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## Hakka Village: Chinese Most Treasured Tourist Attraction

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**Abstract:** This paper is about Hakka, a people whom some Chinese took as guests or foreigners in their mist but in the actual sense, they are Han Chinese from the north trying to escape from their pursuers. The paper traced what China was before now; how much the people have suffered due to wars and hunger. It made us to know the effect of these problems was Chinese migration to other nations of the world. This contributed to the foundation of what people now know as Hakka village in Fujian Province of P.R.C. The study had interest in showcasing how Hakka tribe, a rejected stone among the Chinese, has become a yielder of golden egg in Chinese economy as it contributes towards tourism in the southern part of China.

**Keywords:** Hakka; Village; Chinese; Most; Treasured; Tourist; Attraction.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the news in the lips of the people of the world is that China is the second largest economy on earth after United States; that China constitutes the cheapest labour; that China produces for every country and that in the next few years, China may overtake United States economically and militarily. Linguistically, people also think that in the next fifty years, that China may lead the Globe in terms of language judging by the way they are spreading their language and culture, granting scholarship to various students of the Globe through the instrumentality of Confucius Institute. Therefore, talking about world economy in neglect of Zhongguo's emerging economic prowess is to say the least but a mistake and misplacement of priorities.

Among stories told of Zhongguo, was the devastating effect of hunger on the life of the citizenry. Before then, there was so much hunger that a father could call out his entire family members early morning and ask for volunteer among them who would donate one's life for others to live. It was told that before then, a Chinese man could marry between two and seven or more wives. Each of these seven wives as learnt then could bear up to fifteen children. It then means that everything being equal and each of the seven wives bears 15 children, a total number of children given to the man by his seven wives, would be 15 multiplied by 7 which equals 105 children. If we move farther to add the seven wives and the man himself, the man's family size will then rise to 113 individual consumers. One therefore need not wonder why China is the largest populated nation.

It is interesting to know that in as much as some men married many wives with the intention to produce more children who eventually would help in the farm work thereby producing more for the family's table, this idea of Chinese, turned out to be negative. It was so because there was little or no land to cultivate. In concert with this, Anedo avers that 66% of Chinese land is mountainous (Anedo, 2014). This being a fact, one understands that the remaining 34% constitutes the waters, habitable lands and the farm lands. In China, arable land per capita is 0.1 ha (Zhou).

One now imagines how much land remains for agriculture if we are to minus percentage of waters and habitable land. We understand that China is the world largest population; about 1.5 billion inhabitants. Of course, people may be seen in china so poor that, unable to provide their infants with food, they expose them in the streets (Mote, 2000). So they were faced with the problem of feeding the populace. It was told that for a family to live, a father sometimes, call out his family members in the morning and solicit for one's donation of life for others to feed on and live instead of all of them dying at a time. It was understood that some children donate for others to live but whereby no one oblique, the father might point at any of them and asked others to prepare him for food for others to live. In concord with this, Mote says ... a man sometimes sells his son or even himself and his family for a very small price, the Government, so attentive in other matters, closes its eyes to these difficulties and this frightful spectacle is repeated every day (Mote, 2000).

As a result of this, it was not surprising that many Chinese started migrating to other nations like Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Taiwan and other surrounding Asian nations in search of jobs and food. Today, we have many Chinese nationalities in all these nations contributing to their population and development. It was understood that Chinese migration to other Asian countries was not only due to hunger caused by over population and scarcity of arable lands but also as a result of series of wars which they faced. Chinese had history of over 5000 years of wars

with nations such as the Mongolia, Manchu, Japan, and others which defeated and enslaved them. Some were taken to Britain and America where they constructed tunnels with their bare hands and did other hard jobs.

One has to understand that China was led by many Emperors under dynasties, fought many wars and defeated by many Emperors. This history dated back before 1600B.C. We read of the introduction of Buddhism into Chinese life which had a great impact on their daily life (Valerie, 2000). Buddhism entered China during the period of division between the third and the sixth centuries and continued to grow during the succeeding Sui (589-618) and Tan (618-907) dynasties. However, before the introduction of Buddhism, there has been Daoism and Confucian culture. Nevertheless, one could see Buddhism to have impacted more on ordinary Chinese life.

We need to note that because of abuse of power by emperors, regents, evil ministers and eunuchs, causing suffering to ordinary people, there were quick changes and successions in Chinese dynastic cycles. As a result, China in succession found herself under the leadership of Qin Empire, Mongol, Manchu, Buddhist missionaries from India, Russia, Japan, and other powerful leaders from the North.

China encountered so much war that sometimes, a ruling dynasty sought to erect a barrier around China's borders. To the North, it built Great Wall. However, because the dynasty could not construct a similar barrier to the east along its coast, it banned private ownership of boats and all private trading. It passed a series of regulations designed to make all contact with foreigners difficult. What it means was that the southern part was not actually protected. It was unfortunate that the earlier Chinese leaders clicked onto same dehumanization of their subjects after the Americans, Mongolians, Manchurians and others' styles who defeated and ruled them. As a result of these sufferings in the land, the few strong ones kept on moving, taking all the available lands and finishing all other inhuman activities which American, Britain and their other pursuers could not do on the weak members of the populace. No wonder Anedo quoting Spencer, says that only the fit keeps going (Anedo, 2015). The people therefore had to take their security into their hands. Some people then took to digging holes and or tunnels and lived in there to protect themselves from powerful forces. For some others, they climbed mountains, got to the foot of the mountains and built mighty round houses surrounded by Rocky Mountains. This style of house is known in China as the Hakka house or Hakka village and the inhabitants are the Hakka people.

**Figure-1.** A Typical Hakka Village Surrounded By Mountains



Source: <http://www.chinabackpacker.info/dest/d70.html>

Figure-2. Outside View of Hakka Tulou



Figure-3. An Inner View of a Typical Hakka Tulou



Source: [https://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/fujian/fuzhou/earth\\_tower.htm](https://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/fujian/fuzhou/earth_tower.htm)

## 2. History of Hakka People and Settlement

On our visit to Hakka village on December 12, 2009, as students of Xiamen University, Xiamen, students began to ask questions on how the people started to exist and from where or how they managed to migrate to the places they were seen especially at the early time when there was nothing like vehicles, bicycles or easier means of transport. There were possible answers from our tourist guard, Liwen Lin on who the Hakka people are and how they got to where they are. She narrated how people were trying to save their lives during the many wars faced by Chinese. She said that Hakka people were among those that escaped from the Chinese enemies and that they started having the type of house they live in as a way of protecting their lives. Liwen Lin revealed that the existence of the Hakka people were unknown to the Chinese people until the coming of the Americans who were hovering over Chinese airspace with their helicopter, saw them and managed to get down there. She queried, how could one have known that human beings were there since the areas were surrounded by mountains? (Liwen, 2009). About one of the areas visited, Liwen Lin narrated how the ancestor of the place whom she described as hardworking brave young man, built three round houses and later, when he saw that his family size has increased, he build additional for four round houses to accommodate his family. He cultivated tea plants round the compound as if it was flower beds.

Apart from narration from the Xiada students' tourist guard, there are other stories related to the history of Hakka people. It was understood that some scholars of Hakka origin and non-Hakka scholars also agree that the ancestors of those who later became known as "Hakka" were Chinese but that they came from southern Shanxi, Henan, and Anhui in north-central China. This is in concord with Liwen Lin narration that they were the people running for their lives as evidenced here,

*Once the success of Uriyangkhadai's campaign in Yunnan seemed assured, Mongke had began to give serious consideration to a large-scale and direct attack on the Southern Sung. Starring in 1254, Mongolian raids and reconnaissance along the Song's northern borders were stepped up, and a program of political warfare was initiated, designed to induce Sung frontier officials to defeat (Herbert and Denis, 2008).*

It was learnt that from the beginning of Chinese organized culture, these early Hakka gradually moved southward in five successive waves of migration hence, Hakka, whose origins stem from Northern China are unique in their culture and dialect, despite being a major branch of the Han ethnic group (Winnie, 2012). One thing that is clear is the fact that no one can claim to have known the exact time and sequence of the earliest migrations. Most historians place the first migration during the fourth century at the fall of the Western Jin dynasty, when Hakka ancestors reached as far south as Hubei, south Henan, and central Jiangxi. The next period is less debated. By the late ninth and early tenth centuries, with the disorder created during the late Tang dynasty, the ancestors of the present-day Hakka moved farther south into Jiangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong. It was Fujian that Hakka people got to Taiwan hence; all of you should know that I, Lee Teng-hui, am a Hakka. Many of the Mainland China's leaders are also Hakkas. Hakka people are brilliant, isn't it? (Lee Teng-hui, 2000). The third wave, which stretched from the beginning of the twelfth century to the middle of the seventeenth, was caused by the exodus of the Southern Song dynasty and their supporters in a southward flight from the Mongol invasion. This dislodged people from Jiangxi and southwestern Fujian and forced them further into the northern and eastern quarters of Guangdong. By the end of the Yuan dynasty (A.D. 1368), northern and eastern Guangdong was exclusively Hakka. The fourth wave, which lasted from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, began with the Manchu conquest, and during the Qing dynasty, migration expanded into the central and coastal areas of Guangdong, Sichuan, Guangxi, Hunan, Taiwan, and southern Guizhou. By the time of the fifth wave, beginning at the middle of the nineteenth century, conflicts between the Hakka and the Yue increased. Triggered by population pressure, the Hakka-Bendi (Yue) Wars, and the large Hakka involvement in the Taiping Rebellion, the fifth wave of migration sent Hakka emigrants to seek better lives farther afield to the southern part of Guangdong, to Hainan Island, and overseas to Southeast Asia (especially Malaya and Borneo). The establishment of the People's Republic of China and China's announcement of the intent to reclaim Hong Kong in 1997 has created what might be called the sixth wave of migration, which has

continued the flow of Hakka overseas, especially to the United States, Australia, and Canada. This is to say that Hakka people are not encircled in one area. However, the Hakka concerned here is the Hakka in Fujian and neighbouring Province.

*The Hakkas are able to mould outstanding military men, their hardworking conduct having been developed through years of arduous livelihood in the mountainous regions. Praises of the Guangdong spirit by the Japanese actually refer to the Hakka spirit. A big majority of the officers and soldiers in the Guangdong army are Hakkas, the distinguished successes of Hakka military men have been attested by the modern history of China (Zhang, 1980).*

Being refugees according to their history, the Hakka have had a history of conflict and competition with other Chinese groups over scarce land and resources. In Fujian, it was told that they suffered from hostile relations with Min, and in Guangdong they fought with Yue speakers. These were their hosts. Hakka-Yue conflicts were particularly violent throughout the middle of the nineteenth century, in the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion, and during the Hakka-Bendi Wars (1854-1867). These are the reasons why some scholars described Hakka people as non Chinese hence the name, HAKKA, meaning GUESTS. However, evidence that Mongolians and other Chinese Northern neighbors had wars at which China was defeated is enough to support that Hakka are of northern Chinese origins. In the People's Republic of China therefore the Hakka are officially included in the category of Han Chinese.

### 3. Hakka Village as a Tourist Centre

Stepping on Chinese land especially, in Fujian Province without a visit to Hakka village constitutes a loss to a foreigner. This is likened to one going to Idah in Kogi State of Nigeria without a visit to Amina's statues at the river side. While in People's Republic of China as a researcher and a student in Xiamen, I was opportune to exercise my eyes on the exciting sites of Hakka. It was during the occasion of oversea students' expedition organized by a ninety five year old Xiamen University. Before then, notice was put across to all the Oversea Students that on December 12, something like that would happen. Interested students were asked to pay ten *kuai*. This does not mean that we paid for the expedition rather it was a measure to know the number of interested students and to know how ready one was to embark on such journey. Of course, it helped the management to free itself from wasting resources. Actually, we later got the refund of our deposits.

Before getting to Hakka village, we visited so many exciting places and tasted so many kinds of Chinese menus some of which were, crab, bamboo and other things which names I do not know what to call in English but they are good of course. In fact one needs to taste bamboo. Tasting bamboo if one is not told, one would not know that it is. We visited a seven storey mud round house inhabited by one hundred and ten families. This seven storey building has only one entrance. It has no windows outside it. It situates in between high mountains. In fact, it is in the valley encircled by rocky mountain. This house is known as a Hakka village. This house was said to have been gutted by fire and so was reduced to five floors.

According a respondent through an interpreter, the early Hakka ancestors traveling from north China entered Fujian first, then by way of the Ting river they traveled to Guangdong and other parts of China, as well as overseas. Thus, the Tingjiang River is also regarded as the Hakka Mother River, said the respondent.

It was observed that the Hakka people who settled in the mountainous region of south-western Fujian province developed a unique form of architecture known as the *tulou* (土樓), literally meaning "earthen structures". The *tulou* are round or square and were designed as a combined large fortress and multi-apartment building complex. The structures typically have only one entrance-way, with no windows at ground level. Each floor serves a different function: the first floor contains a well and livestock, the second food storage, and the third and higher floors living spaces. *Tulou* were built to withstand attack from bandits and marauders.

However, in one of the houses, visited, the first floor is kitchen. The second floor is the toilet. The rooms in the third floor have bathrooms. They have spaces for everything; space for ceremonies such as weddings and burial ceremonies. There are also deep well in there which serves as source of drinking water. They have a shrine where adherents of folk religion, Buddhist and Taoist do worship their gods. The religious practices of Hakka people are therefore, almost identical to those of other Han Chinese. Ancestor veneration is the primary form of religious expression and so Lee Wei Ling says, and I nearly broke down, but I won't break down. I am a Hakka woman. So, farewell, Papa. I will miss you. Rest in peace and... Be as tough as Hakkas come (Lee, 2015). More evidences of ancestral reverence among Hakka people abound in the following statements: In order to maintain ethnic identity and attachment, the Hakka people have adopted such strategies as amending pedigrees, combining clan organizations and building ancestral temples (Zhou, 2007). Moreover, ancestral worship is important to Hakka culture, with highly sophisticated sacrificial ceremonies and rituals being regularly practiced (Winnie, 2012). There was also market for all their needs and a pit toilet which according to our tourist guard, has never been filled with human excreta.

We later got to another village, about five kilometers from the seven storey building. In the village we saw four round houses in one square house. The houses were said to have been built in 1770 during the Qin dynasty. The place according to Liwen Lin, our tourist guard, was found by the ancestor of the village. He was a very brave and hardworking young man. He built three houses first but when he saw that they were increasing in population, they built more four round houses. We could see how they planted some crops especially tea plants and arranged it like flowers round the environment as a cover. These houses have same projection and only one entrance. No windows are found in the first, second, third and fourth floors outside except the last floor and that is for protection, said the tourist guard. One could easily notice that the front was made of stone and anything made of stone is believed to be

strong. They have inscriptions on the walls which tell about their writing styles. The name of this family is yellow family as the inscription tells visitors. The yellow house has three floors with seventy eight rooms. In one of the village houses we visited, we experienced a different character from others. One elderly woman about 98 years, warned us not to take a picture of her when she saw that our camera was focused towards her. One significant thing among all the villages visited was their ability of having shrines in there, source of drinking water, toilet, kitchen, daily market and everything needed to qualify a place, an autonomous community.

#### 4. Conclusion

As a the saying that travelling is part of education, if I did not travel to China and to Fujian Province in particular, I would be thinking that round houses are only the African cultural heritage. It was interesting to observe though, different structured, that round houses also are being enjoyed in elsewhere Asia. Necessity they say, is the mother of invention. Tulou by Hakka people were made out of the need for proper protection. The earth tower of Hakka has a history of one thousand years ago when some of the original Hakka migrated and settled at the sparse Yongding area. In order to protect themselves against bandits and wild beasts, they used local materials to build tall, multi-storey circular earthen buildings where a whole family or clan could live in. These are the earth towers that we saw and known as Hakka Village.

The towers were constructed with fire-resistive materials that are practically impregnable. They are spacious and they are made up of different shapes like square, rectangular, semi-circular and round. The ones that are round in shape are the most famous. They are of three sizes, small, medium and big. The small ones are usually 2 to 3 storey tall with a single ring and have 21 to 28 rooms. The medium buildings are usually three to four storeys tall with a large inner open space, in single or double rings and containing thirty to forty rooms. The larger round buildings are usually four to seven storeys tall. These consist of three rings and could be demarcated into 50 to 80 rooms. Though, we could not measure the diameter of the buildings each of them could be about a diameter of 70-80 meters. It is a 'group-oriented' residence, usually with one main entrance. Its wall is usually around 1 meter thick. The main entrance door is padded with iron sheet and is locked by 2 horizontal wood bars. The wooden bars retract into the walls in order to open the door.

Inside the entrance is a huge central courtyard where all the doors of the rooms and inner windows open facing it. Normally, the rooms at the ground level, except the hall and the staircases, are used as kitchens and dining rooms. The rooms on the second floor are used for storage and those on the third level are used as bedrooms. The rooms at each level are identical. In front of each room, there is an open round hallway and usually there are 4 staircases to move from one level to another. It is said that during the Ming Dynasty, Japanese pirates who intruded the coastal areas, always left the Hakka's tulou areas alone.

The construction of the earth buildings signifies the wisdom and creativeness of the ancestors of the Hakka settlers in Fujian province of the People's Republic of China. It closes the gaps between Chinese architecture history and the world architecture history and is regarded as a miraculous wonder by thousands of students and tourists who have been enchanted by its beauty. In fact, tulou represent the most tourist attraction that generates a lot of income to the Government of Fujian Province in the People's Republic of China and the people of Hakka. By this, Hakka people termed guests or strangers by some Chinese people in the early time, now constitute the most income generating community for the Government of People's Republic of China. In other words, it may not be a mistake for one to qualify Hakka people as the rejected stone that has become the cornerstone of the house.

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