

**Postgraduate Student Forum**  
**The Chinese University of Hong Kong**  
**21-22 January 2011**

**ETHNOGRAPHIES ON IDENTITIES AND MEANINGS**

**QIAN Siyun (Fudan University)**

*The Triumph of the Weak: An Ethnography of the Shanghai Gumin*

Gumin (a local term which refers to stock investors holding an insignificant amount of shares) is a vast group of investors in the Chinese stock market. With a strong focus on Gumin's everyday life and meanings created within the scattered social spaces of the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE), my paper aims to bring multiple voices to bear on the issue of how much individual will, or agency, affects the way Gumin behave and think, in the face of structural forces that are beyond their control. Compare to other investors, they have been staying in a weak position during the 20 years of the stock market history. This obvious vulnerability of weakness has become intensified with the advent of the global financial crisis in 2008. However, based on ethnographic evidence, I argue that through developing routine strategies that allowed themselves to interact with the country, the market, the economy and the whole society, Gumin were able to find meanings of life in the local social world in which they conformed to norms while persevering personal dignity. This has strong indication of the triumph of the weak, which could lend itself to more optimistic future outlook of the Chinese capital market.

**CHUN See-Ching (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

*Volunteers in Hong Kong Environmental Groups: Idealistic Scolds in a Society Devoted to Consumption*

In Hong Kong is one of the most capitalistic and materialistic societies on earth, there exists an environmental movement at odds with the mainstream comfort-seeking lifestyle. Most people in Hong Kong consider the environmentalists as disturbances to their lives, seeking to restrict their consumption practices, a nuisance to the society as a whole. While there are those employed by various environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), there is also a considerable number of volunteers which help facilitate the works of these organizations. These volunteers work at the ENGOS in their leisure time, sharing in this dream of environmentalism that is being advocated by ENGOS. Through working as a volunteer for various ENGOS in Hong Kong over the past year, I discuss in this paper why these volunteers do what they do in a society that considers them busybodies and scolds.

**ZHANG Meiyin (Fudan University)**

*See Voices: An Ethnographic Perspective on Routine Discourse Practices among Deaf People in Shanghai*

Based on participant observation and in-depth field interview, this paper explores the multiple local social worlds inhabited by Shanghai's deaf people, an extremely diverse group of individuals officially labeled as the disabled people with special needs. Using the intimate perspectives provided by ethnographic fieldwork, I proceed to examine the considerable discrepancy between two radically different systems of communication: the standardized Chinese Sign Language (CSL) and a far more localized, colloquial form of gestures and paralanguage among the ordinary deaf people. My initial findings suggest the CSL has failed to meet the actual needs of the deaf people despite its good intentions. As an attempt to represent the under-represented "voices" of the deaf, I analyze the "code-switching" strategies employed by the younger members of this disadvantaged group and the embedded adaptive wisdom which enabled them to mediate in a liminal state of "between and betwixt." Making explicit links between communal memories, structural power, and particular localities, my study contributes to a deeper understanding of the multi-layered meanings of "being deaf" in contemporary Shanghai in the hope that concrete actions will be taken to help empower the deaf and eliminate social stigma.

**MO Li (Yunnan University)**

*"The Imported Wife of a Dai Village" - The Identity of Myanmar Women in China-Myanmar Cross-Border Marriage*

Since eighties, many Myanmar women chose to marry in China for some reasons. A lot of them have not to become Chinese citizens. How they think about their identity? How the Nation treat them? How about other's view? This paper is based on 2 months fieldwork in a Dai village named Guanchun which is in China-Myanmar border of Yunnan. The writer investigate the life story and current living situation about the Dai wives who came from Myanmar in order to discuss how their national identity and ethnic group identity to be constructed after they married in China.