

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/18940> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Cai, Xiang-yu

Title: Christianity and gender in South-East China : the chaozhou missions (1849-1949)

Date: 2012-05-10

CHAPTER SEVEN: MISSIONS, THE NEEDLEWORK AND GENDER

Introduction

New western techniques of needlework, which included drawn-thread work, cross-stitch, crochet and embroidery, was introduced into the Chaozhou region by Western missionaries and became the prevailing handicraft among thousands of women. In the 1930s, the art emerged as the most important export product in the form of Swatow handkerchiefs and tablecloths. Its spread and popularity exerted a widespread influence on both the economic landscape and the social life of the Chaozhou region throughout the twentieth century. Nowadays, a piece of Swatow needlework beautifully embroidered with elaborate patterns still has the power to enthrall many customers. Compared with traditional Chaozhou embroidery, in the more modern work it is the drawn-thread sections which are the most distinctive element, even though the more elaborate styles of Western needlework in fact use a variety of still other stitches and techniques. Because of this distinctiveness, the phrase *chousha* (抽纱), the exact translation of “drawn-thread”, was the formal terminology adopted in the 1930s to indicate all Western technique needlework products. Informally, it was called *fanhua* (番花, ‘barbarian patterns’), a phrase indicating its exotic origin. *Zuoshoubu* (做手布, ‘making a handkerchief’, the most common export product in the 1930s)⁷⁴⁹ was the word most commonly used to indicate the profession of those who engaged in this industry. Drawn-thread work was also categorized as white work embroidery because in the Western world it was traditionally done in white thread on white fabric, another element which distinguished itself from the colourful Chaozhou embroidery (see Figure 28).⁷⁵⁰

749 Handkerchiefs made up 70% of the export needlework between 1934 and 1941, the heyday of the needlework industry in Chaozhou, *History*, p.8

750 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawn_thread_work#Needlelace_and_Drawn-thread_work, consulted in January 2011.



Figure 28: A piece of drawn-thread handkerchief made in Swatow (hand-made, modern)

Since 1949 articles on Swatow needlework have appeared regularly in newspapers, academic journals and business magazines and continue to do so right up to the present.⁷⁵¹ The first scholar who did solid research on this industry was Theodore Herman from Colgate University.⁷⁵² He demonstrated its economic importance to Swatow in the years 1917-1949, and drew attention to the cultural factors, the production patterns (putting-out system) and the circuit of production (with Swatow as the centre and its connections with the surrounding areas). Most of his information on trade flows and business practices was derived from personal interviews with Mr Fred Maloof, who ran one of the biggest needlework companies in Swatow between 1925 and 1949,⁷⁵³ and on documentation provided by Mr Irving S. Brown, who served with the Chinese Maritime Customs between 1923 and 1931 and later made several cost-benefit analyses of the needlework industry for the US Bureau of Customs.⁷⁵⁴ So far, Herman has been the only Western scholar to have written about the history of this needlework, but a dozen Chinese reports and articles have been available since the 1950s.

Two reports by the Swatow Needlework Guild were published in 1950 and 1959 respectively, the

751 There were three articles on the lace and needlework industry printed in newspaper in 1949, see: 《潮汕抽纱业近况》, 香港《华侨日报》, 1949年1月17-18日; 《我国花边工业概况》, 《工商日报》, 1949年6月12日; 温洒凡: 《潮安的抽纱刺绣业》, 《联合日报》1949年6月26日. Archives of needlework industry collected in the Shantou Municipal Archives. 卢继定: 《潮汕刺绣与抽纱》, 《中华手工》, 2006年05期; 《汕头抽纱史上重要的普通人》, 2007年6月21日; 《潮州对潮汕抽纱事业的贡献》, 《潮州日报》, 2009年11月25日. For the workers/businessmen who engaged in this industry in the Chaozhou region, see: Kang Weiguo 康维国, “Chousha dawang Weng Jintong” 《抽纱大王翁锦通》 [Weng Jintong, the King of Needlework], *Qiyeyanjiu* 《企业研究》 [Studies on Enterprise], vol.4, 1996; 余世和: 《追求完美的女企业家——记饶平信荣织造有限公司董事长黄惜荣》, *Chaoshan Businessman*, 2008 (1); 高峰: 《学历史智慧 (一) ——从幼年的故事说起》, 2010年2月19日.

752 Theodore Herman, “Cultural Factors”, pp. 122-128.
753 The interview took place in April 21, 1952. See Theodore Herman, Note 12, “Swatow Lace and Needlework Industry”, p.126.

754 Ibid., Two letters from Mr Brown dated Nov. 28, 1952, and Feb. 24, 1953.

former entitled “*Introduction to the Past and Present of the Handicraft Industry of Needlework in Chaoshan*” (shortened to “*Introduction*”),⁷⁵⁵ the latter *A History of the Development of Chaoshan⁷⁵⁶ Needlework and its General Circumstances* (shorted to “*History*”).⁷⁵⁷ The purpose of these two reports was to provide references for the newly founded People’s Republic of China which would help it determine its policy towards the needlework industry. To facilitate this goal, a brief history and detailed statistics were provided. Written by different groups of people, these two reports have different emphases and supplement each other. Unfortunately, they have seldom been quoted by those scholars whose work was published between 1980 and 2010.

These thirty years can be divided into three periods: before 1995, 1995-2006, 2007-2010. Chen Zhuofan’s (陈卓凡) research is the work which stood out most prominently in the 1980s.⁷⁵⁸ Unaware of Herman’s article and the two preceding reports, he also traces the origin, development and decline of the needlework industry. He has done so from the local perspective, including the management of the foreign and Chinese factories in Swatow, the production patterns (putting-out system), different types of work and the origin of the various raw materials (textiles) and the regional distribution of different types of needlework. If Herman looked at the industry from the outside, Chen Zhuofan has looked at it from the inside, paying attention to the exploitation of the female workers by the compradors of foreign-owned factories.

Since the mid-1990s, local scholars have been trying to promote “Chaoshan Culture” as a regional culture distinguished by special characteristics. Many books about the migration of the Hoklo to Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, South-East Asia and all over the world have been compiled, including the biographies of prominent Hoklo scholars, experts and businessmen. The handicraft of needlework is regarded as a traditional, important element of this regional culture by such scholars as Guo Mafeng and Wei Qiuying (1999),⁷⁵⁹ Chen Zehong (2001),⁷⁶⁰ and Yang Jianping (2005).⁷⁶¹ They have all continued to take the same line as that adopted in Chen Zhuofan’s research, adding their own anthropological and sociological insights. They have agreed that this craft was introduced into the Chaozhou region by foreign women missionaries, but did not know precisely by whom or when. As they were unable to consult the Western sources, several versions of the introduction of this craft

755 Shantoushi chousha gongye tongye gonghui 汕头市抽纱工业同业公会 [Swatow Needlework Guild], *Chaoshan chousha shougongye zhi jinxi gaishu*《潮汕抽纱手工业之今昔概述》[Introduction to the Past and Present of the Handicraft Industry of Needlework in Chaoshan], May 1950.

756 “Chaoshan” is short for Chaozhou and Shantou (Swatow).

757 Chaoshan chousha dangan xiaozu bian 潮汕抽纱公司档案小组编 [Archival committee of the Chaoshan Needlework Company ed.], *Chaoshan chousha fazhanshi he jiben qingkuang (chugao)*《潮汕抽纱发展史和基本情况 (初稿)》 [History of the Development of Chaoshan Needlework and Its General Situation], Aug. 1959.

758 Chen Zhuofan 陈卓凡, “Chaoshan choushaye de qiyuan jiqi gailue”《潮汕抽纱业的起源及其概略》 [Origin and Situation of the Drawn-thread Work Industry in Chaoshan], *Guangdong Wenshi Ziliao Jingbian*《广东文史资料精编》, Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, December 2008.

759 Guo Mafeng 郭马风, Wei Qiuying 魏影秋, *Chaoshan meisu taociyu cixiu chousha*《潮汕美术陶瓷与刺绣抽纱》 [Fine Arts, Porcelain, Embroidery and Drawn-thread Work in Chaoshan], Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, January 1999. (based on Chen Zhuofan)

760 Chen Zehong 陈泽泓, *Chaoshan wenhua gaishuo*《潮汕文化概说》 [Introduction on Chaoshan Culture], Guangzhou: Guangzhou renmin chubanshe, 2001.

761 Yang Jianping 杨坚平, *Chaoxiu chousha*《潮绣抽纱》 [Chaozhou Embroidery and Drawn-thread Craft], Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, November 2005. (based on Chen Zhuofan and Chen Zehong)

appeared, even though both Herman and Chen Zhuofan had already pointed out that Sophia Norwood and Lida Scott Ashmore were the mothers of this industry.

Lee Kam Keung (2007, 2009),⁷⁶² a Hong Kong historian, did not consult the two reports or the works of Herman and Chen Zhuofan but, by using the archives of the churches, he cleared up the mysterious origins of this industry, a subject with which Guo Mafeng and Wei Qiuying (1999), Chen Zehong (2001), and Yang Jianping (2005) had wrestled before him. He reached the same conclusion as Chen Zhuofan, contending that Sophia Norwood and Lida Scott Ashmore introduced industrial needlework into the Chaozhou region. He revealed the close relationship between Christianity and the Hoklo entrepreneurs who ran the needlework business in Hong Kong. Twenty-seven years earlier, Chen Zhuofan had already pointed out that “most of the needlework compradors had graduated from the Anglo-Chinese School [which was also called the Sino-English School, 华英, in Chinese sources, CXy] which was founded by the Church in Swatow, or were Christians who had studied in the UK or the US”,⁷⁶³ but he had not drawn any conclusion about the influence the churches might have exerted.⁷⁶⁴

762 Lee Kam Keung, “Tongxiang, tongye, tongxinyang—Yi “Lügang chaoren zhonghua jidujiaohui” wei ge’an de yanjiu” 《同乡、同业、同信仰——以“旅港潮人中华基督教会”为个案的研究（1923-1938）》 [Came from the same place of birth, engaged in the same industry and sharing the same belief—a case study of the “Chaozhou Christians in Hong Kong, the Church of Christ in China”], Wu Yixiong 吴义雄 ed., *Difang shehui wenhua yu jindai zhongxi wenhua jiaoliu* 《地方社会文化与近代中西文化交流》 [The Culture of Local Society and the Sino-Western Intercourse in Modern China], Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010. Lee Kam Keung, *A Centennial History*.

763 He mentioned that “抽纱洋行买办大多数是出身于汕头基督教主办的华英学校（该校以培植买办和传教士为目的），或留学英美的教徒。”，see Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.329.

764 Although Lu Jiding gives a rather confused statement about the origins of needlework in 2006, his articles in 2007 and 2009 remedied this mistake and shed light on the initial stages of the industrialization of needlework in the Chaozhou region. See Lu Jiding 卢继定, “Chaoshan cixiu yu chousha” 《潮汕刺绣与抽纱》 [Embroidery and Drawn-thread Craft in Chaoshan], *Zhonghua shougong* 《中华手工》, Vol. 5, 2006; “Shantou chousha shi shang zhongyao de putongren” 《汕头抽纱史上重要的普通人》 [Important Ordinary People in the History of the Drawn-thread Work Industry in Shantou], *Shantou ribao* 《汕头日报》 [Shantou Daily], June 24, 2007; “Chaozhou dui chaoshan chousha shiye de gongxian” 《潮州对潮汕抽纱事业的贡献》 [The Contribution of Chaozhou to the Drawn-thread Work Industry in Chaoshan], *Chaozhou ribao* 《潮州日报》 [Chaozhou Daily], November 25, 2009. Nowadays fewer and fewer Chaozhou women earn a living from needlework. Since 2007, the Shantou Municipal Government has been planning to protect this handicraft in the context of the “intangible provincial cultural heritage”. Lu Jiding’s researches in 2007 and 2010 were closely connected with this initiative. The same goes for Ke Yudan (柯宇丹), an expert on textiles, who has made a comparison between needlework in Shandong, Jiangsu and Chaozhou, and describes the different techniques predominating in these regions. See Ke Yudan 柯宇丹, “Shilun dui Chaoshan chousha gongyi de baohu yu chuancheng” 《试论对潮汕抽纱工艺的保护与传承》 [The Protection and Inheritance of Chaoshan Artex], *Huizhou xueyuan xuebao* 《惠州学院学报（社会科学版）》 [Journal of Huizhou College], Vol. 30, the 1st Issue, February 2010; “Chaoshan chousha gongyi de yishu tezheng tanxi” 《潮汕抽纱工艺的艺术特征探析》 [Research on the Artistic Characteristics of the Drawn-thread Craft in Chaoshan], *Yishu tansuo* 《艺术探索》 [Art Exploration], Vol. 24, the 1st Issue, February 2010. For a concise history of the lace and needlework industry in a specific village, see Zhang Haiou 张海鸥 ed., *Gurao xiangzhi* 《谷饶乡志》 [Gazetteer of the Gurao Village], Shaoshan wenhua duiwai jiaoliu zhongxin 潮汕文化对外交流中心, Taiguo Chaoyang Guraoxiang Zhangshi qinzuhui chuban 泰国潮阳谷饶乡张氏亲族会出版, August 2001. (based on Chen Zhuofan and Guo Mafeng). For the (Christian) businessmen who engaged in this industry in Shanghai and Hong Kong, see Shanghai: Zhan Yijian 詹益建, “Chaoren zaihu de choushaye” 《潮人在沪的抽纱业》 [The Drawn-thread Industry Run by the Chaozhou People in Shanghai], *Shantou shizhi* 《汕头史志》, Vol. 4, 1995. Shi Gan 石干, Liu Yonglan 刘咏兰, “Lishi de baojiang——Chaoren chousha hangyu yu yinghua shoupaye lueying” 《历史的褒奖——潮人抽纱行业与印花手帕业掠影》 [A Brief Introduction to the Drawn-thread Work and Printed Handkerchief Industries in Shanghai], *Chaoren xianbei zai Shanghai* 《潮人先辈在上海》 [Pioneer Chaozhou People in Shanghai], Shantou: Chaoshan lishi wenhua yanjiu zhongxin 潮汕历史文化研究中心 [Chao-Shan History and Culture Research Centre] & Shantou daxue chaoshan wenhua yanjiu zhongxin 汕头大学潮汕文化研究中心 [Chao-Shan Culture Studies Centre, Shantou University], 2001. (based on Zhan Yijian).

As I discussed in Chapter 3, Dana Robert emphasized the importance of the domestic training⁷⁶⁵ of Christian women to enable them to make a Christian Home: “Although domestic training and the Christian home were not the same thing, domestic training was always considered an essential part of the economy of the Christian home”.⁷⁶⁶ ... “Besides reading, sewing was undoubtedly the most popular subject taught by missionary women and sought by indigenous women. Doing one’s own sewing not only clothed the clean and orderly Christian family, but needlework provided income for women with children in economies that limited their options for gainful employment.”⁷⁶⁷ Robert provides a new perspective which helps to understand the ideological background of the needlework in the Christian congregation. She reminds the reader that “generalizations about the economic and social impact of girls’ domestic training must therefore be nuanced by examination of the context.”⁷⁶⁸ As spiritual bodies, the American Baptist Church, the English Presbyterian Church and the French Roman Catholic Church all kept remarkably silent about their relationship with the needlework industry but recently Lee Kam Keung and the other sources have uncovered that a large number of Christians, both men and women, were engaged in this industry. Therefore, my intention in this chapter is to trace the divergent policies adopted by the ABM and the MEP on the one hand and the EPM on the other in managing their needlework enterprises. This decision involves studying the economic and social impact of the needlework industry on the Christian and non-Christian needle workers, both male and female, in the Chaozhou region.

I shall do so by addressing the following questions: 1. What did needlework mean to a Christian woman? 2. What were the differences in policy between the ABM/MEP and the EPM in managing their needlework enterprises? 3. How did the Christian needlework entrepreneurs contribute to the self-support of the churches in the Chaozhou region? 4. What was the division of labour between the Christian men and women engaged in this industry? 5. How did it influence the migration routes of the Hoklo in the twentieth century? 6. How did it transform the lives of the Hoklo women? Besides the research already mentioned, I shall use a range of other sources, both primary and secondary. For the history of the American Baptist Church, the general histories by Lida Scott Ashmore (1920) and Emanuel H. Giedt (1946) have been consulted, in addition to the publications by the committee of the history of Lingdong Baptist Church (1932, 1936).⁷⁶⁹ In researching the matter in the English Presbyterian church, the Synod records of the English Presbyterian Church (1918-1948) provide information about Hou Yichu (侯乙初) and Zhang Guchun (张固纯), both of them leaders of the Swatow Needlework guild and at the same time either minister or elder of the Swatow Presbyterian

765 When referring to “domestic science” (家政课) in the Chaozhou context, both the American Baptist Church and the English Presbyterian Church meant doing needlework. For the former see the curriculum of the Women’s School listed by Ashmore: “Daughters in the Home; The Mother in the Home; Hygiene; First Aid; Sunday School Normal Work; Practice Teaching; Studies in Personal Work; Practical Work; Nature Study; Story Telling; Care and Feeding of Children; Child Study; Social Service; Sociology; Domestic Science; Instrumental and Vocal Music”, see Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, pp.95-96; for the latter see Zeng Derong’s account: “我们还有家政课, 学习手工, 例如绣花, (我们)学的是十二(字)绣...”, Du Shimin, *The Christian Girls School*, p.59.

766 Robert, “The ‘Christian Home,’” p.155.

767 Ibid., p.156.

768 Ibid., p.155.

769 Ashmore, *The South China Mission. A Special Issue, The Good News for Lingdong*, Giedt, *Early Mission History*.

Church. These sources have been supplemented by the archives on the needlework industry in Swatow⁷⁷⁰ and biographies of Christians engaged in this industry.⁷⁷¹ Oral accounts provided by four graduates of the Presbyterian Shude Girls' School and recorded by Du Shimin (杜式敏) have also been quoted,⁷⁷² supplemented by five interviews I did with three non-Christian women (one a professional needlewoman, two who worked at this craft in their youth as a part-time job) and one Roman Catholic sister, Li Xuzhen (李绪珍) plus Huang Zhiren (黄志仁), the son of a Baptist Church leader.⁷⁷³

Before dealing with the details of the developments in the various missions, a general outline of the Chaozhou needlework industry is required. Between 1886 and 1900, Western missionaries taught their converts Western needlework as an enterprise which would make them self-reliant,⁷⁷⁴ in this period needlework products were sent by the missionaries as gifts or sold to the missionary institutes overseas. Between 1900 and 1914, the needlework industry began to grow and workshops were established in Swatow, mostly using investments by Chinese dealers.⁷⁷⁵ These first footsteps were taken against a background of dynastic decay and the establishment of the Republic of China, a time in which social unrest forced people to supplement their income.⁷⁷⁶ During World War I, Western needlework merchants switched their investments from Europe to China, which resulted in the fact that American investors gradually replaced their Chinese predecessors who had helped the missions and Chinese women were also taking the place of European women in producing the goods. The craft was pursued on a widespread commercial basis. The Western exporters controlled the production through their Chinese agents who distributed the raw materials and collected the finished products.⁷⁷⁷ Between 1919 and 1934, the needlework industry continued to develop and Western investment increased again around 1925.⁷⁷⁸ The period between 1934 and 1941 proved to be the heyday of the needlework industry.⁷⁷⁹ The growth of the industry was interrupted by World War II, between 1942 and 1945, but underwent a short revival between 1946 and 1949.⁷⁸⁰

The Origins of Needlework in Chaozhou

770 *Introduction*, etc.

771 For the biographies of Hou Yichu (侯乙初) and his wife, Yang Jingde (杨锦德) Huang Hao (黄浩) and his wife, Wang Peizhi (王佩芝, Fang Lang (方朗) and Su Hui (苏惠), see *Biographies of the Chaozhou People in Beijing*.

772 See note 95.

773 Li Xuzhen, born in 1931 in Yuecheng (月城) in Jieyang district, interviewed in early November, 2009; Chen Xuanzhen (陈璇贞), born in 1948 in Xianju (仙居) village, Chenghai district, interviewed in April, 2010; Lin Ruyin (林如音), born at the end of the 1970s in Paotai, Jieyang district and Huang Zhiren, born in the 1950s in Queshi, both interviewed on May 27, 2010; Lady Xiao (肖姐), born in 1960 in Shantou city, interviewed on January 30, 2011.

774 Herman, "Cultural Factors", p.122.

775 *History*, pp.2-3.

776 Chen says 1912-1914 was the first boom period of this industry in Swatow, Chen, *Origin*, p.334.

777 The *History* says the development of this industry was interrupted during World War I, p.3. Chen Zhuofan seems to support this viewpoint, Chen, *Origin*, p.334.

778 *History*, p.3.

779 Chen says between 1936 and 1941, *Origin*, p.334.

780 *History*, pp.2-3, p.11.

Herman, Chen Zhuofan and Lee Kam Keung have all signalled the important role Mrs Lyall (Sophia A. Norwood) played in introducing Western needlework to Chaozhou.⁷⁸¹ However, there are reasons to question the importance of Sophia Norwood in the actual introduction of this craft. A brief introduction to the “colonial revival”, a relevant cultural movement in the US might help to clarify who was actually the first missionary to teach needlework in Chaozhou. Beverly Gordon says, “The revival is most often spoken of as a particular period, running from about the time of the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia to the outbreak of WWI (some observers extend the period to the 1930s)”.⁷⁸² During this movement, in contrast to the women who were struggling to achieve suffrage and to enter the professional work force, “Needlewomen were identified as domestic homebodies because this craft was associated with a seemingly simpler and nobler American past, a literal embodiment of the colonial and of domesticity”.⁷⁸³ At around the same time, as affluence grew in the West, needlework was becoming an art appreciated by and within the reach of an increasing number of people both in the United States and in Great Britain.

Although Norwood left America for Chaozhou in 1877, one year after the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition, her busy work in Queshi (礮石), the Baptist compound, might well have prevented her from teaching needlework to her students. As assistant to Adele Fielde and William Ashmore Sr, she took part in the training of Bible-women (1878-1882), which was followed by the work of transcribing Mr Ashmore’s *Swatow Grammar Book* and she “superintended its passage through the press” (1883-1884).⁷⁸⁴ She met Dr Alexander Lyall (EPM) at the Hongxue xuan (鸿雪轩), the English Presbyterian Press in Swatow, where he was helping to revise the medical terms in the *English-Chinese Vocabulary of the Vernacular of the Spoken Language of Swatow*.⁷⁸⁵ Norwood and Lyall (see Figure 29) fell in love with each other and were married in 1885, effectively concluding her service with the ABM.⁷⁸⁶ All these activities must have consumed most of her time and energy; she might not have been able to teach her students the craft during her service in the ABM.

781 Herman adopted Mrs Speicher’s (ABM) account and attributed this technique to Mrs Lyall only. He says: “In 1894, a Mrs Lyall of the English Presbyterian Mission taught Mexican drawn-work to a girl who needed to earn extra money to complete her education at the mission school and from this start other girls soon learned.” See Herman, “Swatow Lace and Needlework Industry”, p.125. Both Chen Zhuofan (1980) and Lee Kam Keung (2007) agree that both Mrs Lyall (Sophia A. Norwood) of the English Presbyterian Church and Lida Scott Ashmore of the American Baptist Church introduced needlework into the Chaozhou region. Referring to when it was introduced, Herman says by Mrs Lyall in 1894; Chen Zhuofan says by Mrs Lyall in 1902 and Mrs Ashmore later; Lee Kam Keung put both of them in 1880s. He introduces Mrs Lyall first in detail, then simply mentions Mrs W. Ashmore Jr. He is inclined to suggest that these two ladies introduced needlework at more or less the same time.

782 Beverly Gordon, “Spinning Wheels, Samplers, and the Modern Priscilla: The Images and Paradoxes of Colonial Revival Needlework”, *Wintertur Portfolio* 33:2/3, p.164.

783 Ibid., p.164.

784 William Ashmore Sr., *Swatow Grammar Book*, Swatow: English Presbyterian Mission Press, 1884, Preface.

785 Rudolf Lechler, William Duffus revised, *English-Chinese Vocabulary of the Vernacular of Spoken Language of Swatow*, Swatow: English Presbyterian Mission Press, 1883.

786 Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, short introduction on Miss Sophia A. Norwood, p.183.



Figure 29: Dr and Mrs Lyall, Swatow (From Jas. Johnston, *China and Formosa*, 1897)

In view of her busy schedule, I suggest that it was in fact Lida Scott Ashmore, wife of William Ashmore Jr (see Figure 33) of the ABM, who, having been influenced by the colonial revival movement, introduced the art of drawn-work⁷⁸⁷ to the local Christian women in the compound between 1880 and 1885. Norwood learned this technique from Mrs Ashmore when they were colleagues in the ABM. When Norwood had more leisure after her marriage,⁷⁸⁸ she taught this craft to her maidservant Lin Saiyu (林赛玉) and her two daughters, Xu Shujing (徐淑静) and Xu Shuying (徐淑英),⁷⁸⁹ who were pupils at the Shude Presbyterian Girls' School.

Before continuing the discussion of the development of needlework, a few notes on its ideological background are important. Since the time of Mary Lyon, who founded Mount Holyoke Seminary as the first women's college in America in 1837, women's education had relied on the training of "head, heart, and hand." The training of the "hand" meant sewing one's own clothes, growing one's own food, washing one's own laundry and engaging in other tasks to support oneself. In the American context, domestic training was seen as the basis for self-reliance among women.⁷⁹⁰

787 Herman says Mrs Lyall taught "Mexican drawn-work", on the basis of information supplied by Mr Maloof, the manager of one of the three biggest needlework companies in Swatow. But Mrs Lyall's home country was Canada (then part of the British Empire) so she might not have been familiar with this type of needlework. On the other hand, Lida Scott Ashmore came from Santa Ana, California, which is very close to the Mexican border (Both she and her husband William Ashmore Jr. spent the last years of their lives there). It is very possible that Mrs Ashmore Jr learnt the Mexico needlework in Santa Ana and taught it to Sophia Norwood when they were colleagues in Queshi from 1880 to 1885.

788 With the rise in the numbers of single woman missionaries with the EPM from the 1880s, the married woman missionaries could retreat into the background. See Records of the Swatow Women's Missionary Association Council, 27th Meeting, Far East House, 30th Sept., 1915, Married ladies. Archives of EPM.

789 Lu Jiding, 2007. Lu Jiding mentions Lin Saiyu in his 2006 article, and Lee Kam Keung mentions Xu Shujing and Xu Shuying only in 2009. However, in his 2007 article, Lu Jiding says he has made the discovery that Xu Shujing and Xu Shuying were Lin Saiyu's daughters, because she had married a peasant whose surname was Xu.

790 Robert, *American Women in Mission*, p.93.

The American Baptist woman missionaries in the Chaozhou region were undoubtedly influenced by the Mount Holyoke educational model, upon which many other women's colleges in the United States and China were patterned. Some of the woman missionaries from Mount Holyoke among them Lucy Lyon, niece of Mary Lyon, decided to join the China mission. They were encouraged in their resolve by William Dean when he visited this college during his furlough in America between 1845 and 1846.⁷⁹¹ Other Mount Holyoke influence on China came through Matilda Calder Thurston and Alice Browne Frame, who occupied the positions of first president of Ginling College (金陵) in Nanjing (南京) and the Acting-President of Yenching College (燕京) in Beijing (北京) in the early-twentieth century.⁷⁹² Both were former students of Mount Holyoke. Under their supervision, both colleges were modelled on Mount Holyoke and were ranked the first class female colleges in China. Two general principles from Mt Holyoke in particular and the American missions in general can be identified in the teaching of needlework to Chinese Christian women: first, encouraging women's self-reliance; second, improving the economic situation in the Christian home.⁷⁹³ The missions in China also had two specific aims: "...to give an opportunity for catechetical instruction",⁷⁹⁴ something common to Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries who compiled various tracts in the form of Chinese traditional folksongs to be sung during communal needlework,⁷⁹⁵ and needlework was also regarded as a sphere of social service, which had been carried out by James and Eliza McMullan of the China Inland Mission in Qingdao (青岛), Shandong province, in the 1880s.⁷⁹⁶ In 1916 Chen Tianle (陈天乐), a male catechist of the Basel Mission, also pointed out that for the women who had no time to do evangelical work, there was always needlework for the orphans and widows.⁷⁹⁷ Gertrude Leclair (日多达), an Ursuline sister who supervised the lace and embroidery workshops in Chaozhou in the 1930s and 1940s, shared the same idea.⁷⁹⁸ Because of the close contact between the Christian missions in Chaozhou, it is likely that many of the same principles and practical aims guided the female missionaries in the Basel Mission and the French Roman Catholic congregation.

Chaozhou society offered advantageous conditions for the introduction of Occidental-style needlework, because this skill tied in well with one of the four traditional female virtues: "be diligent in

791 Lucy Lyon arrived in Hong Kong in April 28, 1847 with her husband Edward Clemens Lord, a missionary of the American Baptist Missionary Union. They settled at Ningbo in June. She died in 1854. William Dean wrote an introduction to the book *Memoir of Mrs Lucy T. Lord, of the Chinese Baptist Mission*. Quoted from Robert, *American Women in Mission*, p.73. Biography of William Dean, p.86; biography of Edward Lord, p.163, both in Wylie, *Memorials*.

792 Robert, *American Women in Mission*, p.98.

793 The economic goal was also shared by the French Roman Catholic congregation: "to provide some economic aid in a country growing daily more impoverished", see Mahorney, *Snatow*, p.210.

794 Ibid.

795 The ABM published *Hymns for Worshipping the True Living God* (拜真活神的诗), the Basel Mission published *Hymns for the Little Girls of the Church* (教会小女歌) and the EPM published hymn books in Romanized text. See chapter 3.

796 Qingdao was in an area known for its silk, lace, and embroidery businesses. When the McMullans arrived in this area, they decided to rescue the abandoned children and established an orphanage. They began a school to teach their young orphans how to make lace and how to embroider, and by doing so, provided them with a livelihood. See http://jamesmcmullan.com/frame_brbiog.htm, consulted on 2011-1-27.

797 "所以今日, 好多女界爱当家, 唔得闲传道, 就做女工, 帮助信徒中嘅孤儿寡妇, 来感动人, 也话得系传道了。" Chen Tianle 陈天乐, *Yesu daoli yangbian zai nüjie zhong* faming 《耶稣道理样边在女界中发明》 [How to Instill the Doctrines of Jesus among the Women], *The Mirror for the Female Christians*, p.12.

798 Mahorney, *Snatow*, p.232.

weaving and sewing” (妇工) or “be good at weaving and sewing” (精于女工 or 女红). This was the yardstick by which the ideal wife was measured. The women in the Chaozhou region were already expert in the Chaozhou style of embroidery (潮绣), “thousands of women and girls [were] able to perform [the craft] with skill, speed and accuracy”.⁷⁹⁹ The prefectural city of Chaozhou had been the traditional centre of the fine needlework since the eighteenth century.⁸⁰⁰ The women missionaries were undoubtedly aware both of these ideological principles and of the flourishing local embroidery tradition when they introduced Occidental needlework into this region.

The work was obviously intended for the export market. Ashmore of the ABM, Lyall of the EPM and the Roman Catholic Ursuline sisters all sent the needlework products abroad for sale, but in doing this they adopted different policies. Ashmore was the first (in 1890s) to invest in needlework production for the benefit of the mission and it was clearly stated that the male Baptists were not allowed to engage in this profitable business. This policy was later adopted by the Roman Catholic mission. Lyall taught needlework to poor Presbyterian women and girls who needed money to support themselves. More liberally, the EPM allowed male Presbyterians to earn their living in this business, instigating a policy of private initiative. Now the scene is set, the time has come to see how these churches organized the needlework production among their different congregations.

The American Baptist Church and French Roman Catholic Church: Needlework for the Missions

Lida Ashmore was a woman with foresight. In the natural growth and development of the church, it fell to her to introduce the paying of fees and the founding of day nurseries at country stations when she took charge of the general educational work in 1885.⁸⁰¹ With the increase in the numbers of students at the Zhengguang Girls’ School (正光女学), “after consulting with others,... [she] asked the Society for the modest sum of \$1000 gold, promising to furnish an additional \$600 Mexican received from the sale of drawn work, the making of which she had introduced among our church members... the work on every piece was paid for at its full value.”⁸⁰² The new building was finished in 1899⁸⁰³ at a cost of \$3,658. The sum was completely furnished by Ashmore from her needlework earnings alone, and the sum of \$1,000 voted by the Society was never drawn on but returned to the Society.⁸⁰⁴ Ashmore’s achievement sheds light on two points: “drawn work”, drawn-thread work, was a Western needlework technique which was introduced into the Chaozhou region and needlework products,

799 Herman, “Cultural Factors”, p.122.

800 These two factors are mentioned by Herman, *ibid*.

801 Mrs Ashmore Jr said she took charge of the girls’ boarding school just before the death of the first Mrs Partridge early in 1882 (see Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.184; and *A Special Issue*, p.5). But Giedt said “Miss S. A. Norwood... carried on after the death of Mrs Partridge in 1882 till her own retirement in 1885 to marry Dr. Lyall of the E. P. Mission. Thereafter Mrs Ashmore, Jr. (12 years, 1885-1897), was in charge of the school.” Although Mr William Ashmore Jr took over the responsibility for the boys’ school from Miss Fielde in October 1880, it was not until 1886 that he began to charge Mex. \$2 a year for tuition. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that Mrs Ashmore Jr took charge of the general educational work from 1885. See Giedt, *Early Mission History*, p.17.

802 Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.112.

803 The building was completed in 1899, just as the Ashmores left on furlough. They might have promoted the marketing of the Swatow needlework among their relatives and American businessmen.

804 Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.112.

drawn-thread or otherwise, were sold to America through the missionaries' personal networks. Ashmore's successful policy was imitated by the French Roman Catholic Mission. In 1903 when Father Mérel was appointed priest and procurator of the mission in Swatow, where an independent Chaozhou mission had not yet founded, Father Douspis (Figure 30) was put in charge of sending and receiving expresses and packages for his colleagues. He foresaw the division of the mission in Canton and collected the resources with which to facilitate the erection of an apostolic vicariate in Swatow. For this purpose, he established embroidery workshops for Roman Catholic women and sold the products in Hong Kong, where the MEP press and sanatorium were located. To raise funds to finance his project, Douspis sent letters accompanied by Chinese knick-knacks, postcards and photographs of Chaozhou to benefactors in Europe and America, in a quest to elicit donations.⁸⁰⁵ At the same time Agathe Lo, a Roman Catholic Virgin in the prefectural city, introduced this handicraft to the Roman Catholic orphanage. Régis Gérvaix, a MEP priest who was sent to Chenghai, paid a visit to this orphanage in 1914 and wrote that, "The orphan girls learn sewing, weaving textiles and dyeing cloths, and produce artificial flowers, embroidery, etc."⁸⁰⁶ Anne Lim, another Virgin, supervised "the needlework school and the classes" (l'ouvroir et des classes), "she demonstrates all sorts of needlecraft to the older girls in the orphanage, and teaches the younger girls personally". "All sorts of needlecraft" refers to the limited techniques introduced in this initial stage, tablecloths, doily and patchwork were the main products. The basic material was linen (夏布) produced in Xinhui (新会) in the Pearl River Delta and in Jieyang.⁸⁰⁷

805 Antoine Douspis, *Notice biographique*, archives of MEP: "En 1903, Mgr. Mérel le nomma curé de Swatow, et procureur de cette partie de la Mission. M.Douspis eût donc la charge de faire les commissions des confrères, et de leur expédier courrier et colis, car la poste n'était pas encore organisée. A Swatow, ville portuaire florissante, il gagna la sympathie de tous, nouant de bonnes relations avec les consulats et les autorités locales. L'occasion lui fut donnée de réaliser ses grands projets. Il établit des ateliers de broderies pour les femmes dont les produits étaient vendus à Hong-Kong. Mais surtout, prévoyant la division de la Mission de Canton, il créa des ressources pour faciliter l'érection et la marche du nouveau vicariat apostolique de Swatow. Il chercha des fonds. Pour cela, il écrivit de nombreuses lettres en Europe et en Amérique. Il envoya à ses correspondants des bibelots chinois, des cartes postales chinoises, des photographies."

806 "Les orphelines apprennent la couture, le tissage des toiles, la teinture des tissus, la fabrication des fleurs artificielles, la broderie, etc. A ces travaux s'ajoutent la culture du jardin, la lessive, la préparation des aliments, la fabrication des cierges et des hosties, etc." Gérvaix, "Pour le Prix Montyon", p.136.

807 "1900 至 1914 年间主要商品以新会夏布、揭阳夏布及一些英国加纱（俗名胶只）制成的枱布、垫布（盘布、补布、几布等）等类为主，工种则有团花、水波痕、老大藤及很小部分的扎目、哥罗纱花边”。*History*, p.7.



Figure 30 (left): Father Douspis at Swatow. He sits for his portrait in a chair holding a Chinese fan in one hand and scrolls in the other, taken on March 11, 1910.

Figure 31 (right): Group of orphan girls engaged in needlework in the Chaozhou city

It was not long before the sale of drawn-thread work by Ashmore was misunderstood and incorrectly reported in the American press. Although Ashmore did not disclose the nature of the criticism leveled by her detractors, her defence that “this was a business venture of her own, and the work on every piece was paid for at its full value”⁸⁰⁸ implies that people had expressed doubts about the suitability of a missionary running a profitable enterprise. The Roman Catholic Ursuline sisters confronted a similar criticism fifty years later. The ministry of Gertrude Lechair of the Roman Catholic lace and embroidery workshops was seen by some people as transgressing the boundaries of Ursuline apostolate.⁸⁰⁹ Another criticism was that the desire that the schoolgirls earn some money would cause them to devote less time to their other duties. Ashmore responded by saying that the schoolgirls were not allowed to do this work because it would have put too much strain on their eyes.⁸¹⁰ If what she said was true, the Chinese women who did needlework in the American Baptist compound could only have been those who had studied at the Women’s School (明道妇学), which was founded by Adele Fielde in 1874. In the post-Fielde period, this school was run nine months a year and needlework was a new course added to the curriculum.

This craft benefited both the mission and the local Baptist women. In 1899, the first building

808 The Chinese history of Zhengguang Girls’ School also stressed twice that Mrs. Ashmore Jr. provided her own money to construct two buildings. See *A Special Issue*, p.35.

809 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.232.

810 Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.112.

erected with the earnings from the needlework supervised Ashmore was finished. Later, when this building grew too small and the need for more classrooms for the growing number of classes became urgent, Ashmore put up another building with the help of two members of her family in the United States. This second building was completed in 1911.⁸¹¹ As has been mentioned in the chapter on Bible-women, the local women who studied at the Women's School, most of them poor widows or grass-widows, were in their forties or older. Some even pursued occupations forbidden by the precepts of the church, such as acting as a spirit-medium⁸¹² or earning a livelihood by making mock money.⁸¹³ After their conversion, these women had to find a new ways to support themselves. Doing needlework, they could earn about \$10 per month, three or five times more than their male peers.⁸¹⁴ The earnings were distributed to them with a lapse of several months, after the products had been sold overseas.⁸¹⁵

Contrary to Ashmore's intentions, the lucrative income also attracted the younger students from the Girls' School to engage in needlework. When Miss Myra Weld (卫每拉) replaced Ashmore as the president of the Girls' School in 1904,⁸¹⁶ she introduced a different policy: she allowed the girls in their teens to do needlework, and the resultant income was accumulated to sponsor the Zhengguang Girls' School Mission. A special mission which legitimated the girls' participation in needlework was founded in 1906. A large proportion of the income was used to sponsor this mission, but the girls could still earn some money for themselves.

According to her anonymous biographer, Weld taught the girls "to learn to be fair and pursue one's role quietly/decorously" (实行公道,安守本分).⁸¹⁷ Apparently, needlework fitted this adage perfectly. The girls under her training "disciplined themselves to be as virtuous as jade, eschewed vices and achieved great things" (圭璧自守,不染恶习,成绩斐然).⁸¹⁸ After a year or more had passed,⁸¹⁹ the income was sufficient to sponsor two Bible-women, Chen Jingchen (陈景澄) and Zhang Jingxin (张景馨), to run Bible Schools in the out-stations of Liugang (柳冈, 1897) in Chaoyang district, Haishan (海山, 1900) in Raoping district and Guihu (归湖) in Chao'an district, helping to promote women's literacy and to teach the Christian doctrine there.⁸²⁰

This indicates that the rapid development of the Baptist mission, organized by the local girls and women (妇女宣道会) under the supervision of the Western missionaries, was closely tied up with the

811 The building was called the Abigail Hart Scott Memorial by Ashmore in memory of her mother, *ibid.* Mrs Ashmore Jr enlarged the Zhengguang Girl School (also called the Kak-chieh Girls' school according to E. Giedt) twice, and dedicated it to her mother Abigail Hart Scott. See Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.112; and *A Special Issue*, p.35. Giedt also mentioned Mrs Ashmore Jr furnished funding for two Abigail Hart Scott Memorial buildings of the Kak-chieh Girls' school, see Giedt, p.17. Therefore Lee Kam Keung has made a mistake in saying that Mrs Ashmore Jr provided funding for the construction of the Kak-chieh Boys' School and Zhengguang Girls' School with the sale of needlework (Lee Kam Keung, 2009, p.50); for a correct rendering, see Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.329.

812 Such as Lotus (庄莲花), Bible-woman, Tolerance's mother, who was a spirit-medium in a temple before her conversion.

813 Bible-woman Cress (陈萍) from Guiyu (贵屿) in Chaoyang district earned her living by making mock money.

814 *History*, pp.3-4.

815 Oral account by Huang Zhiren, the Chairman of the Three Self Patriarchal Committee in Shantou, 27 May, 2010.

816 Biography of Myra Weld, *A Special Issue*, Biographies, p. 13.

817 *Ibid.*

818 *Ibid.*

819 The Chinese word "经年" could mean "for one or several years", it is hard to decide how long it means here.

820 "History on the Development of the Women's Mission" (妇女宣道会发达史), *A Special Issue*, p.33. The year mentioned refers to the time each Church was founded.

needlework enterprise run by the Baptist Church. When Weld passed away in 1911, the girls' mission she founded was taken over by Melvina Sollman (宋罗文). In 1912 M. E. Cruff (丘美华) was appointed the principal of the Zhengguang Girls' School by the ABM.⁸²¹ In the summer of 1912, the girls' mission sent a Bible-woman to Jinsha (金沙), a village in the environs of Swatow. When Cruff, Abbie G. Sanderson (孙安美, see Figure 27 in Chapter 4) and the Chinese matron, Bei Furu (贝馥如), supervised the Zhengguang Girls' School in the 1920s, they gave the girls' mission enormous support.⁸²² In 1912, Zhang Jingxin, a teacher at the Women's School, with Sollman and Edith G. Traver (荼福恩), founded the Women's Mission of the Queshi Church (礮石礼拜堂).⁸²³ Most of the members were village women who decided to settle down in Queshi after having been educated at the Mingdao Women's School.⁸²⁴

With the passing of time, new sorts of needlework were introduced. Lida Ashmore chose a photo (See Figure 32) to illustrate a group of local Christian women (probably in the compound, the photo was taken between 1911 and 1920) doing a variety of needlework: embroidering, beading, making tassels, making bead bags, crocheting.⁸²⁵ The first three techniques were part of the repertoire of traditional Chaozhou embroidery, but the last two, making bead bags and crocheting, were typical Western handicrafts.



Figure 32: Earning their way in the Women's School

(From Lida Ashmore's *The South China Mission of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society*, p.94)

The mission work carried out by the local Baptist women expanded. Between 1912 and 1932, the

821 Ibid., Miss M. E. Cruff and Bei Furu's position see “卫女士已逝世（1911年），学校（正光女学）乏长，遂暂停办，翌年，美国宣道会派丘美华继任为校长，贝馥如、陈伟昆两女士相继为学监...,” *ibid.*, p.35.

822 Ibid., p.33.

823 Also called the Jiaoshi (角石) Church, “礮” and “角” have the same pronunciation in the Chaozhou dialect. “History of the Development of the Women's Mission” (妇女宣道会发达史), *A Special Issue*, p.33.

824 Queshi was an emigrant community gradually formed with the arrival of the ABM in 1860. The residents came from a variety of places in the Chaozhou region. For instance, the residents surnamed Hong (洪) came from Baita in Jieyang district.

825 Ashmore, *The South China Mission*, p.94.

women's mission of the Queshi church employed one Bible-woman per year to preach at the other out-stations. In 1928, acting on Mrs Anne K. Speicher's (江景梅) enthusiastic proposal, the Shantou (汕头) and Qilu (崎碌) churches jointly founded a Women's Mission, with a membership of more than eighty people. It could afford to employ two Bible-women with the money received from its subscriptions. The local Baptist women of the Chengzhong Church in Chao'an district (城中堂, 1906, the year indicates the establishment of the church), Xiancheng Church in Jieyang District (县城堂, 1865), the Longjing Church in Chaoyang district (隆井堂, 1868) and the South Gate Church in Chenghai District (南门堂, 1909), all founded their own Women's Missions. Their example was followed by the Paotai Church (炮台堂, 1878), Huanggang Church (黄冈堂, 1893), Guxi Church (古溪堂, 1885), Liugang Church (柳冈堂, 1897), and Lianyang Church (莲阳堂, 1916).⁸²⁶

Although the anonymous author who wrote the history of the development of the Lingdong Women's Mission reveals that the funding of the Zhengguang Girls' mission came from the earnings of the schoolgirls,⁸²⁷ he does not explicitly point out the origins of the subscriptions which supported the Women's Missions of the Queshi, Swatow and Qilu churches. A glance at the development of the needlework industry in the same period gives some clues which help to solve this puzzle. Foreign needlework dealers converged on Swatow during World War I. In approximately 1925, several big Western companies and scores of medium- or small-scale Chinese workshops mushroomed in Qilu, very close to the Queshi, Swatow and Qilu Baptist churches. As Yang Jianping says, "Needle workers were ubiquitous in Qilu" in this period.⁸²⁸ Hence it is not too far-fetched to suggest that the Baptist women in the Queshi, Swatow and Qilu churches might also have earned their livings from this craft and donated part of the income to fund the women's mission.

826 *A Special Issue*, p.34. The year attached referred to the time each Church was founded.

827 “正光女学女宣道会即告成立，乃提倡手工，积蓄金钱”，“History of the Development of the Women's Mission”, *A Special Issue*, p.33.

828 Yang Jianping, *Chaoshou Embroidery*, p.70.



Figure 33: Laying the Foundation Stone of the Jubilee Building in Queshi, Swatow, China, Dec. 26, 1924.

The school staff and some of the American guests at the Laying of the Foundation Stone

Lida Ashmore: Sitting, the second from the right); Edith Traver: Back row on the left; Melvina Sollman: Back row on the right; Bei Furu (Helen Pue, in the middle holding her clothes)

The American Baptist and French Roman Catholic churches never deviated from the policy of “needlework for the missions” and the needlework workshops of these two congregations were organized under the supervision of the church leaders. Mrs Ashmore was the first leader to take charge of the management of the Baptist needlework. When she retired in 1916, her duties were probably taken over by Lin Zhensheng (林振声), a Chaozhou male Baptist who had received a higher education in America. Chen Zhuofan says that Lin managed a needlework company at the end of the 1910s.⁸²⁹ This might not have been a coincidence. Lin Zhensheng was probably entrusted either by the Baptist Church to run the needlework enterprise or by Mrs Ashmore herself to continue her “personal” investment. Lin also worked simultaneously for the Swatow Christian Institute (汕头普益社), a Baptist foundation.⁸³⁰ Considering that there was only one private needlework businessman who had studied at the Baptist Boys’ School (Queguang School, 馨光中学) compared to the seventeen entrepreneurs who had graduated from the Presbyterian Boys’ School (see Appendix D),⁸³¹ it seems that the American Baptist Mission forbade its male leavers of its school to engage in the needlework industry. This hypothesis is supported by Huang Zhiren, who told me that the Baptist school required the male students to devote themselves to the welfare of the society, not to the pursuit of making a personal fortune. Therefore, when the Communist government was set up, it was not difficult to find a fair

829 Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.329.

830 *A Special Issue*, p.18.

831 汕档 12-9-351: 汕头抽纱业工业同业协会会员名册, 中华民国三十七年十月三十日.

number of ex-Baptists who had been denied any entrepreneurial role ranked among the first two generations of local officials in the 1950s and 1960s.⁸³²

The story of the needlework enterprise in the Roman Catholic congregation between 1922 and 1949 is easier to trace than that in the Baptist congregation. When the first three Canadian Ursuline sisters arrived in Swatow at the end of July, 1922, they were astonished to find that needlework was “a popular undertaking for Western missionaries”.⁸³³ Bishop Rayssac put them in charge of the workshops in Swatow and Chaozhou city.⁸³⁴ Soon after the catastrophic tsunami on August 2, Rosaire travelled to Jieyang “to see whether she could commission some needlework she could sell in America.”⁸³⁵ If this plan could be carried out successfully, she could earn 5 to 7.5 per cent of the cost as commission.⁸³⁶ This plan was aborted because the local needlework agents raised the price when they saw that Rosaire was “a white person” [a Westerner, CXY]. She had to return home without any orders.⁸³⁷ In Chaozhou, the workshop in which orphan girls could be trained in needlework continued to produce work.⁸³⁸ In 1924, Ste Croix, the Ursuline sister who took over the Virgins’ work in this city, opened a workshop for poor women.⁸³⁹ She wrote to Standstead in Canada, where the headquarters of the Canadian Ursuline order to which she belonged were located, that: “Despite our poverty we would dearly love to help another class of persons: women who are unsuccessfully looking for work. We would like to build a workroom for these poor women who become so discouraged that they commit suicide.”⁸⁴⁰ At the end of 1929, Bishop Rayssac reported to Paris that the workshop in Chaozhou had accepted about 200 women.⁸⁴¹ In 1932 in the wake of the rising social unrest, at Sister Marie de Lourdes’ suggestion, the older orphan girls in Chaozhou were brought to Hepo, an important station for the Ursuline Order founded in 1926. These girls began “their training in lace-making and embroidery in the workshop” in their new home.⁸⁴²

In 1923, the Ursuline sisters in the Swatow mission joined the Roman Union attached to the vice-province of Java in the Netherlands East Indies, which had been founded by the Tildonk Ursulines of Holland in 1856.⁸⁴³ This opened the door for wider participation and after this Western sisters came to Swatow from different continents. There is no sign that this transition hindered the needlework enterprise in the Roman Catholic congregation. Before 1949, Western sisters who were proficient at needlework were sent to Swatow. Sister Maria Luisa Geminati is a good example. An

832 Oral account by Huang Zhiren.

833 Mahorney, *Swatow*, pp.71-73.

834 Adolphe Rayssac, *Notice biographique*. “En 1922, peu de temps avant le violent typhon du 2 août, arrivèrent à Swatow, les Ursulines canadiennes; Mgr. Rayssac leur confia l’éducation des enfants des européens et des eurasiens, puis l’œuvre de la Sainte Enfance ainsi que des dispensaires et ouvroirs.”

835 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.73.

836 *History*, p.7.

837 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.73.

838 *Ibid.*, p.74.

839 *Rapport annuel des évêques de Swatow*, 1924.

840 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.75.

841 *Rapport annuel des évêques de Swatow*, 1929: “Nos dévouées Ursulines viennent de construire là une école avec ouvroir, qui pourra recevoir 200 élèves.” See also Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.115.

842 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.150.

843 *Ibid.*, p.23, p.43.

Italian, Geminati was a skilled needlewoman. After spending four years in Siam, where there were many Chaozhou emigrant workers, she exchanged positions with Sister Kunigunde Bajczar in Swatow in 1931. In Swatow she helped to supervise the workshops of the Swatow mission.⁸⁴⁴ The Roman Catholic women produced a variety of needlework products which were sold through an American company to Standstead in Canada and Boston in America via Shanghai.⁸⁴⁵ The name of this company has still not been ascertained.

The years between 1934 and 1941, especially those between 1939 and 1941, were the heyday of the needlework industry in Chaozhou. Needlework production increased dramatically in the wake of the panic and chaos which ensued after the Japanese invasion of North China. In Yantai (烟台) in Shandong province, one of the earliest and biggest needlework centres in North China, production was forced to stop and, although Swatow was occupied by the Japanese army in June 1939, the Western needlework companies were allowed to continue their businesses.⁸⁴⁶ Therefore, the merchants in North China who had been forced to close their businesses thronged into Swatow where needlework became one of the most important commodities for speculators. The invasion of South-East Asia by the Japanese army also caused an interruption in the remittances sent to Chaozhou from there by emigrant workers.⁸⁴⁷ Many sojourner families found themselves facing poverty and parents could no longer afford the education for their children. The upshot was that more and more women needed to earn their living by doing needlework. The Ursuline sisters in the city of Chaozhou complained that they were no longer able to keep all their classes going. Instead, they enlarged their workshop, in which the number of workers increased from 200 women in 1929 to 750 in 1939.⁸⁴⁸ One year later, the Ursuline sisters had had to close their school and were no longer able to take care of the babies from Swatow because of the deterioration in the condition of the roads between Swatow and Chaozhou. Despite the appalling infrastructure, the number of needlewomen in their workshop tripled, an expansion which enabled the women to earn at least a little money.⁸⁴⁹ In fact, the needlewomen in the Roman Catholic workshop swelled to such a number Sister Ursule Blot reported to Rome in 1941 that it was increasingly difficult to supervise them with only two sisters.⁸⁵⁰ Soon the course of the war caused a deprivation in basic provisions and in the raw materials required for production. In the spring of 1940, Sister Clotilde Holloway wrote that, "Here, crowds of people are starving, as there is no rice to be sold. Many other things are running out, for instance, it is impossible to buy needles."⁸⁵¹ As conditions worsened the needlework industry gradually declined. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7 1941, America entered the Second World War on the side of

844 Ibid., p.128.

845 Ibid., p99, p.210.

846 Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.334.

847 Cai Hongsheng pointed this out to me. He also told me that quite a large number of people who depended for their living on remittances starved to death in this period.

848 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.210.

849 Ibid., p.211.

850 Ibid., p.214.

851 Ibid., p.212.

the Allies. Not long after, the Imperial Japanese army invaded the foreign concession in Shanghai and many needlework export companies which were located in the concession were forced to shut down.⁸⁵² The needlework production in the Chaozhou region, which depended heavily on export via Shanghai, was therefore interrupted.

With the end of the Second World War in August 1945, the needlework industry began to revive. Sister Gertrude Leclair supervised the needlewomen in this period; her most prized occupation was engaging “with women working in lace and embroidery factories”.⁸⁵³ When she saw that the needlewomen were labouring “under appalling conditions” and were “generally treated no better than slaves”, Gertrude acted “as a kind of entrepreneur with the factory owners and managers, thus winning better wages and condition for the women.”⁸⁵⁴ This description by Mahorney gives a clue hinting that the management of the workshops was no longer in the hands of the Roman Catholic Ursuline sisters. Li Xuzhen, who entered the Roman Catholic Chenxing Girls’ School in 1946 and joined the Ursuline order in the early 1950s, told me that she never saw or heard of the existence of needlework workshops run by the Roman Catholic church. Considering the criticisms heaped on Leclair asserting that the ministry of the workshop was beyond the boundaries of the Ursuline apostolate,⁸⁵⁵ it is very possible that the Roman Catholic church changed its policy and put the workshops out to contract. The membership roll of the Swatow needlework guild preserved in the Shantou Municipal Archives shows that a needlework factory named “Guangtai” (光泰), which was opened in May 1947, was located next to the Cathedral in Swatow.⁸⁵⁶ Earlier, this factory might have been run by the Roman Catholic sisters.

Needlework and the English Presbyterian Church: Private Initiatives

Robert states categorically that, “doing one’s own sewing not only clothed the clean and orderly Christian family, but needlework provided income for women with children in economies that limited their options for gainful employment.”⁸⁵⁷ In the Chaozhou region, employment was the mainspring in teaching the local Christian women to do needlework. As a Christian and a widow with two daughters in Yanzao, the first village in Chaozhou which accepted Christianity, Lin Saiyu (林赛玉) was recommended to work as maidservant for the Lyalls. Lu Jiding says that she was very skilled at traditional Chaozhou embroidery. Coming into close contact with Mrs Lyall (Sophia Norwood), Lin Saiyu also learned Western needlework techniques, including Mexican needlework and crochet.⁸⁵⁸ It did

852 Shigan, Liu Yonglan, “A Sketchy Introduction”, p.182.

853 Mahorney, *Swatow*, p.231.

854 *Ibid.*, pp.231-232.

855 *Ibid.*, p.232.

856 汕档 12-9-351: 汕头抽纱业工业同业会会员名册, 中华民国三十七年十月三十日.

857 Robert, “The ‘Christian Home’”, p.156.

858 “1896年福音医院英籍医生‘莱爱力’迨同其妻来汕头时, 途径日本, 在日本学到一些抽纱技术, 并购备样品; 抵汕后, 再行传授; 由此抽纱工作比较充实, 除团花、美希哥、水波痕等工种外, 还补充了扎目、哥罗纱花边(钩针花边), 打定花边(梭仔边)等”, *History*, p.1.

not take her long to master these new skills. In 1894, Xu Shujing (徐淑静) and Xu Shuying (徐淑英), Lin's daughters, learnt the craft from Mrs Lyall and their mother and they used the extra income to pay the fees their studies at the Shude Girls' School.⁸⁵⁹ Outside school, Mrs Lyall also taught needlework to the Christian women as a way of making them self-reliant. Li Dexi (李得惜)⁸⁶⁰ who came from Neixinxiang (内新乡), a suburb of Swatow and was baptized in 1895 at the age of thirty-two, also learned needlework from Mrs Lyall, with whom she studied in the company of the Xu sisters. Lin Saiyu taught her neighbour, Aunt Zhu (祝婶), this craft.⁸⁶¹ Before the turn of the century, only some twenty women in the Swatow Presbyterian Church did needlework, with the Shude Girls' school as the centre of the enterprise.⁸⁶² Since the production was limited, the finished needlework, including both Western and Chinese styles, would be sent by the EP missionaries as gifts or sold to the missionary institutes in Great Britain and Germany.⁸⁶³



Figure 34: Traditional Chaozhou embroidery: Chinesische Dank Tafel (Pin, 屏) für Miss. Lechler

To commemorate Rudolf Lechler's retirement, 1899⁸⁶⁴

Presented by the English Chaozhou-Huizhou Presbyterian Church before his departure, probably made by the Presbyterian Christian women in Chaozhou

859 Herman says: "In 1894, a Mrs. Lyall of the English Presbyterian Mission taught Mexican drawn-work to a girl who needed to earn extra money to complete her education at the mission school", see Herman, "Cultural Factors", p. 125. This girl might have been someone like Xu Shujing (徐淑静) or Xu Shuying (徐淑英).

860 Li Dexi's personal information, see Baptismal Register, Shantou Archives.

861 Lu Jiding, "The contribution Chaozhou gave to the Industry of Drawn-thread Work in Chaoshan". "祝婶" might probably have been "足婶", another name for Li Dexi. Her husband's name was "足", which is pronounced the same as "祝" in the Chaozhou dialect. See membership roll of the Swatow Presbyterian congregation, Shantou Municipal Archives: 12-11-18. No.18, information for Li Dexi's baptism.

862 *History*, p.3.

863 *Ibid.*, p.2.

864 The English Presbyterian Church in the Chaozhou region used the name "Chao-Hui Zhangleo Hui" (Chaozhou-Huizhou Presbyterian Church) from 1881-1900. During this period, Rudolf Lechler of the Basel Church went back to Germany for furlough twice, in 1886 and 1899. He planned to return permanently in 1899, therefore, besides visiting every Basel church in the Hakka hinterland, he also visited the English Presbyterian Church in Yanzao, which was his first foothold in mainland China. See *150th Anniversary of Tsung Tsun Mission*, p.44.

Lyll did not forbid the pupils at the Girls' School to do needlework, as Ashmore had done. On the contrary, doing needlework was integrated into the curriculum of the school as part of the training of the girls to be clean and orderly. Four alumnae—Zeng Derong (曾德容), Aunt Laughing (笑姨), Xie Xuezhong (谢雪璋), Lady Lin (林氏)—who entered this school in about 1917, 1924, 1925, 1933 respectively, recalled that the school placed great emphasis on teaching the girls to do all kinds of needlework, including cross-stitch,⁸⁶⁵ weaving, drawn-work and making their own school uniforms as required.⁸⁶⁶

The lucrative income (\$10 per month)⁸⁶⁷ to be earned from needlework attracted other girls to the Shude Girls' School to learn. Soon, women and girls from many inland places were making their way to Swatow for training. Some returned home where they spread the craft, others remained in Swatow after persuading their families to join them.⁸⁶⁸ This population mobility first became visible in the Christian communities. Especially those graduates of the Shude Girls' School who went on to work as teachers, Bible-women or the wives of the ministers contributed to the transmission of this craft in the Presbyterian out-stations, including Yanzaio in Chenghai district, the prefectural city of Chaozhou, Wujingfu (五经富) in Jieyang district.⁸⁶⁹ From these centres, the skill was disseminated to the adjacent villages. So potent was the spread of needlework that new out-stations actually emerged because of the transmission of this craft in 1900s. These included Jinghai (靖海),⁸⁷⁰ Paotai (炮台),⁸⁷¹ Guangmei (广美)⁸⁷² and Yuhu (渔湖).⁸⁷³ Huang Shude (黄树德), baptized in the Guangmei Church at the age of fifteen with her mother, learned the craft of needlework from this congregation.⁸⁷⁴ Chen Zhuofan states that: "The places where the Christians were more concentrated were meanwhile the main processing centers of needlework products."⁸⁷⁵

There was a significant difference between the ABM and the EPM in their management of needlework enterprises. The former monopolized the management of the needlework enterprise and

865 Zeng Derong specialized in cross-stitch (十字绣). "我们还有家政课, 学习手工, 例如绣花, (我们)学的是十二(字)绣, 我还绣过'木兰从军'; 我(后来)剪裁(裳裤的能力)很强。" See Du Shimin, *The Christian Girls' School*, p.59.

866 According to Lady Lin, "每个人按照(学校规定的)样式自己做, 大家做衣服都很在行的。...而番仔都是穿他们自己的服装。...在学校读书的时候, 家里有时还弄点活让你干, 给弟弟缝衣服, 打毛衣什么的; 学校放假的时候回家乡, 回家了就要做抽纱挣钱帮助家庭。" See *ibid.*, pp.88-89.

867 *History*, pp.3-4.

868 Herman, "Cultural factors", p.126. See also Lee Kam Keung, *A Centennial History*, p. 50.

869 Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.334.

870 Synod Record of the English Presbyterian Church, May 2, 1902: "安饱德等复征收大会费, 将各堂会分作六等:每年半元者仙门城、碣石、庵埠、惠来、遮浪、塘心邱(?)、龙湖、留隍、东山、鲤湖、靖海。" See also Chinghai (靖海) in Herman, "Cultural factors", p.125.

871 Synod Record of the English Presbyterian Church, Aug. 25, 1907. See also P'aot'ai (炮台) in Herman, "Cultural factors", p.125.

872 Synod Record of the English Presbyterian Church, Aug. 25, 1907. See also Lee Kam Keung, "Came from the same place of birth", Note 6 and 15; and Liu Lizhi 刘理之, Wang Xingyuan 王杏元 eds., *Jieyang Xiangtu lu* 《揭阳乡土录》, Jieyang xiangtulu bianweihui 揭阳乡土录编委会, December, 1984.

873 Synod Record of the English Presbyterian Church, Sep. 14, 1915: "划归学区, 即揭邑、棉湖、枫口、登冈、顶埠、广美、大窖、流沙、龙港、新寮、炮台、新亨、东寮、竹桥、京冈、灶浦、陂头、玉溪、龟背、果陇、鲤湖、蔡口, 共二十二堂。"

874 Huang Shude and Huang Zhongshan (黄仲山), who also came Guangmei village, became needlework entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. See Lee Kam Keung, "From the Same Birthplace".

875 Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.334.

kept it under the control of the missionaries. This was also true of the local women's missions. Although funded by the needlework income of the local Christian women, the missions were supervised by the Western women missionaries. The English Presbyterian Church had other ideas and allowed its flock to earn a living from this craft and accumulate money. This policy helped to create a boom in the needlework production in the Chaozhou region. In collaboration with the skilled Presbyterian needlewomen, male Presbyterians, as said earlier in contrast to their Baptist counterparts, played an important role in this significant stage. How did this gender collaboration between the Presbyterians at the turn of the century contribute to the formation of the needlework industry which was so significant to the history of the city of Swatow?

Although it was the young women who were the producers of the needlework targeted for the oversea markets, these same young women were not allowed to travel freely to the treaty port of Swatow where many foreigners, sailors, businessmen and officials employed in the maritime Customs service congregated. Their exclusion meant that the promotion of the sale of needlework products devolved into the hands of the men. This group was also narrowed down because since the purchasers were Westerners, only those men who could speak English could market this product among the foreigners. Chief among them was a group of peddlers who used to board the foreign vessels in the port to sell the foreign soldiers and sailors their daily necessities. They also seized the opportunity to vend some of the local specialties and embroidery. They were called *bei nang zai* (背囊仔) since that they carried their commodities in a bamboo basket on their backs. Weng Caiyuan (翁财源), who used to be a barber, and Xu Zixiang (徐子祥), a Presbyterian, were said to have been among the first generation of *bei nang zai* to sell needlework.⁸⁷⁶ Be that as it may, the story of Lin Jiahe, who was also a *bei nang zai*, offers a better illustration of the relationship between a male peddler and a needlewoman in the initial period. Lu Jiding says that Lin Jiahe was a fellow villager of Lin Saiyu, who like he was a member of the Yanzaao congregation. Having acquired some knowledge of English from the missionaries, Lin Jiahe went to Swatow to work as a *bei nang zai* around 1902. As he marketed his wares, Lin Jiahe discovered that the needlework products made by the Presbyterian women were in great demand among the foreign visitors. He therefore contacted Lin Saiyu, who had already returned to Yanzaao during the furlough of the Lyalls, and ordered more needlework products, which he was able to sell at a great profit. His example was soon imitated by the other *bei nang zai* (背囊仔), who also frequented the villages near Swatow where women were producing fine needlework. Naturally, their orders stimulated the needlework production around Swatow.

After accumulating some capital, *bei nang zai* Weng Caiyuan and Xu Zixiang founded their own companies. Between 1903 and 1907, four needlework companies named “Weng Caiyuan”, “Swatow & Co.” (汕头公司), “Huazhang & Co.” (华章公司) and Zhenchao & Co. (振潮公司) were founded in Swatow. Most of the entrepreneurs, for instance Cai Hanyuan (蔡汉源) of Swatow & Co., Xu Zixiang

876 *History*, p.2.

and Lin Junliang (林俊良), another needlework dealer, were Presbyterians.⁸⁷⁷ At that time no foreign company yet dealt with the export of needlework products in Swatow itself. Cai, Xu and Lin followed the traditional emigrant route to Hong Kong to promote their products. Others travelled to Shanghai. In that period, both cities had considerable Western communities.

As this trade with foreigners was being developed, the art of needlework was being steadily transmitted from Swatow into the hinterland. Ding Huilong (丁惠龙) played an important role in introducing the craft into the prefectural city. Born in the village of Chenqiao (陈桥)⁸⁷⁸ near the west gate where the traditional embroidery centre of this city was located, Ding's first career was as an embroidery dealer. Promoting traditional embroidery products among Western customers meant that he frequently travelled between Chaozhou and Swatow. In Swatow, he sought close contact with the missionaries from whom he learned English. He eventually converted in later life. He met Lin Saiyu in the same congregation. Blessed with intelligence and eloquence, Ding made a great impression on Lin, from whom he learned various needlework techniques. His knowledge of the craft of needlework, his experience in promoting embroidery and his knowledge of English made him an ideal candidate to be a needlework comprador. When the opportunity presented itself, he was introduced to the Zhenchao Company by the missionaries. Ding obtained his raw materials, including white cloth and fine embroidery thread, from this company and distributed these prerequisites among the female embroidery workers in the vicinity of *Bushu* (布梳, 'Cloth and Comb') Street, the traditional embroidery centre. He also resorted to Lin Saiyu for help. Under Lin's supervision, these embroidery workers combined traditional and Western techniques to create original needlework products. The Zhenchao Company continued to supply the raw materials and took charge of the promotion and sale of the finished products abroad via channels in Shanghai and Hong Kong. In his turn, Ding Huilong distributed the raw materials among the workers and collected their finished products.⁸⁷⁹ He did not work exclusively with the Zhenchao Company, but also acted as a comprador for some other needlework companies. When business expanded and the needle workers along Bushu Street could no longer handle all the orders for their products, Ding Huilong found new centres of production in the rural areas, where the labour force was much cheaper. This was the beginning of the "putting-out"

877 Biographies of Cai Hanyuan, Lin Junliang and Xu Zixiang are as follows:

蔡汉源(?-1953), 开设“汕头抽纱公司”, 并曾于汕头组织基督教青年会

林俊良(?-1952), 汕头崎碌堂(伯特利堂前身)执事。青年时期于汕头从事抽纱业, 并往来上海、香港营商, 偕蔡汉源、黄浩等筹组汕头青年会。晚年任尖沙咀堂顾问, 至1952年离世。

徐子祥(?-1963), 生于富户, 亦为抽纱业者, 其弟为汕头贝理神学院首位华人院长徐腾辉牧师, 妹夫为陈泽霖, 皆为汕头教会的要员。先后担任汕头堂长老、执事等职, 为汕头教会核心人物。20年代由于非基运动, 使汕头堂会分裂, 部分长执要求自立, 攻击堂牧郭景云的纷争, 最终分裂产生要求独立的汕头新中华基督教会。而徐子祥于其时拥护堂牧郭景云中扮演重要角色。

林俊良、徐子祥原于汕头教会担任要职, 二人辗转南迁香港, 遂以其长才协助旅港潮人基督教会发展, 于“惨淡经营, 不遗余力”中, 使“会务突飞猛进”。See Lee Kam Keung, "Came from the same place of birth".

878 He was also said to be a native of Xinpu (新浦) village, *History*, p.4.

879 According to Mr Maloof, the types of needlework exported from Swatow were "handkerchiefs, with smaller quantities for tea sets and runners; some lace was also made, especially for large tablecloths. The bulk of the handkerchiefs, both men's and ladies', were of medium quality but contained a variety of work: drawn-work, embroidery, and a hand-rolled hem." See Herman, "Cultural factors", pp.124-125. Handkerchief and table linen were two main products.

system which dominated the needlework industry throughout most of the twentieth century. The relationship between Lin Saiyu, Lin Jiahe and Ding Huilong clearly shows a division of labour based on gender: as a woman and an expert in needlework, Lin Saiyu supervised the needlewomen thereby in fact becoming the first woman manager. With his language skills, “retailer” Lin Jiahe sold the needlework products to the foreigners. “Comprador” Ding Huilong worked in close co-operation with the needlework companies in Swatow. Lin Saiyu went even further and ran a joint-venture needlework shop, *Ding Fa He* (丁发合号), with Ding Huilong in Chaozhou City. Following in her mother’s footsteps, in 1925 her daughter, Xu Shuying, became manager of the Dechang Hang (德昌行), another needlework company in Swatow. Despite their connections with missionaries and Christianity, Lin Saiyu, Lin Jiahe and Ding Huilong had not received any formal education at a Christian school but from 1910, graduates of the Presbyterian Boys’ and Girls’ Schools in Swatow did begin to enter the needlework business (see Appendix. D). Before 1949, some leaders (either ministers or elders) of the Swatow Presbyterian Church were working simultaneously as directors of the Swatow Needlework Guild, proof of which is demonstrated by the experiences of Hou Yichu (侯乙初) and Zhang Guchun (张固纯).⁸⁸⁰

Hou Yichu was born in the town of Fengjiang (凤江镇) in Jieyang district⁸⁸¹ in 1867. He married Yang Jingde (杨锦德), a graduate of the Shude Girls’ School, who engaged in needlework in order to keep her family. Hou Yichu became a minister of the Swatow Presbyterian Church sometime after 1910. He was in charge of various important affairs in the Swatow Intermediate Synod (汕头中会), including marriage,⁸⁸² the migration of Christians,⁸⁸³ the management of girls’ primary schools run by the affiliated churches,⁸⁸⁴ the division of the Lingdong Presbyterian parish⁸⁸⁵ and the revision of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church.⁸⁸⁶ Zhang Guchun was born in Swatow in 1871 and was baptized by George Smith (施饶理) on November 11, 1887.⁸⁸⁷ He became an elder of the Swatow Presbyterian Church after 1910, and immersed himself in such issues as school affairs, membership, the appointment of evangelists and ministers,⁸⁸⁸ and church repairs.⁸⁸⁹ Around 1930, Hou Yichu and Zhang Guchun were close colleagues in the church, and worked together on the register of the Yuhuai

880 汕档: 12-9-415: 1929年1月5日的文件显示, 汕头抽纱公会常务委员是侯乙初、张固纯、赵资光。

881 Now Jiexi district (揭西县).

882 September 26, 1919; May 7, 1920; June 20, 1921; October 2, 1923, Records of the Swatow Intermediate Presbytery.

883 Sent letter to the South Siam Synod June 20, 1921 and October 24, 1922; sent letter to the Taiwan Presbyterian Synod, *ibid*.

884 September 22, 1925: 卅四: 议西教士会议将中会属各堂小女学可归中会统一管辖较便云云。邱家修举须派人与西教士会委办商酌以复后会。即派侯乙初、郭潭恩、吴国维、许修翎、洪美珠。中会准。 *Ibid*.

885 April 22, 1930: 八十二: 分区聘牧委办侯乙初等复经将各堂划为二十区。 *Ibid*.

886 April 26, 1932: 六十二: 提名委办复派人复查公例案。经派定邱家修、侯乙初、廖献诚、林受天、林章光、陈作瑞、施雅各。区会纳。 *Ibid*.

887 Zhang Guchun’s mother was also baptized on April 1, 1900 by the Chinese minister Wang Lieji. She lived in Qilu (崎碌), where most of the needlework companies were located. She probably did needlework to support her family and, like other sons engaged in this line of work, Zhang Guchun inherited his career from her interest. More examples of this pattern can be found in the Presbyterian congregation, see short biography of Huang Shude (黄树德): “十五岁与母亲一同受洗于广美村礼拜堂, 其母于教会习得抽纱手艺。黄氏因而从事抽纱业。1920年于香港弥敦道创办‘复荣公司’ (Fook Weng & Co.), 致富后奉献甚多, 历任值理多届。” See Lee Kam Keung, “Came from the same place of birth”.

888 September 26, 1918: 张固纯等重复编委办之事经酌议如左: 学校: 张固纯; 鼓励布道: 侯乙初; 人数总单: 张固纯; 小学束修: 张固纯; 传道收银并分发: 张固纯、汲约翰、华河力, 执簿: 许修翎; 牧师束修: 张固纯。Record of the Swatow Elder and Deacon Synod (汕头长执会记事册).

889 See April 22, 1929; August 2, 1931; June 26, 1932; August 26, 1934; May 9, 1948; July 15, 1948, *ibid*.

Boys' School (聿怀中学) from 1929 to 1931.⁸⁹⁰ They are both listed in the standing committee of the needlework guild,⁸⁹¹ an important institute which assisted in negotiations with the government affecting the interests of the needlework merchants. Zhang Guchuan was the chairman of the guild for twenty years between 1929 and 1949. His important position in the needlework industry helped him in his office as treasurer of the Swatow Presbyterian Church. Directly and indirectly, the Presbyterian needlework entrepreneurs gave the churches enormous financial support. When the National Government required the Yuhuai Boys' School to be registered, three needlework companies, Xiecheng (协成),⁸⁹² Swatow (汕头) and Yihan (益汉), stood guarantor. Cai Hanyuan, Xu Zixiang, Lin Junliang and Huang Hao(黄浩), who also held office in the Swatow Presbyterian Church, later emigrated to Hong Kong where they continued their businesses and gave financial support to the founding of churches for the Chaozhou Christian sojourners.⁸⁹³

Before the First World War, because of a reliance on the personal connections of the English Presbyterian missionaries, such European countries as Great Britain and Germany were the main market for the Chaozhou needlework products. Only a small portion of this work was sold in America via Ashmore's personal network. This situation changed when the European market seriously shrank during the war, thereby opening the way for America to surpass Europe as the main needlework market. In 1920, Mallouk Brothers of New York was the first foreign company to establish itself in Swatow: a Swiss designer was employed to produce new patterns, new Italian needlework techniques were introduced, linen made in Ireland and *Zuochou* (柞绸, a kind of undressed silk cloth known as pongee made in Shandong and often known as shantung) replaced the local linen cloth (made in Nanhai and Jieyang) as the new basic materials.⁸⁹⁴ Mallouk Brothers was followed by Roese Brothers (新昌洋行, Ashville, Ohio, USA), George (乔治洋行), Shalom & Co. (双隆洋行, New York City), Jabara & Bros, F. M. (倍利洋行, Wichita, KS, USA), Kohlberg, Inc. (柯宝洋行, Mt. Kisco, NY, USA), and Maloof (马禄孚洋行, Columbus, OH, USA). According to *The History*, the majority of the owners of these foreign companies were American Jews or Syrians.⁸⁹⁵ Although less competitive than the American merchants, European merchants also established companies in Swatow, among them Bradley & Co. (德记洋行, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, UK) and Melchers (美最时洋行, Bremen, Germany). The establishment of Western companies in Swatow integrated the Chaozhou region into the world economic system, the global context in which these emerging industries operated. The compradors of these foreign companies were usually graduates of the Presbyterian Anglo-Chinese School, some of

890 For Hou Yichu, see April 30, 1929; December 16, 1930; September 1, 1931; For Zhang Guchun, see April 28, 1931, Records of the Swatow Intermediate Presbytery.

891 See note 888. Zhao Ziguang was also an elder of the Swatow Presbyterian Church in the 1940s.

892 Owned by Xie Xuezhong's (谢雪璋) brother, see her oral account, Du Shimin, p.70. Xie Xuezhong was the first female minister in July 1982. See *History of Protestantism in Shantou* (draft), p.3.

893 “其时发起重组教会，获得蔡汉源、黄树德、黄仲山、孙佳广、陈润生、柯宏楠、吴宠荣、林兆禧 8 位支持。八人多业抽纱。” See Lee Kam Keung, “Came from the same place of birth”.

894 “工种又增加了意大利式扎目及对丝等”，*History*, p.1.

895 “这些洋行的老板大部分是美籍犹太人或叙利亚人，精明圆滑，资力雄厚”，*ibid.*, p.3. In the membership roll of Swatow needlework guild (1948), a manager named M.R. Dahrouge (达鲁祺) is listed. This might be French-oriented spelling of an Arabic name.

them had even enjoyed a tertiary education in Great Britain and America.⁸⁹⁶ A Presbyterian Zhang Tingjian (张廷鉴) was the comprador of Kohlberg, Inc. He was also president of the Gospel Kindergarten & National Girls' School in Qilu (崎碌福音幼稚园女子国民学校), which he funded with the help of charity institutions.⁸⁹⁷ Like Zhang, Dai Weilian (戴威廉, William Dai), the comprador of the Maloof Company, was a Presbyterian.⁸⁹⁸

The Wider Economic and Social Impact

The 'putting-out' system was the crucial factor in the rapid growth of the needlework industry in the Chaozhou region. When Western dealers arrived in Swatow during the First World War, their initial plan was to set up workshops where they could directly supervise women working full-time. This plan was doomed to failure because of the local economic and social conditions during the 1910s. Herman explains that needlework could be done more cheaply in the inland areas where the women and their daughters lived at home than in factories in Swatow. Another spanner in the works was that the needlewomen preferred to work at their own speed and among their own family members, opting for informality and less routine working hours to the rigid regularity of supervised factory life. In all likelihood, this preference was reinforced by male kinsmen who preferred the women to work at home where they would not be subject to close contact with strangers, especially men, as they would have been in the factories. Therefore, contrary to all "rational"⁸⁹⁹ industrial planning, most of the production was carried on outside the city limits of Swatow, one centre (Jinghai in Huilai district) being as far as 30 miles away.⁹⁰⁰

Eventually the divergent policies adopted in the production of needlework by the ABM (and the MEP) and the EPM ushered in different sorts of social influences. Heeding the criticism of their peers at home who believed that missionaries should not engage in profit-making businesses, the production of needlework in the American Baptist and the French Roman Catholic congregations was supervised by the missionaries solely for the benefit of the missions. Eschewing any attempt to make personal benefit, the local male Baptists and Roman Catholics were sternly forbidden to participate in this industry as a commercial business, because they were required to devote themselves to the welfare of the society, not to the pursuit of making a personal fortune. As it did not feel constrained by these about profit-making considerations, the EPM did not itself organize formal workshops for Presbyterian women but allowed the male Presbyterians to run the needlework business. In return, the wealthy needlework merchants provided donations to fund the development of the EP Church. In this case, as a wholly Chinese enterprise the craft was rapidly transmitted throughout the out-stations of the

896 Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.329.

897 Ma Yuhang 马育航, *Shantou jinkuang zhi yiban* 《汕头近况之一斑》 [Sketch of Recent Circumstances in Swatow], 1921, p.33.

898 “汕头的张廷鉴、戴威廉，都是学英文后成为第一等洋商买办的”，Chen Zelin, “The Presbyterian Mission in Chaoshan”, p.440.

899 Herman, “Cultural factors”, p.126.

900 *Ibid.*

EP Church, first to Yanzaio in Chenghai district and then to the district of Jieyang, with the town of Paotai (炮台) as its centre. Soon afterwards, it had been disseminated to Chaoyang, of which the town Zaopu (灶浦) was the pivotal point. In 1910, the craft was introduced to the prefectural city, Chaozhou, by Ding Huilong. With the commencement of the mission work of the Presbyterian Church in the district city of Chenghai in 1922, needlework also began to be produced in this city.⁹⁰¹ It would be fair to say that, after 1900 to a certain extent the spread of the craft certainly seems to have contributed to the planting of new Presbyterian stations, for instance, those in Paotai, Jinghai and Chenghai city. Very soon, the non-Christian women around these stations also mastered the craft and a systematic needlework industry gradually evolved in the Chaozhou region, with Swatow as the centre of the importation of raw materials and the export of the finished products.

A piece of needlework required a number of different techniques, which resulted in a regional specialization in certain types of work. A Chaozhou folksong succinctly summarizes this division of labour as follows: “Chao’an women do fine embroidery, Jieyang women are good at cross-stitch, every woman in Chenghai is skilled at French knots (蕾花),⁹⁰² Chaoyang (women) are famous for their drawn-thread work, Guangbu (关埠) (women) are experts in weaving ramie grass cloth (苧葛布), people in Yanzaio excell at crocheting.”⁹⁰³ The needlework industry reached its zenith between 1934 and 1941. During its heyday, at a moderate estimate, 500,000 people,⁹⁰⁴ most of them women and girls,⁹⁰⁵ were engaged in this industry in the rural areas. In 1930, an intricate circuit was established on the basis of the regional specialization. Both Herman and Chen Zhuofan illustrate how ladies’ handkerchiefs were made in the Chaozhou region (see Figure 35, an area covering 50 miles from north to south, and extending 30 miles inland).⁹⁰⁶ Based primarily on Herman, supplemented by Chen

901 The *History* says around 1925, pp.4-5.

902 Also called “插花”, see Ke Yudan, “Research on the Artistic Characteristics”, p.94.

903 在潮汕大地上, 有着这样抽纱技艺的民谣传颂: “潮安长垫绣(embroidery), 揭阳会十字花(cross-stitch), 澄海人人会蕾花, 潮阳雕窗 (drawn-thread work) 上出名, 关埠擅长苧葛布(grasscloth), 盐灶拿手‘哥罗纱’ (crochet, 即通花) ...,” See Yang Jianping, *Chaozhou Embroidery*, pp.78-79.

904 Herman estimates the number to have been 300,000 in the period 1936-1941. This number was “a generalized compromise between an estimate of 200,000 in U. S. Department of Commerce, China Monthly Trade Report, Feb. 1, 1935, p.15, and 400,000, a medium estimate by Mr Fred Maloof, former exporter-importer of Swatow work for 25 years, in a personal interview in New York, April 21, 1952;” Herman, “Cultural factors”, p.124. However, the statistics provided in the *Introduction* (p.2) suggest numbers ranging from 500,000 to 900,000 (excluding 10,000 employees who worked in Swatow). The statistics in 1938 provided by The *History* (pp.4-5) are more detailed: Jieyang district: 250,000; Chaoyang: 100,000; Chao’an: 300,000; Chenghai: 50,000; 700,000 needlewomen in total (excluded 6,000 employees worked in Swatow). I have adopted the moderate number of 500,000 Chaozhou needlewomen in the heyday of needlework industry.

905 Men constituted certain percentages among the needle workers. Lady Xiao (肖姐), who did needlework at the end of 1970s, told me that 10% of the workers were male. Interview with Lady Xiao, 2011-1-30. This is not a strange state of affairs in the Chaozhou region, because men had also worked as embroiderers for as long as the traditional craft of embroidery had existed in Chaozhou city. They specialized in embroidering the costumes for the officials and for the actors and actresses in traditional Chaozhou drama. This work was not allowed to be done by women. When Western needlework was introduced into this city, it was said that most of the workers who began to learn this craft were male. With the development of this industry, women gradually became the majority. See *History*, p.5.

906 Herman, “Cultural factors”, p.127. The place names and the Chinese terminologies for the types of work in brackets have been added by the author. See also *Introduction* (pp.1-2): “抽纱制造繁复之过程中, 大别可分为两大部份及地域, 汕头为收发之枢纽, 各县农村为制造之中心, 农村妇女以抽纱为副业, 汕头市男女工人专司漂洗、烫熨”. Chen Zhuofan also said: “抽纱业的经营, 把加工的工种, 分门别类就各地区的专长, 分布送去加工. 其中名贵的抽纱品种, 都要包括几个不同的工种, 而且还要经过几个不同的地区, 进行不同的加工. 例如白花绣手巾的加工先送揭阳县抽纱, 次送潮安县绣花, 后送汕头市郊卷边, 然后制成.” Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, pp.333-334.

Zhuofan and *The History*, below an overview is given showing the regional specialization, the processing circuit and the number of needlewomen in each needlework centre during the heyday:

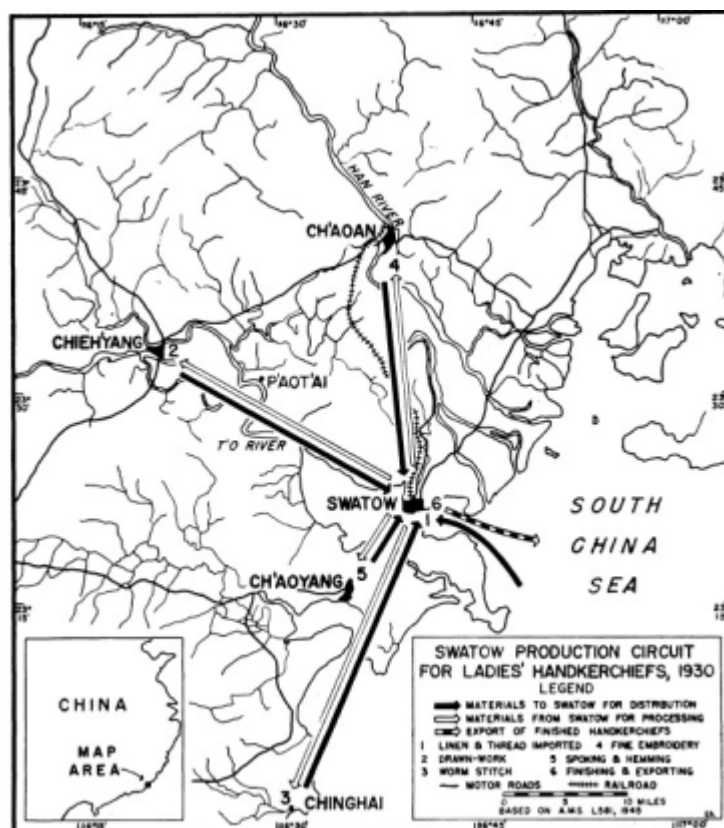


Figure 35: Swatow Production Circuit for Ladies' Handkerchiefs, 1930

(From Theodore Herman, "Cultural factors", p.123)

Step 1, in Swatow: Pieces of imported linen were stamped with the design in Swatow, often four copies on one large piece.

Step 2, Jieyang district was home to 250,000 needlewomen. The agents carried bundles of the pieces of cloth and the thread up the Tuo River (鮎江) by launch or sampan to the district city of Jieyang and its satellite villages, notably Paotai (炮台), where the women and girls specialized in drawn-thread work. When their work had been completed, the pieces were collected and returned to Swatow for inspection by the agents. The agents were paid and took the bundles to another area for the next step in the process. Besides drawn-thread work, the women in Jieyang had mastered a wide variety of other techniques, for instance picot or purl work (对丝), eyelet stitching (网眼), embroidery (绣花), hemming (卷边), binding (扎边), appliqué (贴布) and so forth.⁹⁰⁷

Step 3, in Jinghai (靖海) in Huilai district: If simple worm or bullion stitch was required, their destination was Jinghai, on the coast 30 miles south of Swatow, where girls of seven or eight were employed to do this work. When finished, the pieces came back again to Swatow. (Worm or bullion stitch)

Step 4, the district of Chao'an (潮安) had 300,000 needlewomen. To be assured of the finest embroidery, the

907 “揭阳县抽纱工作较为全面，如绣花、抽纱、网眼、卷边、扎边、贴布均能做，而以对丝、网眼、龙眼花、三山边、托地花为特长。” Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.334.

material was transferred north to Chaozhou by river, rail or road. (Embroidery)

Step 5, in Swatow and Chaoyang (潮阳): Upon completion, the work was again returned to the environs of Swatow and sent south to Chaoyang for spoking across the drawn-thread work, cutting the large pieces into four separate handkerchiefs and hemming them all by hand—each process undertaken by a different group. Among the villages in the environs of Swatow which were good at hemming were Outing (鸥汀), Dongdun (东墩), Fulong (浮垅), Jinsha (金沙), Huawu (华坞). They were located in the southern part of Chenghai district. In the northern part, the villages of Yanzaio, Zhanglin and Dongli (东里) had a reputation for crocheting. The Chenghai district had 50,000 needlewomen in total. In Chaoyang there were 100,000 needlewomen whose specialty was patchwork or appliqué.⁹⁰⁸

Step 6, in Swatow, in the workshops of the contractors or exporters, local women did the final processing which included inspecting, washing, ironing, folding, labelling, and packing. Some 5,000 women were employed in the factories in Swatow.⁹⁰⁹

In 1938, a year in which there was regular production, 3,600,000 dozen handkerchiefs, 1,050,000 tablecloth sets, 18,000 kilograms of lace and 42,000 kilograms of crochet gloves were exported.⁹¹⁰ The value amounted to US\$ 7 million. Seventy per cent of the products were exported to the United States (see Figure 36):⁹¹¹

908 “潮阳县专工贴布，澄海县的鸥汀乡以绣花及卷边为长，盐灶、樟林、东里等乡以织花边（又名珂罗纱）驰名，汕头市郊之东墩、浮垅、金沙、华坞等乡则专长卷边。” Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.334.

909 The number in *Introduction* was 10,000; The *History* says the number of needle workers in Swatow was 6,000, 90% of them (5,400) women. This number is very close to Herman's estimate.

910 See *History*, p.7. The statistics in *The Introduction* (p.3) are: during 1937-1941, 3 million dozen handkerchiefs and 1.75 million tablecloths were exported. However, the number given by Herman (p.127) is very low, “between 150,000 and 200,000 dozen handkerchiefs were exported annually.”

911 Herman says the number was as high as 90%, see Herman, “Cultural factors”, p.127.



Figure 36: Routes of Import⁹¹² and Export⁹¹³ of the Chaozhou Needlework Industry
(From *The History*, p.6)

As indicated by Herman, before needlework had been introduced to Swatow, this craft was well established in other ports along the Chinese coast, as among them Ningbo (宁波) and Changshu (常熟) near Shanghai, Yantai (烟台), and Qingdao (青岛) in Shandong province. At the time, these cities were more regular ports of call for ocean-going ships from around the world.⁹¹⁴ Despite the established reputation of the craft in these port cities, Swatow was eventually chosen as a centre of needlework production during and after the First World War. Why was this choice made? Herman does raise this question but does not answer it.⁹¹⁵ Two factors might be considered in searching for an explanation:

912 The foreign counties from whom imported the raw materials:

Materials	Made in:
linen 亚麻布	GB, Switzerland, Belgium
cambric 细洋纱布	Switzerland, GB, US
Argentine cambric 亚根地纱布	Switzerland, GB,
crewel yarn 绣纱线	GB, France, Switzerland,

Introduction, p.3.

913 Herman says 90% of the products were exported to the US, *ibid.* However, the statistics provided in *Introduction* are:

	The US	GB	Australia	Canada	South Africa	South America	Others: Philippine and East Indies, etc.	Total
Before WWII: 1937-1941	70%	3%	7%	5%	3%	2%	10%	100%
After WWII: 1948-1949	80%	Import restricted	4%	6%	Import restricted	2%	8%	100%

914 Herman, "Cultural factors", p.124:

915 *Ibid.*, p.122.

needlework was already the principal profit-making craft in the Chaozhou region which could provide a ready labour force composed of a large number of unemployed village women, a circumstance it has to be said it shared with Shandong province. Although needlework was also introduced into the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas, the women there had already found employment in the traditional cloth and silk weaving industries, especially after these were mechanized in the mid-nineteenth century. As the population expanded, a certain number of village women in the Yangtze River Delta also earned their living from plying this craft. This change in employment did not occur in the Pearl River Delta. Apart from being engaged in the silk-reeling industry, the village women in this delta were more likely to be found employed as migrant workers in Guangzhou, Hong Kong or even South-East Asia, where some of them worked as *amah* (female servants) in rich Chinese and Western families. Others earned their livings as peddlers or even coolies.

The second reason for the prominence achieved by the craft in this region was that as it was located between Hong Kong and Shanghai, the two biggest port cities, Swatow was an ideal place to become a centre of needlework production. Enterprising Chaozhou merchants followed the emigrant tradition and went off to establish needlework export companies in Shanghai and Hong Kong. The companies which had their headquarters in Swatow and branches in Shanghai, illustrated in Appendix D, were One Price lace Co. (一价行), Loo Brothers (卢伟记), Kaiji Hang (凯记行),⁹¹⁶ Guangcheng (光成商行), Chaoshan Drawn thread Work Company (潮汕抽纱商行), Hengfeng Hang (恒丰行); those which had a branch in Hong Kong was the Swatow Company Fook Weng & Co. (复荣抽纱商行). The branches outside Swatow also served as a “hostel” where the emigrant workers who moved to the big cities from their hometowns might feel at home.⁹¹⁷ In the 1920s, a new network of Chaozhou emigrant workers began to take shape, which is reflected in an old saying: “Shanghai first, Hong Kong second, Singapore third, Siam fourth” (一上二香三叻四暹)”, listing the first four favourite destinations of emigrants from the region. By this time the flourishing ports of Shanghai and Hong Kong had surpassed the overseas choices of migration, Singapore and Bangkok, as the first two destinations. The commercial networks for needlework products either overlapped with or helped to form this new emigrant network.

The Chaozhou needlework merchants were also interested in the internal market and also searched assiduously for marketing opportunities in Qingdao, Beijing and the other inland cities. The Housheng Drawn-thread Work Company (厚生抽纱公司) in Swatow had a branch in Yantai.⁹¹⁸ Huang Hao (黄浩) and his wife, Wang Peizhi (王佩芝), also ran the “Chongchi”⁹¹⁹ needlework and embroidery

916 The Chinese characters “Hang” (行, pronounced “Hong” in Cantonese), “Ji” (记), “Hao” (号) or “Gongsi” (公司) were often used as suffix to indicate a shop, factory or company. Sometimes the first two characters were used in conjunction, such as “Kaiji Hang”.

917 谢牧师她家有几个要好的朋友, 虽然相隔很远, 但合办了一家“志成抽纱公司”, 协助接待家乡的牧师、长老。那时候不是轻易能住上旅社的, 所以有乡下的亲人往来就(在志成公司)歇一晚或一天, 就像(住)旅社一样; 如果是信主的家庭, (志成公司)招待也就是请吃一餐。Account of Aunt Laughing, Du Shimin, *The Christian Girls School*, p.81.

918 汕档 12-9-351: 汕头抽纱业工业同业会会员名册, 中华民国三十七年十月三十日。

919 “Chongchi” (宠锡) was her husband Huang Hao’s old name given by his parents. See the biography of Huang Hao in *Biographies of the Chaozhou People in Beijing*.

factory (宠锡挑补绣花工厂) in Beijing in 1927. The uncle (her mother's brother) of Aunt Laughing, an ex-student of the Shude Girls' School, also ran a needle work atelier in Beijing where her second brother (二哥) worked as an apprentice. In the summer, the season of retreat for the Westerners (most of whom were missionaries), her brother travelled to Beidaihe (北戴河), one of the well-known summer resorts for Westerners in North China, to solicit sales of needlework products and build up contacts with these potential customers.⁹²⁰

Conversely, this flourishing commercial network also stimulated immigration to Swatow from the other provinces. Young men came from the Yangtze River Delta and as far away as Shandong province to set up a needlework business and they spent the rest of their lives there. Most outstanding among them was Zhang Yunsheng (张运生, also called Y. S. Chang). He had grown up and was educated in Ningbo. In the 1920s, he came to Swatow where he worked as a comprador for the German company Melchers.⁹²¹ In 1934, he launched his own needlework factory called Yueming (月明厂, meaning Bright Moon). In November 1945, he was also employed as deputy-manager of the Chaoshan Drawn-thread Work Co-operation (潮汕抽纱工业品产销合作社)⁹²² and also worked simultaneously as the administrative director of the Needlework Guild, collaborating with the Presbyterian Zhang Guchun who was the head of this guild.⁹²³ When James McMullan Ltd opened a branch in Swatow around 1925, the requisite management personnel were dispatched to the Swatow branch from its headquarters in Yantai. This meant that some company personnel had to migrate from North to South China.⁹²⁴

The experiences of Weng Jingtong (翁锦通), one of the most successful Chaozhou needlework merchants of the twentieth century, are a textbook example of both the rise of a needlework dealer and of a typical domestic and international emigrant whose commercial network was provided by the needlework trade. Weng was born in Pengzhou (蓬洲) village in Chenghai. In 1927, when he was a teenager, Weng first worked for the Housheng Drawn-thread Work Company in Swatow as an apprentice, carrying the water to wash the finished needlework products. Three years later, when the head of this company opened a branch in Yantai, Shandong, Weng was appointed its chef. He also helped to deliver goods and miscellaneous pieces of work. In traditional Chinese society, an apprentice should perform all sorts of chores before he could become a manager. In 1933, he took over the work as pattern designer and assessor. One year later, he took over the management of the needlework company. In around 1940 when similar companies in Shanghai began to adopt the techniques of mechanized embroidery, Weng was sent to Shanghai to learn about this process. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, the needlework industry in mainland China declined and Weng lost his job and returned to his hometown.⁹²⁵ After working as a peasant for sixteen years, in 1957 Weng was granted

920 Aunt Laughing, Du Shimin, *The Christian Girls School*, p.77.

921 Chen Zhuofan, *Origin*, p.331.

922 汕档 12-9-351: 汕头抽纱业工业同业会会员名册, 中华民国三十七年十月三十日.

923 July 26, 1947: 汕头市抽纱特产改善意见书, 理事长张固纯、常务理事林承之、常务理事张运生

924 See http://jamesmcmullan.com/frame_brbiog.htm, consulted on 2011-1-27.

925 Kang Weiguo, "Weng Jingtong, the King of Needlework", p.37.

permission by the Chinese government to migrate to Hong Kong. There he worked in a needlework company run by one of his ex-colleagues (they had met in Yantai and now met again in Hong Kong). Five years later, he had accumulated enough capital to open his own company.⁹²⁶ When this company was successfully established in Hong Kong, Weng moved on to explore the European market. In 1966, he investigated the needlework markets in West Germany, Italy, Belgium and Greece and discovered that needlework products were cherished by the Italians as an important item in a girl's trousseau. Therefore, the decision was made to open a branch in Rome the next year. With the normalization of relations between China and America in 1972, Weng took the initiative to explore the vast market in America, which had been lost to the Chaozhou needlework products for more than a decade. He set up Senxing (森兴) Co. Ltd, which had 200 branches in America in the 1980s, in the New York city in 1974.⁹²⁷

Although compared with the male needlework dealers, the lives of the Chaozhou needlewomen were less adventurous, this craft still exerted a great influence on their lives. The introduction of the craft of needlework provided the countrywomen with a new way of earning a living. They learnt to “support themselves with a needle” (一支针求生存). Importantly, needlework also provided new forms of communal activity. Watching their mothers or elder sisters, some little girls aged only five to six years old mastered the craft and assisted their mothers.⁹²⁸ Lu Jiding depicts it in an almost nostalgic pastoral setting: “For needlework all one needed was a ‘*gou hua zhen*’ (勾花针), a needle made of stainless steel more than 10 centimetres long and a bamboo basket for carrying the threads. With these tools and materials, women could crochet or do drawn-work wherever they went. In the past, wherever the women folk assembled, they all had such a ‘*gou hua zhen*’ in their hands, including women as old as fifty or sixty and the little girls as young as eight to nine years old. They skillfully plied their shiny needles, chatting away at the same time. This was the typical scene in the cities and rural areas in the Chaozhou region.”⁹²⁹ Lady Xiao also told me that at the end of the 1970s, the schoolgirls (she was one of them) invariably did needlework in the breaks between classes. Some of them even did it during class, managing to escape being caught by the teacher. Lady Xiao could earn three Yuan per day, a significant amount considering that the average salary for an adult at that time was 18 Yuan per month. Her younger brother also helped her to do needlework. Both of them were therefore able to pay for their own tuition throughout secondary school. The tuition fees at that time were two Yuan each semester.

926 Ibid., p.38.

927 Ibid., p.39.

928 Yang Jianping, *Chaozhou Embroidery*, pp. 78-79.

929 Lu Jiding, “Embroidery and Drawn-thread Craft in Chaoshan”, pp.69-70.



Figure 37: Inspection on the needle workers by the Shantou Customs, photo by Huang Yongzhe (黄勇哲), 2005
(From Guan Shan, “A Letter of Requisition Revives an Industry”, p.49.)

Even though the image of the needlewomen was a feminine one, the economic independence of women in the private sphere (family) impelled them to go in search of their own social values. As a result of the feminist movement in the 1920s, some Christian women had already begun to become involved in Church affairs. Take Yang Jingde (杨锦德) as an example: she was a graduate of the Shude Girls’ School, excelled at needlework and later married the Reverend Hou Yichu. She not only supported her family with her needlework but was also sent by the church to attend the Presbyterian South China Synod in Guangzhou in April 30, 1929, where she was the only woman among the church leaders.⁹³⁰ Another Shude graduate, Xie Xuezhong (谢雪璋), whose elder brother managed the Zhicheng (志成) Needlework Company, was ordained the first female minister in the Chaozhou region in 1982.⁹³¹

Some women also followed in the footsteps of Lin Saiyu and her daughter, Xu Shuying, and became managers of needlework companies. In Beijing in 1927, Wang Peizhi (王佩芝) ran the “Chongchi” Needlework and Embroidery Factory in conjunction with her husband, Huang Hao. Her anonymous biographer claims that she was a good manager, taking care of her female workers’ education, marriages and paying attention to the physical and mental problems besetting their daily lives. In return she won their respect.⁹³²

The needlework factories also produced some important figures in the first generation of Communist party cadres, as among them Su Hui (苏惠)⁹³³ and Fang Lang (方朗). Su Hui was born

930 “八四: 胡若霖举宜派人筹备进行华南区会议, 要点, 并禀报大会。即派林重三、汲多玛、刘泽荣、陈则起、谢德茂、林之纯、邱家修、吴国维、侯乙初太太。区会通过。” See Record of the District Synod, April 30, 1929.

931 See *History of Protestantism in Shantou*, p.3.

932 In *Biographies of the Chaozhou People in Beijing*.

933 Her original name was Zhuang Qisu, 庄起苏, *ibid*.

into a well-to-do Baptist family in Tianqian (田墘) in Haifeng (海丰) district. Her father, Zhuang Yaoting (庄耀庭), was an active member of the Peasants Union (农会) organized in Haifeng district by Peng Pai (澎湃). She married Fang Fang (方方), grandson of the famous general Fang Yao (方耀). Influenced by Marxist thought, both Fang Fang and Su Hui joined the Communist party. Fang Lang (方朗), born in the district city of Huilai (惠来县城关镇) in 1923, completed only two years at the local primary school. After she dropped out, she supported her family by doing needlework. At the age of thirteen, she worked as a cotton spinner in the Great China Spinnery (大中华纺纱厂), Swatow, where she joined the “Anti-Japanese Resistance People’s Army in the South China” (华南人民抗日义勇军), a peripheral organization of the Communist party. Dispatched to work in the needlework companies “He Tai” (和泰), Melchers (美最时) and “Xiecheng” (协成), she spread Communist propaganda among her fellow workers. She joined the Communist Party in February 1937. Su Hui and Fang Lang agitated together for the welfare of the female workers (double wages at New Year) in the needlework companies run by Fred Maloof (马禄孚, or 马禄夫).⁹³⁴

Conclusion

In the Western world, needlework was regarded as one of the domestic skills required of women, who played an essential part in managing a Christian home. In the mid-nineteenth century, Western style needlework was introduced to various coastal ports such as Ningbo (宁波) and Changshu (常熟) near Shanghai, Yantai (烟台) and Qingdao (青岛) in Shandong province by Western missionaries. After the arrival of Western woman missionaries in the Chaozhou region, it was Lida Scott Ashmore who introduced this craft to the American Baptist congregation in the 1880s. Later, when Sophia A. Norwood switched her membership from the ABM to the EPM, this craft also spread among the Presbyterian congregation. The examples of the Protestant ladies was followed by the French Roman Catholic priests and the Ursuline sisters. The missionaries also used their personal and international networks through which they promoted the sale of needlework in their own countries.

Confronting the criticism of their peers in the West who were adamantly convinced that missionaries should not engage in profit-making businesses, different policies were adopted, the ABM and MEP assuming one position and the EPM the other, to manage their needlework enterprises. The production of needlework was carefully organized by the American Baptist Church and the French Roman Catholic Church solely for the benefit of the churches. The local male Baptists and Roman Catholics were not allowed to participate in this industry. This policy meant that the spread of the craft was limited to within their own congregations. The EPM did not organize workshops for Presbyterian women but allowed the male Presbyterians to participate in the needlework business. This policy resulted in the fact that Presbyterian merchants made up a considerable percentage of the needlework

934 Fred Maloof not only invested in a needlework company in Swatow, he was also a wealthy oilman, timber owner and art collector who established a museum for fine art and John Hanson memorabilia, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxon_Hill_Manor, consulted in 2011-01-27. Maloof gave Theodore Herman an interview and gave him information about trade flows and business practice in 1952.

merchants in Chaozhou and that the leaders of the Swatow Presbyterian church took charge of the Swatow Needlework Guild for a number of decades prior to 1949. In return, the wealthy Presbyterian needlework merchants provided donations for the EP churches in the Chaozhou region and Hong Kong.

Exceptionally well-suited to the code of the four traditional female virtues which decreed that an ideal woman should “be good at weaving and sewing”, this craft was not only welcomed by both male and female Christians, it was also greeted with open arms by the non-Christians in the Chaozhou region. Needlework was the first profitable craft in the Chaozhou region which was able to absorb the pool of labour formed by the large number of unemployed village women. In the 1920s a putting-out system gradually took shape. Its formation should be attributed to the local ethic prevailing in pre-industrial Chaozhou society that needlewomen preferred or it was preferred that they work at home rather than in the supervised factories in Swatow. The craft of needlework developed into a booming industry in the 1920s, and in 1930 an intricate circuit utilizing the geographical specialization of certain types of work was formed, with the port city of Swatow at the centre. This industry was in fact the main impetus for the development of this city and exerted a significant influence on the economic landscape and social life of the Chaozhou region all throughout the twentieth century.

The division of labour on the basis of gender in the needlework industry was clear cut: women were the main producers. This craft not only provided a new way of livelihood for women in the countryside, it also ensured them of social and cultural networks. It would certainly not be wrong to assume that, in the initial phase, in the places where the churches took the initiative in teaching this craft, some women converted simply because they wanted to learn the techniques. Apart from financial independence, another advantage of acquiring the skill was that they could easily find companionship there with the other needlewomen. The craft might have also been used strategically by the churches to attract a group of women to listen to preaching. In the eyes of the Baptist and Roman Catholic congregations, a needlework workshop was an ideal place to carry out evangelism: a Bible-woman or Virgin could preach to the needlewomen or they could sing hymns together, in the same vein as the non-Christians sang folksongs while doing embroidery. Even though the image of needlewomen was feminine, the independence of women in the economy of the private sphere (family) impelled them to search for new social values. The combination of needlework expertise and schooling enabled gifted women to deploy themselves as church leaders, managers and Communist party cadres.

In contrast to the women, the men engaged in this industry took the role of the agents who distributed raw materials to the workers and collected the finished products or worked as comprador for a Western company or even as manager of their own company. The enterprising Chaozhou merchants actually followed the well-trodden path of the emigrant tradition and established needlework companies in Shanghai, Hong Kong and the other coastal or inland cities. This commercial route overlapped with, or even helped to form, a new emigrant network in the 1920s: Shanghai and Hong Kong surpassed Singapore and Siam as the first two favourite emigrant destinations. Emigrant workers

and foreign investment also followed the inter-provincial and international routes to Swatow. All of these helped to integrate the Chaozhou region into the world economic and colonial systems.