



Working Paper No. 30, March 2009

**ANCESTOR POWER: MARRIAGE RITUALS OF A HAKKA  
COMMUNITY IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIA**

Elena Gregoria Chai Chin Fern

**Working Paper Series**

**Faculty  
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Social Sciences**

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2009

# **ANCESTOR POWER: MARRIAGE RITUALS OF A HAKKA COMMUNITY IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIA**

**Elena Gregoria Chai Chin Fern**

**Faculty of Social Sciences  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK**

This paper discusses marriage rituals in a Hakka community in a resettlement village in Sarawak, Malaysia. Modernity has changed the lifestyles of the villagers. They have gained access to improved infrastructure, greater exposure to the mass media, higher education attainment and increased social mobility especially amongst the young people working outside the village. Despite the social changes due to modernization, marriage rituals have remained very much the same. I examined the reasons behind the continuance of such rituals and my hypothesis is that the villagers still uphold a worldview that marriage does not only involve themselves (the living), but also the supernatural beings in the other world (their dead ancestors). The legitimacy of the union in marriage is acknowledged after the blessings of the ancestors have been sought. Although on the surface, ancestor worship is an expression obligation, they actually connote the eternal alliance between the dead and the living. As suggested by Turner (1974), ritual does not act just as 'social glue' that holds the community together or put social order into place. I thus examine further the symbolic representation of ancestor worship in marriage rituals. I use the term 'emulating process' to describe how the future is moulded to gratify the past because one will become a past in the future. It is performed to ensure that the family lineage is carried on, as has been past down by their ancestors.