

City University of Hong Kong
香港城市大學

**Types of Ethnic Relations and
Entrepreneurship of Chinese Migrants:
A Case Study on Remittance Letters Between
Singapore and Chaoshan of China in 1921-1955**
**宗親關係的種類與華人移民企業：
新加坡和潮汕僑批(1921-1955) 研究案例**

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ABSTRACT

The role of ethnic relations has a complicated relationship with entrepreneurship. To study the impact of different types of ethnic relations on entrepreneurship, remittance artifacts written by a migrant in Singapore to his ethnic relations in Chaoshan are analyzed. These 433 artifacts include letters and envelopes sent by the subject from Singapore to Chaoshan and replies from his ethnic relations from 1921 to 1955. Supplement analysis of eighteen remittance houses' advertisements on newspapers is also performed. Although the study period is in 1921-1955, enterprise still occurs among new migrants in different parts of the world due to transnational and internal migration.

The letters are divided into minimal content units, of which those pertaining to entrepreneurship are used for this study. Each of these units is examined for connections with the various types of ethnic relations. The focus is on four types of ethnic relations, namely, blood relations, lineage relations, geographical relations, and occupational relations. Examination of the artifacts shows that different ethnic relations had different effects on the migrant's attempts at enterprise.

Based on the remittance artifacts, blood, lineage, geographical, and occupational relationships play different roles in developing enterprise at different points in time. While blood relations provided both an inspirational and motivational component to the subject's enterprising, it also created conflicting priorities. Lineage relations provided minimal financial support for enterprise. Geographical and occupational relations provided more substantial financial support. This study can be summarized in a Chinese idiom, especially in the stages of an individual's life in enterprise development, "At home one relies on one's parents, and outside on one's friends (在家靠父母, 出門靠朋友)".