A SPATE OF POLICY AND ACADEMIC STUDIES ON qiaoxiang, or homeland of Chinese Overseas, have come into view in China over the past decade, heralding a new trend — the study of Chinese Overseas. Of these, the volume edited by Li Minghuan is the latest and a welcome addition to the scholarship in the field. Unlike previous undertakings, this work is a product of collaboration among scholars from three universities in Fujian Province in South China. A careful reading of the contents pages will reveal that the editor has taken great pains in structuring the book chapters by six authors from four different disciplinary backgrounds, each presenting his/her research findings based on fieldwork conducted at different locales of Fujian qiaoxiang. As indicated by the book title, the editor has skillfully conceptualized their studies in binding the six chapters together under the theme of identities, networks and culture in qiaoxiang. The book is divided into two sections comprising six main chapters and two chapters of introduction and conclusion. While the first section examines three typical qiaoxiang villages and one farm based on case studies, the second section attempts to explore in-depth the social transformation and dynamics of emigration waves in Fujian's qiaoxiang from different theoretical perspectives.

The first chapter authored by Liu Chaohui is a particularly interesting study of Xin'an village, a traditional qiaoxiang village near today's Xiamen (Amoy). Using a cultural, anthropological approach, it studies two lineage temples established by the same Qiu (Khoo) clan in southern Fujian and Penang of Malaysia, and analyzes the relations and interactions between a Chinese community overseas and its ancestral village over the past one and a half centuries. The author vividly shows how qiaoxiang ties can be maintained in an institutionalized way by Hokkiens overseas. What is especially notable is a case study of an unsuccessful real estate investment project initiated by clansmen of the ancestral village in 2000. It convincingly shows that qiaoxiang ties and clan connections sometimes do not necessarily lead to FDI (foreign direct investment) from ethnic Chinese communities overseas even as regular overseas remittances and donations are expected. Economic benefit is usually given priority when Chinese Overseas invest in the Chinese mainland. Unfortunately, while a fairly large part of the chapter is devoted to the description and discussion of the Khoo community in Penang, almost all the discussion on Penang's ethnic Chinese community has been drawn...
from the works of a local historian, Teoh Shiaw Kuan, as the author himself has never visited Penang. In addition, it seems he is not familiar with the scholarship on the history of the Chinese in British Malaya, judging from his discussion of the Chinese kongsi in Penang.

Unlike the first chapter which is a study of a traditional Chinese qiaoxiang village, a newly emerged qiaoxiang village is purposely chosen for discussion by the editor in the second chapter to present a totally different pattern of emigration from present day China. Zhan Guanqun mines government documents, statistics and personal interviews for a richly detailed account of the formation and development of a new qiaoxiang village in mountainous northern Fujian. The author probes into the current emigration mechanism of rural China with Sha'xi village as an example and points out that the new emigration waves from China are mainly facilitated by two factors — immigrant network and non-governmental credit system. The editor who was also involved in the fieldwork, emphasizes that the phenomenon of migration in qiaoxiang villages which have mushroomed in South China actually represents a new type of transnational labor movement operating in a non-governmental context and targeting labor markets of developed countries. As she stresses in the introductory chapter, scholars of Chinese migration should view her hypothesis as a basic premise when observing and analyzing current transnational emigration from Fujian. She appeals to the relevant government authorities to regulate the waves of Chinese labor export rather than blocking the channels of emigration.

The third chapter looks into an Overseas Chinese farm in South Fujian and perceives it as a special qiaoxiang village. A group of scholars led by Li Minghuan conducted fieldwork on the farm for almost two years yielding a series of reports shortly afterward. Authored by Yu Yunping, this chapter is thus an abbreviated, edited version of the original reports. It offers a nuanced analysis of the formation and change of a typical qiaoxiang identity in a larger Chinese cultural and humanistic environment while providing readers with an insightful account of the history of a returned Overseas Chinese community. The author argues that qiaoxiang identity has been mainly formed on the basis of a collective memory shared by returned Overseas Chinese themselves and that the unique qiaoxiang culture in China could be converted into substantial economic capital.

The fourth chapter by He Donghang offers a relatively comprehensive overview of Jinjiang, a well-known qiaoxiang of South Fujian. It describes the rise of Jinjiang as a qiaoxiang in coastal Fujian and examines economic donations and investments from overseas Jinjiang Hokkiens in their home villages in three different periods, presenting new observations and persuasive arguments. The author points out that in terms of donations and investments, there is a difference between old and new Jinjiang Hokkiens overseas. While the old generation of Jinjiang Hokkiens overseas are on the whole considerably wealthy as they have settled down in