

Money Plucked from the Sky: Shrimp Farming, Entrepreneurship and the Circulation of Know-How in a Fujian Village*

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This article uses Lave and Wenger's concept of *situated learning* to explore how the new shrimp farmers of Baisha Village in South Fujian "learned capitalism" without "unlearning" the production of community. I suggest that when villagers turned *en masse* to rural capitalism, specialised knowledge or skills increased both in economic importance and in social efficacy. I argue that this knowledge circulated within two cycles: a spatial circulation of technical knowledge-PROPERTY, where shrimp farming know-how was inserted into the rural gift economy and share-holding arrangements, and a historical cycle of KNOWLEDGE-property, which was the basis of a local habitus formation and of local distinction. The historical cycle produced the entrepreneurial skills and local expertise that underpinned the success of particular farmers in the village and formed Baisha's "competitive" edge. The spatial cycle secured rapid access to new forms of production and created a market for Baisha's products by producing localised knowledge. At the same time, these two cycles produced skills, subject positions, and Baisha's particular set of social relationships. I suggest that in Baisha continuity and change, and the production of capital and community, necessarily came together as the "community of practice" engaged in the production of its own future.

Keywords: shrimp farming, circulation of skills, rural capitalism, Fujian, production of sociality

* My research in Baisha originally focused on changing property relations, when I was a researcher in the "Property Relations Group" directed by Chris Hann at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany. This paper has enormously benefited from comments by Charles Stafford, Jacob Eyferth and an anonymous reviewer. I also wish to note here the fruitful discussions after the presentation of an early version at the LSE workshop and at the departmental seminars of the Departments of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, U.K. and National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu, Taiwan. All place and personal names in this paper have been changed to safeguard the anonymity of informants.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the learning and circulation of economic skills among new rural entrepreneurs in Baisha Village, South Fujian, and explores how, in a highly commercialized environment, the learning of new economic practices is linked to family and community reproduction. Baisha Village, situated near the Xiamen Special Economic Zone (SEZ), is a coastal community that has gone through dramatic changes during the last fifty years. Before the Revolution Baisha was a community of large landholdings steeped in commerce and trade, which attracted labour migrants from poorer regions and sent many emigrants to Southeast Asia. After 1949, the village became a rural brigade of socialist peasants (*nongmin* 農民), producing mainly fish and rice for a collective socialist economy that had eliminated private markets and emphasized economic self-reliance. Since the Reforms, and especially in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Baisha experienced maybe the most dramatic of all changes. It transformed itself into an entrepreneurial “shrimp farm village,” with numerous private enterprises commercially producing large quantities of cultivated shrimp for the national and international market. Despite the village-wide turn towards entrepreneurship, capital investment and commodity production, however, Baisha continued to be very much a localized community in which *bendi ren* 本地人 (locals) sharply distinguished themselves from *waidi ren* 外地人 (outsiders). *Bendi ren*, from the perspective of villagers, were people whose ancestors had come to Baisha and raised their families there, and who held an inherited right to village resources. In the post-Reform environment this translated into the notion that only *bendi ren* had a right to establish a shrimp farm in Baisha, and a situation where the know-how of shrimp farming circulated first and foremost between local families. In short, the village had turned itself into a “community of entrepreneurs,” where learning to produce capital did not imply “unlearning” the practices that produced community. Or, more specifically, in Baisha the new value of economic know-how did not clash with local processes of knowledge exchange. How did the villagers learn to become certain types of economic agents? How can we understand this particular pattern of local development?

This paper focuses on two economic practices that sustained Baisha’s transformation into a community of entrepreneurs: the villagers’ skilful investments in rural enterprises, where profit-maximization and the production of capital were the main economic rationale, and the exchange and sharing of shrimp farming know-how with kin, neighbors, and friends. Together, I will suggest, these practices produced the most important resources for social

mobility in the new environment: money, specialized knowledge, and sociality.

My main argument is that both practices developed through *situated learning in a community of practice* (see Lave and Wenger 1991). To understand the relation between the production of capital and community in Baisha, economic and social practices are best explored as skills, the learning of which, as Lave and Wenger write, (re)produces¹ not only economic livelihoods but also certain types of persons and communities. I will further suggest that the “double character” of skills as knowledge and property constitutes the link between economic, social and cultural (re)production in Baisha.

To explore the link between the circulation of knowledge-property and the production of a community of entrepreneurs, we have to analyze the local meanings of different skills and the processes, contexts, and relationships through which they were learned and shared from the perspective of economic agents. But before we take a closer look at the nature of economic learning in Baisha Village, it is necessary to shortly discuss the issue of knowledge-property (or intellectual property) and to highlight Lave and Wenger’s concept of *situated learning* (1991) as an innovative approach to economic practices and particular patterns of local development.

Learning, Knowledge-Property, and Communities of Practice

Shrimp farming knowledge (building on the more general knowledge of an entrepreneur) can be understood as a perhaps minor form of intellectual property, and it is under capitalism where intellectual property rights become important economic assets, since here ideas and expertise can generate profit (cf. Harrison 1992:234). The transition to capitalism is therefore thought to bring about a new emphasis on the private ownership of intellectual property; as much as capitalism has generally been associated with the rise of private property that is disembedded from social relations (cf. Whitehead 1984:180). Also from the perspective of intellectual property, the phrase “community of entrepreneurs” appears to be a contradiction in terms.

But intellectual property is also KNOWLEDGE and this, by definition, presupposes a certain degree of intersubjectivity. As Simon Harrison argues, the case of intellectual property therefore highlights the link between econ-

¹ Instead of production and reproduction, I use (re)production to denote what, in Lave and Wenger’s view (1991), is essentially one process through which sameness and difference are generated at the same time.

omy, culture, and forms of sociality particularly clearly. A “good” from an economic perspective, “its objects have no existence except on the plane of intersubjectivity. They presuppose a shared universe of information and meaning, and depend on this universe not only for their value, but for their very reality” (Harrison 1992:235). Harrison, exploring ritual and myth as intellectual property, shows that in non-capitalist societies intellectual property rights were often closely tied up with group identities, status differences and ethnic boundaries.

It is evident that capitalism adds a new value dimension to certain types of knowledge and therefore tends to strengthen notions of exclusive knowledge ownership. But on a more general level, knowledge-property² retains its fundamental intersubjectivity also in capitalist contexts. This becomes evident from the perspective of practices and learning. Learning often requires having access to particular social relations in which relevant knowledge is “embedded.” Furthermore, the sharing and exchange of knowledge within skilled or learned communities can actually increase its value—as in the case of academic communities, for example (cf. Strathern 1996:23). In newly “capitalist” Baisha, as I will show, the skills of a successful entrepreneur were also attributes of particular social relations. The sharing of shrimp farming know-how between villagers reproduced these relationships, while at the same time as it produced a much more valuable form of knowledge: local and localized expertise. The high market value of this expertise, vice versa, strengthened the identification of villagers with Baisha as a local community.

I found Lave and Wenger’s concept of *situated learning* particularly useful for understanding the intimate link between the circulation of knowledge-property and capital and community production in Baisha. Lave and Wenger propose in *Situated Learning* (1991) a view of learning as “legitimate peripheral participation” in a “community of practice.” Studying butchers, midwives, and tailors, they show that economic skills are learned as a part of wider social practices, and that learning is a process of “evolving membership” through which beginners eventually establish themselves as full members of skilled community. Participants in communities of practice not only learn reifiable skills but become embedded personalities: “. . . identity, knowing and social membership entail each other” (ibid.:53). *Situated learning* thus (re)produces these communities as it (re)produces the skills themselves. It is a generative

² I prefer the term “knowledge-property” to intellectual property because it highlights intersubjectivity and the importance of learning processes, as well as the double character of skills as both knowledge and property.

socio-cultural activity fundamental to the production of meanings, relations, and subject positions; the basis of “crafting” communities, social orders, and selves.

The circulation of skills in communities of practice—and this is crucial for the understanding of social reproduction also under capitalist conditions—produces not only sameness but also difference, not only continuity but also change. Both processes are in constant tension with one another but necessarily come together because learning “is never simply a process of transfer or assimilation” (*ibid.*:57). As Lave and Wenger write:

Among the insights that can be gained from a social perspective on learning is the problematic character of processes of learning and cycles of social reproduction, as well as the relations between the two. These cycles emerge in the contradictions and struggles inherent in social practice and the formation of identities. . . . Learning, transformation, and change are always implicated in each other, and the status quo needs as much explanation as change. Indeed, we must not forget that communities of practice are engaged in the generative process of producing their own future. Because of the contradictory nature of collective social practice and because learning processes are part of working out of these contradictions in practice, social reproduction implies the renewed construction of resolutions to underlying conflicts. In this regard, it is important to note that reproduction cycles are productive as well. They leave a historical trace of artefacts. . . and social structures, which constitute and reconstitute the practice over time. [*ibid.*:57–58]

Baisha Village, as a historically formed system of social relatedness, is best understood as a community of practice engaged in the production of its own future. As Baisha transformed itself from a peasant village to a community of entrepreneurs, the access to and the circulation of specialized knowledge-property increasingly became the basis of identity and community formation. The cycles of knowledge transmission (re)produced Baisha’s local community in two senses: firstly, the circulation of KNOWLEDGE-property was the pre-condition of economic and “cultural” (re)production of entrepreneurial families and of the “community of entrepreneurs.” Secondly, as knowledge-PROPERTY, that transmission was inserted into the rural gift economy and local shareholding arrangements, and thereby became part of the (re)production of sociality and community. Both of these cycles were crucial to the ability of villagers to produce capital in South Fujian’s new economic environment, and they led to the rapid multiplication of shrimp farms in Baisha and a highly localized pattern of development. But let me now turn to a description of Baisha Village as both community and context of this local development.

Baisha Village as Community and Context

Baisha Village has nearly seven hundred households and is situated on the coast of South Fujian close to Xiamen Harbor. It is what villagers call a *zaxing cun* 雜姓村, a village made up of many different surname groups, in Baisha's case of 65.³ This high number of different surnames, unusual for South Fujian, resulted from several waves of migration into Baisha from poorer areas between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. Before the Revolution many of Baisha's landowning families recruited landless laborers from outside the area to work on their fields, who then later settled in the village. The village's expansion of sugar cane production under the order of a Xiamen-based sugar company in the early twentieth century also played an important part in bringing these new settlers to Baisha. After Liberation, immigration continued into the late 1950s, when teachers and other professionals were sent by the state to work in Baisha. When I visited the village, the descendants of these later immigrants made up the vast majority of the population. Also many new migrant workers from poorer inland provinces had arrived in Baisha after the Reforms. They worked in the local shrimp farms and lived in the village as *waidi ren*.

Until the Reforms, villagers in Baisha, as all over China, lived and worked in socialist collectives and, though private sideline production was allowed, depended mostly on economic resources produced in the village and re-allocated through the local bureaucracy. After the Xiamen SEZ was established in 1981, Baisha, like other coastal villages, was drawn into the whirl of markets, commodity production and investment that thoroughly changed its social and natural landscape. Many villagers were pulled into start-up rural enterprises that promised far higher incomes and meant less backbreaking work. As a result, villagers told me, Baisha could no longer produce its own foodstuffs and had to "import" (*jinkou* 進口) them from more remote hinterland villages. But there was also a "grander" development scheme that had caused massive land expropriation and environmental destruction in Baisha and that had pushed villagers out of agriculture and fishing. Baisha's prosperity had originally been founded on its ownership of about 2,000 *mu* 畝 of fertile agricultural land, of the surrounding hills where villagers grazed goats

³ The source of all statistical information on Baisha is the village government (personal communication).

and cattle and collected firewood, nearby fishing grounds and a large tidal basin. In 1991 the Xiamen city government expropriated 700 *mu* of farmland to build a golf course, leaving 6 of the 12 former production teams landless and forcing 44 households to resettle. At the same time, all remaining agricultural lands were earmarked for further development. Baisha's village beach and tidal basin had completely disappeared after years of excavating sand for construction sites in Xiamen; as one villager wistfully pointed out to me, much of it went into the construction of the Xiamen University campus. Fishing and the rearing of fish were rendered barely profitable because of the immense pollution from Xiamen Harbor. And half of the village hills had been turned into state-owned stone quarries, with explosions regularly shattering windows in the village. Baisha villagers had little choice, short of leaving the village altogether, but to look for new ways to make a living.

In the highly volatile economic environment of southeastern China, many businesses are only profitable for a couple of years, and Baisha came to be dotted with abandoned enterprises and investment ruins. However, most of Baisha's former farmers and fishermen had turned themselves rather successfully into rural entrepreneurs. They had learned how to make timely investments in profitable new lines of production, and to rapidly abandon them when returns decreased. Since new market niches can generate very high incomes for a period of time, the village soon developed what can only be called an "investment frenzy." In the early 1990s, the village government had turned entrepreneurial, investing, unsuccessfully as it turned out, village funds in large-scale pig farms, a factory that produced concrete (*shuinichang* 水泥廠), a row of houses at the local market it hoped to rent out to migrant laborers, and even in businesses in Hong Kong. Villagers followed suit by opening up fish and frog farms, shops, restaurants, small shoe and cloth factories and by going into more specialized crafts such as carpentry or metal works. Even the local temple committee briefly considered investing temple funds, but then backed away from the idea because it was "too dangerous" (*tai weixian* 太危險).

When I lived in Baisha in 2000 and 2001, the village was in the process of being swept by a "shrimp farm fever." Villagers borrowed large sums from relatives, friends, or even the bank to invest them (*tou zi* 投資) into shrimp farming enterprises. This led to the rapid multiplication of shrimp farms in the village. In June 2000 Baisha had 35 shrimp farms, and by the end of the same year their number had risen to 62. In October 2001, when I visited Baisha for the second time, 115 farms were in operation, and a village cadre told me that with the construction of even more farms going on everywhere he expected there would be 130 farms running by the end of 2001. Virtually every square meter of land within the confines in which the local government tolerated the

operation of such farms was being used for farm construction. Villagers tore down earlier investment ruins, moved village lanes and even filled ponds to find space to built new farms. What triggered this fever was that raising shrimp, at that moment in time, was fast money: the national and international market demand was booming and the larger operations in Baisha already generated around 200,000 yuan annually (roughly 21,000 € / 24,000 US\$).

In this enterprise, too, economic success demanded fast action. If one was in the business when market prices were good, one could earn a sizeable amount of money for a couple of years. If one entered the market too late, the chance to strike it rich might not only have passed, but one might also be left with crippling debts owed to family, friends, or the bank that one could not repay. This possibility created enormous pressures for village families and sent them scrambling to assemble the necessary funds. Before I left again for Europe, I paid a last visit to a female friend, only to find that half of her frog farm had been demolished. I knew that Mingfa desperately wanted to start a shrimp farm, but also that she had had problems finding the money in the village. She was in the process of trying to find a co-investor in Xiamen, but had already torn down half of the old operation because, as she said, she “just could not bear waiting any longer.” In short, the “entrepreneurial spirit” of these villagers was striking. What were the skills of the successful shrimp farmer in Baisha and where did they come from?

In the following, I will explore the development of Baisha as a shrimp farming village and community of entrepreneurs from the perspective of learning and knowledge circulation. To do so, I will introduce three women, Reili, Suyu, and Mingfa, all in their late thirties and early forties, married and with children. Reili and Suyu had for several years acted as *laoban* 老闆 (bosses) of successful shrimp farms, and were considered the “number one” and “number two” shrimp farmers in Baisha. Mingfa, as mentioned above, had so far been unsuccessful in even starting a shrimp farm. She had single-handedly run her frog farm for five years and she was also operating a small shop (*xiaomaibu* 小賣部) in the village. Mingfa only spoke with the greatest awe of Reili and Suyu, lowering her voice whenever she mentioned their names. From an outsider’s perspective these three women (who were among my main informants in Baisha) seemed notably similar: all of them had very sociable personalities and all of them appeared bent on improving the situation of their families by actively looking for new income options or expanding their businesses. Still, they occupied very different positions in the local status hierarchy.

The Skills of Successful Entrepreneurs

Baisha villagers operated shrimp hatcheries (*xiamiaochang* 蝦苗場) where shrimps are raised from spawn to the postlarvae state⁴ in a number of concrete, rectangular tanks. The most immediate reason for specializing in hatcheries was environmental; Baisha's sea was too polluted for operating larger ponds in the sea. The full production cycle in a hatchery took only 20 days, after which villagers sold the product to so-called grow-out farms that raise the mature shrimp. Baisha's farmers thus started new "shrimp cycles" many times per year, and often closed the operations over the winter when the business was less profitable. Because of the quick turnaround of shrimp production and the number of operations in the village, mobile phones were an essential part of the business. But most of it was done at the farm itself: farmers sold their shrimps straight from their backyards to visiting traders, and they bought feed, additives for disease prevention, and other equipment from suppliers who delivered straight to the farms. Baisha's harvest supplied grow-out operations from Guangdong Province in the south to Shandong Province in the north, as well to Hong Kong and Macao. Only a minority of Baisha's shrimps went directly to such facilities in the vicinity.

While the number of shrimp farms in Baisha was growing rapidly, other villages in the vicinity (with similar or better environmental conditions) did not respond to the "shrimp boom," or had, in a similar fashion, exclusively specialized in a different product. Which factors can this explain this localized pattern of development?

Sometimes the concentration of similar businesses in one place has important economic advantages. As one of the larger shrimp farmers explained to me, the most important precondition for his business was that *there must be a market*. In South Fujian marketplaces and market networks had to be rebuilt in the post-Reform era, and it is clear that the concentration of shrimp enterprises in one place, in close vicinity to major motorways and an international airport, had created this market for Baisha shrimps. Moreover, the local state's official development policy encouraged villages to specialize in one product and the development of regionally integrated industries, as captured in the slogan *yi cun yi pin, yi xian yi ye* 一村一品, 一縣一業 (one village one product, one county one industry). At the turn of the twentieth century, shrimp farming was high on the local government's political agenda. Manuals had

⁴ Tiny but fully formed shrimps of less than one centimeter size.

come into circulation, and the Internet offered both chat rooms and web pages with details about shrimp farming in Chinese.

Whenever I asked villagers how they had obtained the know-how to farm shrimps, however, the common answer was they had “watched others raise shrimp” (*kan biede ren yang xia* 看別的人養蝦) and then had developed their own expertise. Shrimp farmers hired *shifu* 師傅 (“masters,” i.e., particularly experienced villagers) when particular problems occurred, but generally only for one production cycle. They were paid for their services, but, as one female *shifu* told me, a *shifu* would generally only help friends and family. Official extension services played no role in the spread of shrimp farming know-how in Baisha, and I never saw any manuals in use. There was also no collective strategy behind Baisha’s turn into a shrimp farm village. The local government, supposedly responsible for leading local development, was disdained for its mishandling of village funds and its own failed investments, and the villagers considered it useless in terms of local development. Each farmer was first and foremost interested in the success of his or her own farm. Although farmers might not regard themselves as direct competitors in the booming market for shrimp, intense status competition among them discouraged any collective strategizing.

Instead, Baisha’s transformation into the region’s most famous shrimp village resulted from the formation of a local entrepreneurial habitus and from practices of knowledge exchange and sharing that also reproduced local relationships. Through the latter, the know-how of shrimp farming quickly spread in Baisha and eventually produced the local and localized expertise that sold so well on the national market. However, villagers did not exchange or share shrimp farming know-how in order to produce local expertise, but because it did not directly harm one’s business interests to follow established practices of sharing or exchange. Local and localized expertise was an important “side-product” of these practices.

The first step in becoming a shrimp farmer was finding the necessary start-up capital. Shrimp farms required a large investment. Mingfa, for example, told me that the frog farm she had started in 1995 had cost only 30,000 yuan, but now she was looking at about ten times that cost to start a shrimp farm. Most start-up capital came from people within a farmer’s closest social network—from friends, neighbors, and kin, people who often did not ask for interest on such loans (cf. Yan, this issue). Even when bank loans became much more easily available in the mid-1990s, villagers tried to avoid them because of the enormous interest rates. Large loans from the bank moreover needed five guarantors (each could guarantee up to 100,000 yuan), people who again would come from a person’s closest social network. One way to obtain

such loans more easily, as well as to share the risk of investments, was to operate a farm as a shareholding partnership. In the early 1990s, when there was little capital in the village, farms had sometimes up to 30 different shareholders, who were either actively involved in farm operations or only held property shares. Those who acted as owners and held majority shares were generally *bendi ren*, people with a right to live from the resources of the village. Moreover, rising investments in technology and feed and booming land prices forced Baisha's farmers to continue to rely on the support of neighbors, friends, and kin to raise money for investments, even after more capital became available. This also meant that in terms of both partnerships and loans, the village community remained the most important source of economic and social capital. In 2000 and 2001 farms in the village normally involved three to five different owners, who actively participated in farm operations. Many of these partnerships were spin-offs formed after the break-up of earlier farms, whose size soon had proved unmanageable and also undesirable because it minimized the profits of each partner. But more recent partnerships could also break up over financial quarrels, when diseases ruined the shrimp harvest, or over personal disputes. This continuously led to the formation of new farms under different ownership, involving more and more villagers.

To operate a farm, then, shrimp farmers needed to acquire the basic technical know-how of shrimp farming. The villagers I talked to described learning this technical know-how as a simple and non-prestigious achievement (*hen jiandan* 很簡單); probably in an implicit comparison with the questioning foreign *boshi* 博士 (doctor), whose achievements were considered generally as *bu jiandan* 不簡單 (not easy). Their dismissive attitude resulted partly from the learning process itself. The basics of shrimp farming were learned from fellow villagers in mundane settings and simply by doing it, not much different from the now much disregarded skills of "ordinary peasants." They can indeed be summarised as a couple of steps and procedures, as in done in manuals and on relevant webpages: before each cycle, ponds had to be cleaned, dried out and disinfected. Water had to be aerated and regularly changed, and its temperature, salinity and cleanness regularly controlled. Shrimp farmers furthermore needed to know what feed, water temperature, and salinity is required at each stage of the maturation cycle. Beyond this, they had to learn how to adjust the environment during the last stage of the maturation cycle in order to prepare the shrimps for the transport to grow-out facilities. The little prestige that villagers accorded to this basic knowledge obviously played a role in its quick circulation within the village community.

As readers will realize, however, being a successful shrimp farmer is not necessary simple in practice. Having a "green thumb," beyond its more intui-

tive aspects, requires experience and a certain work ethic. Reili and Suyu had been in the business for several years and had seen many farms in the village go bust in only one or two years. Most often, they said, these farm owners lacked the diligence, exactness, and conscientiousness needed to succeed at raising shrimps. I often accompanied Reili on her daily rounds when she personally adjusted the condition of shrimps' environment after scrutinising their size, color, and mobility. Shrimp farming was not hard work, and both Reili and Suyu spent much time during the day chatting with visiting neighbors and friends. But both of them went to their farms every day, supervising workers, being available for traders and suppliers, and being ready to act immediately should problems occur. The final quality of the product also decided whether farmers could successfully market their produce. Many traders had become "good friends" (*hao pengyou* 好朋友) of Reili or Suyu, but before a deal they always performed a number of tests to make sure that the shrimps would survive transport. Reili's expertise had earned her a reputation and already afforded her a side income in Baisha as a *shifu*. But farm operators who were not diligent (*qingrao* 勤勞) enough, Reili said, never managed to make enough profit and were eventually forced out of the business.

Another essential skill, beyond the raising of shrimps, was being able to obtain up-to-date information on new technologies and market developments and to adapt one's business strategies accordingly, in order to sustain one's business and eventually expand one's enterprise. Traders and suppliers, who oversaw a much larger area, were the key source of such information. Reili and Suyu had known many of the traders and suppliers for years and the business of selling shrimp was always accompanied by invitations to sit down for tea or a meal. These social events were crucial for outside traders getting information on new business developments in Baisha, and Reili or Suyu and their partners gaining new insights on wider developments that could affect their business. Reili had started her farm with only 5 ponds in 1995, but in 2001 she was already operating 25 ponds. She was even planning to build a new operation in a different part of the village, with a new set of partners, but was still trying to buy an adequate piece of land.

Another important precondition for success was, not surprisingly, skill in accounting and bookkeeping. To expand one's farm or simply stay in the business, expenses had to be carefully calculated against expected profits. A part of the annual income of a farm went for electricity and water (some operations spent 10,000 yuan annually on clean seawater shipped in from 40 km down the coast), and there were ongoing expenses for migrant labor, shrimp feed, additives for disease prevention, and maintenance for the equipment. As a rule, partners made a full calculation of all income and expenses before the

farm closed in winter, and then divided the profit into shares and the portion that would be reinvested in the farm. In short, becoming a successful rural entrepreneur required from shrimp farmers, and particularly from farm bosses, to become resourceful and flexible economic agents; agents who were able to constantly acquire new knowledge and also could put this knowledge into practice.

What Reili's and Suyu's example also shows is that economic proficiency is inseparable from crucial social skills. Conscientiousness in daily farm operations and good bookkeeping, for example, prevented many of the problems and quarrels that often resulted in the termination of partnerships. And, as villagers told me, those farms with the longest period of operation under the same owners were the most profitable ones in the village.

Sociability and the ability to command respect and trust (i.e., to have "face") were furthermore essential for maintaining the important relations beyond the village that provided business knowledge. In the case of female entrepreneurs, the production of face sometimes meant skilfully playing on existing gender identities. Suyu, for example, once told me how she established face with a new trader from Zhejiang Province by telling him that she would "throw him in the river" if he would not adhere to the terms of trade (upon which, she related, he responded jokingly about how "terrible the women in South Fujian" were). Social skills were even more important within the village. Marginal, unrespected, or isolated members of the village community could neither raise the necessary funds nor find reliable partners to start a farm in the first place (cf. Yan, this issue). A *laoban* also needed "face" and interpersonal skills to maintain a functioning partnership and to mediate in disputes.

Social and economic skills were themselves partly an attribute of the more important social relations and practices that defined a person in the village. Suyu and Reili's "face," for example, also derived from the fact that they maintained a wide circle of *laiwang* 來往 ("come and go," i.e., friendly contacts), that they made regular donations to the local temple, and that they were married to men who were themselves well respected in the community: Suyu's husband was the local *wenshu* 文書, the cadre responsible for village documents and household registration, who together with a brother-in-law helped villagers to obtain bank loans. Reili's husband was himself a successful shrimp farmer, with his own operation and his own partners in the village. In the new volatile economic environment, the production of face, sociality and sociability was not only crucial because it minimized risks (the "moral economy thesis," see Scott 1976), but because these relations allowed villagers to shoulder the economic risk of investment in the first place. In the social and

economic environment villagers operated in, the production of sociality and capital cannot be separated from each other (see Brandtstädter 2003).

The following section analyzes the relation between capital production and social production in Baisha by exploring the cycles of skill transmission. In the case of a historical paper-making community in Sichuan, Jacob Eyferth (2001) shows how paper-making skills reproduced economic livelihoods and local forms of sociality through the different ways in which skills circulated: “through vertical transmission in the agnatic community, usually from father to son, through the horizontal movement of skilled women between families, and through the criss-crossing movement of wage-workers between workshops.” In Baisha’s community of entrepreneurs, two similar cycles can be distinguished: a spatial cycle through which the community rapidly specialized in shrimp farming, which “localized” a knowledge crucial to economic production and contributed to the (re)production of a local system of relatedness in place; and a historical cycle of habitus formation and distinction, through which entrepreneurial families and the community of entrepreneurs (re)produced itself through time. Both cycles were crucial to the production of capital, because together they produced Baisha’s competitive edge—localized expertise. Not coincidentally, they share strong similarities with the cycles of *yang* 養 (to raise or cultivate) and *laiwang* that Charles Stafford (2000) identifies as crucial for the (re)production of families and networks of sociality and sociability in China. Similar cycles of socio-cultural reproduction through the movements of gifts and through property shares are also found in Chinese religious institutions (Wilkerson 1995).

I will argue in the following that these cycles produced, in a “double movement,” difference and sameness, transformation and continuity, and together constituted Baisha as a community of successful entrepreneurs. Let me first discuss the historical cycle in Baisha.

The Entrepreneurial Spirit, Collective Identities, and the Production of Difference: KNOWLEDGE-Property Learned in the Historical Cycle

That whole villages specialize in a certain trade is historically nothing new in China. Jacob Eyferth (2001) has described how in one paper-making village in rural Sichuan paper-making skills were transmitted over generations, with a clearly gendered division of labor. Girls learned from their mothers basic manual and supportive skills considered easy, while boys learned moulding and acquired the more prestigious skills of making the paper pulp from their fathers. The most prestigious and carefully guarded knowledge was the recipe

for paper pulp, which was considered the private property of households. Papermaking, as Eyferth points out, was cherished both as a communal skill and property and as a “collective heirloom” received from the ancestors. (Re)producing this skill through time was not only the basis of a family’s or the community’s livelihood, but was also closely tied up with the (re)production of agnatic group identity.

In comparison, the entrepreneurial shrimp farmers in Baisha had a very detached (or one might say alienated) attitude towards their trade. Villagers regarded shrimp farms as temporary money-making machines, and their reasons for this specialization were purely financial. Shrimp farming, in their view, was not a proper profession (*gongzuo* 工作), since that always required some formal education or an apprenticeship. There was also no clear gender division of labor in Baisha’s shrimp enterprises. Both (married) women and men held responsible positions in the farms, and apparently to about the same degree.⁵ Also, none of the other shrimp farmers I spoke with aspired to bequeath their shrimp farming know-how, nor the farm itself for that matter, to their children. What they wanted to leave their children were the resources to make it in the world, i.e., money and education that would gain them a good job and respect in the wider society. Instead of shrimp farming itself, it was this entrepreneurial spirit and the striving for social mobility through hard work and education that informed Baisha’s collective identity; an identity by which villagers in nearly every interview verbally sought to distinguish themselves from the “useless” (*mei you yong* 沒有用) and “corrupt” (*fubai* 腐敗) village government.

From a property perspective, the individual and collective ownership of precisely these skills effected individual and collective identities in Baisha (cf. Strathern 1996:30; and Eyferth 2001). However, the historical cycle of community reproduction constituted itself foremost as a process of continuous knowledge formation (i.e., learning), rather than of “knowing” (i.e., having). It formed both a local habitus and the basis of local distinction in Baisha (Bourdieu 1977, 1984), and its skills were learned in the *longue duree* as part of becoming a particular person and a member of the local community (cf. Simon, Stafford, this issue). In contrast to the paper-making village in Sichuan (see Eyferth 2001), in Baisha’s entrepreneurial community innovation and transformation was in itself a source of continuity. How did Baisha’s villagers learn and how did they (re)produce this KNOWLEDGE-property?

⁵ As Suyu told me, men were “always” officially farm bosses, although these *laoban* had often little to do with farm operations. In contrast, women who de facto ran farms often called themselves publically *jishuyuan* 技術員, technicians.

As workers in agricultural production teams during the Mao era, Baisha villagers had obviously few chances to learn about the mechanisms of supply and demand, about how to find market niches and how to invest capital for the production of more capital. At the same time, South Fujian as a region had a centuries-long pre-Revolution history of commodity production, commerce, and overseas trade, and much capital had been invested in the production of scholars and members of the imperial bureaucracy (see, e.g., Rawski 1972; Gates 1996). Entrepreneurship and the valuation of education or “culture” (*wenhua* 文化) were also part of Baisha’s indigenous village “tradition.” In this *zaxing cun*, most villagers had fathers or grandfathers who had either come to Baisha from poorer regions in search of economic opportunities, or who, as members of the founding lineages, had gone overseas to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, in search of even better ones. Some of Baisha’s present lineage leaders were returned overseas Chinese from Vietnam, and relationships with overseas communities continued even through the collective era. Large land-owners in Baisha had grown cash crops before the Revolution, and many teachers and skilled laborers had joined the community up to the 1950s. Baisha’s historical identity was thus formed by migrations to and from the village in the search for upward mobility, by class relations, the production of cash crops, and the arrival of many professionals in the early and mid-twentieth century. Children growing up in Baisha were likely to have learned about markets, trade, and commerce, about self-made entrepreneurs, and about the value of education even before the Reforms, if only because this knowledge and these values were woven into the transmission of the life histories of the older generation and the history of the community as a whole.

In his study of private entrepreneurs in Xiamen in the late 1980s, David Wank shows how business success reproduced itself in particular families over generations, even through the hiatus of the collective era (1999: Chapter 6). Descendants of *grande bourgeoisie* families not only could draw on the reputation, extensive local ties, and overseas networks their families had developed before the Revolution, but also knew how to project authority in social interactions through dress, education, and speech.

Much of such knowledge circulated in Baisha’s entrepreneurial community as part of a local habitus. Farm owners, and especially female ones, paid, for example, surprising attention to dressing fashionably, often appearing (from my perspective) considerably “overdressed” for the work and the environment they operated in. They thereby projected an urban and modern image clearly different from that of ordinary *nongmin* (peasants) and also demonstrated their future aspirations. Some were even planning a holiday in Europe, maybe one of the most important markers of middle-class modernity in con-

temporary China.

However, the historical cycle of KNOWLEDGE-property also (re)produced distinction in Baisha as it did among Wank's Xiamen entrepreneurs. Because of my different original research focus, I unfortunately cannot provide detailed case studies of family histories or of individual enterprises. But the data I have suggest that the material and immaterial resources crucial for economic success were concentrated and (re)produced within particular family constellations. Suyu, for example, had a sister-in-law who worked in Xiamen as a schoolteacher and owned a minority share in her farm. This sister-in-law was married to a physician with close ties to the city government, who had several times visited Europe as part of an official delegation. Both frequently visited their relatives in Baisha, staying at the house of her elder sister who ran a small shop in the village. Suyu's husband, as mentioned before, was the local *wenshu*, the cadre in charge of household documentation, who helped villagers to obtain bank loans and with other financial transactions in the nearby township. Suyu's husband was also the son of one of the former large-landholding families in Baisha, classified as *dizhu* 地主 (landlord) during the Mao era, while his brother-in-law had uxorilocally married into the family as the son of former migrants. Reili, whose husband operated his own shrimp farm, had married into Baisha from the nearby county capital and was the daughter of a retired schoolmaster. Her husband's father was a former team leader and his family had close personal relations in the county government through another relative who had been promoted to work as a cadre there. Finally, one of the partners of his farm was a former village cadre, one of those who had started the private fish farms in the 1980s.

In these family settings, individual farmers such as Suyu, Reili, and her husband learned, personalized, and eventually personified the skills of successful entrepreneurship in Baisha. It was the outstanding expertise of *laoban* (or *jishuyuan*) that made some farms more profitable than others, and that villagers like Mingfa admired in the more successful farmers. Like the "secret recipe for paper pulp" in the case of the Sichuan paper-makers (Eyferth 2001) or the individual skills of the "bookkeeping man" (Yan, this issue), such KNOWLEDGE-property was not easily shared, because it was the basis of capital formation, power, and distinction. It reproduced itself in the longue duree through the socialization of children and through long-term interaction with members of one's closest social network. But in the close-knit world of Baisha Village, where everyone was eventually related to everybody else (though not necessarily biologically), it also slowly spread through a trickle-down effect from one social network to another, eventually becoming part of community knowledge. Successful entrepreneurs and their powerful family

networks were motors of transformation and innovation in Baisha. At the same, they also represented local identity and continuity.

Gender and the Reproduction of Skilled Persons

Where does this leave gender as a factor in the (re)production of skills and personal identities (cf. Gates, this issue)? At first glance, shrimp farming involved no relevant gender division of labor. But the high number of female shrimp farmers was in itself remarkable. Women were particularly publicly present and outspoken in Baisha, which, besides projecting a modern and “cultured” image, was obviously crucial to the “techniques of enchantment” (Gell 1988) every successful business (wo)man has to master (Stafford, this issue). The origin of this particular local skill is probably the village’s long history of uxorilocal marriages with male labor migrants and the high number of village endogamous marriages. Because of this history, women of Baisha represented community as much as their men, and female shrimp farmers, as village daughters, could draw on their own social networks and on local entrepreneurial skills. Some of the central skills of the shrimp farmers were also clearly compatible with a more traditional gender identity. For villagers, raising shrimp (*yang xia* 養蝦) not only bore a semantic resemblance to raising children (*yang haizi* 養孩子), it also drew on skills such as conscientiousness, patience, and diligence commonly associated with women (and mothers in particular). As bookkeepers for their farms, women entrepreneurs’ acknowledged tightfistedness and capability in financial matters (Gates 1991, this issue) well combined with the superior mediation skills associated with women in domestic settings (see Yang 1994). Furthermore, because most business deals were done at the farm or within the community, female *laoban* remained most of the time within an “inner” sphere associated with family, femaleness and female work (Jacka 1997).

The historical cycle, thus, was both the basis for habitus formation and for distinction—for the formation of an “entrepreneurial spirit” and for personal and family distinction, socio-economic differences, power differences, gender identities, and also a community distinction or identity that differed from that of neighboring communities. At the same time, it was neither the primary source of sociality within the village nor of the basic technical know-how of shrimp farming in Baisha. But access to social relations and technical knowledge was crucial for every aspiring entrepreneur—and more precisely fast access, since the time window to invest into new market niches often closed again quickly. The main mechanisms through which this technical know-how circulated in the village were the long-standing practices of producing social relatedness in the village in a spatial cycle of exchange and sharing.

The Circulation of Shrimp Farming Know-How and the (Re)Production of a Local System of Relatedness: The Spatial Cycle of Knowledge-PROPERTY

Suyu, a lively and witty woman in her late thirties, once described in an interview how her money was “plucked from the sky,” because she had “learned nothing” and “knew nothing.” As she said, the shrimp farmers “can make money now, but we don’t know if we have to go hungry again tomorrow.” To her, a definite change in social status meant getting an education, something that one could keep whatever the circumstances. Her ambition was to save enough money to send her teenaged children to university, something that would be her real investment for the future. Reili and her husband had already one son studying in Heilongjiang and were building a house in the nearby county seat. “Money plucked from the sky” underlines how Suyu, like all the other villagers, considered shrimp farming knowledge neither prestigious nor in itself a source of economic security or personal identity. What the expression also captures is the villagers’ appreciation of market volatility that renders specialized knowledge such as that involved in shrimp production valuable only for a certain period of time; after that it becomes outdated and villagers must find new sources of income. This short-livedness, and the fact that shrimp farms first and foremost produced capital, underlines the alienated attitude Baisha’s farmers had towards their trade. However, as property shared and exchanged with fellow villagers, this knowledge developed an important social efficacy in Baisha.⁶

As I have pointed out, for the villagers a *bendi ren* (local person) was someone with a general right to live from the resources of the village, which in the formerly agricultural village had first and foremost meant the right of access to its natural resources—land, water, fishing grounds. In the commercialized “shrimp farm village,” the knowledge of shrimp farming itself had become an important local resource, and quick access to this knowledge was critical to participating in the economic upswing the village experienced. But access to and the successful exploitation of this resource depended on a person’s active membership in the community, as that decided whether he or she could draw on fellow villagers as partners in local enterprises or on relatives

⁶ From Eyferth’s (2001) case study of Sichuan paper-makers, for example, it is evident that the transmission of specialized knowledge, as immaterial property, can have a similar social efficacy as the transmission of material ancestral property in agricultural villages in China.

and friends for loans, partners, and other forms of mutual help and support. This, again, meant actively taking part in the (re)production of the village as a local moral world.

“Shareholding”

As Yunxiang Yan argues (1996: Chapter 4), it is through the flow of gifts that a child learns the *renqing* 人情 ethics that constitute the moral world of Chinese villages, how to comport him or herself in relations with fellow villagers, and how to create and maintain a personal social network. Community membership also implied having a share (*you fen* 有份) in the village temple's ritual economy that constituted the temple as a symbol of local identity and community. Such shareholding arrangements based on inalienable or inclusive property⁷ have historically been another important aspect of producing relatedness in China: they can be found in more directly economic organizations, but they are also a principle on which corporate kinship groups, religious associations, and temple communities established themselves (see Sangren 1984; Wilkerson 1995).

Most shrimp farms in Baisha were owned as shareholding partnerships, and it was the shifting arrangements of shareholding and collective ownership that had helped to multiply the number of farms in the village. Baisha's farmers relied on the support of neighbors, friends, and kin to raise money for investments and find shareholders, and with rising investments in technology, feed, and land needed to remain competitive, this pattern continued to perpetuate itself. In contrast to non-capitalist shareholding associations, however, the arrangements of these rural entrepreneurs were often brittle and quickly terminated after quarrels over farm operations. What, however, continued to be shared even after such break-ups was the knowledge the partnership had entailed—this knowledge was essentially inalienable and constituted a form of “inclusive property” in James Carrier's sense (Carrier 1998; also see Eyferth 2001). Moreover, every failed enterprise led to the formation of new partnerships and thereby spread shrimp farming know-how in the village, leading to the reproduction of “sameness in place.” Furthermore, as in Ellen Oxfield's example (Oxfield, this issue), disputes over farming operations were an essential element in producing local knowledge about shrimp farming. This was no longer the same as the technical know-how found in shrimp farm manuals, but a knowledge adapted to local conditions and augmented through local

⁷ The expression “inclusive property” is James Carrier's. He defines “inclusive property” as a notion of property “wherein an object is embedded in and reflects durable relationships between those people implicated in its past” (1998:86).

experiences. Sharing thus over time created local expertise, increasing instead of decreasing the value of knowledge. The market value of this local and localized knowledge, at the same time, “made community” in a situation when processes of urbanisation and land expropriation weakened collective rights to natural resources in Baisha.

Knowledge Sharing and Exchange as Part of the Local Gift Economy

In Baisha, where much basic knowledge of shrimp farming was acquired simply by “watching how others do it,” knowledge-PROPERTY circulated even faster through the networks of *laiwang* between of neighbors, friends, and kin that are part of the daily life of Chinese villages (cf. Stafford 2000). Such knowledge exchanges did not involve long-term intensive cooperation and therefore contained lesser “knowledge value” than partnership shares (as loans in Baisha, in comparison to shares, generally involved less money). The status and pattern of transmission of such knowledge is strikingly similar to the sharing of manual skills among Eyferth’s paper-makers, which, as Eyferth says, are learned easily by observing others in the village (2001).

But even the exchange or sharing of this knowledge followed particular patterns that reinforced a person or family’s social networks. Yunxiang Yan (1996) also identifies sharing (*zhanguang* 沾光) as a practice within the rural gift economy.⁸ He writes that sharing, as a moral principle, stands beside reciprocity (*bao* 報) and “face” (*mianzi* 面子) and implies the obligation to let others within one’s network share one’s privileges or social resources. Obligations to share or give will differ according to the closeness of a relationship (ibid.:128–133, Yan this issue).

Not every villager in Baisha would just drop in on a farm to “observe;” only villagers who were part of a farmer’s wider personal network did so. Reili, for example, was frequently visited by a distant cousin of her husband, who came to help with daily farm operations and occasionally cooked meals there. This woman, who said she was uneducated (*mei you dushu* 沒有讀書) and had no particular skills, clearly considered her visits as occasions to learn from Reili and the other shrimp farmers in Reili’s personal network. As a member of the wider family circle and as a form of reciprocity for her help, she was able to become a “participant observer” at Reili’s farm. These networks of sociability were important vehicles for both exchanging knowledge

⁸ The expression “to have a share” (*you fen*), in contrast, describes a *status quo*, where shared inalienable or inclusive rights to (material or immaterial) property form the basis of a system of relatedness.

and deepening one's personal relationships, and it is networks in which Chinese women are particularly active (cf. Stafford 2000; Yang 1994). This suggests that also the strong presence of female shrimp farmers contributed to Baisha's rapid transformation into a "shrimp farm village."

As Lave and Wenger argue, "social reproduction implies the renewed construction of resolutions to underlying conflicts" (1991:58, see above). In Baisha it was mainly through the spatial cycle of knowledge-PROPERTY that villagers constructed such resolutions against the forces of difference and alienation that threatened to undermine the community as a system of social relatedness. Together, both cycles (re)produced Baisha in economic and socio-cultural sense: as a village that derived its identity and livelihood from the production of capital, constant adaptation to external economic changes, and the striving for socio-economic mobility, while at the same (re)producing skilled persons, sets of social relationships, and community identity. Shrimp farm knowledge was fundamental to both cycles and constituted a crucial link between them: circulating as knowledge-PROPERTY in a spatial cycle, it (re)produced relationships and assured the villagers' access to an important resource, while, within the historical cycle, KNOWLEDGE-property constituted local expertise that also produced capital in the new economic environment.

Concluding Remarks

I want to conclude this paper with a discussion of the relation between capitalism, knowledge-property, and notions of the person in Baisha. Let me again quote from Lave and Wenger's book *Situated Learning*:

As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person. In this view, learning only partly—and often incidentally—implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings. Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by, as well as defines, these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities. [1991:53]

In contrast, a widely held assumption within the anthropology of development has been that the principle of individual profit-maximization is funda-

mentally opposed to older moral arrangements of sharing and distribution, and to a "subsistence ethic" that once assured that all could live from the resources of the community (Scott 1976). It is also frequently argued that notions of ownership and private property lead to individuation through their much-discussed link to notions of the person. Private property is seen as concomitant with the rise of the individual as a jural and social entity since it requires the separation of property from social relations and the assertion of an individual's rights against rights held by a collectivity (Whitehead 1984:180).

What this paper has emphasized is that the relationship between the production of individuality and the production of collectivity or relatedness, between difference and sameness, is also under capitalism more complex than such a zero-sum opposition between individual and collective purposes. According to Harold Demsetz property is best conceived as a "bundle of rights" (quoted in Oxfeld, this issue), and aspects of this "bundle" can have different meanings in different contexts and can refer to different sets of social relationships. The complexity of property as a bundle of rights (or better: as a bundle of social relationships) and its relation to notions of the person is maybe most pertinent in the case of intellectual or knowledge-property. Marilyn Strathern argues that ownership of intellectual property "re-embeds ideas and products in an organism. . . . [It] gathers things momentarily to a point by locating them in the owner, halting endless dissemination, effecting an identity" (1996:30). But intellectual or knowledge-property is normally built up from, and builds on, a whole spectrum of different skills. As I have shown to be the case in Baisha, these can have different values, involve different learning processes, circulate in different cycles of social (re)production and consequently also form different, not mutually exclusive, types of "person" or aspects of personhood. What "persons" did the circulation of knowledge-property form in Baisha?

The different degree of expertise, in Baisha as elsewhere, has led to increasing status distinction and socio-economic differences between individuals and families in the community. Farmers such as Reili and Suyu did have entrepreneurial knowledge that set them apart in the village and that produced capital for further differentiation—through consumption, education, or other pathways of individual socio-economic mobility. Together with particular social skills, these entrepreneurial skills informed Suyu's and Reili's personalities, or, to put it differently, they crystallized as private property in particularly skilled persons and thereby effected individual identities. At the same time, these personal skills remained socially efficacious in a historical cycle of habitus formation that shaped Baisha as a community. In the spatial

cycle, in contrast, a less distinguished form of entrepreneurial knowledge was exchanged as a gift or shared as inclusive property. Both cycles together not only produced local knowledge in the form of local shrimp farming expertise, but also constituted persons as nodes in a network of personal social relations and as particular community members, while at the same time (re)producing these relations themselves.⁹ As Lave and Wenger argue, in the cycles of learning and knowledge reproduction, individuality and distinction are produced at the same time as relationships and sociality.

This paper has shown that with the transformation of Baisha from an agricultural village into a community of entrepreneurs, local and localized expertise, rather than rights to natural resources, became increasingly important for both social (re)production and capital formation. It can be safely assumed that the circulation of knowledge-property, rather than of property per se, will continue to grow in importance in the (re)production of particular forms of social relatedness—not only in China but throughout the contemporary world, where access to knowledge or the learning of particular skills is of increasing economic value. Studying socio-economic change from the perspective of *situated learning* thus should also become an integral part of the anthropology of development.

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⁹ On such a relational construction of the person through the embodiment of sentiment and *guanxi* 關係 see also Kipnis (1997).

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天上掉下來的錢：

福建鄉村的蝦養殖場、產業關係和技術的流通

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本文採用 Lave 和 Wenger「情境學習」的概念 (concept of *situated learning*) 來探究福建南部的白沙村村民，如何在經濟改革後轉型為「企業家的社群」時，「習得資本主義」的同時也沒忘記社群的生產。就過去百年長遠的歷史角度來看，白沙村歷經三個主要經濟發展階段。革命後，它從一個原來擁有廣大熱中於海外貿易、經濟作物和商業之地主的社群，轉變成為按照計畫經濟生產的社會主義農民隊。之後，隨著南方市場經濟的蓬勃發展，村民集體轉向保證高獲利的鄉村資本主義以及投資。到了第三階段，生產線持續的調整和改變以便及時反應新市場的商機，已經成為地方經濟本身的部分。雖是如此，白沙村仍保持相當程度的地方性社群，不但外地人和本地人對資源所擁有的權利明顯的不同，傳統的股份持有和交易方式也使得新的生產技術知識得以流通。在西元 2000 年代初期，這些方式迅速地造就了全村蝦養殖業的專業特色，而該產業的增值也孕育了商業化的國內和國際蝦苗市場。村民們是如何在這高度商業化的環境中運作，而得以將資本生產和社群連在一起的呢？

筆者認為就像 Lave 和 Wenger 所說的「實踐社群」，在白沙村知識資產的流通 (the circulation of knowledge-property) 不僅維持了經濟生計，也包括個人和集體的認同。當白沙從農村自我轉型成為企業家的社群時，由於經濟的重要性和社會功效的關係，對於專業 (且地方性的) 知識的掌握越來越比運用自然資源還來得重要。知識傳輸的循環創造了社會流動的資源——金錢、專業知識和連帶的關係——同時，也使社群成為一個具有地方關係的系統。筆者以蝦養殖業為例，區分出兩套構成白沙村企業成功訣竅的循環：技術之知識資產 (knowledge-PROPERTY) 的空間流通，在鄉村禮物經濟 (gift economy) 和持分的配置中傳遞了有關蝦養殖業的技術；而知識資產 (KNOWLEDGE-property) 的歷史循環，乃是促使地方習俗的形成以及造成地方差異之基礎。歷史循環傳遞了產業技能、創造了地方的專門知識技術，這不但造就了村中特定農民的成功，並且因此讓白沙村擁有「競爭的」優勢。空間循環確保了新的生產形式之快速獲得，並且，透過擴增在地的相同產業和製造地方性的知識，更創造了白沙產品的市場。在此同時，這兩個循環產生了技術、主體位置，和白沙特有的社會關係組合。當做為實踐社群的鄉村投入它自己未來的生產時，延續和改變就必然會同時出現。

關鍵詞：蝦養殖業，技術流通，農村資本主義，福建，社會性生產