

PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF JŪNG SĪHNG LÓHNG,
WRITTEN FOR THE AUTHORITIES DURING THE LAND REFORM.¹
CHINESE TRANSCRIPTION AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION,

BY E. FINCH, MELBOURNE, 2013. REVISED 2017.

傳自之書所命組作工奉朗承鍾會新時改土共中
文英成譯並錄繕謹化之坐雍林

Note that the Chinese symbol for a missing character, a square box (□), is used in the transcription to represent a character that could not be made out, such as some on page edges which are only partially shown in the digital images; the English symbol for missing text, an asterisk (*), is used to represent the same in the translation. A box around a transcribed character indicates that it was unclear in the images of the original, from which the transcription was prepared, and has therefore been deduced. Where there is no standard English transliteration for a word, Wade-Giles romanization is used to represent its Cantonese pronunciation, and Pinyin romanization its Mandarin pronunciation, although Mandarin transliterations only appear in the footnotes; rough transliterations are shown in italics. Note also that some of the orthographic errors and idiosyncrasies of the original have been preserved in the transcription.

師返回本村
自煮飯二人全食十八歲老
學習吾作伙夫每放學後方
講一連兩年吾亦跟隨老師
請老師往三村藍頭祖祠開
講十六歲三村四邑鄉親聘
收館金十五歲老師有事停
之間所以叫吾在此聽講不
因他與吾不但兄弟而戚屬
秀才鍾文^綴在翼子裡設講
竹葉或採柴十四歲奉村文
讀小學四年十三歲往山摘
錢二分予九歲至十歲連
館金一兩先生憐我但收七
我得以度日兼讀小學此時
代人縫衣得些錢米多給於
無維善於針指常年往外歲
少年喪父^父獨生一女倚靠全
外祖母乞鄰于憐而助伊亦
些薯芋給我暫且免飢尚幸
日惟賴祖父往山採柴兼種
不欲生因家無產菜難以度
父死後最慘者家母幾次死
親式十八歲母親式十六歲
歲○三十六天喪父此時父
□□ 出身貧寒莫若如下三

** background is of abject poverty: At the age of three years² and thirty six days, I lost my father. My father was then twenty eight; my mother twenty six. My mother was the one who suffered the most after my father's death; there were a few times when she did not want to go on living. There was no home produce so getting by was hard; we had to rely on my grandfather³, who collected firewood in the hills, and grew some potatoes and yams, which he gave to us to stave off starvation. We were also fortunate in that a neighbour took pity and aided⁴ us after my grandmother⁵ begged her for help. My grandmother had also lost her father in her youth and had only born a daughter; she had nothing on which to depend, but she was talented at needlework, and, through most of each year, she was away, stitching clothes for people. Much of the little money and rice she earned was given to us, and this enabled us to get by and me to attend primary school. At that time the school fee was one tael, but the teacher pitied me and took only seven and two⁶. I attended primary school for four straight years between the ages of nine and thirteen. I spent my thirteenth year picking bamboo leaves and collecting firewood in the hills. When I was fourteen, a scholar⁷ from our village, Jūng Mǎhn Ji⁸, began teaching in Yihk Ji Neighbourhood. As he and I were not only clansmen but also close kin, I was bid to attend classes there free of charge. My teacher had to stop giving classes when I was fifteen. When I was sixteen, a See Yup countryman⁹ of Sāam Village invited my teacher to give lessons at the Sāam Village Lāahm Tàuh Ancestral Hall, where he did for two years running. I followed my teacher there and continued to study under him. I acted as his cook: every day, right after class, I would cook dinner, and then the two of us would eat together. My teacher returned to our village in my eighteenth year¹⁰

¹ The land reform was a violent and bloody affair in many parts of China, including where this account was written. The writer would most probably have been in a dangerous position, and is hardly likely to have given China's new communist authorities an honest account of his capitalist successes overseas. It must, therefore, be borne in mind that this document is in all likelihood an intentionally biased and perhaps outrightly dishonest autobiography.

² Here and throughout the account, the author most likely gives his age according to the traditional Chinese reckoning, which, like the Western calendar, starts at year one not zero; 'three years' here therefore probably means just two years.

³ Paternal grandfather.

⁴ Probably written in the sense of financial aid.

⁵ Maternal grandmother.

⁶ Seven mace and two candareens, which means 0.72 taels of silver. This figure, which one might think of as 'seven and two' as if it were in shillings and pence, was often used, because it was the value of one foreign silver coin (洋錢), and for this reason a Chinese silver coin of the same value (龍洋) was introduced, but not until many years after the time referred to here.

⁷ What has been termed a *civil licentiate*, a graduate of the first level of the three-tier Imperial examination system, in the civil as opposed to military stream.

⁸ The author would have been a speaker of a dialect of the See Yup language, which is a sister language to Cantonese. I give the phonetic rendering of this name and other proper names according to their standard Cantonese pronunciation, with which I am better familiar.

⁹ Or the plural 'some See Yup countrymen'.

¹⁰ This is the end of the right hand half of the first image; the next section appears continuous.

純軒祖祠設講 吾亦設檯在
此自思家無粒米何有心讀
書是往山摘竹葉為多十九
至廿式歲自學耕田式畝餘
有時往山採柴廿三歲奉里
同祖共井兄弟連 吾六名同
往新金山此時光緒十三年
〔一八八七〕式月十三晨早起程行
往黃冲沖口搭艇往雙水轉
搭大渡往澳門轉搭輪船往
香港住在和興金山莊至十
七日搭長沙輪船由港開行
往澳洲三月初八日到雪梨
埠碼頭日餘不許搭客登岸
此時雪梨限制我華人壹百
P人頭稅方得登岸長沙船
在雪梨三數日直返回香港
因辦貨家早定春分頭水
茶葉付澳洲我等搭客又在
雪梨轉搭別船至三月十一
日到美利伴埠我六名兄弟
全上埠往兄弟菜園暫宿數
天至廿一日由美利伴搭船
廿式日午上到蘭只慎埠即
晚在鍾潤菜園過

and started giving classes at the Sèuhn Hīn Ancestral Hall. I also took up a desk there, though I had little appetite for study, knowing there was not a skerrick of food at home, and so I spent much of my time in the hills picking bamboo leaves. From the age of nineteen to twenty-two years, I learnt how to work a field of two-and-a-bit acres¹¹; at times I collected firewood in the hills. At the age of twenty-three years, I and five of my cousins - from around the same well in my neighbourhood - headed off together for the New Goldfields¹²: this was in the thirteenth year of the Gwōng Séuih reign (1887¹³). We set off on the morning of the 13th of February¹⁴. We walked to Wòng Chūng Chūng Háu¹⁵ and then caught a little boat to Sēung Séui¹⁶. Then we took a ferry to Macau and then a steamer to Hong Kong, where we stayed at the Wòh Hīng Goldfield Agency¹⁷. On the 17th, we caught a steamer, the Chèuhng Sāa¹⁸, and set off from Hong Kong for Australia. We arrived at the Sydney¹⁹ docks on the 8th of March, but passengers were not allowed to disembark for over a day. At that time there was a restriction on us Chinese at Sydney: a tax of £100 per head to disembark. After three or so days in Sydney, the Chèuhng Sāa headed straight back for Hong Kong - to meet an order for the first shipment of spring-harvest tea for Australia. We passengers changed boats in Sydney and on the 11th of March arrived in Melbourne. The six of us headed into the colony to a clansman's vegetable garden, where we stayed for a few days. On the 21st we caught a boat from Melbourne and, on the morning of the 22nd, arrived in Launceston. We passed that night at Jūng Yeuhn's²⁰ vegetable garden.

¹¹ Two-and-a-bit Chinese acres. A Chinese acre is just over a sixth of an English acre. The word acre, in this translation, should be taken in all cases as denoting the Chinese acre.

¹² The *New Goldfields* were, from the Chinese perspective, the first Australian goldfields, including the Ballarat goldfields, and were reached via Melbourne; the *Old Goldfields* was the term applied to the Californian goldfields after the later Australian gold rush; the Bendigo goldfields were called the *Great Goldfields*. The expression “*the New Goldfields*” was later often used in a wider metonymic sense of “Australia”, as in this case. The Chinese word for goldfields is frequently fancifully translated as ‘gold mountain’, this results from a tendency in modern translation for metaphor, i.e. translation so literal that the meaning may be lost, and from an inadequate appreciation, on the part of some translators, for the subtleties of Chinese and English forms of expression, which can give rise to strange, over-embellished English translations. The Chinese expression for goldfield used during the gold rushes is composed of two characters - much as the expression ‘goldfield’ (also written as *gold-field* or *gold field*) is composed of two elements, ‘gold’ and ‘field’ - the first character 金, pronounced *gum* in Cantonese, means gold; the second character 山 *saan* does not have a direct English equivalent. Its primary sense is of a raised landform, ranging in size from a little hillock to a tall mountain. The character, which is a word on its own, has no plural or singular forms, so it may refer to a hill or hills, a mountain or mountains. The secondary or extended or metonymic sense of this character is *land in general* - this extension is probably due to the fact that China is a relatively hilly country - it is used in this sense in a set of old Chinese words for landscape, country, homeland etc. (山水山川江山河山等), and in the vernacular word for China 唐山 used in Cantonese and in the See Yup language. It is in this secondary sense that the character is used in the term ‘goldfield’ - 金山 *gumsaan*. This is the same as in the English word ‘goldfield’, where the ‘field’ is not to be interpreted strictly as referring only to field land, but to land generally. In other words, in Chinese one says ‘goldhills’ and in English one says ‘goldfields’, neither word refers to hill country or field land specifically, and each is fairly much the equivalent of the other. However, an uninformed Mandarin speaker would be likely to interpret 金山 as meaning ‘gold mountain’, because *saan* 山 is not used in the sense of ‘land’ in any Mandarin vernacularisms, and is not linguistically productive in this sense in Mandarin - i.e. not capable of forming new words in this sense. The modern Mandarin word for goldfield is 金礦區 ‘gold-deposit zone’, which lacks the classical flavour of *gumsaan* 金山.

¹³ Here the author uses Arabic numerals, whereas elsewhere he uses Chinese numerals, or Chinese characters, to represent numbers. Chinese numerals (蘇州碼), which are technically digits, have, like many other traditional things, been virtually extirpated in mainland Communist China (i.e. the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) excluding Hong Kong and Macau); these numerals are now also rare in Republican China (Taiwan, i.e. the Republic of China (R.O.C.)), a democracy, which the Australian government does not recognise, but they are still in use, be it dwindling, in Hong Kong, and in some overseas Chinese communities. They have many advantages over the Arabic numerals that have replaced them in ubiquitousness and they have a very long history.

¹⁴ This and other dates are probably written according to the Chinese calendar. This date would then mean the 13th day of the 2nd month of the 13th year of the Gwōng Séuih reign (Gūangxù in Mandarin), which is actually March 7th 1887. I have translated other dates given in the account in the same direct way.

¹⁵ This place is on the banks of the river Tàahm (Tánjiāng in Mandarin, 潭江 in Chinese characters) and a little north of Sāam Village. *Chung* (涌或冲冲) is a Cantonese/See Yup language word for a river or stream that fills and empties with the sea tides, a bit like the Australian word creek, which means a river or stream that fills and dries with the seasons. This word is used in many place names throughout the Cantonese/See Yup language speaking region of Southern China. One could think of the place name Wòng Chūng Chūng Háu as ‘Yellow-Creek Creek-Mouth’ (this rendering certainly conveys the flavour of the Chinese).

¹⁶ Shuāngshūi in Mandarin; it is a town that faces the city of Sān Wuih (Mandarin Xīnhui; formerly Sinhwy) across the river Tàahm (Tánjiāng; 潭江).

¹⁷ Online sources indicate that these ‘goldfield agencies’ catered for departing, sojourning, and returning prospectors by selling tickets for their passage, forwarding letters and money to relatives back home, and offering, or arranging, accommodation.

¹⁸ An article titled *Chinese Newspapers in Australia from the Turn of the Century*, which is published on the La Trobe University website, contains a translation of a Taigu Shipping Company advertisement from an early Chinese newspaper, the *Chinese Australian Herald*, that reads ‘Our company has constructed four powerful first-class ships - the Changsha, Chengdu, Taiyuan and Jinan - which travel regularly between Melbourne and Chinese ports...’; Changsha, Chengdu, etc. are all names of Chinese cities. Changsha is the Mandarin equivalent of the Cantonese Chèuhng Sāa. The ship referred to in this advertisement is perhaps the one on which the author came to Australia.

¹⁹ The name used here for Sydney is still used by the R.O.C.. This name, like the other Australian place names used in this account, is no longer used by the P.R.C., which changed the Chinese names for many foreign places. The new names are often longer than the former ones, and are mostly phonetic renderings according to Mandarin pronunciation (Chinese characters are like numerals: they are pronounced differently in the languages that use them). The earlier Chinese names for places in Australia were generally created by speakers of the See Yup language and Cantonese. Some were phonetic renderings, which reflected the pronunciation of the dialect spoken by the person or persons who named them; some were not phonetic renderings of the English names but altogether new names; some had a clear significance in Chinese but also matched the English pronunciation, such as in one old name for Melbourne (美利濱), meaning ‘Shore of Beauty and Advantage’ or ‘Shore of Great Advantage’, [易經乾卦文言傳曰以美利利天下謹按美利之曰大利] a name with much flavour. (The new name for Melbourne (墨爾本, or 墨尔本 in Communist ‘simplified characters’) means something like ‘Ink You Origin’: it is purely phonetic, but in Mandarin, not in Cantonese or the See Yup language.) The name used for Melbourne later in this account is very similar to the aforementioned old name (only the last character is different); it was also used by the Chinese intellectual Lèuhng Kái Chīu (Liang Qichāo in Mandarin; 梁啟超 in Chinese characters), who hailed from the same region as the author, in a letter he wrote to his teacher Hōng Yau Wai (Kāng Yōuwéi; 康有為) on his return from a tour of Australia c.1901; and by Melbourne's See Yup Society.

²⁰ Identified on the Journal of Chinese Australia website as James Chung-Gon. His personal name was Jeuhn; his courtesy name was Chiuh Hūng: both have the same meaning (以潤為名故以潮孔為字蓋孔云者大也殷也大潮即潤).

其叁

三月廿三午下三點鐘搭火車即晚九點鐘到好拔埠
在遂生園做工五個月但得餐食工金全無此時做苦
工每祀八司零尚無人可請至八月間適有老伯父在
此自耕數分園地用籬擔菜往各門口發賣他因年老
東旋出頂吾交盡十三尸承受做一年○八個月共獲
工金六十尸左右此時因遂生號有一股伴欲東旋出
頂該號股東四名堂兄承禮着一經已對東旋者訂購
交吾承受是將自己之園地頂出於人隨後有一人相
勸東旋者未可將股頂出做至明年一齊同返唐此時
吾進退無路迫於在遂生號做工十個月身上存款四
十餘尸意欲返唐一轉適遇澳洲新例禁止我華人入
口此時光緒十六年初是將數十尸與前同舟之兄承
振同往蘭只慎埠另在此處合集兄弟二人共四名集
股承頂一菜園連做式年餘每年得獲工金廿餘卅尸
各人自用衣物及付歸養家不敷何有錢積蓄該埠我
華人約計百□而我本村兄弟着六十名左右俱耕菜
園為多有三數間洗衣台山人雜貨店式間俱辦貨上
錫坑而已奈因我新會無一舖戶出入是以合集設一
雜貨店名新廣榮每人集股一 式十尸湊成數百尸滙
交香港廣同安辦貨公地予當外交出入啟煥當司理
店中發貨所做十個○月生意雖則不缺而尚有微
利但時景不合有多少者返唐餘在埠者困窮莫若每
由香港辦到唐米什貨銷路易多是注部紙上富貴本
錢無歸是不得已將該生意招人承頂乃本村兄弟鍾
亞英由美利伴過來有外姓鄉里過信他數百尸得以
承受此時亞英屢勸吾與他合伴久聞其人狼惡不良
故不與受隨後返往好拔埠□□□

III

At 3 p.m. on the 23rd of March, I²¹ caught a train, and at 9 p.m. that evening arrived in Hobart. I worked for five months at Seuih Sāng Garden for bread and board²²: there was no salary. At that time a labourer couldn't even find work for eight shillings a week²³. In August, it happened that an old gentleman - who worked a garden of under an acre there and went about carrying baskets of vegetables on a shoulder pole and selling them door to door - decided, on account of his age, to sell up and go back East. I handed over £13 and took on the business. I worked at it for one year and eight months, making in total around £60. I then sold off my garden, because my cousin Sihng Láih and four Seuih Sāng shareholders had come together and arranged to purchase for me the share of a shareholder there who wanted to sell up and go East. Later on, someone persuaded the returner not to sell his share but to wait until the following year when they could go back to China together: this placed me between a rock and a hard place. I was forced to work at Seuih Sāng for ten months. I then had on me savings of over £40 and wanted to make a visit back to China, but I met with a new Australian law prohibiting us Chinese from entering the country. (This was early in the 16th year of the Gwōng Séuih reign.) So I took several tens of pounds and with my cousin Sihng Jan, who had come across on the boat with me, went to Launceston. There we got together with two other cousins and the four of us pooled our money together to take on a garden, which we worked for over two years straight, each year making from twenty-something pounds to £30: not enough to cover clothing for each of us, or to send back²⁴ to provide for our families, let alone to make savings from. In Launceston there were approximately one hundred * of us Chinese and around sixty of them were clansmen from my village. Most worked vegetable gardens. There were three or so Chinese laundries. There were two groceries run by Hoisanese²⁵, both of which only supplied to the tin mines. But there was no store for us Sān Wuih²⁶ people. For this reason, we put shares together and opened a grocery, Sān Gwóng Wihng²⁷. Each of us contributed a share of £10 to £20, making a total of several hundred pounds, which we remitted to Gwóng Tuhng Ōn²⁸ in Hong Kong to purchase stock. The gentlemen tasked me to deal with the incomings, outgoings and remittances; and Kái Wuhn²⁹ to manage the shop and sales. While we did not lose money in the ten months I worked after the shop was stocked, and even made a small profit, the climate was not right: there were a certain number of people who returned to China; and those that remained in Launceston were living in very straightened circumstances. So when orders of Chinese rice and groceries came in from Hong Kong they were easily and widely sold, but while prosperous on paper, the money invested did not return. On this account, we had no choice but to put the business up for sale. A clansman from my village, Jūng A Yīng, came over from Melbourne. He had been entrusted with several hundred pounds by a countryman of a different clan, which enabled him to purchase the business. A Yīng tried repeatedly to persuade me to go into partnership with him, but I did not, having long heard him to be a wicked devious man. Thereafter, I returned to Hobart ****³⁰

²¹ Chinese permits a greater degree of ellipsis than English and for this reason it is not possible to know if the subject of this line is 'I' or 'we'; I have therefore taken a conservative approach to the translation and given it as 'I'.

²² Actually 'board' is not mentioned: I use the phrase 'bread and board' merely to match the style of the phrase used in Chinese.

²³ Here the author uses a compound Chinese character that is not recorded in Chinese dictionaries, but was used in account keeping by speakers of the Cantonese and See Yup languages. It is a combination of the characters 禮拜, meaning 'week' (the character is formed from a 礼, which is the abbreviated form of 禮, and the left-hand part of 拜, with the vertical line drawn uncurved). [There are very few Chinese characters that have polysyllabic readings in Chinese languages, this would be one, others include 瓦 'kilowatt', 尙 'contract', 簍 'gallon', 尗 'ninety-eight percent', and 哩 'nautical mile'.]

²⁴ The character used throughout the account for 歸 "return" or "back" is a simplification of 歸 (归 with the dot higher) and was common at the time. Several examples can be seen in a letter available on the *The Chinese in California, 1850-1925* website (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cicquery.html>), listed in the catalogue as "[Letter A]: From Tin Heong Chemical Company miscellany: Letters from Zhou Fu-zhi to his uncle".

²⁵ People from the city of Toi Saan, or Tāishān in Mandarin (Hoisaan is the pronunciation in the native dialect).

²⁶ Sān Wuih District. The author's village of Pihng Gōng was within Sān Wuih District, which takes its name from its principal city of Sān Wuih. (以清制言之敘事者為新會縣壽寧鄉灑水都平岡村人)

²⁷ This is the name they gave to the grocery.

²⁸ The name of a business, most likely a wholesaler of Chinese foodstuffs, medicines, etc. (南北貨), many of which were once concentrated around the port district of Sai Wan on Hong Kong Island.

²⁹ This appears to be a personal name.

³⁰ The next section does not appear to be consecutive.

其五

工價旺的是在兄弟借得銀十餘P另與式人三名同往烏矢崙省此時光緒式十年^七八月間由好拔搭船開行三天到烏矢崙境邊經過三小埠六天到偉令頓埠過一夜搭火車七十二米路直到媽市頓埠仔兄弟菜園做東主四名雇工者七名^吾當行馬車每^禮出六日市餘在園做工金^{1P}把種蒔者¹⁸元餘各¹⁸元所做兩年^吾身染大熱病請醫調理廿餘天無效後得東主同落偉令頓埠幸遇鶴山縣人鄭祿牧師在此代為往我華人大店戶取一牌照直入大醫院不過十餘天病體全愈而醫生謂此症須再候月餘方能出院若早出院不久復發在院內戒食物多服藥清除心裡病根熱滯永久不再發生僅留醫七個^禮後方出院不收文錢此時至今五十^年吾無時不念及感德鄭^祿牧師及大醫院醫生之功德永久不忘也

隨後復返媽市頓埠答謝兄弟照料之恩惟^吾自思時當命^口連累兄弟自願辭工別往事因東主上數年每獲工金^{1P}至^{1P}到後第壹年每獲廿餘P第貳年每缺卅餘P所以^吾別離也隨後東主亦自收盤後將全盤給我七名雇工者極廉價每人收卅P幾人同做兩年每年工金卅P左右至後有等返唐或別業惟有我三人承些傢棄此舊園地遷往近埠新開一園連做四年每共獲得式百餘P到港此時光緒廿八年五月初到港後返江門搭渡返三村冲口另有三名兄弟同外返各有攜抬行裡者式名行至三村忠心里間前經過^吾念及答恩於外祖母之恩故囑工人將行裡隨同三兄弟返故鄉^吾

V

Wages had risen³¹, so I borrowed ten or so pounds from a cousin and, with two other men, headed to New Zealand. This was in the 7th or 8th month of the twentieth year of the Gwōng Séuih reign. We caught a boat from Hobart, and three days later arrived at the New Zealand border. We went through three towns and after six days arrived in Wellington, where we spent the night, before taking a seventy-two mile train trip to Masterton, to work on a clansman's³² vegetable garden. There were four owners and seven employees. I drove the cart, going to market six days a week; the rest of the time I spent working in the garden. The pay was £1 a week. The pay for those who did the raking, sowing and planting was 17s. 5d. a week; the pay for others was 15s. a week. I worked there for two years. Then I caught a severe fever. A doctor was called and I rested for twenty days, but to no avail. Then one of my employers³³ took me down to Wellington, where I was fortunate to meet with Pastor Jehng Luhk of Hohk Sāan County, who went to a large Chinese shop, where he obtained a licence for me. I was admitted directly into a large hospital, and before ten or so days had passed, I had recovered. But the doctor said that, with this condition, I would need to wait over a month before leaving hospital, and that if I left early, the disease would soon reappear. He said to avoid eating too much while in hospital and to take medication to eliminate the root cause of the disease, so the feverishness would never again break out. I left the hospital after only seven weeks' treatment: there was no charge. Throughout the fifty years from that time to this day, I have remembered this and felt grateful. The kindness of the Pastor Jehng Luhk and the doctors in that hospital I shall never forget.

Afterwards, I returned to Masterton to thank my cousins for their kindness in looking after me, but I felt that my ill-luck³⁴ at the time would have also caused them trouble. I wished to resign and go elsewhere, because the owners had been earning £40 to £60 a year over the few years before my arrival, and in the year after my arrival 20 or so pounds, and in the second year after my arrival had made a loss of 20 or so pounds. And so on this account I left. Afterwards, the owners closed the business, and then later gave it to us seven employees at a very reasonable price – each owner receiving £20. A few people worked at the business for two years; we each made around £30 a year. Later, some people left the business, and some returned to China, leaving only three of us carrying it along. Then we abandoned this garden and relocated to a nearby settlement, where we started a new garden, which we worked for four years, each year making in total £200 to £300. I then went to Hong Kong. That was in early May of the twenty-eighth year of the Gwōng Séuih reign. After arriving in Hong Kong, I returned to Gōng Mūhn³⁵, where I caught a ferry to Sāam Village Chūng Háu³⁶. With me were three other clansmen also returning from abroad, each of them had two baggage carriers. We walked to the Jūng Sām Neighbourhood of Sāam Village and, as we passed its gate, I thought of returning the kindness of my grandmother's kindness [sic]. So I bade the carriers to take my bags, along with my cousins', back to my home village and I...³⁷

³¹ I am not entirely sure of what is meant by this phrase – it might be simpler to interpret if the previous section of the account was not missing.

³² Or 'on a clansmen's vegetable garden' (plural case).

³³ Or 'some' or 'all' of my employers.

³⁴ What is translated here and in part IX as 'ill-luck' might perhaps also be translated as 'fate'.

³⁵ Now known in English by its Mandarin name, Jiangmén (江門).

³⁶ 'Sāam Village Creek-Mouth'.

³⁷ The next section does not appear to be consecutive.

□五月初返後見祖屋一間而且頹爛故在鄰近買得一廊房一間居住至八月置家後暫可稍閒數十年之勞苦但見里中諸伯叔兄弟勤耕苦鋤獨自無寥而自亦耕種一式分田薯芋或時往山採些柴自用回思我本祖魚塘數十年如故坭沙越填越窄我本祖人口同居一里六條巷口橫過至下空地直約五丈長至下魚塘約四畝左右灣過每三式年幹一次抽丁担塘底沙倒在下塘箕至有與鄰里兄弟常常抄鬧日久如故吾思及往外十餘年到過數埠無不以欲解調和吾雖無黨派九遇善事無不自諒而樂助何況我祖同宗共里是以吾思及日前各兄弟由外洋捐助多款回里吾亦着捐一份以為修建圍牆及門閘種種善事而尚有餘存款項而吾身居不但小族村中最小房敢進及上存之款取出以應建築坭圍牆之費即稟告四房父老同意擇日開工六條巷口水渠用紅毛坭築成直至塘邊以減些坭沙落塘隨後接理祖嘗部兩年照數即前支過些少數項清還及贖回前人典出之祖田九分稅吾返後兩年○三個月所有各數目算清楚交回兄弟管理此時吾囊空如洗故不得已復往外洋而在人家生過銀數百元到處寄回清還原直返鳥矢崙埠New Zealand吾有回頭紙號碼五十五式號因有兄弟約我返好拔埠Hobart全事做因吾前離好拔時未曾取回頭紙不能復往而該兄弟不知何來獲得別姓名人傳給我用港紙卅元冒險前往該水船十名假入籍紙船到美利伴埠Melbourne碼頭關員檢查六名新會人俱係西陳姓三名台山人俱不准登岸因在船中返回香港惟吾三次審問幸吾上十餘年經過該埠而畧曉些英語與關員傳論

VII

* after returning in early May, I found the family house in ruin, so I bought nearby a bedroom and a sideroom, and resided there till August. I was able to enjoy, for a little while, some spare time after settling down. After several decades of toil, I found all the clansmen in the neighbourhood hard at work in the fields, and only myself unoccupied. And so I began working a potato and yam field of one to two tenths of an acre, and at times collecting firewood in the hills for my own use. I thought on the family³⁸ fish pond, which had filled and narrowed with silt over the decades. My family lived together in six lanes of the one neighbourhood. It was around 5-6 chang³⁹ across the entrances of the lanes to the open land at the end, and considering their length, curving round to the fish pond below, the neighbourhood was about four acres in area. Every few years we would get a band of men together to muck out the silt from the pond bed, which we would dump on the bank of the next pond. This led, over the years, to frequent arguments with the clansmen in the next neighbourhood. I thought on the fact that all, in my nigh score years abroad, had been to the end of resolving troubles and bringing harmony. While not political, whenever I encountered a good cause, I was able to appreciate the need and happy to assist; this was no less so in respect of my own family. So I thought on how, in days past, all my cousins had sent monies back home from abroad as assistance, and I thought that I too should make a donation for the cause of repairing and constructing a surrounding wall, and gate, etc. And I had some remaining funds, and while I lived in the smallest house within our humble village, I dared to break into these funds to meet the cost of constructing the surrounding wall of earth⁴⁰. I reported this to the heads of the four houses⁴¹, who agreed on a date to begin the works. We built drains for the six lanes out of cement, right up to the pond's edge, so as to reduce the amount of dirt and sand going into the pond. Afterwards, I took on the family property register⁴², and over two years, according to the figures (the small sums previously paid out), I paid off the tax and redeemed the nine tenths of an acre of family land that had been mortgaged⁴³. Two years and three months after my return, I had all the various figures in order and returned the accounts to my cousins⁴⁴ to manage. I was then penniless and so had no choice but to go abroad once more, and to borrow⁴⁵ several hundred yuan, to be sent back and paid off on arrival. I was originally to return directly to New Zealand ('New Zealand'⁴⁶); I had a return paper, No. 52. But a cousin invited me to return to Hobart ('Hobart') and work with him there. But when I last left Hobart, I had not taken a return paper and so was unable to return; that cousin however, somehow obtained one in another person's name and passed it to me. I took a risk for 30 Hong Kong dollars and headed off. On the boat there were ten people with false entry papers. When the boat arrived at the Melbourne ('Melbourne') docks, the customs officials⁴⁷ checked the six Sān Wuih people, all Chans from Ngāaih Sāi⁴⁸, and the three Hoisanese: none were allowed to disembark; they were stuck on the boat to return to Hong Kong. I alone was interrogated three times. Fortunately I had passed through that city in the past ten or so years and I knew some English. I discussed with the customs official...

³⁸ Family in the sense of members of one (paternal) branch of the clan.

³⁹ A chang (丈) is equal to ten covids (Chinese feet); 5-6 chang here is around 17.25 – 20.7 meters.

⁴⁰ Earth, or possibly mud, clay, or concrete.

⁴¹ Family branches.

⁴² Or 'property registers' (plural case). The register referred to (祖嘗簿) is of a special type, which records family assets, including agricultural land (嘗田), acquired by successive generations of ancestors, and the associated incomings and outgoings. The profit from these assets generally rotates each year to a different male heir, who uses some of it to cover the cost of whole-family ancestral observances and sometimes other family matters. The register is either passed in turn between the recipients or maintained by a single individual. Land held under this system was confiscated by the state and redistributed during the land reform.

⁴³ Subject to a mortgage that involved the conveyance of the land to another private party, who paid an initial sum, somewhat lower than the full value of the land, and then ongoing sums of interest, equivalent to the cost of leasing the land.

⁴⁴ Or 'to a cousin' (singular case).

⁴⁵ He was leant money by someone who charged interest.

⁴⁶ Here the author writes 'New Zealand' in English after writing it in Chinese; he does the same for Hobart and Melbourne later on on this same page.

⁴⁷ Or 'a customs official' (singular case).

⁴⁸ All people of the surname Chan from the Ngāaih Sāi area of Sān Wuih County.

其九

後來必取返自己正名始終無處所至於返回好拔埠
相約之人置之莫理是自取船位返過鳥矢崙埠有一
兄弟見吾相勸他願借貲奉足用交吾開菜園自耕種
三年餘此時四十四歲前單生一女回思不孝有三
將菜園頂出回家得七百元港紙在家一年又要往外
然在人家挪移舟費至年尾家人產一男孩數月內得
接家人信孩兒夭亡命□如斯又至五年間再返歸後
年久家又產雙生男孩二個落地後天亡莫奈如何也
再及我祖塘箕前建築圍數十丈尚有數丈橫箕廣闊
况有樹木故前未曾築建吾往外後又與鄰里兄弟為
風水抄鬧打架傷人又用手榴彈幾乎斃命發生大事
有志明兄弟不敢設法調和後傳至外埠各兄弟聞知
均同樂助以建築橫塘牆之需適值吾該年返唐外各
兄弟委吾敢為此事也三十餘年均皆和睦矣！

公元壹九五壹年式月十五日辛卯元月初十日鍾承朗字

IX

Later I had to get back my real name, but in the end there was nowhere to do it. And after having to return to Hobart, the man who had previously invited me paid no heed. So I took a place on a boat and returned to New Zealand. There I met a clansman who wished to lend me enough capital to open a vegetable garden. I worked that garden for over three years. I was then forty-four years old, and had only fathered a daughter. I thought on the *three ways of being unfilial*⁴⁹. And so I sold off the garden and returned home with seven hundred Hong Kong dollars. After being home for a year I had to go abroad again; but I had to borrow the money for the trip. At the end of the year my wife gave birth to a son. And within a few months I received a letter from my wife: the child had died. Such was still my ill-luck. Five years on, a year or so after returning again, my wife gave birth to twin boys. Both suffered a fall and later died: there was nothing one could do. Post script: A perimeter, several tens of chang in length, had previously been build along the bank of the family pond, but there were still several chang of the long bank which were wide and moreover, had trees, and therefore nothing had been built there. After I went abroad, there were again arguments with the neighbouring clansmen about this, on account of geomancy⁵⁰; there was fighting and people were injured, even hand grenades⁵¹ were used, almost causing the loss of life. In the face of this, cousin Ji Mihng could not find the courage to work towards striking a peace. Later, word passed out to those abroad, who on hearing it, were all happy to aid in the construction of the needed wall along the long bank of the pond. It happened that I was returning to China that year, and so with my cousins abroad entrusting this task to me, I did find the courage to carry it through. All has now been harmonious for over thirty years!⁵²

Jūng Sihng Lóhng,⁵³
15th February 1951 C.E.,
10th January VIIIiv^{54 55}.

⁴⁹ 'There are three ways of being unfilial, the worst of which is being heirless' are, reputedly, the words of the Chinese philosopher Mencius (據孟子孟子曰不孝有三無後為大).

⁵⁰ Chinese geomancy or what is now popularly known as 'fengshui'.

⁵¹ Or 'a hand grenade' (singular case).

⁵² Here the author uses a Western explanation mark in addition to a sentence-final particle (矣) that has the same effect; he does not use punctuation marks elsewhere in the account, which is normal for Chinese written in the traditional way.

⁵³ Zhōng Chénglǎng in Mandarin.

⁵⁴ The second date is given by the Chinese calendar. The year is the 28th of the Chinese sexagesimal cycle, *san maau nin* (辛卯年), which I have represented here as VIIIiv, meaning 8-4, because the figure is composed of two characters, the first being the eighth from the set of ten heavenly stems, which correspond with the numbers one to ten, and the second being the fourth from the set of twelve earthly branches, which correspond with the numbers one to twelve. The heavenly stems and earthly branches form a set of sixty pairs, corresponding to the integers 1 through 60. The pairs are ordered so as to enable one to tell the overall value of any pair from its constituent characters without having to have committed all sixty to memory - the first pair is composed of the 1st stem and the 1st branch, the stems and branches go up in order until the 10th stem is reached, the stems then begin a new cycle, so the 11th pair is composed of the 1st stem and the 11th branch, the branches begin a new cycle at the 13th pair, where the stem is the 3rd and the branch the 1st, all in all the stems cycle six times (6 x 10 = 60) and the branches cycle five times (5 x 12 = 60). One can tell that 8-4 corresponds with 28 because the stem is an 8, which gives the second digit, and the branch is a 4, and the only product of 12 from 1 to 60 that yields a number ending in 8 when 4 is added to it is 24.

⁵⁵ The account is written in a combination of the See Yup language and some classical Chinese. The classical Chinese element lends it an elegance and succinctness; the vernacular element renders it readily intelligible to any educated speaker of at least the dialect used. This style of writing is what is properly called 'vernacular writing' (白話文). The vernacular writing movement began near the end of the Qing dynasty, its motto was 'write as you speak' (我手寫我口), which meant writing in one's mother tongue, whatever Chinese language and dialect that might be. In practice, a certain amount of classical Chinese was generally also used, for rhetorical purposes, or when the writer was not familiar with the written form of words in their own language, or where it was necessary for the writing to remain intelligible to speakers of other Chinese languages and dialects. Recently the term 'vernacular writing' has become something of a weasel word, because the Communists have continued to use it, but in reference to written Mandarin only, which is not the mother tongue, i.e. vernacular, of many Chinese. More recently, the Communists have begun to use the term 'Chinese language' (漢語) specifically for Mandarin, as if other Chinese languages were not Chinese. (Many other Chinese languages, such as Teochew and the See Yup language (the mother tongue of most of the first Chinese to come to Australia), are in fact purer forms of Chinese, i.e. much closer to classical Chinese, than Mandarin, which, while very rich, is something of a bastard (i.e. mixed) language, like English.)

