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中華陳氏根源記述

Chan China Roots Journal

November 2018

Ron Chan

陳光宗

*They say you die twice. Once when you stop breathing, and a second time
when somebody says your name for the last time.
This journal is to honor Chan Kin On's name and
memory not only in America, but also in
China so he will not be forever
lost in time.*

Chan China Roots Journal 2018

Chan Kin On Village and Chan Memorial Visits

by Ron Chan 11/2018

陳光宗

Preface



My Chinese name is 陳光宗, or Chan (Cantonese spelling) Kong Chung. However, being second generation Chinese born in America, it might as well be “Made in the USA”. I am Chinese enough to respect the tradition of serving tea to my parents when we got married, but my mind, education and life has always been in the comfort of living the American dream.

I am American-Born Chinese, or ABC. Less complimentary terms for westernized Chinese are “banana” - yellow skin on the outside, white inside. Or “jook sing” 竹升, Chinese for “bamboo pole”, as you have a Chinese exterior, but like bamboo that is hollow, devoid of Chinese culture. The immigrant and first-born generation rarely talked about their tribulations of the past - discrimination, hunger and hardship. Second generation American born Chinese generally have drifted away from their cultural roots. Sacrifices made by our forefathers fade to become distant memories. Understandably, succeeding generations rarely contemplate these sacrifices being self absorbed in their own careers, children and online presence.



I never met my grandfather, Chan (Chen in Mandarin Pinyin) Kin On 陳健安. He died four years before I was born. He was just a photo on grandma's bedroom dresser. But his picture spoke to me as I became enlightened on the immigrant struggle, sacrifices of leaving China, detention on Angel Island, and what it took to scratch out a living to feed a family of eight through the Depression and World War II.

Because Kin On had the courage to immigrate to the Gold Mountain, 52 of his descendants, inclusive of their spouses and children, owe him for all they have today.

Had Kin On never left China, it could have been **you** pulling weeds in the hot sun behind a bamboo fence... a barrier keeping animals out, but also a cage locking **you** into a minimalist existence.



It could have been *you* I saw carrying buckets of water on a pole. Trudging in the mud back and forth, back and forth, irrigating a vast vegetable field. Day after day, day after day.

Village Life 2018



Restaurant with fresh chicken on the menu



Drying rice after the harvest



Kin On spoke little English. He spent his days sun-up to sun-down laboring in the sweltering Sacramento pear orchards in 100°F plus heat to help dig irrigation ditches, prune trees, spray toxic DDT insecticide and more, for fields he could not legally own.

This survival level of struggle is (thankfully) totally foreign to me, and my children. We have the luxury of opportunity and choice that was borne on the backs of those toiling before us.

I've written two books on the Chan Family History chronicling four generations in America. For years I thought the Chan genealogy was done.

I was wrong.

Largely out of my ignorance and inability to speak or write Chinese, I turned a blind eye to research our prior 150 generations and 4700 years of our ancestral roots in China. After attending three Chinese Genealogy Conferences hosted by [Henry Tom](#), I gathered the courage and knowledge to explore the China side of our past.

I turned my eyes eastward and set my sights on doing a Chan pilgrimage throughout Guangdong (formally romanized as Canton) to gather the tools and knowledge to make our history truly complete. To answer the fundamental question ... where did I come from?



Au Wai Sheng 欧蕙裳, my grandmother, gave me my Chinese name 光宗. I was born the eldest son, of the eldest son of Kin On. My name means the “light of generations”, meaning through me the Chan family name extends another generation. Bryan, my son, is also first born of his era so he perpetuates another Chan generation. I have physically lived up to my grandmother’s name expectation.

Poetically, 光宗, has the expectation to be not only a generational beacon of light for the future, but to preserve and respect the past.

My name, 光宗, is from the first two characters from the Chinese idiom:

光宗耀祖

This idiom means, “to bring honor and glory to one’s ancestors”. This phrase was first seen in one of the greatest novels in Chinese history - Dream of the Red Chamber (1784) in the Ching Dynasty. Chinese parents would use one or two characters from this idiom to name their children or grandchildren to show their expectation.

If we break up the characters one by one:

光 - means light (n) or brighten (v)

宗 - means ancestors, family members or a relative with the same surname

耀 - means shiny, brighten

祖 - means ancestors, same as the word "grand" in "grandfather"

My mission to China was to visit our roots and Chan clan memorials to honor my grandfather Kin On, and live up to the expectations of my grandmother Wei Sheng in both name, and in practice.

Luci and I canceled a month long vacation to Hawaii this year once it was discovered a 86 year old nephew of Kin On still lives in the ancestral village. Genealogy has a shelf life. Family elders hold the keys to our past. However, they are now either in the twilight of their lives, or their stars have gone dark. I did not want to miss this fleeting opportunity to meet my Uncle in China by waiting too long.

The tracks our ancestors left behind to document village lineage is known as a “jiapu”. The jiapu includes: 1) lineage information recorded within the village; 2) the names of ancestors and their genealogy lineage; and 3) usually the most current generation of clan lineage.



With the death of Chan Kin On, his village legacy and his three American born generations died with him in the village jiapu as he never returned.

This three generation gap has critical significance, as over 3200 years ago, Chen Mo, the progenitor (first) Chan’s in the Toishan and Chungshan region said, ...

“If this family tree is not cared for in three generations, then you are not filial and all will be lost. If you care of the family tree, then all descendants will know our roots forever.”

Chen Mo, 1173 - 1242 BC (translated by Gene Chin)

A fundamental goal of this pilgrimage is to restore the missing three American generations in the village jiapu so Kin On’s legacy continues.

The Yaotiao 窈窕村 village jiapu can be cross referenced with regional (Zhongshan), and then provincial (Guangdong) zupu’s. Securing the Chan village jiapu, and regional/provincial zupu’s are a key goal. With this data, my ultimate goal is to create a Chan family scroll of 150+ generations spanning 4,700 years.

Luci and I left for China in November 2018. One day, if you wish to follow our roots road less travelled, I wrote the following journal as a guide to Chan Kin On’s ancestral home. This journal strings together random thoughts, observations and photos ... and a few China travel tips to use on future village trips. This journal only focuses on Chan Family field research portion on our China trek.

I will spare you of our vacation itineraries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Disneyland Shanghai, and cruise to Japan... well, maybe just a few pictures. \-)



Shanghai Disney



Shanghai - The Bund



Cruise to Japan from Shanghai

Throw your toothbrush in a bag, and let's go visit our village roots!

Summary

From November 5 to November 26th, 2018, Luci and I went to China for 22 days. Thirteen days were dedicated doing a Chan family roots quest with Henry Tom's "Overseas Chinese Genealogy Workshop and Tour". We focused on Guangdong province - origins of our forefathers.

On our agenda were visits to...

- ✓ Wuyi University to study genealogical search techniques and case studies
- ✓ Three Chan temples to pay respects to our ancestors
- ✓ UNESCO historical and cultural sites to get first person immersion on village life
- ✓ Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum where my father, Alfred Chan is exhibited
- ✓ Birthplace of Chan Kin On

We participated in a multi-day cultural immersion in Cangdong Village, a heritage conservation site preserving traditional village life. We made zongzi (rice tamales) and dumplings, and watched demonstrations of Chinese martial arts, lion dancing, opera, calligraphy, music, handicrafts, and the harvesting of rice.

Cangdong Village 苍前东 *(see hyperlink for map location)*



Chan Genealogy Research Highlights and Journal Chapters



Uncle ShouFu Chan



Aunt Oiushu Wu



Yaotiao lineage Book (village)



Chen Temple (provincial)



Chen Feng Tai tomb marker



Chen Mo Temple (regional)



- ✓ Visited the village birthplace of Kin On (Yaotiao, Zhongshan, Guangdong, China)
 - ◆ *secured two* village Chan family lineage books by scanning 110 pages spanning centuries of our family genealogy
 - ◆ met our Chan elder, the 86 year old nephew of Kin On, ShouFu Chan. Also met Qiushu Wu, who married a descendant of Kin On's brother
 - ◆ established communications with Qiushu's son, Chan Kang so we can rebuild family bonds between China and the US
 - ◆ visited the birthplace home of Kin On (no longer exists)
 - ◆ left a copy of the "American Pictorial Family History of Kin On Chan" I authored so future generations in China may know the US legacy of Kin On
 - ◆ added the three missing American generations in the village lineage book - Alfred and John Chan, their sons and grandsons
- ✓ Made a joss offering and prayer to pay respect and honor ancestors at the Chen temple in Zhujixiang
 - ◆ *secured* the Chen Guangdong family lineage book
 - ◆ added Kin On's name to be memorialized on the temple wall
- ✓ Made a joss offering and prayer to pay respect and honor ancestors at the memorial and tomb of Chen Feng Tai, the Chan's progenitor (first generation) in Guangdong province
- ✓ Made a joss offering and prayer to pay respect and honor ancestors at the temple of Chen Mo, the first son of Chen Feng Tai, progenitor of Toisan and Chungshan immigrants. These two regions make up the majority of immigrants to America.
 - ◆ *secured* the Chen family lineage book for Taishan (Toisan Cantonese) and Zhongshan (Chungshan)
- ✓ Visited the Jiangmen Wuyi Museum of Overseas Chinese as Alfred Chan's picture is exhibited in a book I co-authored - the 50 year history of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Chinatown Post 3956

Footnote: Chan and Chen are used interchangeably, and refers to the same surname 陳 (陈 in simplified Chinese). Chen is the official romanization, as in Chen Feng Tai and Chen Mo.

Travel Journal

Chan China Roots Journal 2018

Village Visit

[Yaotiao, Zhongshan, Guangdong, China](#) 窈窕村 (see [hyperlink](#) for map location)

A key part of the tour were workshops at Wuyi University on overseas Chinese genealogy research techniques, and meeting our student village researcher / translator. I hired a car, driver and student interpreter through Wuyi University for 10 hours, \$200 USD.



Prior to the trip I also hired Douglas Lam, a genealogy consultant who did a substantial amount of field research visiting the village twice before my arrival. Douglas confirmed the jiapu survived the Cultural Revolution when lineage books were reviled and burned.



ShouFu Chan, 陈寿夫, is the nephew of Kin On. Born in 1932, he is a very young 86 year old. As Chan family elder, ShouFu is custodian of the Chan Family ancestral lineage book.

Chan ShouFu's father is Qingwei Chan(陈庆伟). His grandfather is Guifen Chan(陈桂芬).

ShouFu is energetic, well groomed, and greeted me wearing a pair of dress slacks, white shirt and a broad smile. He stands straight as an arrow and you would think him 20 years younger. ShouFu rode his bicycle from his house to the village gate where we met. His house has two stories, was modern, clean, and included a full size grandfather's clock.

Before I could pick up the bill for lunch, ShouFu paid for it unsuspectingly in the middle of the meal. This gave me huge respect for Uncle. ShouFu was greeting me as a long lost relative, not as an ABC to be mined from the Gold Mountain.

You can find Uncle's residence nearby by the biggest tree in the village (left photo), where you will find at the head of his street a shrine (center) representing earth. From the tree and shrine you are only a few steps away from his front door gates on the right side (right).

Qiumei Wu (Aunt), Luci, Ron, Uncle ShouFu





Genealogical Gold - Chan Family Yaotiao Jiapu. I came prepared to photograph the family jiapu in Uncle's home, packing a heavy tripod designed for document copying. A remote trigger was used to minimize vibration. Glad I brought extra camera battery as shooting the morning's photos drained one completely. It took three hours shooting under natural light. Assistance was provided by Helen, my Wuyi University student interpreter, and Mr Ng, a retired government official who organized the village visit logistics. The book was delicate beyond belief so great care was used to handle it.

It was quite emotional for me to see the jiapu. When I touched the cover, tears came. I felt the presence of a hundred ancestors. I traveled so far, spent so much time and money, but no price was too great to give up the feeling that moment.

I have brought honor to my ancestors ... 光宗耀祖

Authoring Kin On Chan's American Family History book in both Chinese and English was a monumental effort, but it was worth all the sweat seeing the book being received with welcomed smiles. They praised the book and said it will be held for future generations in China to see. Uncle autographed the cover of my personal edition to commemorate my visit:

光宗耀祖，思乡念祖，唯能可矣。
千里回乡，身兼两任，家书情重。
陈寿夫
2018.11.14

Chan Kong Chung (Ron), my nephew, misses his village roots and ancestors and this feeling is very precious. Coming back to the village from thousands of miles away to find your clans to re-establish the family bond and relationship is beyond price.

ShouFu Chan, 陈寿夫



Uncle is holding Kin On's American Family History I authored for the village, and gift of a fan with our Chan surname. Ron is holding the Chan Ancestral lineage book (jiapu).



Fan gift made at Cangdong village



Chan Kin On's American Family History book discussion



New Yaotiao village gate 2018

Luci, Qiumei Wu (aunt), Mr Ng (government liaison), Ron, ShouFu Chan and Douglas Lam (genealogy consultant)



Qiumei Wu 吳秋妹 (Cho Mui in Cantonese), is the wife of a nephew of Kin On's, and a close relative. She is kind and hospitable. Her two story house was very clean in a modern Chinese style. Kin On Chan's house has been demolished and Qiumei Wu's house now stands in its place. Qiumei Wu has two sons. Son Chan Kang (CK) lives upstairs with his wife and young daughter.

Separated by decades, but drawn together by blood, it is a huge co-incidence that when Aunt Pansy and James went to the village thirty years earlier they met with an elderly lady, ZhengXue Ying, 鄭雪英, who helped them find Kin on Chan's house ... that lady is Qiumi Wu's mother-in-law!

Below is the photo of Pansy, James, and ZhengXue Ying that *coincidentally* was included in the Chan Kin On's American Family History book. ZhengXue Ying is again pictured in the front row, center, in 2004 with our China family.



ZhengXue Yin was guide in 1989 visit to find Kin On's house 2004 photo of same lady - ZhengXue Ying

Also coincidentally, a photo in Kin On Chan's American Family History book was of Chan Yao Him, Kin On's father, standing against a wall. Still standing in the lot adjoining the house where Kin On lived is the very wall the photo was taken!



Chan Yao Him, Kin On's father, welcomes me home

In a spine tingling moment I felt my great grandfather smiling with approval of my presence with his. Through the magic of photo-shop, Chan Yao Him was there to welcome me home.



It came as a total shock, when Qiumei Wu, came to Uncle's house with a SECOND Chan jiapu, not previously known.

There are two different versions of the family jiapu. This second one, is a more detailed jiapu of the the Chan lineage. The second book includes both Kin On, and Alfred's names. I left the lineage chart of the son's, grandson's and great grandson's of Chan Kin On to be added to the second book. This would include Alfred, with son Ron, and grandson Bryan. Plus, John and his two sons, Steve and Kenny, and John's three grandson's Justin, Trevor and Kyle. The missing three generations lost in America are lost no more. We now take our rightful place among the long lineage of the Chan Clan.

We found Au Wai Sheng's name in the second, more specific jiapu, listed as Kin On's wife. If space permits, the wife of a son is added, but omitted when space is limited. The larger, older jiapu Uncle ShouFu holds, cannot be expanded. Once contact with Kin On was lost, his page was finalized, and will never include his American legacy...but will be included in the second jiapu.

Kin On's legacy of son's, grandson's and great grand son's names were not added on my visit, as the calligraphy must be done by an expert in traditional brush and ink, and will be added at an appropriate auspicious date and time for good luck.

Left also was Kin On's daughter's Chinese names in the American Family History book so they also can be known for generations to come. However, according to traditional Chinese practice, daughters are not added to the jiapu as they do not carry forward the Chan surname.



Chan Kang (CK), 陈康, is Qiumei Wu's English speaking son. He has a wife and young daughter. I already had a series of chats and emails with CK, who is very interested in the long missing American branch of the family. I sent CK the Chan Family History Book, all photos taken that day, and Kin On Chan's American Family History book to reconnect our 117 year broken bridge between our China roots and the US. CK's email is 104399396@qq.com. WeChat ID ck998976, name C-K, Kang Chan.

Chan Kang, wife YuLing Gao (高钰玲), daughter JingXi Chan (陈婧滢), mother Qiumei Wu, and brother Bin Chan (陈斌)

I am also working with CK on translating the jiapu, which is phase two of this pilgrimage project.

One thing I wanted to do, but time did not permit, was visit the family cemetery to take photos of the ancestral grave sites. However, CK visits annually the cemetery for Ching Ming (Tomb Sweeping / Ancestor's Day) and will forward photos. This is when traditionally grave sites are cleaned, ritual offerings are made of food, and burning of joss sticks are performed.

Visit with Qiumei Wu



Alley to Kin On's former house



Front gate to Qiumei Wu's home



Luci, Ron, Qiumei Wu



Kin On's original home at this location



Replaced with a beautiful courtyard and home



Utility area with its own well



The Yaotiao village Luci and I visited just 12 years ago has rapidly transformed into a modern city - complete with a Kentucky Fried Chicken. Where buildings now stand, rice fields grew, and streams ran not so long ago. If you intend to see the real village, the time to go is now before it is completely paved over by progress.

Yaotiao, a city in transformation and modernization



Mr Ng, XiTang Wu(吴禧堂), was hugely instrumental in organizing all the village logistics of this trip. He is a retired government official, and well versed in Yaotiao's history and its residents.

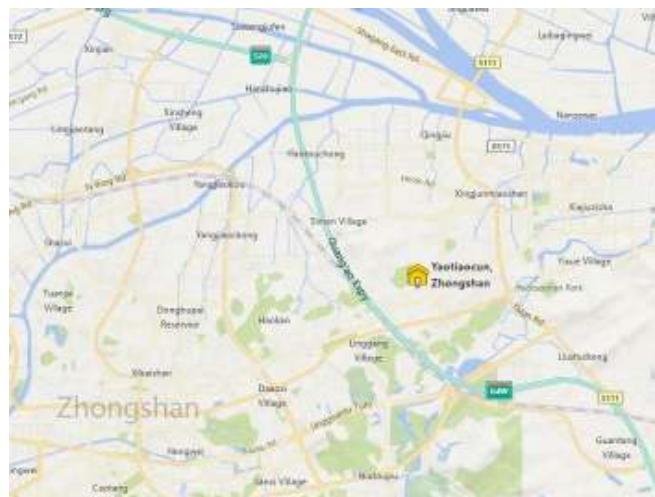
中山火炬你开发区窈窕村, Tel: 18923319782.

[English](#) and [Chinese](#) Yaotiao location map coordinates (hyperlinked).

Below is a close up view, the other an overview of the Yaotiao village location.



窈窕村 YaoTiao Cun



Lunch. Taking photos of the jiapu consumed much of my six hours allotted in the village, as there was an additional four hour drive round-trip from the hotel. We did take a break for lunch and walked to a nearby nice restaurant. Lunch was on the top floor, in a private room, with a private (Western) style toilet adjoining the room. It was real treat to have village home cooking.

We had mulberry leaves (like ung choy except slightly more bitter), yellow boned fish (bones turn white when you cook it), egg quiche with worms 雞蛋焗禾蟲, eggplant, pigeon, mustard greens, and pan fried meat filled bun.

The local traditional dishes were the worms and pigeon. The worm egg quiche was ordered in honor of Kin On as it was one of his favorite dishes. I ate a polite portion, which was met with great approval around the table. Uncle saw my wormy gusto and rewarded me with a second generous portion! Once you get past the worms tiny little legs, it did not taste all that bad.



Worms are actually quite a delicacy and high in protein. I asked about this dish in Hong Kong, and it's rarely offered because worms are harvested from rice fields - plentiful in China, but not in Hong Kong.

At a nearby restaurant, they served another local delicacy - your choice of what cut you prefer.



My Core Research Team

This trip could not have been possible with the behind the scenes coordination, support and research from the following folks ... Thank you for all your hard work in making my genealogical dreams come true.



Douglas Lam, Genealogy Consultant, who found the village, jiapu and relatives to make this visit possible



William Tam who did all the Chinese translation in the Chan Kin On's American Family History Book



Mona Lee who made all the initial village contact to coordinate logistics



Helen Lam our student guide, researcher and translator from Wiyu University



Henry Tom whose Chinese Genealogy Tour and Workshops gave me the knowledge and courage to undertake this epic ancestral journey

Thanks also to Al and John Chan for their exceptionally generous sponsorship, and the US Chan clan allowing me to be their China ambassador to bridge the century long gap between families.

Travel Tips

Getting to the Village

If you fly into Hong Kong, take the 90 minute ferry to Zhongshan from Kowloon, as it is the closest port to the village.



Buy your tickets online at [Chu Kong Shipping Ferry Service](#), which goes out of the China Ferry Terminal in Kowloon. After landing in Hong Kong we went into Kowloon and stayed at the Royal Pacific Hotel. Royal Pacific is in the same building as the China Ferry Terminal, making it an easy two floor escalator commute to start our journey.

At the terminal we redeemed the online tickets, checked our bags at a separate counter, then went to the waiting area to board. Pick up snacks at the 7-11 in the terminal. You can take a bus or the new rail system which is cheaper, but it is too precarious and complicated a journey for this ABC to navigate with zero Chinese skills.



The ferry website provides no distinction between First Class and VIP... so here it is ... VIP cabin is a private room seating up to 7, has air conditioning, TV, bottled water, USB/AC ports, table, first off exit to beat the rush for immigration, nice views of the shoreline, vessels and fishing boats, and the Hong Kong - Macau bridge as you cruise to China. Internet is OK near shoreline, but lost crossing deep water. \$310HK (\$39 USD) per person from Kowloon to Jiangmen where our tour started.

Ask for senior discount if over 65 - be prepared to show your passport to qualify.

Toilets

Carry baby wipes and toilet paper, as rural washrooms (all the sites we visited) do not supply paper. At the Chen Feng Tai memorial there are no toilets at all. If you have to go ...go. We are all family. Move along, nothing to see.



On a rare occasion you may find a western style toilet, but the standard is a squat toilet (right). If you are not used to squatting and balancing, you can easily find yourself *in* the toilet, not on top of it. There is nothing to hold onto to balance. At one restaurant we went (food was great) there was a squat toilet and sink. The sink had no drain, but instead the hose drained water onto the floor to the squat toilet. So the floor is always slippery - giving you an extra balancing challenge.

I also carried alcohol tissues to clean all my utensils before eating. If you drink water in China without boiling (like tea), the squat toilet will become your new best friend.

Chan Kin On Memorialized at the Chen Temple

Zhujixiang 珠玑古巷 (see [hyperlink](#) for map location)



Chan Temple

Today's goals are two fold:

- ✓ bring honor to Chan Kin On by adding his name to the Chen Family Temple walls
- ✓ secure the provincial Chen lineage book

The Chen ancestral hall is where Guangdong's Chan provincial ancestral lineage books reside. When you cross reference this provincial book with the regional and then Yaotiao (Cantonese Mil Til 窈窕) village jiapu's, we can trace our lineage 4700 years back to the Yellow Emperor. This would be the Chinese equivalent of tracing your lineage back to Adam and Eve. However, this is not a trivial task as it means doing research in Chinese to find where all three lineage books intersect.

Zhujixiang, located in the northern most part of Guangdong, is home to Zhuji Ancient Alley, 公里处的梅岭山下, where over 100 clans originated and settled in the Pearl River Delta, and eventually Zhongshan, Sam Yap, and Sze Yap. At Zhuji Ancient Alley there are libraries, shrines, a 1000 year Banyan tree and temples preserving family surname history and culture.



It took six hours by bus, driving from Jiangmen to Zhujixiang on mountainous highway roads, which appeared to double as an oxcart path because it was so bumpy.

The Chen temple is in the Heritage Village, a concentration point where many of the 183 Chinese family surnames are represented. The Chen temple is among the oldest and largest. Some surname memorials were actual temples, most are small, far more modest one room "storefronts" with clan memorabilia. Others empty with nothing more than the clan name.

The Chen Clan Ancestral Hall was founded in the 14th year of the Guangxu reign (1888). It was built by the 72 Chen clans in Guangdong's counties. The Gathering Hall was once a place for meeting and worship by Chen clansmen, and is now used as an ancestral hall. The hall is 19 buildings, with nine halls and six court yards. Well preserved and magnificently decorated, it is praised as "the Pearl of Lingnan Architectural Art", with a great variety of materials and techniques such as wood, brick and stone carvings, stucco reliefs, pottery figures, iron and copper ornamentation, surface paintings and murals.

The Chen temple was big, and impressive. On the walls were rows and rows of names sponsored by a 500 Yuan (\$75) donation. Carved on these temple walls, to be forever remembered, is the name of Chan Kin On (added to below register).



Going to the Chen temple has significance in peeling back our heritage spanning centuries in Guangdong Province - this regional book is called a “zupu”. The book that is in Chan Kin On’s village is very local - and called a “jiapu”.

I bought the two volume zupu, 6” thick, current to 2016, all written in Chinese. This is the Chan Rosetta Stone to give us the big picture. The local village jiapu is the key to this whole puzzle on how we fit today in our centuries old family.

Coming from a 5000 year old culture, being eldest son of the eldest son, and going back to the motherland in a genealogical search has great weight and responsibility (光宗耀祖).

I now know what that weight is .. 12 pounds! That is how much the ancient Chen genealogy books for Guangdong weigh. The books are updated every three generations, or 100 years. I hand carried this heavy, but precious cargo in my luggage for the next three weeks across China and Japan.



Guangdong two volume Chen family lineage books in front of the memorial wall

While walking to the Chen family temple we strolled through rows and rows of local delicacies - pressed duck and dried preserved pork (which we had for lunch). There were a few other street vendors selling hand rolled cigarettes, family surname flags (bought Chan and Mar), tofu fa, incense, peanut and sesame candies. Random dogs and chickens roamed the streets.

Total temple cost \$75. Preservation of our history and heritage in memory of Kin On - priceless.

Chen Temple



Paying respect to our ancestors at the Chen temple

Heritage Village



Preserved meats - duck, bacon, sausages



Fireworks to scare off evil spirits and invite ancestors to come feast



Clan shrines



1000 year old banyan tree

Foods of China

We had Chinese or Asian fusion food (especially on the cruise) for all 22 days, and even when we finally caved in to eat something American at Pizza Hut, we opted for a *Peking duck* pizza. Here is a small sampling of China's vast variety of snacks and food ...



Chip Flavors: Texas grilled, seaweed, Mexican tomato, cucumber, classic, vegetable, pizza

Peanut flavors: wasabi, chicken, coconut



Chicken feet



Chips: beef, roasted chicken wing



Crab cookies



Mushroom bun



Pan fried soup dumpling dinner \$4USD



Shanghai Crab Noodles \$50USD



Poon Choi - "big bowl feast"



Custard bun

Mei (Plum) Guan (Pass)

From the Heritage Village we travelled to the Mei Guan 梅关.

We stopped at a “service center” for a potty break, which was complete with a McDonald’s featuring burgers, congee and noodle soup. There was a large convenience store, “Loye”, which has four rows of the ever popular candied chicken feet (spicy or regular), and on the counter they had boiled eggs and corn. We opted as our snack orange fig newtons.



Mei Guan is the gateway through the Meiling Mountains 梅岭 allowing



passage from the North China Plains to Southern China for thousands of years. Many people came through from the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) on. From there was a mass immigration into the Pearl River Delta and into Taishan and Zhongshan where a significant portion of overseas immigration originated.

It is probable that if you research far enough back, that we have distant ancestors who made their way from northern to southern China.

We got to Mei Guan in the late afternoon and began a walk up the mountainside (1000 meters high) to the top of the pass. The trail was nothing more than a rubble of rocks. Being 64 years old I stroll, rather than hike - especially on the mountainous uneven rock path. We only got half way to the top as the light started to fade. So we turned back after reaching the lighted lady Buddha. We ended up

using our phones as flashlights back to the trail head as we carefully probed our way back.

This small hike of two miles was an effort. What we did not know is we were in for a real hike up, and I mean UP to the Tomb of Chen Feng Tai the following day



Lady temple



Location Marker



A twisted ankle waiting to happen

Tomb and Memorial of Chen Feng Tai

Tian Tang Shan 天塘山 (see hyperlink for map location)

The tomb of Chen Feng Tai, aka Chan Hui, is the first Chan ancestor (progenitor) that came to Guangdong province. It is from him and his seven sons the Chen clan in Guangdong province are descended. The tomb is in a northern rural part of Guangdong.

In order to get to the tomb of the first Chan in Guangdong we had to take a ride as far as the 50 passenger bus could go in Tian Tang Shan. Then because the road got too narrow and switchbacks too tight for the big bus, we transferred to a 12 passenger van.

The 12 passenger van raced up a winding road with so many hairpin turns and blind curves that the driver constantly honked his horn to warn oncoming traffic he is coming. One hairpin turn was so steep the driver could not make the turn, and came to a dead stop against the retaining wall on a steep hill. The van's transmission locked up and would not go in reverse. So the men had to get out and push the van away from the wall so the wheel could be turned enough to make the turn.

The van stopped at the end of the dirt and rock path and could go no further. So we had to walk up two miles on an unpaved trail. At the end of the trail, there was a staircase going UP 598 steps. UP a 1300 meter high elevation mountain to reach the tomb.

2 Mile Hike to Tomb Stairway



2 mile journey to get to stairway



Are we there yet?



It's getting steeper

Checking Fitbit, we walked UP and down the equivalent of 60 floors up a 1300 meter elevation. My legs were literally shaking and I was gasping for air 450 stair steps up. The last 148 steps felt it might as well been 15,000 steps. What made it additionally difficult was that the stair steps are irregularly sized, some requiring two steps, or a half step or a full step ... causing me to stumble and trip.

I will **NOT fail** (*leg's quivering*). I **WILL honor** the previous struggles of my ancestors (*breathlessly*). I **WILL keep true** to the my genealogical goals (*groan*). I **cannot fail** (*profusely sweating*)....

Going to the first Chen tomb in Guangdong was a primary goal of the trip, and I did not come 7000 miles to fail. Kin On labored all his life. This effort of a few hours in my relatively pampered hot house existence does not compare to my grandfather's daily labors. It was this driving thought, that made me determined to succeed in my quest to the top of the mountain.

The area is so remote that there are no toilets, as evidenced by droppings at several places on the stairs up. When we asked our guide what to do about toilets he vaguely waved toward the general direction of some bushes.

A Journey of 598 Steps, Starts with the First



*How hard can this be? Are we there yet? Are you kidding me? Almost there Success! 598 Steps
Banner reads - Kaiping Chan Clan Association*

Luci and I finally made it to the top and were rewarded with majestic views and bask in the presence of the Chan clan origins.

Tomb and Memorial of Chen Feng Tai



The tomb of the first Chen was initially built in the Soong dynasty (960 - 1279) making our Chan roots in Guangdong 800 years deep. The monument was renovated 160 years ago in the Ching dynasty and is now a historical landmark.

Chen Mo Temple, First Chan in Chungshan

[Chongpan Village, Taishan](#) 冲泮村 (see hyperlink for map location)

If this family tree is not cared for in three generations, then you are not filial and all will be lost. If you care of the family tree, then all descendants will know our roots forever.

Chen Mo, 1173 - 1242 BC



Chen Mo is the eldest son of Chan Feng Tai, and a progenitor of Chan's in the Toishan and Chungshan region.

We went from travelling on a smooth six lane highway, to a kidney-shaking goat path village road. We hiked through the modest village, onto a dirt road, and reached the Chen Mo temple undergoing restoration.

As we started getting closer to the village temple honoring Chen Mo, it was like each

mile clicked off decades of time. There was a communal hall with a long outdoor patio which was the village focal point. We passed long vegetable fields and many dilapidated buildings.

Chen Mo's temple was in disrepair, with more mosquitoes than people in the village occupying the building. But there it was, three altars. The first was for the heavens. The second was a small unassuming shrine for those who died young (under 18). The final shrine was for Chen Mo. Being the only Chan in the group, with the help of the temple grounds keeper, I lit three incense for each shrine and bowed three times for respect.



Ron and Luci in front of the Chen Mo temple



Here is the zupu from Chen Mo's temple to help trace our origins



Chen Mo altar with the temple docent lighting incense. Secured the Chan jiapu for the Toisan and Chungshan districts where we originated

When the docent (Chan Win Lin) found out I was from the Gold Mountain, he was quite pleased someone would come such a distance to pay respect to his ancestors, and called me brother. He spoke to me in length, and by the tone of his voice was earnest and eloquent ... but his Chinese words were lost on me. However, his smile and actions transcended language.

The Chen Mo temple had a local area jiapu I will use to cross reference against the other three lineage books secured from this trip for 50 rmb (\$8), and a temple donation.

Travel Tips - The Vitals

Essentials after food, water and toilet, are internet, cash and phone. Use the following as a checklist on what we found successful (as of November 2018) to survive the wilds of China. For a detailed “how to”, Google is your friend. Your mileage may vary.

Voice and Internet. You can get a SIM card for voice and data calls. One of my group paid for a 30 day SIM card, but the store installed one for 7 days. Welcome to China. We have T-mobile which provides free internet worldwide. We opted to use the internet for voice - iPhone Facetime and WeChat...but mainly did texting.



WeChat



A must have app in China. It connects a billion people together. WeChat is China’s multipurpose messaging and social media platform. With exception of your phone text plan, everything else like Messenger, WhatsApp etc may, or may not work due to China’s internet restrictions. WeChat does group messaging, translates Chinese to English, and does pinpoint location. I’m not saying all Chinese look alike, but if you are lost, and there are a billion other Chinese around, WeChat will make it a lot easier to find you.

Google Translate Application. Download here for [Apple](#) or [Android](#) . Download the simplified Chinese (NOT traditional) dictionary so you are not dependent on internet to access. Outside of tourist locations, English is not used in rural areas. Typing a vital question like, “where is the toilet?”, and be instantly translated in Chinese can be crucial (at least for that moment\~).



Cash is King. ATM is your Friend. China is virtually a cashless society, as mobile banking is the standard. Since you probably don’t have a bank account in China, mobile banking is not an option. Check with your bank on best way of exchanging currency... but what we did was convert USD\$ to Chinese RMB before leaving home at our local bank.



If you don’t want to carry a lot of RMB (beware of pick pockets) hit an ATM (which are plentiful). Credit cards are rarely taken unless it is a tourist location, and sometimes you may have to pay a surcharge. Credit card cash advances are costly.



Internet Service . China censors many web sites, which may include Google services - maps, gmail, translate etc, Facebook, Netflix and more. Some phone carriers allow Google access, but to be safe load a virtual private network (VPN) on your phone and laptop prior to entering China. I bought a one month subscription from [ExpressVPN](#) for

\$13. Cancel upon return home. Works great. You can run 3 devices concurrently on a VPN, but can load VPN software on an unlimited number of devices. Excellent chat tech support.

Old Soldiers Never Die, They Simply Fade Away (to China)

Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum. Jiangmen, China 江門五邑華僑 華人博物館



After World War II, Chinese veterans returned from the distant shores of Iwo Jima in the Pacific, to the bloody battle fields of Europe. When my father returned from war, Chinese veterans were not welcomed in the local white Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) association.

This discrimination held true when the newly married Al and May looked to buy their first house. May called a Realtor asking to see a home. The Realtor asked, "what nationality are you?" After saying, "Chinese", the next thing May heard was a "click", and a dial tone.

When mom and dad finally found a house, the seller was OK selling to Chinese, but the next door neighbor was not. Ironically, the neighbor was a Navy officer. In 1944, Alfred served in the Navy as a Seabee on Midway Island in preparation for the invasion of Japan. 1950 was a time you can die for your country, but were not welcome to live in it.

My father with a core group of veterans became the founding fathers of the East Bay Chinatown Post 3956.

The Post was more than a social organization, as it offered scholarships to Chinatown youth and acted as a community hub. Most significantly the Post sponsored a bill to help reunite Chinese servicemen with their families in China after the war. The original intent of helping Chinese families reunite fell on deaf ears when promoted with the local Congressman, so the Post changed their tactics and pushed for families of *veterans* be united, which passed with ease. From this band of 100 Guangdong band of brothers, thousands of Chinese families became one once again.



But as the silver soldiers faded and fell to time, the Post dropped below its muster minimum and had to be folded into another local post. I had the honor of co-authoring the 50 year history of East Bay Chinatown Post 3956. That book, with the Post flag, commanders cap and other Chinatown VFW memorabilia did not roll into the closet of the local post. Instead, they were donated, and now exhibited in the Wuyi Chinese Overseas Museum as an example of how China's immigrants survived, thrived, and served their country.

Al and "sailor Ron" 1956

As I gazed upon the exhibit, 50 years of VFW family gatherings flashed by. I helped fold that flag. My father marched in Chinatown parades with that flag. That flag was present at all our Thanksgiving and Christmas parties when we said the pledge of allegiance. It was not just a flag, but a representation of who these vets were.

All of the East Bay Chinatown Post 3956 veterans were from Guangdong. All fought for America. Some died in the name of freedom. But in their hearts they never forgot their China roots.

East Bay Chinatown 3956's Final Resting Place Wuyu Overseas Chinese Museum



Ron as docent explains the history and significance of the VFW exhibit at Wiyu Overseas Chinese Museum



The 50 year Anniversary book on exhibit (right) was co-authored by Ron Chan



Commander's cap donated by the last Post Commander, Ed Yu



Visiting the Post flag one last time

Final Thoughts

The age old riddle ... if a tree falls in the forest, but there is no one to hear it, does it make a sound? Likewise, if our family history is not chronicled, will our forefather's sacrifices be remembered?

To the hundreds of Chan generations in China who preceded us, I hope the fruits of three American born generations bring honor to you.

To my grandparents, Kin On Chan and Au Wei Sheng, thank you for your courage and sacrifices in immigrating to America, so your children, and all who followed could have a better life.

Our roots exist ... only if don't bury them too deep.



光宗耀祖

