be important that the new patterns could coexist with, and build on, existing patterns.

The above discussion has sought to illustrate the insights on traditional Chinese urban society which can be gained from a comparison with an overseas Chinese society such as that in Papua New Guinea. Inevitably, such comparisons shift the focus of analysis from a conception of culture as a static, unchanging entity to a dynamic view concerned with the process of its construction and modification. In particular, it leads to an examination of the relationship between women's participation in the systems of production and biological reproduction. The Papua New Guinea material highlights the complexity of this relationship and indicates the necessity of considering not merely women's occupational roles, but the whole institutional setting within which they work and the connections which exist with the economic aspects of their family and kinship roles.

A similar point has been made by Ebrey (1981: 124, 127) in her study of upper-class Chinese women in the Southern Song period, which shows a disparity when their situation is compared with that of the traditional nineteenth- and twentieth-century models (and, potentially, with contemporary peasant and poor urban patterns) in so far as affinal relations are differently useful to the two groups. Such differential importance was described by Watson (1985: 132-6) in her study of the role of class in the single-lineage village of Ha Tsuen in the New Territories. Likewise, in Papua New Guinea, although the Chinese community could not be described as having a differential class structure, it was evident that patterns of affinal relations varied with families' economic resources, albeit in a way contrary to that described by Watson and Ebrey, since the better-established families have moved beyond dependence on affinal ties as they extend their business relations outside the Chinese community.

The importance of considering the socio-historical context when discussing 'Chinese' patterns of kinship and familism is readily apparent

from disparities such as this. Given that Watson (*ibid.*: 156) has drawn attention to changing patterns of affinal relations in Ha Tsuen and that bilateral trends among the New Guinea Chinese generally have increased, it is interesting to speculate on the likely direction of changes in family forms of different Chinese communities. Whether the variations in Chinese women's roles and affinal relations constitute different systems linked to different social contexts (Ebrey 1981: 124) or different manifestations of Chinese kinship under specific conditions (Lau 1981: 978) is a matter for further consideration. Whatever the outcome, Freedman's injunction to compare the expression of Chinese communities with patterns in China has been an important stimulus to attaining a more complex understanding of the role of kinship and women in both areas of Chinese society.

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