

Summary of Interview

The interviewee is my mother, Mrs. Li. My mother was born in Hong Kong in 1952. She is now 47 years old. Her early childhood was in a mainland city – Chaochow, located in the southeast coastal area of mainland China. She came back to Hong Kong when she was around 8. She can't recall clearly about the exact period being in Chaochow.

As my mother told me, the world economy was in recession in 50s to 60s and the situation in Hong Kong was also poor. My grandparents had a big financial difficulty for living in Hong Kong. Then my grandmother brought my mother back to my grandfather's mother town – Chaochow – to count on my grandfather's family. My grandfather got a job as a mariner. So he didn't come back to his mother town with his wife and his daughter and he only came back to Hong Kong once or twice a year. In the 7-year Chaochow life, my mother only lived with her mother and her sister whom was born in Chaochow and she is 1.5 year younger than my mother. She was not that happy in her childhood owing to lack of parental care. In Chaochow, under the old Chinese custom, boys have the top priority whether in home and in society. In that old Chinese family, my grandmother brought up with my mother and my aunt as only 3 ladies in the room. My grandfather has 4 brothers, and so, 5 families and my grandfather's mother were living together in a big traditional Chinese-style house. My grandfather's brothers also lived in such big family. However, owing to my grandfather's job, he could not stay with my mother and he was only back twice a year to see them only. Lacking father's protection, my grandmother and her 2 daughters were looked down by the other 4 families. My mother was always being alone with her sister and her cousins got used to leave her alone. As my mother told

me, moreover, my grandmother didn't treat her fairly. My grandmother thought my mother brought bad luck to the family as my grandparents lost their job and could not find any way to support the living after my mother was born. Even my mother reached to the age of having education in Chaochow, my grandmother did not give her chance to have regular education. But my great grandmother requested to my grandmother that all her grandchildren, including my mother, had to receive education in their childhood. So my mother had had 2-year education in Chaochow. She was back to Hong Kong when she was 9. According to my mother's memory, her life in Chaochow was not very clear, but basically, she can't say that is a very happy memory.

My aunt isn't born in Hong Kong, so she has no certificate of birth. That is the main reason why they had to stay in Chaochow for long because my aunt needed to get the permission for getting into Hong Kong which was registered by the Chinese Government. My mother came back to Hong Kong when she was around 8. 3 of them rented a room in Shamshuipo and my grandfather was still working overseas as a mariner. The room which they were living was divided from a big apartment. 8 independent rooms were divided for 8 families. So there was very crowded. My grandmother went out to work from early morning to deep night. So, there was only my mother and my aunt in the room only. They went to school themselves, made meal themselves, and took care of themselves. My grandmother only left some money for the sisters' daily use. My mother lacked parental care in her childhood. She only played with the neighbor kids. My grandmother doesn't like my mother since she was born. My grandmother wanted my mother want out to get a job rather than continuing the studies. So my grandmother always kept the school fees till to the deadline. What my mother only could do was begging and entreating day by day. My grandmother

thought women should not have any education as they would be married one day. Education was a kind of waste in her mind. My mother kept begging my grandmother for the school fees from primary 1 to secondary 5 but she could get the fees finally. My mother studied in a secondary school which was run by left wing people, i.e. the supporters of the Chinese Communist party. During the 5-year education, the students were imbued with the idea of communism. Mostly, they needed to have a discussion about the Chinese political issues or hold the activities to back up the pro-China political parties. Teaching English was regarded as a kind of colonialism in these schools. But under the regulation of Education Department, teaching English was a must. So the school authority decided using the English version of Mao's ideology, the little red book, as the English teaching material. After graduation, my mother found that the political teaching was not appropriate. All of those activities only slowed down the study process and she would rather not let her children to enter such school for studies.

Name of interviewee: Chan Yeuk Fong

Name of interviewer: Li Sai Wah Brian

Date of interview: 23rd Feb 2000

No of tapes recorded: 1

Evaluation of Interview

The interview was taken in my home on Feb 23rd. The interviewee is my mother and there's only both of us in my home. That's my main purpose for choosing an afternoon for my interview because of the quiet environment. So the atmosphere is quite quiet and the record is clear enough. We had our interview in the sitting room and the conversation was running smoothly. During the 40-minute interview, there's only a few interruptions, like, phone ringing and miscontrol of the cassette recorder. Generally, the interview was running in a smooth way and the conversation was clearly recorded. Basically, my mother is a good interviewee that dead air seldom appeared in the conversation and my mother has provided sufficient information about her childhood. So why the interview lasts for 40 minutes as she could not stop to share her story in detail and repeated to mention some points. She kept thinking about the stuff in her childhood and I think she really tried her best to satisfy this interview. She was quite upset when she recalled the tough memory. But anyway, she could calm down in the whole interview when telling something sad as how she was ignored by family. As usual, she likes to share her childhood story with us. So, for some incidents, she has a good memory with them, like her school life. After all, the interview was finished without any problem and it is nice for me to know more about my mother in other angles in this interview.