Occasional Paper No. 147 *June 2004*

Fundraising for Charity on the Streets of Hong Kong

An Anthropological Approach

Satohiro Serizawa

香港亞太研究所

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies was established in September 1990 to promote multidisciplinary social science research on social, political and economic development. Research emphasis is placed on the role of Hong Kong in the Asia-Pacific region and the reciprocal effects of the development of Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific region.

HK$20.00

ISBN 962-441-147-6

Fundraising for Charity on the Streets of Hong Kong

An Anthropological Approach

Satohiro Serizawa

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong

About the Author

Satohiro Serizawa is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, Nara University, Japan.

ISBN 962-441-147-6

Fundraising for Charity on the Streets of Hong Kong

An Anthropological Approach

Charity and Chinese Society, History and Anthropology

In recent decades, many historians have become interested in charitable activities in Chinese society. In late imperial China, charitable activities began in the seventeenth century with voluntary organizations presided over by elites in the Zhangnan region, and later spread to southern China (Fuma 1997; Liang 1997). In that period this kind of civic organization played an important role in the self-governance of Chinese cities, for example, Hankou (Rowe 1989).

While Hong Kong was a colonial city largely populated by Chinese, charities organized by Chinese elites mediated between the colonial government and local Chinese society (Lethbridge 1978; Kani 1979; Smith 1985; Sinn 1989). The Tung Wah Hospital, established in 1870, was the leading organization in the Chinese community, and became a model of the modern Chinese hospital for other overseas Chinese communities in the late nineteenth century (Sinn 1989:80-81). In the twentieth century, prominent charitable organizations in Hong Kong such as the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (hereafter, Tung Wah) and the Po Leung Kuk still played a crucial role in the politics of the colony. Even after the Second World War, directors of these two organizations were recruited to serve as representatives of the Chinese community, and were key figures in the administration of the colony (King 1981).

A general model for the anthropological study of charitable organizations in Chinese societies was presented by Crissman (1967). He identified the leading organization in Chinese society in each of three different periods. In the early nineteenth century, the most important organization in overseas Chinese societies was the secret society. Later, it was succeeded by the Chinese hospital. In the twentieth century, the Chinese general chamber of commerce gained the most prominence.

In fact, the Chinese hospital works as a complex of charity organizations, rather than purely as a medical facility. Besides medical clinics, in many cases the board of management in a Chinese hospital is responsible for the management of temples, schools, homes for the elderly, orphanages and cemeteries. The board is mostly a club or gathering of the most prominent members of the local Chinese chamber of commerce. The board donates large amounts of money for various charitable purposes and contributes to keeping their community stable. We can assume that even throughout the twentieth century, the board of a Chinese hospital has been an important nexus for local issues centred on charitable work.

Aijmer (1974, 1984) presented another model of charity and leadership in Chinese society. Leadership is exerted in various social fields; however, it is very important for a person hoping to extend his/her influence beyond the lineage organization and to the broader community, to devote some part of his/her personal wealth to the welfare of the public. Aijmer (1984:21) pointed out that charitable donations play a prominent role in Chinese society.

This function of Chinese elites in local political, religious, commercial and charitable activities has been further researched by anthropologists and historians in Hong Kong, Taiwan and, recently, mainland China. For example, in his study of Sai Kung, a local market town in the New Territories region of Hong Kong, Blake (1984) vividly described changes in the leadership of several local organizations and of the temple of the main local deity by focusing on the ethnic backgrounds of the leaders.

Indeed, as with other aspects of Chinese society, the study

of Chinese charity could be further advanced by incorporating history and anthropology (Faure and Siu 1995). An anthropological approach could shed much new light on a subject that is difficult for historians to grasp given the scarcity of documents. Because they rely on written records, it is easier for historians to focus on elites than on illiterate common folk. Although the contributions of the literati and petty capitalists play a large role even in a small peripheral community like Sai Kung, many local events are supported by both local leaders and their impoverished followers. As was pointed by Watson (1975:140) in his monograph on San Tin village in the New Territories, the names of prominent figures who had made large donations were inscribed in stone to be recorded for eternity, but the names of ordinary people and the amounts of their donations were written on red paper, which would be destroyed on the next rainy day. It is very difficult for historians who rely on extant written documents to conduct research on the small contributions of the common people.

In this paper, the author tries to understand the subject of street donations from ordinary citizens of Hong Kong by using the case of a small charity organization. This study aims to contribute to the study of charitable donations in Chinese society in two ways. First, by emphasizing the importance of performance and interaction around money and material objects, rather than the importance of historical texts and documents, which many anthropological studies have emphasized. Second, this study can offer a concrete picture of fundraising events targeting the ordinary Hong Kong citizen, which has been characteristic of charity organizations in Hong Kong in recent decades.

Popularization of Fundraising for Charity in Contemporary Hong Kong

In explaining the changes in Hong Kong's social structure, many scholars of contemporary Hong Kong society have pointed to the epoch-making riots of 1966 and 1967. After the riots, the

government began to devise social policies that led to intervention in the local Chinese community, and helped prompt the rise of a "Hong Kong" local identity in the 1970s (Lau 1982; Jones 1990). By then, more than half of the territory's residents had been born in Hong Kong, and the inhabitants of Hong Kong started to participate in the social and political life of Hong Kong as citizens of their homeland.

In terms of charitable organizations, the epoch-making event of this period was the establishment of The Community Chest of Hong Kong (hereafter, Community Chest) in 1968 to serve as an umbrella organization for Hong Kong charities. The body of this new organization was originally a division for fundraising in the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service had been established in 1947 as a liaison organization for relief activities after the Second World War. In the late 1940s and 1950s, many international charities aided the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, as did local Chinese charities and Christian churches did. However, in the 1960s, many international associations closed their offices in Hong Kong, as Hong Kong no longer seemed to be a place in need of international relief. Local charitable organizations then had to consider the issue of how to raise funds locally. This was one of the reasons for the establishment of the Community Chest. The system of centralizing fundraising activities was adopted as a more efficient way of raising funds for small member organizations of the Community Chest. This approach was modelled on the United Way in the United States. The idea for founding the Community Chest is said to have come from the American wife of the then governor of Hong Kong.

In 1971 the Community Chest started its famous fundraising campaign, the "Walks for Millions." According to a former administrative executive of the Community Chest who was involved in fundraising at the time, this programme was begun to promote the "popularization" of charity in Hong Kong. Beginning in the 1970s, the ordinary citizen in Hong Kong was not merely a passive receiver of charity but also an important giver. Lui (2001:8) used the phrase "two stories of Hong Kong" in his monograph on the Hong Kong Red Cross to describe how Hong Kong was transformed from a refugee society with little public spirit to a community that cares about others. In the late twentieth century, Hong Kong, formerly a recipient of charity, became a donor to world aid organizations.

In the 1970s and 1980s, international organizations reopened their offices in Hong Kong and began the work of raising funds. For example, the Oxfam Group started fundraising in Hong Kong in 1976, 10 years after having closed its fund dispensing office there. World Vision of Hong Kong, a branch of an international Christian relief and development organization established by an American journalist that had first carried out relief work in Hong Kong in 1962, began to conduct fundraising in Hong Kong in 1982.

Large local charities also changed their character during the 1970s and 1980s. The Tung Wah started its famous fundraising television programme, the "Tung Wah Charity Gala," in 1979. Prior to this, the Tung Wah carried out other fundraising events with collaboration of television stations. However, the previous events had targeted the Chinese commercial elites who made up the fundraising committee. In the previous events, the traditional method of fundraising was to sell tickets for tables that were situated in front of the stage, as the traditional method of fundraising was to hold a charity performance of Cantonese opera. By contrast, the main fundraising event in the "Tung Wah Charity Gala" was one which ordinary people enjoyed. This was the contest to see which public housing estate raised the largest amount of money donation. The Mutual Aid Committee, a residential association established by the government in 1973 to encourage the residents of public and private housing estates to organize, was the active mediator in raising funds for the Tung Wah. Today many ordinary citizens in Hong Kong have many occasions both outside and inside their housing estates to donate money for charity.

Even if people lack the consciousness to make charitable donations, there are many chances in the commercial world in

Hong Kong today for people to channel their money towards charitable uses. One such chance is gambling. The only officially recognized organizer of gambling activities in Hong Kong, the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, now the Hong Kong Jockey Club (hereafter, Jockey Club), contributes more than any other organization to local charities. Every year, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust distributes funds for projects carried out by charity organizations in Hong Kong, including those of the Tung Wah.[1] People "contribute" to charitable works by gambling on horse-races and playing the lottery. Since the 1970s, off-track betting places have been positioned on streets and residential areas in Hong Kong, despite opposition from social groups.

Increase in Small Charitable Organizations and the Professionalization of Fundraising

Several large charitable bodies, such as the Community Chest, the Tung Wah and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, have become much more important in conducting charitable work in Hong Kong. In the year 1994/95, the Tung Wah administered 9 medical facilities, 43 schools, 24 centres offering services to the elderly, and another 51 facilities offering a variety of other social services. Indeed, each of these large Chinese charitable organizations has a long history and has enjoyed much support from Hong Kong residents. At the same time, the Community Chest has many small member organizations to support, and the number has been increasing. In the year 1994/95, the number was 137. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service itself is a member of the Community Chest.

The number of voluntary organizations has grown since the 1970s. According to Chow (1994:325), the important factor in this phenomenon is the government's recognition in 1973 of the importance of voluntary organizations in charitable work. As various new services have been needed in Hong Kong society since the 1970s, various small voluntary organizations have been

organized for special purposes, and government subsidies have been allocated for their special projects.

Consequently, many charitable organizations in Hong Kong now have to compete with each other for donations. As fundraising in public places is an important way of gaining access to latent donors, charitable organizations compete over times and places for their campaigns. The most popular method of fundraising on the street in Hong Kong is the "Flag Day" campaign. On a Flag Day, staff members and volunteers spend the morning selling small stickers at public places such as mass transit railway (hereafter, metro) stations. Flag Days often fall on Saturdays. However, in the mid-1990s, when the author conducted fieldwork in Hong Kong, the 52 Saturdays in a year were not enough for the many charities. As the number of organizations applying to hold a Flag Day increased, the Social Welfare Department of the Hong Kong government had to allocate several weekdays in a year, in addition to the Saturdays, for Flag Day campaigns.

In interviews with the author, many officers of charitable organizations acknowledged the difficulty of fundraising and the importance of marketing in contemporary Hong Kong. At the same time, they feel a kind of dilemma in fundraising for charity. Although it is necessary for a modern charity to spend money on advertisements, most of the donation has to be spent for purely charitable purposes. Even the Community Chest in Hong Kong, which successfully conducts many new fundraising events, has very low running costs and personnel expenses. Many organizations now employ an officer who specializes in fundraising. However, decreasing the cost of fundraising is being pursued at the same time. How is this dilemma to be solved for charities in Hong Kong today? The case of a particular organization is discussed below.

Homes for the Elderly and the "Cookie Campaign"

In this paper, one charity fundraising campaign is examined. The data for this case came from the author's fieldwork

conducted in Hong Kong from December 1994 to August 1995 and from January 1996 to March 1996. During these periods, the author served as a volunteer member for this campaign, and was therefore able to conduct participant-observation and to interview people related to this organization and campaign.

The charity organization for this study is Homes for the Elderly (pseudonym; hereafter, HE). HE was established in 1978 by several Westerners concerned about the housing problems of elderly people in Hong Kong. In the first five years, HE worked mainly to resettle elderly people living in old buildings in urban areas. Later, HE began to manage homes for the elderly in public housing estates. In the mid-1980s, as the government's housing policy was expanded to include single, elderly people, HE's services likewise expanded. At present, and during the period when the study was conducted, HE was operating care homes for the elderly and recreation centres for the elderly with hostel facilities.

Many Hong Kong people have become familiar with HE because it has been organizing a special fundraising campaign called the "Cookie Campaign" since 1984. Every year during the Chinese New Year season, staff members and volunteers sell packages of cookies modelled on traditional "Lai See" packages (a red envelope containing money) in public places in Hong Kong. The idea of selling "Lai See" cookies during the season when real "Lai Sees" are exchanged among Chinese people was said to have come from a committee member at that time. However, according to a long-time committee member, the campaign was not so successful in its first year because the cookie was shaped as a heart and coloured black.

In subsequent years, the campaign was more successful and it has become an important event for the people of HE. The money raised in this fundraising event now accounts for more than 10 per cent of HE's annual income. As more than half of HE's income comes from rent, meals and government subsidies to its homes for the elderly, 10 per cent is not a small amount. The "Lai See" cookie has now become something of a corporate symbol for this organization.

One episode shows its importance in the fundraising activities of HE. HE became a member organization of the Community Chest in 1990, and funding from the Community Chest made up about 10 per cent of HE's total income in the mid-1990s. In fact, HE had been invited to become a member of the Community Chest long before 1990, but had hesitated because of anxieties over fundraising. Although the Community Chest is only the central organ for fundraising and does not intervene in the services of the individual member organizations, it is responsible for all of the fundraising activities of the member organizations. Thus, the member organizations have to abandon control over their own fundraising activities. The Community Chest does not permit its member organizations to conduct their own original fundraising campaigns except for special purposes, for example, the building of new facilities (Wu 1989:28). HE disliked the idea of leaving its own fundraising campaigns completely to the Community Chest. Consequently, as a condition for becoming a member of the Community Chest, HE demanded and was granted permission to retain control over the Cookie Campaign.

Cookies Viewed by the Westerners and the Chinese in HE

Today, HE has an administrative officer who is responsible for fundraising and advertising. Ten members of staff in the central office draw salaries, including the officer. The administrative staff assists the volunteer committee members. The committees are composed of the executive committee and three special small committees: management and finance, building and development, and fundraising. The activities of the fundraising campaign are decided by this small fundraising committee.

In the 1996 campaign, a new approach to fundraising was proposed by a new member of the committee. The person, Mr Kao (pseudonym), who had been a member of the small committee for building and development for three years, joined the fundraising committee. He had previously not been an active member of HE, because he lacked sufficient knowledge on building and development. In the year he joined the fundraising

committee, an activity in which he did have experience, he became more active than before.

Mr Kao comes of a well-known Chinese family who own a large company. His family background enabled him to join this large Chinese charitable organization as a director when he was only in his twenties. To become a director of the committee of a large Chinese organization, the age and wealth of a person are very important. He was invited to join the organization by a family friend, who thought this young man should gain some experience. He did volunteer work there for several years, and was then asked by another friend to join the committee of HE.

Mr Kao has many opinions that are in opposition to those of other HE committee members. The dominance of Western people and the English language in the committee, and their lack of understanding of the local Chinese community sometimes irritates him. According to him, cookies are not a proper food for the Chinese people. Rather, to use candy may be better for Chinese New Year. Most importantly, Mr Kao points out the importance of Cantonese entertainment and of making use of it in fundraising campaigns. He said to the author,

> In my way of thinking, what the contemporary populace likes is only idle stars. For example, Andy Lau and Jacky Cheung, many people pay attention to these figures. If they could help us, it would be better than the present situation, for example, of looking for a pianist whom many people do not know. They [committee members] must have connections with the press. But the press are not only the *South China Morning Post*. What we need practically is Chinese newspapers and Chinese radio stations. We could succeed in the campaign with the help of Commercial Radio, and Radio and Television of Hong Kong. If we have no connections with them, it would be very difficult for us to advertise our campaign.

In the small fundraising committee of HE, Mr Kao was the most active member that year. His ideas on advertising were accepted by the committee. He also contributed his own money to this new project. For this new method of advertising the campaign, HE employed a public relations company. The donation from Mr Kao paid for the expense of employing the company. The company, CC (pseudonym), is responsible for all of HE's advertising and community public relations during the period of the Cookie Campaign.

CC was also introduced by Mr Kao. The owner of CC, Miss Chan (pseudonym), is a friend of Mr Kao. Miss Chan was famous in the entertainment world in Hong Kong. Through the Chinese media, many people know her face and the stories of her life. She had recently returned to Hong Kong after having emigrated with her family to another country, and established her own business using her connections with the entertainment world. She had also been involved in many charitable organizations in Hong Kong. The new approach to publicizing the Cookie Campaign was successful. The experience and connections of Mr Kao and Miss Chan with Chinese charitable organizations brought greater exposure for HE's Cookie Campaign among ordinary people in Hong Kong than ever before.

Cookie Campaign on the Streets

Every year, HE launches its Cookie Campaign in shopping malls in Hong Kong. In 1995, the opening event was held in a shopping mall in Admiralty, on Hong Kong Island, just before Chinese New Year. A patron of HE, the wife of the Hong Kong Governor, gave the opening speech, and many famous people, including some television actors and Legislative Councillors, sold cookies around the stage during the ceremony. At the same time, HE began accepting applications to buy cookies by post. A pamphlet, including an application form to purchase cookies, is sent to individuals, organizations and schools by direct mail. However, most cookies are sold on the streets after Chinese New Year.

The method of selling cookies is as same as that used to sell stickers on Flag Days. Volunteers sell the cookies in public place. However, as the campaign takes place over a period of about one month, the officer for fundraising in HE's central office

books the dates, times and places for selling cookies, and arranges for volunteers in advance. In 1996, the author had the chance to join a group of HE volunteers selling cookies for several days in a metro station. Many opportunities to communicate with other volunteers and customers presented themselves during this period of participant-observation.

In contrast to Flag Day campaigns, which have many student volunteers wearing their school uniforms, the volunteers in the Cookie Campaign include many elderly people who are living in the homes managed by HE. All of the volunteers wear an HE apron and cap and carry a bag of cookies. No volunteer carries a special box or bag for donations; rather, there is a small station on the street with a donation box and display of cookies. There, an administrative member of staff keeps the money collected and the cookies to be sold. Each volunteer will return to the station to give money to the staff and to pick up cookies for their new sales. The elderly volunteers do this work for a few hours, while the younger volunteers and staff members of HE worked throughout the day. The cookies are sold in the mornings, afternoons and evenings; in some places they are sold only during certain parts of the day.

The price of a cookie is 30 Hong Kong dollars. The cost of production is about three Hong Kong dollars. The cookie is produced every year by a particular confectionery company. Each cookie is packed as a red parcel modelled on the "Lai See" packet. The cookie packet is 17 x 14.5 cm in size. There are about 10 sellers stationed in each area.

Based on the data collected in the fieldwork, how the cookie is sold and how people donate money are described below, and the factors in the success of the Cookie Campaign are discussed. Needless to say, the fact that the cookie symbolizes a "Lai See" for Chinese New Year is a decisive factor in the success of this campaign. "Lai See" is a gift of money, which married people give to younger, unmarried people, and to employees. It is appropriate that the "Lai See" cookies be sold by elderly people during this season. However, as Mr Kao pointed out, it may be superficial to simply focus on the original meaning of "Lai See."

In order to arrive at a fuller explanation of why the campaign has been so successful, it is necessary to examine the interactions between the seller and the buyer.

The Cookie as a Tool for Performance

The cookie is an important tool in performing the activity of fundraising on the street. The cookie presented by the seller is a tool for stabilizing the situation of encountering a stranger on the street, and allows the potential customer to clearly understand the situation. To use the concept of Goffman (1963), who theorizes about interactions in public places, the package of cookies makes the interaction "focused."

A male elderly volunteer explained to the author his method of selling cookies. He grasps two packages of cookies like a fan, and presents them to the person coming up to him. He then stops the person and talks to him. After a short period of idle talk, he starts to talk about this fundraising campaign for charity and ask the person to buy his cookie.

The approach taken by this elderly volunteer is connected to the use of package as a "Lai See." His use of two packages mirrors the custom of using a set of two packages in giving out "Lai See." Many elderly volunteers are conscious of the symbolism of the cookies they are selling, and use the cookies for various purposes in their performance. An elderly volunteer may say only the words "Receive my Lai See! (Sau Laih Sih La!)" to gain access to a person walking by. Some elderly volunteers have a habit of thanking their customers with good wishes after giving a cookie. The phrases they use, for example, "May you have good health! (San Tai Ginh Hong!)," are often heard during Chinese New Year.

It is very difficult even for young volunteers to stop a person to ask for donation in a public place such as a station where many passengers are walking by quickly. It is the red package of cookies that the seller wants to sell that tells people what is being asked of them. The presentation of the object allows communication with the customer to proceed more smoothly. Sometimes a tedious conversation might be a waste of

time for a busy person walking in the station. The presentation of the red package can save the seller a lot of time and trouble in explaining this charity to strangers.

Not Merely a Food

We should not neglect of the essential meaning of the cookie — that it is a food. Many customers recognize the "Lai See" cookie as a cookie for consumption, not as a "Lai See" itself. In interactions on the street, some passengers refuse to buy the cookie, saying "The taste is not good. I know that because I bought it last year." On the contrary, some customers buy the cookie, saying "The cookie this year is delicious."

The taste of the cookie is very important for the success of the Cookie Campaign. The administrative staff of HE recognizes this factor very well. The fundraising officer and the committee members taste the samples from the production factory several times in advance. In 1995, the officer told the author that the taste of the cookie in 1995 had improved over that of the previous year.

The cost of producing the cookie used in the campaign has to be kept low, because the difference between the cost and the donation is pure profit that goes towards charitable uses. Given this condition, it is difficult to produce a cookie that tastes good. Furthermore, in general, it is very difficult to produce a cookie that suites the tastes of Hong Kong Chinese, who, living in an affluent society with many kinds of food from all over the world, have been trained to be critical.

One of the author's customers was a young female high school student who was on her way to take the metro, accompanied by a classmate. She told the author that she had bought the cookie on the previous day and had tasted it. She told her classmate to buy a cookie from the author with the recommendation "It is delicious." At the same time, she also bought another cookie from the author for herself.

The elderly volunteers are very conscious that children and Westerners are very fond of cookies, and some take advantage of this when selling the cookies. In many cases, when the

volunteer sees a family with a child coming, the seller will give the package of cookies to the child first, saying "Do you want to buy a cookie?" The volunteer then ask the parents to pay for the cookie. It is very difficult for the parents to refuse to buy a cookie that their child is already grasping.

However, some customers who do not have children with them say that they do not eat cookies, or they do not like cookies. A middle-aged Chinese man told the author that he does not eat the cookies, although he is used to buying one and using it as a decoration every year.

The "Lai See" cookie is also good for displaying during Chinese New Year. After buying a cookie, customers can also pick up a special piece of paper from HE's central desk in the station. The paper is red and contains one Chinese character, "福" (fortune), as well as the number of telephone service for elderly people in Hong Kong. The paper is provided by the telephone company used by HE. The cookie and the paper are very useful as ornaments in the home of a Chinese family during the Chinese New Year season.

Thus, the "Lai See" cookie is not merely a cookie, but can be used for many purposes. On this point, a young volunteer gave the following explanation to the author:

> This small cookie is sold for 30 dollars. But the price is not so high. Not only can we feel comfortable about donating 30 dollars, but we can also have a cookie. The cookie can be kept as a souvenir. Or it can be given to a friend for tasting. We can help other people and can eat a cookie on the same time. This is a very good approach.

His words suggest that the "Lai See" cookie may be used as a gift commodity. It is not merely a food, but a proper object for the gift exchange among friends and relatives.

Another extra feature of the cookie is the lucky draw, although not many people know that the package of "Lai See" cookies bears a number for a lucky draw. After the campaign, HE will draw the winning numbers for presents provided by sponsors, including a gold ornament, airplane tickets, a watch

and so on. This kind of lucky draw is a lottery for charitable purposes, which has to receive permission from the government. The winning numbers are announced to the public through the major newspapers in Hong Kong. Many charitable organizations in Hong Kong conduct fundraising campaigns featuring a lottery, and tickets are sold on the street. However HE does not fundraise in this manner and, even in the Cookie Campaign, the lucky draw has received little publicity.

Indeed, the lucky draw is a small element of the "Lai See" cookie, but it may be used as a tool for the seller, and may also represent something "extra" for the customer. A male child volunteer shouted "Lucky draw!" while selling cookies. When buying his cookie, a male customer enthusiastically asked the author when and how the winning numbers would publicized. The numbers are in very small print, but the seller can give an explanation by pointing to the number and telling customers about the lucky draw.

Power of the Elderly

The presence of the elderly people during the fundraising campaign is very important in catching the attention of passers-by. In this campaign, the elderly people are not merely the recipients of charity, but active sellers of cookies on the street. In the traditional moral views of the Chinese, it might be considered a shame for an elderly person to beg strangers for donations. However, in this campaign, elderly people living in HE homes can be confident volunteers in selling the "Lai See" cookie. When they come up to a person and ask him/her to buy a cookie for charity, it is very difficult for the person to refuse. Particularly, in the context of Hong Kong where many elderly people are cared by their families and receive much respect, the Confucian emphasis on paying respect to the elderly can be expressed easily, even towards an unfamiliar elderly person in a public place.

Also, in face-to-face interactions with strangers on the street, elderly people can be easily accepted because advanced age is not connected with notions of sex and violence. For most people,

the elderly volunteers are people who can be approached without the need to be cautious. Of course, the difference between the sexes can be used as an important tool when approaching a potential buyer, yet this approach can limit the range of customers. Younger male volunteers, including the author, tended to approach female passers-by by using the gender difference, expressed on their face and performance. On the contrary, the elderly volunteers tended to have more customers than the younger ones, because they sold cookies to people of various social attributes.

Not all of the successful volunteers among the elderly were active in selling. Some of them were silent when selling cookies. A male elderly volunteer standing on the street with a bag of cookies attracted many people. He did not have to call out to the public at all. Even when customers asked him about the price of a cookie, all he would do was to awkwardly present three of the fingers of his right hand to the person. His performance certainly transmitted the message that this charity is for poor and weak elderly people. The presence of people being taken care of by HE is very important in enhancing the credibility of the organization.[2]

Fundraising on Streets and Fundraising in Housing Estates

Fundraising on the street, for example, selling stickers, is very popular in Hong Kong. Most people donate money when a volunteer approaches them. On Saturday morning, it is common to see student volunteers holding a bag and asking the passers-by for donations. When people place money in the bag and a sticker is placed on their clothing, they do not mind which organization they are supporting. The bag used by the volunteers is a special one for collecting donated coins. Once the coin is inserted, the volunteer is not able to gain access to it. The bag guarantees that the fundraising will be strictly managed. What the donor in Hong Kong is interested in is whether or not their donation is truly used for charitable purposes. The Flag

Day is credible to people because it is strictly controlled by the government.

Indeed the Flag Day is one of the most significant methods of fundraising for charitable organizations in Hong Kong, despite the fact that the individual donations are very small. (The bag for the donation was originally designed for collecting coins.) However, there is another way of collecting more money from the ordinary citizen. This is the campaign held in the housing estates. The most popular events in this kind of campaign are the contests to raise funds in public and private housing estates, conducted by large Chinese charitable organizations, such as the Tung Wah and Yan Chai Hospital. These organizations provide their own boxes for residential associations in housing estates to use in fundraising. The special box with the mark of the organization is trusted by the donors.

A Mutual Aid Committee of a public housing estate, where the author conducted a study, uses their own box for collecting money, not the box from the charitable organization which is not as convenient to carry. The committee members of this Mutual Aid Committee use a tin box in the shape of a Chinese moon cake to collect donations in their building. They were proud to relate this to the author, because it shows that the residents trust the committee.

During the campaign, the committee members visit each household and collect donations. This housing estate has participated in the "Tung Wah Charity Gala" for many years. In December, the season of the campaign, many people donate money to this annual activity. In addition, this Mutual Aid Committee organizes a fundraising event during the Chinese Ghost Festival in the summer season. In both annual events, more than half of the households in the building donate money in bills, not coins, when the committee member visits their home. In terms of the minimum amount of money donated per unit, fundraising in housing estates raises more money than fundraising on the street.

We look again at HE's Cookie Campaign. It has no special box or bag for donation and it is conducted on the street. In fact,

the transaction is an exchange of money of 30 Hong Kong dollars for a cookie. The price is high for a donation on the street. Thus, we can assume that the approach used in the campaign is not as safe as other popular methods of fundraising. The relationship between the seller and the customer might not be so stable on a first encounter.

The Soft and the Hard

In 1996, just after the new 10-dollar coin came into circulation, people in Hong Kong became very concerned about the minimum amount to include in a "Lai See" for the coming Chinese New Year. Generally, only bills are used in "Lai See" packets. Before that year, the smallest banknote was 10 dollars. But now, many more 10-dollar coins than banknotes were circulating in the city. Some people wanted to keep their old 10-dollar banknotes for the coming Chinese New Year. Others decided to use 20-dollar banknotes as a minimum amount for "Lai See." The recipient was able to check the minimum amount of a "Lai See" package by touching it. Was it soft or hard? Was it 10 dollars or 20 dollars? Or, if one received a set of two packages, was it 20 dollars or 40 dollars? People became conscious of the difference.

This dichotomy of "a soft thing (Yunh Yeh)" and "a hard thing (Ngaahng Yeh)" clearly shows the existence of a cultural differentiation of money in Hong Kong. Money is not only an item that can be calculated, as economists do. It is a cultural product with a material nature that is exchanged through the interaction of people in a society. This is very much the case in contemporary Hong Kong, a city well known for commerce and trade.[3] In Hong Kong, money has to be investigated as the object of cultural meanings, a subject on which anthropologists have conducted research.

People in Hong Kong often have two items for keeping their cash: a wallet for banknotes and a purse for coins. Small change is still important for use in the street, although the use of the electric payment system, "Octopus," has been spreading in

the past few years. In 1996, in particular, when the use of mobile phones and the "Octopus" system were not as widespread as it is today, people had to prepare small change, especially one-dollar coins, to use public telephones on the street and to pay fares when taking public transportation, especially buses and minibuses.

In making donations on the street, people will take out money from their purse. It is easy for them to do so when passing by on foot. On the contrary, when making donations in a housing estate, people will remove money from their wallets in their own house. Members of the Mutual Aid Committee sometimes write down the name of donor and the amount of donation in a notebook and/or a board in their office. This occasion for donation is far more formal than that on the street. The money donated also needs to be more formal, as with a gift of "Lai See." A small amount of money may cause people to lose face. Thus, people tend to use banknotes when donating.

How do people come to use banknotes to buy a cookie for charity on the street? Many sellers of cookies know that 30 dollars is a lot for a street donation. Furthermore, they have no special donation box. Thus, many volunteers, including the author, make full use of a kind of deceptive salesmanship. They would not be so successful if they were call out like a street hawker, "Thirty dollars for each!"

The proper way of selling the "Lai See" cookie is as follows. The seller presents the front side of the package of the "Lai See" cookie and calls out "Buy a cookie for the elderly! (Bong Lou Yanh Ga Maaih Kuk Keih Beng A!)" The seller then stops the passer-by, and spends a few moments to explain the purpose of the charitable activity. It is not until the passer-by asks the price that the seller tells him how much the cookie costs. The seller reverses the package of the "Lai See" cookie to reveal the printed price. After talking to the seller and, more importantly, asking the price, it now becomes very difficult for the passer-by to refuse to buy this item for charity. The person finally takes out his/her wallet to pay the seller the amount asked.

It is in this way that the HE's Cookie Campaign has become

so successful at collecting money on the street. The HE has transformed the collecting of coins in fundraising on the street to the collecting of banknotes by using the "Lai See" package.

The Ritual in the Urban Setting

The Cookie Campaign includes a mode of interaction typical in the city, that is, the interaction among strangers on the street. The transaction of selling cookies is a face-to-face interaction by means of a performance in a public place. And the most important aspect of this performance is the seller's "deception" of the passers-by, as seen above. The seller selects some elements of information for their advantage, and presents them to a stranger in the process of a performance. In the process, the customer comes to learn some information, for example, the beneficiaries of the charitable activity, but does not gain the whole picture of the events and background information.

According to Hannerz (1980:231-33), Goffman's theory on self and performance is useful for capturing complex interactions in urban settings. In the urban setting, an individual may commit to many aspects of social life, and the "backstage" of the individual may be much larger than the "frontstage" that the person exposes to the public. The ways in which a person shows himself/herself to others are varied. To manipulate impressions on the "frontstage," the person sometimes has to detach himself/herself from the networks, gossip and private information of the "backstage." However, people sometimes purposely talk about private matters to a person in order to become familiar with that person. In an extreme case, the difference between the "frontstage" and the "backstage" may disappear, even in the urban context. Using Gluckman's study of ritual, Hannerz (1980:239) conceptualized the performance of self in public places as ritual in an urban setting, compared with ritual in a traditional society, which gives a role to an individual. In the ritual of urban society, a person with many roles may recover the wholeness of his/her self by manipulating the information of the "backstage."

Using these terms of urban anthropology, we look into the "backstage" of the elderly volunteers. While they are enjoying their performance of fundraising on the streets, what is their "backstage" in the HE homes? Also, what does the Cookie Campaign mean for HE? In addition to the aspect of individual performance in the urban ritual, the campaign may have the aspect of a traditional ritual of HE as an organization, beyond a mere collection of individuals. It could function as a charter collectively shared by the members.

The "Backstage" of the Elderly Volunteers

There are about 300 volunteers in the Cookie Campaign. The exact number is not known even by the fundraising officer in HE's central office, because each HE home, as well as the central office, arranges for volunteers.

The group of volunteers that the author joined was organized by the C home of HE, CHE (pseudonym). CHE arranged for two staff members and about 10 elderly volunteers to sell cookies in the campaign. CHE occupies two floors of a public housing building in a new town. It has 122 elderly residents. CHE is a shelter for elderly people who can live by themselves. One flat is shared by three or four people. Some work in the daytime outside of CHE, but most of the residents have no full-time job. In most cases, the cost of living in this hostel is paid by a government subsidy for the welfare of the aged, but some pay the rent themselves.

A resident shares a common kitchen and common bathroom with his/her roommates. The kitchen, bathroom and individual bedrooms have emergency alarm system. Privacy and security are maintained. In addition, there is a recreation room with a piano and television, and a reading room. The residents can schedule their daily life freely. However many activities are prepared by the staff of CHE, and the residents are expected to join these activities. The groups for weekly activities are organized by the residents under the guidance and supervision of the staff. For example, there is a Cantonese opera club and a handicraft club.

Among these groups is a club for volunteer activities called the "Volunteers Committee." The activities of this club are classified into 11 small units. Each unit is responsible for a small amount of volunteer work for the management of CHE. For example, one unit is called "Hospital Accompany Unit," the unit that brings people to the hospital. When a resident needs to go to the hospital, he/she is accompanied by a volunteer from this unit.

There are 45 members of this volunteer club in CHE. Each member belongs to one, two or three units. The reason why volunteer work is classified into many small units is to calculate points when a member does volunteer work. For example, there is a unit called "Clearing Unit." This unit is responsible for helping the work of salaried staff members in CHE. If a member does volunteer work on clearing, the person can get one point. If a member does special volunteer work, such as work for the Cookie Campaign, the person can get three points. The special volunteer work is not classified as a unit.

There is a table of individual points for the volunteers on the board in the CHE's general office. It is called the "Volunteers' Star Board," a display of points earned by individual volunteers. According to the staff of CHE, this system of points was introduced to motivate elderly people to participate in volunteer activities. Some members purposely say that their points do not have to be added to the table because their contribution is trifling, but the officers encourage members doing volunteer work to report their points based on the system. The officers think that the showing of points of active volunteers is very important for other elderly people in CHE. In the system, a volunteer with many points gets an award, such as a free ticket to HE's recreation centre.

Besides the volunteer work of units of the club in CHE, residents in CHE are involved in many other volunteer activities. CHE joins a fundraising campaign for World Vision Hong Kong, which is organized for elderly people. Elderly volunteers join the Flag Day in their district, and sell stickers for charity organizations. Many community activities are conducted with

the cooperation of other homes for the elderly, hospitals, schools for the handicapped, and kindergartens near CHE. These organizations plan many community activities together, because they often apply to the local District Council for a subsidy for these community activities.

For the elderly volunteers, the Cookie Campaign is one of many volunteer activities throughout the year. At the same time, it is a special event for them.

The Cookie Campaign as an Annual Event

Why is the Cookie Campaign so special for the elderly volunteers? To answer this question, the work for the campaign has to be seen in the context of the whole picture of their volunteer activities. The Cookie Campaign is very special for them because the work of the event is particularly hard. Even though the job is hard on them, many elderly volunteers enjoy the event immensely. However, in interviews with the author, several people in HE said that conducting the event once a year is sufficient.

Standing for several hours selling cookies in a metro station is very hard for elderly people. Unlike younger volunteers, they are responsible for working only half a day, either in the morning or in the afternoon. However their job is as same as the job done by younger people. In the ordinary schedule of volunteer work in CHE, the day following a special activity is devoted to resting at home. However, in the Cookie Campaign, the volunteers have to go out and sell cookies every day for two, three or more days during the period of the campaign.

The staff of the HE homes also needs to work hard. In the evenings the staff of the homes and the staff of the central office discuss the fundraising conducted that day by examining the sales of cookies in each location, and each home decides on its own strategy for the next day, involving when and how many volunteers are going to be deployed to sell cookies. Sometimes, a place is given up, despite having been reserved in advance. Sometimes, the number of volunteers is increased because of the possibility that many customers will be in a particular place. In

any case, as long as the campaign runs, several staff members of the home have to go out and lead the elderly volunteers. A staff member of CHE explained this situation: "Even if many people among the small number of staff members in CHE have to go out for the Cookie Campaign, the home cannot be closed on that day."

Many elderly volunteers use the term "once a year (Yat Ninh Yat Chi)" when selling cookies. Some members of the staff of HE explained to the author that when the season for the Cookie Campaign approaches, the elderly people await the event with excitement, and when the Cookie Campaign concludes, the elderly people feel satisfied. These words are not merely fancy words used on the "frontstage," but are also words that arise from their situation "backstage." The work for this annual event is very hard. Therefore, the cookies are sold only once a year.

The table of the annual schedule in CHE has a description of the Cookie Campaign as well as of many local events for CHE. The Cookie Campaign is a big annual event for CHE in the winter season. As the season approaches, preparations for the Cookie Campaign begin. In HE's homes, the elderly volunteers begin to pack the "Lai See" cookies. Winter is a traditional season for charitable activities in Hong Kong, as well as Chinese New Year. In the season, many activities are held to send clothes and food to poor elderly people in Hong Kong. As we have seen above, HE utilizes the concept of season to make the fundraising campaign more successful. However, it is also important to point out that the concept of season also affects both the staff and residents of HE.

HE's cohesion is enhanced through the work of the Cookie Campaign, shared by the staff and residents of all of HE's homes. By participating in this annual event, a person discovers that the self is incorporated into the whole structure of the organization, as is characteristic of ritual in a traditional society. The Cookie Campaign provides not only an occasion for the individual to recover the self through performance, but also the occasion for the organization to redefine its wholeness.

Conclusion

As we have seen in the case of HE's Cookie Campaign, a fundraising activity for charity is conducted with the cooperation of various kinds of people: the committee members and administrative staff of the central office, and staff and elderly residents in HE's homes. In addition, many volunteers, including younger people and children, sponsors and anonymous donors also contribute to the campaign. However, in previous studies, most descriptions of charity in Chinese society have been confined to outstanding financial contributions, especially in big charitable organizations. Partly because of the lack of documentation, it is very rare to depict the contribution of ordinary citizens in charitable work and donation. By using the methods of anthropological research, this study may help to paint a full picture of a fundraising campaign for charity conducted in contemporary Hong Kong.

In particular, it should be emphasized that in the case of HE elderly people are not the passive recipients of charity but active agents when interacting in public places. In their performance on the "frontstage" as volunteers selling "Lai See" cookies, they can change or redefine the established concepts of money and food in a Chinese charity. In their "backstage," they are individuals to be evaluated by the points earned for their volunteer work, just as the "big shots" are evaluated by the amount of their donation inscribed on a marble plate. Further, they are incorporated into the organization of HE as an important member through their volunteer work for this annual event.

The masses and elderly people should not be neglected in studies of contemporary Hong Kong society. They sometimes appear to be "anonymous," but their presence is obvious. The popularization of charity in the decades under study is characterized as the active participation of these people in fundraising events. They are the target of charitable organizations for donations and volunteers. In this study, while the extent of their contribution is made clear through an

investigation of fundraising interactions on the street, the importance of the know-how and networks of established Chinese elites was also examined, in the case of publicizing the Cookie Campaign.

In Hong Kong studies, there is still a need for ethnographic studies in the contemporary urban setting. This case study on a charitable organization makes a contribution to the field. As this study exemplifies, the focus on wholeness, one of the characteristics of anthropological research, may advance the cooperation between history and anthropology. Through the concrete examples of various activities for charity, we can better trace how the elite and the masses are connected in an organization.

In contemporary Hong Kong society, the government plays a very important role in the provision of social welfare. The government subsidy for social welfare services is much larger than the amount collected by various public fundraising events. It might be not appropriate to use the case of contemporary Hong Kong as representative of civic power in Chinese society.[4] However, as the various functions of HE's Cookie Campaign in the contemporary Hong Kong society shows, the symbolic meanings of the fundraising activities conducted by voluntary organizations are not to be underestimated. They should be examined from a comparative perspective in history and anthropology. Analyses of fundraising for charity in contemporary Hong Kong should not to be reduced to a study of political economy.

Notes

1. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust was established in 1993, taking over from its predecessor, The Hong Kong Jockey Club (Charities) Limited, the responsibility of distributing the Jockey Club's separate funds for charities.

2. The author had a chance to observe HE's 2003 Cookie Campaign. In some metro stations and shopping malls, many elderly people holding cookies sat on chairs. They did not call

out to the public and did not sell the cookie. More young staff members and volunteers were mobilized as sellers than elderly volunteers. In the 2003 campaign, the main purpose for the presence of the elderly people was probably to let potential donors know who the recipients were.

3. In 2002, the Hong Kong government re-introduced the 10-dollar banknote in a new form. This incident suggests official recognition of the cultural classification of money, the coin and the bill. The purpose of issuing the new 10-dollar banknote was to satisfy a general public demand for the choice of a 10-dollar banknote in addition to the 10-dollar coin, according to a small leaflet published by Hong Kong Monetary Authority. This expression also shows that there has been a popular demand for the banknotes for use in "Lai See" packets in recent years.

4. In this respect, in an interview with the author in 1995, an officer of a charitable organization in Macau expressed with pride that charitable organizations in Macau receive little support from the Macau government. According to him, this is the reason why many local officials in Guangdong province of mainland China come to Macau, not to Hong Kong, to learn how to raise money for charity.

References

Aijmer, Göran. 1974. "Immoral Wealth and Generosity: A Note on Traditionalistic Chinese and Charity," *Sociologus*, 24:147-59.

Aijmer, Göran. 1984. "Introduction," in Aijmer Göran (ed.), *Leadership on the China Coast*. London: Curzon Press, pp. 1-30.

Blake, C. Fred. 1984. "Leaders, Factions and Ethnicity in Sai Kung," in Aijmer Göran (ed.), *Leadership on the China Coast*. London: Curzon Press, pp. 53-128.

Chow, Nelson. 1994. "Welfare Development in Hong Kong: An Ideological Appraisal," in Benjamin K. P. Leung and Teresa Y. C. Wong (eds.), *25 Years of Social and Economic Development in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, The University of Hong Kong, pp. 321-35.

Crissman, Lawrence W. 1967. "The Segmentary Structure of Urban Overseas Chinese Communities," *Man*, 2(2):185-204.

Faure, David and Helen F. Siu (eds.). 1995. *Down to Earth: The Territorial Bond in South China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Fuma, Susumu. 1997. *Chugoku Zenkai Zendo Shi Kenkyu* (A Historical Study of Charity Organizations in China). Kyoto: Dohosha Shuppan. (In Japanese)

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1980. *Exploring the City: Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jones, Catherine. 1990. *Promoting Prosperity: The Hong Kong Way of Social Policy*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Kani, Hiroaki. 1979. *Kindai Chugoku no Kuri to Choka* (The Cooley and Female Servant in Modern China). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. (In Japanese)

King, Ambrose Y. C. 1981. "Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level," in Ambrose Y. C. King and Rance P. L. Lee (eds.), *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, pp. 127-46.

Lau, Siu-kai. 1982. *Society and Politics in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Lethbridge, Henry J. 1978. *Hong Kong: Stability and Change*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Liang, Qizi. 1997. *Shishan yu jiaohua: Ming Qing de cishan zuzhi* (Charity and Education in Late Imperial China). Taipei: Lien-Jin Press. (In Chinese)

Lui, Tai-lok. 2001. *Light the Darkness: Story of the Hong Kong Red Cross, 1950-2000*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Rowe, William T. 1989. *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Sinn, Elizabeth. 1989. *Power and Charity: The Early History of the Tung Wah Hospital, Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Carl T. 1985. *Chinese Christians: Elites, Middlemen, and the Church in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Watson, James L. 1975. *Emigration and the Chinese Lineage: The Mans in Hong Kong and London*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wu, Shuili. 1989. "Jiushi niandai zhiyuan jigou de zijin" (The Funding of Voluntary Organizations in 1990s), *Social Service Quarterly* (Hong Kong Council of Social Service), 111:27-30. (In Chinese)

Glossary*

Bong Lou Yanh Ga Maaih Kuk Keih Beng A	幫老人家買曲奇餅呀
Ngaahng Yeh	硬嘢
San Tai Ginh Hong	身體健康
Sau Laih Sih La	收利是啦
Yat Ninh Yat Chi	一年一次
Yunh Yeh	軟嘢

* This paper adopts the Yale Romanization System of Cantonese Chinese.

Fundraising for Charity on the Streets of Hong Kong

An Anthropological Approach

Abstract

This is an ethnographic study of a fundraising campaign by a charitable organization in contemporary Hong Kong. Many scholars in Chinese studies and Hong Kong studies are interested in charitable activities and civic power in local Chinese societies. In this study, contrary to the trend emphasizing historical texts and large charitable organizations, the focus is placed on a small charitable organization and its fundraising campaign. Through an analysis of the interactions and performances of volunteers, especially of people living in homes for the elderly, who sell cookies for charity on the streets, the popularization of charity in contemporary Hong Kong is described. The importance of the contributions of committee members, elderly volunteers, and ordinary citizen-donors to the organization is examined.

從人類學觀點看香港街頭慈善籌款

芹澤知廣

（中文摘要）

本文從人類學的觀點探討香港慈善機構的籌款活動。很多研究中國或香港社會的學者，對慈善活動和華人民間力量的問題感到興趣，他們較多引用歷史文獻，以及關注比較有規模的組織。本研究則集中探討一個細小的慈善機構及其籌款工作，分析義工（尤其是販賣慈善曲奇餅的老人義工）與捐獻者在街頭的交流，指出現代香港的慈善活動日趨大眾化，並評估籌募委員、老人義工、善良市民對這種活動的貢獻。