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THE TANGS OF LUNG YEUK TAU: A CHINESE LINEAGE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONTEXT

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are a localized lineage in the New Territories, Hong Kong that once dominated the Fanling area for centuries; after being eclipsed for some sixty years under the British rule that began in 1899, the Tangs have staged a comeback to become a dynamic part of modern society. The history of this lineage is investigated, and so is its contemporary way of life in terms of settlement patterns, population demographics, family system, lineage organization, social structure, economic life, collective property management, traditional values and beliefs, religious rituals, and political activities.

The ethnographic data are discussed from a cultural perspective that looks into the symbolic and normative systems of the Chinese lineage or zong-zu. Composed of blood, land, and ritual, the symbolic system defines the fundamental ideology of the zong-zu, which, in turn, sanctions the rules of behavior provided by its normative system. The primary functions of the normative system are to cope with the problems of meaning, to offer a meaningful life and social order, and to adapt. But there is no one-to-one correspondence between the symbolic system and the normative system, where an array of viable alternatives is available. In the case of the zong-zu, these alternatives can be subsumed in terms of blood tie, divine land ownership, and ancestor worship, which set
the framework for examining the strategies adopted by the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau in the recent decades.

It is shown that despite a decline in the traditional functions of the Tang lineage at Lung Yeuk Tau, its fundamental values and beliefs are very much alive. This gave rise to strategies that enabled the Tangs to stand up to the pressure of modernization for change. Not only has this lineage tightened its rank and file, reformed its corporate property, upheld the system of divine ownership, and persisted in ancestor worship, but the Tangs are actively engaged in the market economy and reclaim the dominance of local politics as well. The Chinese lineage is much more adaptable than has been assumed by previous studies.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research and writing of this case study would not have been possible without the encouragement, inspiration, and assistance from many individuals to whom I owe a great deal. Several of them merit special recognition.

I am grateful to Professor Chung-min Chen, my dissertation advisor, who encouraged me to pursue graduate studies in anthropology when he was the Department Chair and the Director of the Center for East Asian Studies. The graduate work I did under his supervision inspired the research of this study. Over the years, no matter how busy he might be, he always made room in his schedule to have discussion with me. His support, guidance, and insight have seen me through the completion of this project and my graduate career. I thank him for believing in my initiative and allowing me the freedom to attempt different lines of theoretical interpretation and iron out the kinks in the process.

My gratitude also goes out to Professor Richard Moore, my Master's program advisor. With his scholarship in human ecology and Japanese studies, among others, he expanded my intellectual horizons considerably. My graduate work under him enabled me to gain new insight into the Chinese society and kinship system, which is incorporated into this study. In addition, he directed my attention to the ecological dimensions of feng-shui side by side with Japanese and American folk beliefs. They became an integral part of my
research as a doctoral student.

Many thanks are due to Professor Erika Bourguignon for her careful reading of and judicious comments on this study. But my debt of gratitude goes far beyond that. In return for the impressionistic tales I had keyed out from the field via telecommunication, she sent me correspondence almost regularly. Couched in the form of questions, her advice was so stimulant of thinking that my appreciation cannot be overemphasized. Beneath the clarity of mind, which is a hallmark of her works and instructions, is the warm heart that makes her a wonderful scholar-teacher. Moreover, the impact of my training in ethnopsychiatry under her is transformed into my inclination to a cultural approach for the data analysis of this project.

I also wish to express special thanks to Professor Amy Zaharlick, who exposed me to cognitive anthropology. It helped the crystallization of a cultural approach that is spelled out in this study. A considerable part of my research on symbolic classification systems and metaphor was initiated when I was doing coursework with her. I also owe to her my first employment of the ethnographic method in an individual project on the methodology and issues of fieldwork that she lectured. It prepared me for the fieldwork of this project.

I am genuinely indebted to the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation which awarded me a Fellowship for Dissertation Research Abroad. A preliminary study for this project was supported by the Center for International Studies, Ohio State University with a Phyllis Krumm Scholarship and by the Sun Yat-sen Foundation with a Cai Wan-lin Award, not to mention my continual appointment of Teaching Associateship by the Department of Anthropology, OSU. They all have my sincere thanks.
Furthermore, my deep appreciation goes to the institutes and individuals that facilitated my research in the New Territories. Among them are the Universities Service Center and the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Department of Anthropology, CUHK, Chair and Professor David Yen-ho Wu, Professor Jian Hsieh and their colleagues, the North District Office and its Senior Liaison Officer Ms. Janet Law, Dr. Patrick Hase, the Yuen Long District Office and its Liaison Officer in-Charge Ms. Michelle Cheung, the Fanling and Ping Shan Rural Committees, the Heung Yee Kuk, N. T. and its Executive Councilor Mr. Alfred K.C. Lam, the Antiques and Monuments Office of the Executive Administration and its Assistant Curator Ms. Cissy Ho, and the Archives of the Hong Kong Government.

It goes without saying that I owe my greatest thanks to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau and my informants at Ping Shan and Wo Hang. Special recognition is due to Mr. Tang Chuk-nam, Mr. Tang Kwok-yong, Mr. Tang Kun-nin, Mr. Tang Shin-shi, Mr. Howard Tang, Mr. Tang Nai-man, J. P. and Mr. Lee Shui-luen. Finally, I would like to thank my wife's family and my own, both of which have stood by me with support. This thesis is dedicated to my wife Aifeng in particular, who has remained committed to my goal, endured so much in taking care of a family of three, and waited so long. To her I owe more than I can say. Let this work be a token of my love returned to her and to our son Zhan.

In acknowledgement of my intellectual debts, it must be pointed out that any flaws or shortcomings in this case study are surely my own.
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A GUIDE FOR CHINESE ROMANIZATION

Mandarin is the lingua franca for most scholars of Chinese society. Therefore, Chinese is typically romanized according to its Mandarin pronunciation. But when said in Cantonese, a southern dialect that uses the same writing system, Chinese speech sounds so different that it is unintelligible to speakers of Mandarin. What happens to the listener in this case is a breakdown of the semantic connection between oral speech and written symbols. By the same token, it is often impossible for scholars of Chinese society to make such connection between romanized Cantonese that signifies sound and the written Chinese that they know.

To compound the difficulty, Chinese is a highly homophonous language, in which a string of speech sounds uttered in one specific tone\(^1\) may stand for a wide range of terms that are phonetically alike but semantically different. Knowing the pronunciation and tone of a Chinese term, whether in Mandarin or Cantonese, does not ensure success in mapping sound to meaning when there is little contextual or situational clue. The glossary provided at the end of this study is meant to alleviate these two problems for the reader.

In the glossary, romanization of Cantonese is given in regular letters, whereas

\(^1\) Mandarin has four tones, whereas Cantonese has as many as six tones.
Mandarin is romanized in italics according to the *pinyin* system. This *pinyin* system has gained growing acceptance with scholars of Chinese society. Mandarin terms marked with an asterisk, however, are indicative of romanization using a different system from *pinyin*. Allowance such as this is made situationally, for cases that are time-honored and/or well-established. A proper name may assume its “standard” non-*pinyin* form of romanization when it is quoted from old documents or associated with referents outside Mainland China.

Here are some tips for the *pinyin* symbols that are bewildering to English-speaking readers at first sight. The symbols *c*, *q*, *x*, and *z* have the phonetic values of “*ts*,” “*ch*,” “*sh*,” and “*dz*” in English respectively. In the *pinyin* consonant clusters *ch*, *sh*, and *zh*, the post-consonant *h* stands for retroflexion. Therefore, *ch* is “*tsr*” while *sh* is “*sr*,” and *zh* is “*dzr*.” The problem is that English phonology does not allow for these consonantal clusters. To produce any of them, curl up the tongue tip for the retroflex *h* and then pronounce the consonantal part that precedes it. For quick reference, the reader may consult the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>q</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>ch</th>
<th>sh</th>
<th>zh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td><em>ts</em></td>
<td><em>ch</em></td>
<td><em>sh</em></td>
<td><em>dz</em></td>
<td><em>tsr</em></td>
<td><em>sr</em></td>
<td><em>dzr</em></td>
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Elsewhere, *h* is like its counterpart in English but with aspiration suppressed. Suppression of aspiration also occurs in the *pinyin* fricatives *s*, *z* and stops *p*, *t*, *k*, *b*, *d*, *g*.

Finally, the symbol *j* is pronounced the same as its English counterpart, as in “*job*.”

Cantonese is romanized in Hong Kong by following the Wade-Giles system. A peculiarity of this system is the use of the apostrophe to indicate an absence of voicing. So
p', t', and k' stand for [p, t, k], whereas p, t, and k actually have the phonetic values of [b, d, g] in English. Elsewhere the apostrophe is used to distinguish between the voiced and unvoiced counterparts in such pairs as ch' (English “ch”) and ch (English “j”), ts' (English “ts”) and ts (English “z”), and so on. In actual usage, as in street signs, individual and place names, the apostrophe is omitted. This study and its glossary will follow the same practice. After all, romanization is not transcription.
Map 1: Hong Kong, the New Territories, and Lung Yeuk Tau
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Karl R. Popper (1974:272) remarks that life is a process of problem solving. When the problems that confront a species, a culture, or an institution appear insurmountable, a crisis ensues, threatening to disrupt their continuity. The Chinese lineage or *zung-zu* is thought to be in such a crisis (Hu 1948:98-99; S. Chen 1956:2). Implicitly and explicitly, anthropological studies are pessimistic about the survival of the *zung-zu* into modern society as a viable institution.

1.1 Literature Review

In his observations of Hsin Hsing, a farming village in central Taiwan, Gallin (1966a:273-74) registers the fact that the lineage has difficulty in remaining a source of solidarity and identification due to the accelerated impingement of modern society on village life and to the economic need of individuals for involvement beyond the local level. Hsin Hsing is one of the many areas of Taiwan where there is a conspicuous absence of strong localized lineages. Maurice Freedman (1966:99) attributes this absence to involvement "in a modern system of economic life and communications." It echoes Hoselitz' thesis (1960:26) that the process of economic development invariably goes beyond the providing of a new economic order to restructure social relations in general.
Schurmann (1956:507) also shows that the capitalist mode of production entails the conceptualization of property ownership in a way very different from traditional Chinese thinking. Even in the New Territories of Hong Kong, where the lineage has a strong localized presence, Baker (1968:207) detects a process of deterioration that “threatens to annihilate the lineage as an effective unit of social organization” because of urbanization and industrialization.

In a way, these studies mark a collective effort to address the questions raised by Nash (1955:277), who wonders whether participation in a capitalist industrial economy necessarily leads to the breakdown of unlineal kinship groups along with their basic values as Fortes (1953:24) has predicted. The answer seemed affirmative in the 1960s. If there was any doubt lingering on, it was forcefully attacked by Jack Potter’s data from the Tangs of Ping Shan in the New Territories of Hong Kong. His study (1968:165) reveals a drastic loss of function by the lineage, a changing value orientation among its members, a decline in individual loyalty to the group, and increasing conflict over the management as well as disposition of ancestral estates. Functionally, there is no longer a power vacuum at the village level that warrants the investment of the lineage with its traditional roles, which were at once military, political, legal, and administrative in imperial China. Socially and ideologically, industrialization has brought about profound changes, with “particularistic” ties (i.e. kinship) giving way to “universalistic” relationships, a collective value orientation to an individualistic one, “economic irrationality” (i.e. redistribution through ritual ceremonies) to the market mentality, and ascribed status to achieved status. In short, the lineage is the epitome of both social relations that are incompatible with a Western-style
economic system and traditional values that cease to be meaningful in a changed world (Potter 1968:164 & 168).

There are, however, dissenting voices. Pasternak (1972:129) questions the validity of the notion that urbanization, industrialization, and Westernization are bound to disrupt traditional kinship structures. According to him, this notion is inept to explain why close proximity and long contact with a major industrial center failed to keep agnatic principles from prevailing in the rural Chinese village studied by C.K. Yang (1959:81). It is also shown that the two villages Pasternak himself studied conform to a pattern in which the migration of Taiwanese to cities does not lead to their absorption in an urban culture, nor is it associated with any significant feedback to the rural areas (1972:130). This pattern is in line with what Barclay (1954:132) has discovered for rural Taiwan during the entire period of Japanese rule.

Based on his study of a lineage that has a large number of members working abroad with remarkable success, James Watson (1975:199-200) points out that exposure to the West through massive emigration has produced the opposite of what is expected -- a move to conservatism rather than "progress" in San Tin. Not only are the emigrants and returnees not interested in turning San Tin into a part of the modern world, of which they have had enough, but the villagers use their newly-found wealth to express themselves in traditional ways and preserve many aspects of traditional culture, particularly the lineage. It is his conclusion that the Chinese lineage is considerably more flexible and adaptable than earlier observers assumed. To varying degrees, this view is shared by other scholars (Chuang 1983:207; C. Chen 1985; Y. Li 1986; Wu 1986; G. Yu 1987; Zheng 1992:18).
Indeed, the *zung-zu* is never stationary but modifies itself in response to alteration of the social conditions under which it operates.

Along this line, Rubie Watson analyzes the sociocultural transformations that happened to the affinal alliance, woman status, and kinship relations of a New Territories lineage. On the one hand, there is the embracing of a new life-style that expands the horizons of the individual at the cost of traditional solidarity; on the other hand, the past of the lineage continues to be a source of pride and has a very real significance in terms of granting social prestige and power to its members (R. Watson 1985:162). According to the author, the link between the two is the merchant-landlords, who try to advance their own goals and achievements in the modern world by maintaining and manipulating the attachment of fellow villagers to the lineage. But since the lineage’s economic and political role is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the majority of its members, Rubie Watson (ibid.:167) wonders if the merchant-landlord elite is not fighting a losing battle in its attempt to take the lineage into the 1980s and beyond.

As is obvious from above, although these “dissenting voices” speak on evidence that contradicts Potter’s functionalist picture in one way or another, there is the same doubt about the vitality of the *zung-zu* in a modern world. It is suggested that the contemporary Chinese lineage can survive only by steering clear of feedback from the mainstream society, or as an “anacronistic holdout” (J. Watson 1975:218), or by “clinging to the past” tenaciously (R. Watson 1985:163). Underlying these suggestions and earlier studies, however, is a pessimism that is largely assumed. In the anthropological literature, little effort has been made to systematically examine the mechanisms of problem solving.
that are evolved by the zong-zu in its endeavor to meet the challenge of modern society. It is taken for granted that the lineage is on the way out, with its members hovering like vultures above a "dying animal," determined not to lose a penny of their share of the general inheritance (Fried 1966:293). But there is evidence to the contrary. A case in point is the recent resurrection of the lineage in Mainland China when the country is switching to a capitalist-style market economy (Z. Chen 1991:262-65).

The data from my fieldwork among the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau shed light on the way that a New Territories lineage stands up to the pressure of modern society for change. In its efforts to adapt to a changing social milieu, the Lung Yeuk Tau lineage has not only articulated with a modern economy but also become a dynamic part of modern society without losing its own identity. Behind such vitality is a strong adherence to traditional norms, values, and beliefs, which are very much alive and meaningful to the folk of Lung Yeuk Tau.

Previous attempts at the analysis of the Chinese lineage tend to interpret meaning in terms of function. Implicit in these studies is the belief that meaning is secondary to function, so where there is a deterioration of traditional functions, there must be a loss of meaning. This deterministic thinking betrays the inadequacy of the functionalist approach to yield insight into our data. The functional importance of the Chinese lineage, which has a polygenesis, may vary from case to case synchronically and from period to period diachronically, but it is not necessarily indicative of any change in the underlying values and beliefs that justify its existence. In addition, Li Yih-yuan (1986:54) has cautioned against the functionalist delusion that a Chinese institution is weakened just because there
is a change in its operational patterns. In reality its underlying ideology may well be kept intact or reinforced despite the metamorphosis. Finally, the meaning of sociocultural institutions, which is deeply embedded in norms, values, and traditions, does not lend itself well to functional analysis. To borrow an analogy from Keesing (1987:399), when it comes to meaning recovery and analysis, functionalism is like “Alice in Wonderland,” with broad aspirations but inadequate means.

Among anthropologists, there is a growing awareness of the need to incorporate meaning and symbolism into their studies of the zong-zu (Hsu 1963; Chun 1985, 1996). A recent development in that direction is the paradigm that David Faure (1986, 1989b) and Helen F. Siu (1989) have employed and worked on. It includes an analytical dimension termed the “subjective symbolics,” whereby individuals shape and give meaning to their circumstances and actions (Siu and Faure 1995:209). The rationale of such an approach needs to be emphasized. People are not just biological beings or parts of ecological systems. Nor are they simply economic actors. They are even more than the complex social creatures they have developed into. If we also accept people as culture-bearers, then it is important to take into account their attempts to create meaning and value, which in turn shape their perception of the physical world and engender “culturally constituted behavioral environments” (Hallowell 1954:201). Erika Bourguignon (1979:69) also stresses that each of the groups affected by a common physical environment tends to construct its own “reality”:

This process involves what is seen, heard, and sensed; in other words, it is perceptual. It is also cognitive, involving practical knowledge by means of which the natural environment can be utilized or modified. Finally, the process of constructing reality is also affective; many types of emotions are
to be found in the relationship between a group and its environment, ranging from love and attachment to fear, awe, and even hatred. Some of this feeling is expressed ... in the symbolic language of religion and art.

1.2 Approach, Framework, and Hypothesis

This case study subscribes to a cultural approach under which there is a symbolic system and a normative system (Schneider 1972:39). The symbolic system is a meaning system that defines fundamental values, beliefs, and relationships, whereas the normative system provides rules for behavior. Together, the symbolic and normative systems constitute a cultural model shared by a social group. Because of this sharedness, interpretations made by a cultural model about the world are accepted and experienced as obvious facts of reality (D’Andrade 1984:91). The Chinese zong-zu is a cultural model. As such, its structure comprises four levels. At the representational level we find its symbolic expressions; at the constructive level there is an ideology within which the world is conceptualized, experience is organized, and norms and values are formed; at the directive level, obligations and pressures for conformity are generated; and at the evocative level, personal desires are motivated and satisfied.

By and large, pressure for conformity is a result of socialization. However, it is not true that this pressure is generated entirely by sanctions external to the individual. According to Spiro (1961:95-106), such sanctions are rarely the primary type of control in any society. Typically, the goals stipulated in the cultural meaning system are intrinsically rewarding. In other words, individuals find that it satisfies their personal needs for recognition and success to achieve these goals and follow the culturally prescribed directives. As for social sanctions, the directive force they carry ultimately arises from an appeal to the pre-existing cultural
understandings that are compelling. In this sense, social life depends on the fit between what is socially required and what is individually desired (Holland and Quinn 1987:13). The directive force of meaning is a part of psychology as much as of culture and anthropology. Every aspect of a meaning system requires a great deal of psychological processing and considerable experiential priming. It follows that there is an emotional side in meaning. When the evocative function and the directive function of a cultural model blend in harmony, it gives rise to a powerful good-happy-like approach rather than a bad-angry-flee attitude (Osgood, May, & Miron 1975).

Characteristically, the meaning system of a cultural model is metaphorically structured. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:56) identify two types of concepts: directly emergent and metaphorically emergent. Directly emergent concepts are grounded in our physical experiences, as in spatialization and orientation, whereas metaphorically emergent concepts are grounded in our conceptualization of cultural domains. The key to seeing metaphor as cognitive is to recognize a transfer of relations rather than meaning between two domains (Goodman 1968:72; Richards 1936). Metaphor is not merely one among many substitutive ways that we use to make comparisons and enhance communication; it is frequently a paradigmatic device for pointing out analogies that cross the boundaries of our usual categories and concepts (Davidson 1981:211). To quote from Max Black (1962:37), metaphors create new similarities rather than describe old ones. Through a transportation of relations, metaphor structures a new conceptual domain or reorders a semantic field to change our ways of looking at the world (Kittay 1987:10).
Metaphor is constitutive rather than merely substitutive of meaning (Lakoff 1987:380; Johnson 1987:104). Without metaphors we could hardly reason, communicate or function in the world. This is because the meaning that metaphor creates is irreducible. No matter how simple a metaphor appears to be, it can not be paraphrased exhaustively, not even with a multiple of statements. We understand a phenomenon metaphorically when we use a gestalt from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain. Defined as a way of organizing experiences into a coherent whole, a gestalt is many-faceted. This accounts for both the irreducibility and the multi-vocality of symbols. A symbol is to be understood globally and yet allows itself to be analyzed locally. The richness of the zong-zu as a sociocultural institution is best captured by a cultural approach that incorporates symbolic and meaning analysis.

In association with a meaning system is a normative system. Searle (1969:33) distinguishes between the regulative rules that govern existing forms of behavior and the institutive rules that create new forms of behavior. The normative system of a cultural model is primarily composed of institutive rules. Therefore, it has entailments to norms, which in turn entail action (D’Andrade 1984:91). The chief functions of the normative system are to cope with the problems of meaning, to provide a meaningful social order and life, and to adapt. This enables the practitioner of a cultural approach to say, “I too am a functionalist, and I too have a functional explanation to offer” (Schneider 1972:46). In examining the efforts of Lung Yeuk Tau to adapt and change, this case study will appeal to functional analysis except that structural or utilitarian functionalism, as in Evans-Pritchard (1940, 1951), Meyer Fortes (1940, 1945), and Maurice Freedman (1958, 1966) has no place in its analysis. Economic motives will be
considered at either the normative or evocative level. But as will be shown, overemphasis on their role in decision making can be misleading.

The connection between the symbolic and normative systems is not necessarily of one-to-one correspondence. A wide range of possibilities and alternatives is allowed at the normative level (Schneider 1972:40). Each of these possibilities and alternatives can be viewed as an adaptive strategy in stock. The hypothesis of this study is that at a time of flux, the vitality of a lineage is correlated with the success of its efforts to explore the possibilities and alternatives available in its normative system, but strategies born of such exploration are characterized by adherence to the same values and beliefs of its meaning system. Theoretically when the exploration goes beyond the range of normative possibilities and alternatives sanctioned by the meaning system, there is disengagement between the normative system and the symbolic system. It will mark the demise of a lineage. The link between the symbolic and normative systems of the Chinese zong-zu can be subsumed in terms of blood tie, divine land ownership, and ancestor worship. They set the framework within which the presentation of my ethnographic data from Lung Yeuk Tau and the discussion of its adaptive strategies will unfold.

1.3 Data Presentation

Chapter 2 addresses a number of theoretical considerations for the interpretation of the zong-zu. This concern leads to a discussion of the meaning and symbolism of the zong-zu as a subset of the zu. It is shown that the zong-zu defines its fundamental relationships in terms of blood, land, and ritual. Blood and land are natural symbols, whereas ritual is a "symbolic intercom." Within this symbolic system, there is a systematic overlap of social
relations and genealogical relations. A subsequent comparison distinguishes this model from those in which the zong-zu is devoid of biological roots or merely an idiom by which political, economic, or religious relations are talked and thought about. Two types of models that study the origins of the zong-zu are also examined. Both ascribe great importance to corporate property except that its establishment is assumed to be from the ground up (by the joint or extended family) in one model and from top down (by the scholar-official elite as a political tool) in the other. Based on a critique of these models and a review of history and literature, a cultural approach is proposed in which the zong-zu has a polygenesis rather than monogenesis.

In Chapter 3, the geographic setting, settlement patterns, legends, and lineage history of Lung Yeuk Tau are discussed. These sub-topics are brought together by our search of an answer to the success and glory of this lineage in the past. The chapter is so structured that it contains a reconstruction of the historical concerns of the Tangs based on the geomantic orientation of their villages, an account of their legendary and elite traditions that yielded both social prestige and political clout, and an analysis of their adaptive strategies after the disastrous “coastal evacuation.” It is important to note that in the Fanling area, Lung Yeuk Tau was the first to formalize its lineage system by establishing an ancestral hall endowed with corporate property and the first to incorporate mercantilism into its economic pursuits. All the while, there was a persistent pursuit of scholarly honors. The approach of this chapter is largely historical, but it links the past to the present. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau have a tradition of being innovative and aggressive in their efforts to adapt.
How do the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau live as a lineage nowadays? Chapter 4 begins with a survey of its contemporary population. The demographic impact of massive emigration is analyzed, and so is the change in the family types. The recent increase in big families at the cost of nuclear families is shown to embody a strategy that is goal-oriented. It involves manipulation of the dynamics of family division so that the households (main and branch) arising from an incomplete split of the family property can function as one economic unit to finance costly housing projects. The dynamics of family division and formation is further examined in connection with rites of passage centering on ancestor worship. A lineage is a collection of families bound by their blood tie, which has two dimensions: descent and brotherhood. It gives rise to two types of Chinese lineages based on demonstrated biological relationships: the hereditary and the contractual. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are a hereditary lineage. To maintain its blood tie, Lung Yeuk Tau has tightened its rank and file against the disintegrating impact of emigration and persisted in stringent sanctions against adoptions that venture outside the “circles of discretion” prescribed by lineage rules and public discrimination.

Rice cultivation and ecology set the rhythm of traditional Chinese village life, which still makes itself felt at contemporary Lung Yeuk Tau. Starting in the 1950s, however, competition from the global market compelled the New Territories to gradually phase out its rice production. That was the first encounter that Lung Yeuk Tau had with modernization. Chapter 5 describes how the “vegetable revolution” ushered in the commercialization of agricultural pursuits, causing a crisis for the identity and livelihood of rice farmers. At the heart of this crisis was a constrained man-land ratio that accompanied
the forced retirement of rice farmers into landlordism. Not contented to be victimized by the progress of modern society, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were among the first in the New Territories to turn their attention to employment opportunities abroad. Massive emigration eventually paid off, bringing an economic recovery to the lineage.

Land is a strategic resource. Chapter 6 takes this study further back in time to examine the role of landholdings in the rise and eclipse of the Chinese lineage. This role is viewed first in the history of Lung Yeuk Tau and then in the context of the Fanling area, where despite the shifts of power balance among its four major lineages over centuries, the Tangs remained dominant until the British takeover of the New Territories in 1899. To recapitulate the vicissitude in the political landscape of the Fanling area throughout this period, emphasis is laid on the intersection of land resources with ethnicity, power, and law. It is from this perspective that the Hakka-Punti distinction, local political alliances, and the indigenous resistance against the British takeover are analyzed. Further scrutiny reveals the predacious nature of the British land policies, which had destructive impact on the traditional Chinese land-tenure system, indigenous land rights, and the corporate property of powerful lineages. On the other hand, these policies helped foster new political middlemen, who benefited from their close ties with the colonial administration and came to possess huge landholdings.

Lineage land embodies a system of divine ownership institutionalized in the forms of *tso* and *tong*, which are discussed at length in Chapter 7. Ancestor worship has the first claim of proceeds from *tso* or *tong* land, and any surplus that is left is to benefit the descendants. The distribution of these benefits can be a source of tension between the
strong and weak segments of a lineage. How Lung Yeuk Tau tackles the problems is investigated. The divine ownership of lineage land goes hand in hand with the inalienability of its property, but such inalienability is vulnerable to corruption on the part of the Si Li (property manager), who is officially the sole property owner. A paradox of modern legislation and involute property-holding, the Si Li system legalizes the immunity of its manager to public supervision. Without a sound mechanism of checks and balances, this system proved to encourage serious embezzlements in its early days. Even today, the lack of transparency in the Si Li system breeds suspicion and conflict within many lineages of the New Territories.

The divine ownership of lineage land is a system of “blood food” that involves sacred obligations to and ordained benefits from ancestors. Dear and near to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau as this system is, there is a sense of crisis due to the vigorous challenges from modernization. In response to these challenges, Lung Yeuk Tau resorts to two tactics: engagement and containment. The combination of these two tactics is found to vary greatly in its strategies to deal with different situations. There is more resistance against cultural integration than against economic integration. In articulating with a modern economy, Lung Yeuk Tau has learned to play its game in order to rebuild the material base of their corporate property on which the system of divine ownership rests. What with its relative cohesion, strong leadership, capitalist-style entrepreneurship, and management skills, this lineage has scored considerable successes in reinvigorating its corporate property, even though none of its achievements came easily.
The nexus of the rites and rituals presented in Chapter 8 is ancestor worship, which is the religion of the Chinese lineage. Diffused into the social institutions of lineage life, it makes the secular sacred. Central to the theology of ancestor worship is the ancestral cult, which received its formative impact from Confucius in terms of li, stresses the idea of reciprocity between the living and the dead, entails the obligations of filial piety, and prescribes the rites of sacrifice. Tang Tsung-ling Ancestral Hall is the focal point of ancestor worship at Lung Yeuk Tau, but observances of the ancestral cult are not confined within it. There is differentiation in the ritual attitude with which the rites of sacrifice are performed at home, in the ancestral hall, and at the gravesite. This differentiation reveals the unique Chinese conceptualization of soul in terms of hun and po. Lung Yeuk Tau also observes the cults that arise from ancestor worship but pertain to fertility and death. Likewise, these cults are interwoven into the social fabric of lineage life.

Ancestor worship has its sacred space. The ultimate boundary of such space is defined by feng-shui, a Chinese system of divination. The basic idea behind feng-shui is that the landscape of the earth is alive with a kind of energy and that this energy flows and concentrates in certain locales. Feng-shui is used to seek out these auspicious locales for graves, homes, and villages. A host of symbolic classification systems employed in feng-shui divination are examined, relating the sacred space of ancestor worship to the metaphysics of the Chinese cosmology. The sacred landscape of an ancestral tomb or village usually involves a formation of mountains, waters, and vegetation that stretch into the distance miles away. It is believed that any disruption of the topographic features of such a formation will set into motion a train of baneful forces and cause harm to the
inhabitants. The only way to remedy the disruption, albeit temporarily, is to perform the
religious ritual of tan fo.

The brethren of a New Territories lineage frequently unites behind the thinking of
*feng-shui* to protect the sacred landscape of their ancestral tombs and village. This is
particularly true of the Tangs of the New Territories, who show amazing solidarity and
tenacity in fighting any intrusion upon the gravesites of their high ancestors. The most
heated *feng-shui* disputes that have occurred in the recent memory of the Hong Kong
region are between the Tangs and the government. A look into these disputes since the
early 1950s shows how the Tangs engage the government legally and politically in order to
contain its pursuit of development at the cost of the integrity of their ancestral gravesites.
There are times when the Tangs have to agonize between the duties of their citizenship
and the obligations to protect their ancestral tombs. Where the government is more
culturally sensitive, a compromise is more likely to be reached.

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are thankful to the supernatural and their ancestors
for the blessings they have received. This gratitude finds expression in the celebrations of
*Ta Chiu*, a religious festival that costs millions of HK dollars. An analysis of its rituals
reveals the purpose of this festival as veneration of the *yang* and propitiation of the *yin*.
With all the publicity that the mass media showers on it, *Ta Chiu* provides the public with
a window to lineage life and renders an invaluable service to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau.
More than a religious festival and a show of wealth, *Ta Chiu* is a part of their efforts to
reassert their commitment to traditional values and beliefs, including ancestor worship.
Chapter 9 consists of two parts. One is an overview of contemporary Lung Yeuk Tau, which has risen to affluence and power once more in the Fanling area. Symbolic of its affluence is the large number of modern-style “male-descendant houses” built by the lineage members. The official policy that grants this housing privilege to the indigenous population is analyzed in terms of its formation, implementation, and economic benefits for the individuals. On the other hand, the rise of Lung Yeuk Tau to power is shown to be accompanied by the discovery of an expanded political niche, which has sent its leaders into the Fanling Rural Committee, the Heung Yee Kuk of the New Territories, the North District Board, and finally party politics. Given Lung Yeuk Tau’s dominant control of local politics and involvement in the market economy, it is impossible to deny this lineage as a dynamic part of the modern society of Hong Kong. The second part of this chapter summarizes the strategies that have brought Lung Yeuk Tau to where it is today. With an analysis of their relationships to the meaning and normative systems of the zong-zu, the whole case study draws to a close.

1.4 Methodology

This case study is the end product of ten months of field research which lasted from August 1995 to May 1996 in the New Territories, Hong Kong. Investigation was conducted primarily by the ethnographic method, which involved participant observation, intensive interviewing, and survey.

As the cornerstone of anthropology, participant observation requires an investigator to enter into the native village where “real life” is to be found (Maanen 1988:16) and to conduct research in the native setting of the people under study.
It was within such an environment that I observed and participated in more than a dozen of ritual ceremonies held by the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, surveyed their population and family types, conducted ethnographic interviews, interacted with villagers at their homes and in public gatherings, collected individual life-histories, joined the lineage in its activities both inside and outside the community, recorded its folklore, studied its rites of passage, and delved into its genealogies. The idea was to be immersed in its culture.

Total immersion is impossible, because the fieldworker has to move back and forth between immersion as a participant and observation as an ethnographer (Karp and Kendall 1982:261). But when the ethnographer slips out of the role of observer into one of several roles available to him (friend or whatever), a closeness develops with some natives which cannot be achieved while in the role of observer (Freilich 1970:533). Such moments of temporary identification with the local people are essential to the cultivation and establishment of rapport. Therefore, informants took me into their confidence; the lineage included me in its delegation to attend the 1995 celebrations of Ta Chiu at Kam Tin and in its five-day tour of Dongguan, Mainland China, where some of its most important ancestral tombs are situated and receive worship from the descendants once a year. This acceptance resulted from my role-taking. It helped me to gain insight into the internal logic of native behavior. Lohman’s remark (1937:891) is pertinent: “The ... identities established through a close familiarity will reveal meanings and insights denied the formal investigator.” Cassell (1980:36) also says that in the use of participant observation to recover meaning, interaction is the method, and role-taking is the instrument.
Since housing was too expensive in Lung Yeuk Tau, I had to choose between accepting free accommodation offered by my informants there and renting an apartment in Tai Po instead. My decision to reside in Tai Po meant that four or five times a week, I took a 15-minute ride to Fanling, which is two train stops away to the north. One train stop south of Tai Po is the Chinese University of Hong Kong. As the sponsor of my research visit to the colony, it kindly granted me access to its telecommunication and library facilities. The Department of Anthropology, CUHK also welcomed me to its Friday Seminars, which proved intellectually stimulating to someone enthralled in fieldwork as I was. In the heat of my data collection out at the field sites, it was impossible to attend each of its Friday Seminars. But when I did, I would spend the rest of the day on campus, discussing my field notes with professors in the Department of Anthropology or doing library research in the Universities Service Center of the CUHK, where I had a booth in the midst of its copious collection of books, periodicals, and newspapers. The Center also provided a haven in which I shared ideas and experiences with fellow researchers from abroad and met with scholars invited to give presentations.

Routinely I left Tai Po for my field site in the morning and returned late in the afternoon or evening. Night-time was reserved for sorting out data, transcribing tapes of interviews, writing summaries of my observations, and planning for the fieldwork of the next day. The write-up of fields notes also involved translating data from Chinese into English. The amount of information was so large that each week, one day had to be taken off for finishing up the entry of data into my laptop. Equipped with telecommunication, I kept close contact with my advisor and professors back at the Ohio State University, who
were posted on the progress of my field research. The advice I got in return was invaluable. Furthermore, writing cultivated organization of thoughts. It was not unusual that in the course of writing about the bits and ends of my findings, I saw the data in a new light and got the inspiration as to how to refine my fieldwork.

In retrospect, my entry into Lung Yeuk Tau started the moment I met with the senior liaison officer of the North District Office under the Home Affairs Department of Hong Kong. Not only were there extensive briefings for me, but I was allowed access to certain official records of Lung Yeuk Tau. On top of this, the recommendation from the senior liaison officer to the Tangs did more than open doors otherwise locked to me. It seemed that her credibility with them extended to make me persona grata. In the New Territories, help from the District Office can go a long way. But as I found out later, the persuasiveness of such help may vary from community to community. The bottom line is “who is your official recommender,” and how obliged the community feels to him or her. Where the effectiveness of official networking ceases to be a sure thing, the ethnographer has to turn to network through individuals who can help. During my fieldwork, I tried both types of networking in order to gain entry into my field sites. In either case, finding the right person was the first step of a field trip:

How the community leaders feel about a research project has an important bearing on the cooperation that the ethnographer will get in the field. This case study began as a research project to examine the impact of a changing social milieu on the use of feng-shui by the lineage of the New Territories. Underneath a phenomenological survey, the project was concerned with the continuity of the Chinese lineage on the one hand and the
conceptualization of *feng-shui* on the other. These two research concerns are linked by their common involvement in land use, ancestor worship, and risk management. A preliminary study of the lineages in the Fanling area showed that Lung Yeuk Tau had the most to offer to this project. After hearing me out, its leader agreed and extended a cordial welcome to me. Arrangements were made for my project to start at Lung Yeuk Tau promptly. In the course of this meeting, which grew into a three-hour interview, I volunteered some teaching service to the community in return for its gracious acceptance, but my host would rather I concentrated on studying and writing about his people. It is not irrelevant to add that this happened after my questions had inadvertently informed him of the publication of an English ethnography about a neighboring community which was by no means on affable terms with the Tangs.

According to Pelto (1970:331), the research design is that which combines the essential elements of investigation into an effective problem-solving sequence. It is also an “idealized” blueprint for the investigator to build knowledge and understanding (Fetterman 1989:18). But things may happen in the field that call for re-adjustment of one’s research design. After the initial survey period, I found that given the limited amount of time, it was necessary to narrow the focus of my project to one of its two original concerns. The lineage use of *feng-shui* was to remain a part of the investigation, but my main concern would be with the impact of a changing social milieu on the continuity of the lineage. This decision was made after the revelation that in order to interpret the geomantic pattern of village orientations discovered at Lung Yeuk Tau, it was necessary to reconstruct the adaptive history of this lineage over centuries. Time did not permit me to stick to the
original research design. The shift of focus was a relatively smooth one. What I did was to
give centrality to one of the sets of hypotheses already formulated and fine-tune it.

The time I spent at Lung Yeuk Tau totaled some eight months, not counting the
two breaks that were taken for conducting research at Wo Hang and Ping Shan. Each
break was necessitated by my search of data that was insufficient at Lung Yeuk Tau.
Fetterman (1989:45) points out that participant observation becomes more refined itself
when the fieldworker understands more and more about the culture. Yet it also revealed
some gaps in my data that needed to be filled before I could piece together the whole
picture. In one case, there was a gap of knowledge about the need of ancestral estates to
accommodate modernization for a financial revival and the predicaments arising from a
lack of opportunities to do so. In another case, the gap pertained to historical records on
the inalienability of ancestral property in land transactions. Then I needed to know more
about the differential impact of man-land ratios on massive emigration, the antagonism of
strong and weak segments, the full length that a lineage might go to protect its sacred
landscape, and so on. Being goal-specific and information-dependent, my research was not
so extensive at Wo Hang as at Ping Shan.

The rapport that I established with the Tangs of Ping Shan made a considerable
amount of information accessible to me. While I am sincerely grateful to my hosts there,
this is an ethnography about the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau. The information that it
incorporates from other sources is meant to serve two purposes. One is to highlight the
issues that Lung Yeuk Tau had or has to grapple, solve, or live with. The other is to
outline the range of reality as well as the possibilities and alternatives available to this lineage in its efforts to deal with reality.

The Chinese lineage organizations are a vast terrain to navigate, and I could only cover a small territory of it during my project. What this study attempts to do is to describe the emic view of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau and place the data in an etic analysis. While the etic analysis has reality in the emic view, its categories and concepts may never be used by the natives themselves. A case in point is the term “divine land ownership,” which is a collection of inter-related concepts derived from the emic view but grouped as an etic construct because of its significance for theoretical analysis. The same is true of “engagement” and “containment” as two tactics. At the heart of my research, however, is the emic perspective of reality. To find the internal logic of this perspective, a large amount of data was gathered. To minimize observational bias, interviews were recorded, and every ritual was videotaped. For the same reason, I tried “thick description” in presenting the religious festival of Ta Chiu because there is a wealth of information in it. The description is based both on my own observations at Kam Tin and on a set of five videotapes made by Lung Yeuk Tau of its Ta Chiu celebrations in 1993. The aim is to convey to the reader as much as possible the facts of a multi-faceted event.

Ethnographic interviews were my most important data-gathering technique. Generally, verbal interaction was conducted in Cantonese except for some terms that I was unfamiliar with. In those cases, either Mandarin was used, or the informant wrote the Chinese characters on a piece of paper. If he or she could do neither, I would make a note of it and ask somebody else later. A few informants preferred to start in English or
Mandarin, which is considered to be stylish in the New Territories today, but they would switch to native pronunciation on key terms. Since I stuck with Cantonese in asking questions, the conversation had a tendency to shift to it as the interview went on. I employed informal interviews most of the time. For each such interview, I had specific questions in mind, but they were embedded in the conversation as it moved along a natural and open-ended course. The only structured interview I conducted consisted of seventeen questions that required about three hours to finish. It was done towards the end of my fieldwork at Lung Yeuk Tau. A total of twenty-two informants from different age groups and both genders were interviewed and responded to its questionnaire.

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are a warm people. To some extent, my experience with them is reminiscent of what Delmos J. Jones (1988) says about being native anthropologists. A native anthropologist is one who studies and writes about his or her culture. Since a basic aim of field research is to describe the total culture of a people from the inside view, a native anthropologist seems to enjoy certain advantages. In the field, he or she has easier access to certain types of information, is naturally conscious of the subtleties of speech and mannerisms, shares a common identity with the subjects, and benefits from the presence of intuition and experience. But in a period of cultural multiplicity, all these advantages are not obvious. Between a British anthropologist who is a permanent resident of Hong Kong with almost the linguistic competence of a native in Cantonese and me who perhaps speak better English than Cantonese, “it is not even clear who is ‘Native’ and who is not” (Balzer 1995:3). In fact, it was one of my counterparts who helped me establish initial contact with one of the villages where I did part of my field
research. Neither of us felt any discomfort about it. It is as if anthropologists were citizens of the world, and they should be.

At a certain level, my subjects and I share the same cultural background, which is conducive to their acceptance of me and my understanding of the underpinning of their subculture. The other side of the coin, however, is that informants may skip the basic specifics, assuming I must know already, not take my interview as seriously as they would with a foreign anthropologist, or have downright doubt about any anthropological inquiry (Jones 1988:32 & 35). Besides, it is well-known that the distance for observation has to be negotiated against the attempts to draw the fieldworker into deep involvement (Emerson 1988:179). A native anthropologist may have to try harder in that regard, sometimes against himself or herself. There is also negotiation to make in panning out to the large picture from the minute details that the ethnographer has closed in on. Jarvie (1969:506) likens the position of a native anthropologist, namely, “the inside” to the observation of a parade by its participants, which is not necessarily a clear vantage point. Finally, the insider view has room for preconceived notions, distortions, inaccuracies, and half-truths as does the outside view. Epistemologically, there are pitfalls for both.

There are ways whereby the ethnographer, native or non-native, can strive for objectivity. Anthropologists are increasingly aware that the fieldworker and the natives can be “both performers and audience to each other” (Berreman 1962:362). This is because each side resorts to impression management in order to reduce the indeterminacy of its relationship with the other. I presented myself to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau in terms that they would understand and accept, but I did not tell them, say, all the positions that I
took. Meanwhile, the same thing could be going on in their relationship with me. Emerson (1988:181) remarks, "Trust remains a role arrangement with its own distinctive patterns for conveying and withholding information." It is not a passport to all truth or secrets. Furthermore, there can be bias in what informants tell the ethnographer in good faith. If I failed to remain alert to all this, distorted interpretations of reality would result.

The "unpredictable" nature of trust between the ethnographer and informants, in particular, has led Jack Douglas to argue that much fieldwork is more appropriately conducted on a conflict model (1976:55). Central to this model is the assumption that to some extent, all people have good reason to hide from others what they are doing and even to lie to them. Since everyone suspects others and expects others to suspect him, conflict is the reality of life. The key to success is to penetrate the various fronts, lies, and evasions of the informants by every means possible, including covert roles. This model was ignored in my field research, for it justifies the employment of intentional deception and would be the undoing of the very basis on which the ethnographer bonds with his or her subjects: honesty and respect. But it is my belief that a healthy skepticism against bias and half-truth is not without justification. As a rule, I double-checked important information, as tactfully as possible, between the leaders, elders, and individual members, or between human recollections and written records, or between rival parties, or between what is real and what is ideal.

No matter how hard I tried to be "objective," my position in this research is fraught with subjectivity. Such subjectivity could have been derived from several sources. From the theories that I am exposed to and have chosen to accept, incorporate into, or
reject for this study. From the individuals who happened to be sampled and whose opinions found their way into this study through my interviews. From the data base that is composed of what I believed to be important or significant. From the descriptions of multi-layered events which become “flattened out” under my pen. From the judgments that crept into my interpretation of the data. And from the fact that I am a native anthropologist who cannot completely discard his preconceptions of what social reality is or should be. On the other hand, complete objectivity is a myth. Emerson (1988:20) notes that all description is partial and selective in the sense that what is included or excluded is guided by the observer’s implicit or explicit concepts which make certain details more important and relevant than others. Even what one sees is influenced by his or her state of expectation, frame of reference, mind set, or conceptual scheme (Bruner et al. 1956). No amount of methodological rigor or observational control can make it otherwise.

Despite the fact that subjectivity is ever-present, the ethnographic method has kept making new discoveries to bring about “a progressive increase in the breadth, depth, and objectivity of anthropological knowledge” (Kuznar 1997:68). Much of this achievement is attributable to participant observation, which opens the door to investigating native behavior at more intimate levels, provides entry into the backstage scenes and facts of the community life, adds new depth to ethnographic research, and introduces a level of information that is more elaborate (Gluckman 1967:xii). One thing I can say about this study is that it shares the intimacy with which anthropologists come to know their subjects. A scientific argument for such intimacy is that it provides for more valid data. This recognized strength of participant observation makes Sanjek (1990:395) declare,
“Anthropology speaks in the language of validity.” In view of the ubiquitous existence of bias that we have to live with, I take “validity” simply to mean “being factually reliable.” This is certainly a goal of this case study apart from providing a way of looking at what it has found.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Photo 1: The Scene of Ta Chiu at Kam Tin, 1995

It is a scene that never fails to strike a chord in the folk hearts of the New Territories, Hong Kong. In fact, the scene is nostalgically familiar, with its resplendent façade of richly decorated gateways that feature a quaint Chinese style and giant ornate boards ("fa pai") that glow, glisten, and greet everyone from afar. They not only have a sensory appeal to the eye but also extend an invitation to festivity. There is an instant merry mood in the air as people jostle down a long entrance walk lined with colorful
pennants, interspersed by red lanterns and religious banners. In the midst of din from the beating of drums, gongs and cymbals, cacophony from the excited village children and youth, hubbub from the performance of Taoist rites, and the hustle and bustle of pious worshippers with incense and spirit money, one finally comes to the center of the scene, a spacious matshed particularly constructed for the occasion.

The matshed is a bamboo structure that, rising to an impressive height of some 30 feet, is often brimming over with people and activity. The most important section within the matshed is an altar for the high deities invited to receive sacrifices and a partitioned hall to accommodate the “Three Pure Ones” (*Sam Tsin*) of Taoism. Standing next to each other, they are adorned with distinctive paraphernalia. Among the effigies that welcome visitors into the matshed are auspicious animals, such as the unicorn and phoenix, not to mention Heavenly Guards and the Heavenly Master who founded religious Taoism and was honored by the Chinese emperor posthumously. These effigies are so positioned as to offer protection for the indoor scene.

An elevated stage that flanks the altars is erected. Variety shows of entertainment are performed when a communal meal is served across the matshed. Every guest or visitor can sit down at one of the tables and enjoy a free, four-course dinner of vegetarian comestibles with soft drinks. From time to time, “hungry ghosts” or “lonely spirits” (*ku wan*) are invited to partake of offerings burnt outdoors. They are under the constant watch of the “Ghost King” who rules the nether world but takes his abode temporarily in a small

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1. The highest emanations of the Tao: the three Supreme Gods (天尊) known as Yuanshi (元始), Lingbao (靈寶), and Daode (道德).
matshed built for him. Then there is the “City God,” accompanied by two orderlies to maintain order among the living and the dead.

Such is the typical setting of *Tai Ping Ching Chiu*, a religious festival that usually lasts five to seven days in the New Territories, Hong Kong. The celebrations revolve around the performance of propitiatory and purificatory rites for the continued blessing of communal peace and harmony. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, who hold the festival once every ten years, call it *Ta Chiu*. As David Faure (1986:80) notes elsewhere, *Ta Chiu* consists of a series of ceremonies that are best thought of as thanksgiving to the deities and sacrifice to the spirits of the dead. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, however, have a slightly different view. For them, the purpose of *Ta Chiu* is twofold: to worship *yang* and propitiate *yin*. *Yang* stands for divinity, ancestors, and that which makes for life, whereas *yin* stands for the hungry ghosts and that which threatens to disrupt life. Therefore, instead of confining *Ta Chiu* to the worship of outside spiritual beings and forces, Lung Yeuk Tau extends the celebrations to the veneration of its ancestors and lineage. Tanaka (1985:242) is the first to notice that what is supposed to be an outside-oriented religious event takes on an “inside” dimension at Lung Yeuk Tau. According to him, this “confusion” arises from the zeal of the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau to stress their identity as a single *zong-zu*.

2.1 The Meaning of Zong-Zu

*Zong-zu* refers to a localized Chinese patrilineal descent group which worships a common ancestor. Contrary to the popular misconception that Chinese is a monosyllabic language, an overwhelming majority of Chinese terms consist of two characters. In the disyllabic term *zong-zu*, *zu* is the principal signifier, whereas *zong* is a modifier that
restricts the meaning of the term. According to Xu Shen (AD 58-147) who compiled the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, a dictionary of Chinese etymology, *zong* literally means “venerating the ancestral shrine and its divine power.” Ban Gu (AD 32-92), a great scholar of the first century, also held that *zong* stands for the ancestral shrine on the one hand and for veneration on the other. By extension, the term came to denote “ancestry” and “patriarchy,” as in the compound terms *zong-ci* (ancestral temple), *zong-qin* (blood relatives from common ancestry), and *zong-fa* (rules of patrilineal descent).

What is *zu*? The same classical dictionary of Chinese etymology annotates that it refers to “arrow-head” or “a bundle of arrows bound together.” Morphologically this character has affinity to the word “flag.” By association, it stood for “a gathering of similar beings” led by a standard-bearer and sharing a common goal (Qian 1994:37-8). As early as the first century, *zu* had already come to mean “a group of people from the great great great grandfather to the great great grandson who stick together and care for each other affectionately.” It is apparent that such a *zu* was patrilineal. With regard to the nature of *zu* as a kinship group, Duan Yucai (1735-1815) stresses the sharing of a single ancestor and surname by its members. His reading of the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* has been considered to be unsurpassed (F. Wu 1992:339). In support of Duan’s interpretation is Xu Shen’s own remark, “Different surnames do not belong in the same *zu*.”

One complication in the interpretation of *zu* is the term *jiu-zu*, literally “nine *zu*.”

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1. In Ban Gu’s famous compendium *Baihu Tongyi*: 《白虎通义: 宗族》, “宗，尊也，為先祖主也；宗，人之所尊也……”
2. Ibid.: “族者族也，聚也。謂恩愛相流湊也，上湊高祖下至玄孫。”
3. See Duan’s *Annotations of the Shuo Wen Jie Zi*.
4. In his *Wuying Yiyi* or 《五經異義》, “異姓不在族中。”
There is agreement that in this case zu refers to a generation of relatives. The composition of the “nine zu,” however, was polemical between those who adhered to the archaic classics represented by Ban Gu and the neo-classicists represented by Kong Yingda (574-648). The former took it to consist of nine consecutive generations along the male line, whereas the latter held it to comprise mother’s and wife’s relatives in addition to father’s relatives. Upon a closer look, what the neo-classicists called “maternal zu” and “spousal zu” were the “patrilineal zu” of mother and wife before their marriages. After marriage, a woman’s natal relatives became affines to the patrilineal zu that she had joined as a member. To mark the distinction, some Chinese scholars use the term dang ("黨") for a group of relatives along mother’s or wife’s line. But since the same term can apply to patrilineal relatives, it is of little help, either. The point that needs to be made here is the polysemy of the term. Apart from its denotation of “a patrilineal kin group,” zu may be used in reference to “a group of relatives, patrilineal or affinal” as in jiu-zu. Further down the line, it can be taken to mean “a group of people bound together by some tie.” Therefore, the Chinese language has such terms as min-zu for a nation of people, han-zu for the Han Chinese, and shi-zu for a class of scholar-gentry.

As a compound term, zong-zu acquires the reference to a specific type of unilineal descent group. The Er Ya, a literary work of the second century B.C., remarks that the relatives and descendants from father constitute a zong-zu. Exogamous, patrilineal, and born of common ancestry with demonstrated descent, the zong-zu fits in well with the

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1 古文經學家，今文經學家。
2 《爾雅·釋親》：“于父曰宗族”，“父子黨為宗族。”
Two comments are in order here. For one thing, the folk in rural China tend to use zu as an abbreviation of zong-zu. Therefore, informants will speak of their fellow lineage members as zu-ren ("zu members"), their lineage rules as zu-gui ("zu rules"), and their lineage landholdings as zu-chan ("zu property"), where zu actually stands for the zong-zu or "lineage." The truncations are a result of the linguistic custom to form disyllabic terms in Chinese vernacular. Secondly, the ethnographer may be aware of the truncations but chooses to interpret zu in the sense of "a group of people bound together by some tie" anyway. This indiscriminate practice is indicative of a muddle in the concepts which, beginning with the functionalist fabrication of "segmentary lineages" out of thin air in Africa, has continued in the treatment of lineage organizations merely as an "idiom" or "legal fiction" (Fortes 1949:19; Leach 1961:305; Beatie 1964:94; Kuper 1982:88-90) and in the replacement of reality by an artifice preconceived in the mind of many ethnographers (Schneider 1972:59 & 1984:vii). Can there be anything real then? In response, let us quote from a study of the zong-zu by Qian Hang, who (1994:251) remarks poignantly that neither the traditional nor the contemporary zong-zu is a "fraud" and that both are deeply rooted in the Chinese senses of identity and belonging.

The zong-zu is organized on the basis of patrilineal kinship, a major principle of social organization in traditional China. There is little doubt that conscientious efforts were made to promote the system of patrilineal kinship legally and ideologically. The Confucian state, which featured a small government at the county level, attached great importance to
the roles of patrilineal kin groups in fulfilling the functions of local administration and social control. This resulted in a strong presence of lineage organizations (Woon 1984:1). In a county of Jiangxi Province, for instance, 86.85% of the 1,291 villages surveyed by Hu Hsien-chin (1948:14) were single-surname villages. In rural Hong Kong, the single-surname village also appeared to be the norm (Baker 1968:3; Hayes 1977). A Chinese lineage usually sprawled to occupy several such villages. After the British takeover, the New Territories was found to have no less than 160 lineages, occupying most of its 416 villages (Lockhart 1898:7; Hayes 1983:116). Given the predominance of the zong-zu in the New Territories, the lineage was the principal form of social organization there.

The term zu, however, is useful in providing a unitary framework within which the individual defines his social position and behavior. In our case, the framework operates at four levels: the lineage, the higher-order lineage, the clan, and the surname at large. In the context of the lineage, individual social position and behavior are delineated by genealogical relationships that are vertical and bonds of brotherhood that are horizontal. This context stems from a prima facie certainty of common descent, close proximity of residence, and shared inheritance of corporate property. It gives the majority of situations in which the term zu is used as a synonym for zong-zu.

The synonymy extends to the higher-order lineage. A higher-order lineage is formed by a number of local lineages whose founding fathers were agnatically descended from a common ancestor (Freedman 1966:25). Like the lineage, it is a corporate group, even though its corporate property comprises no more than some ancestral graves and an ancestral hall. There are two elements in the internal relationship of a higher-order lineage
that are of sociological interest. One is the concept of common descent, which promotes social solidarity through cooperation and reciprocity among the member lineages. The other is their competition to be the worthiest son of the common ancestor. A veiled contest of wealth and prestige, such competition is usually taken by the losers with grace but may get ugly sometimes. One New Territories genealogy, for instance, records in detail the deliberate encroachment of its ancestral gravesite by a cousin lineage in an attempt to steal from the blessings of fortune and prosperity that the site generated for living descendants.¹ It was considered a heinous offense in traditional China. In a more recent case, two cousin lineages went so far as to use violence against each other to settle the scores between them. The higher-order lineage had less control over the escalation of competition than did the lineage, whose members were under omnipresent patriarchal supervision and subject to a formalized code of behavior.

In the context of the clan, members are so nebulous about how they are related to one another that common descent is assumed rather than proven. The lineages of a clan do not share enduring common interests and activities as do the members of a higher-order lineage (Faure 1984:5). What persists is a sense of relatedness through some remote ancestor. There is no strong urge to maintain a close relationship, which is unrealistic, or to compete to be the worthiest son of a common ancestor, who may be hard to pinpoint. The internal relationship of the clan is characterized by a polite acknowledgment of related closeness, which can be translated into an alliance in time of need. The Tangs of the New Territories, for instance, are equivocal about their exact genealogical relationship with a

¹ In *The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin*, p. 97.
Tang lineage in Dongguan, but admitted it into the clan ancestral hall anyway and received its enthusiastic support in their organized resistance against the British takevoer in 1899.

The polite acknowledgment of related closeness may extend to whoever bears the same surname. As an informant of Lung Yeuk Tau told me, “All the Tangs under the sky are descended from the thirteen sons of Tang Yue.”\(^1\) In this way, they profess that they belong to the same **zu** founded by Tang Yue in the first century. Of course, my informant is by no means so naive as to expect alliance with all of his name sakes as with his clansmen. But it always makes him feel closer to a person who shares his surname. This feeling is reinforced by the widespread Chinese custom of surname exogamy on the ground that they are biologically related. Maurice Freedman (1958:5) is right when he takes on Daniel Kulp and F. Théry by insisting on the prevalence of this custom. For the Chinese, an **affine** (*yin-qin*) is not to be a member of the same **zu** (*zu-qin*), where **zu** embraces the whole surname group. The meaning of **zu** in this case comes close to its definition “a group of people bound together by some tie,” but not without an innocent deviation. My informant earnestly believes in the existence of some biological relatedness among all the people who bear the same surname.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that folk interpretations of **zu** differ considerably from the classical definition. The semantic change is attributable to folk etymology, a process whereby local reinterpretation of a word results in the assignment of new meaning to it (Pyles and Algeo 1982:241). One line of evidence comes from the

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\(^1\) Tang Yue (AD 1-58) was a lord of the East Han dynasty. A frequently-used expression is “There are only thirteen Tangs under the heavens (天下十三郎)”.
adages that reinterpret the central semantic component of *zu*. A popular Chinese saying, for instance, warns, “One chopstick breaks easily, and ten don’t.”¹ Note the similitude between chopsticks and arrows and also their connotative reference to the strength of collectivity. In association with this adage is a Chinese parable. Lying on his death bed, an old man called in his sons. Instead of telling them his last wish, he asked each of them to break a chopstick. This done, the sons were made to break a bundle of chopsticks. When they failed to accomplish the act, the old man said to them, “Hold on to one another like a bundle and no one will be able to break you.” Folklore such as this served to change the meaning of *zu* from “a bundle of arrows” to “a group of sons or descendants.” In modern Chinese, a group of people cannot be presented as a unit of *zu* unless they are bound by some shared descent.

To sum up, *zu* is polysemic, with its denotation and connotation varying from context to context. As the term moves through four different situational contexts -- lineage, higher-order lineage, clan, and surname at large -- its meaning changes in terms of three semantic features: common descent, solidarity, and competition. The change that involves common descent is from recent to distant, bordering on fiction at the far end (shared surname). Solidarity is correlated with descent, dwindling from fraternity to reciprocal cooperation to a feeling of expectant and then non-expectant closeness as genealogical distance reaches the maximal limit. Competition behaves differently from descent and solidarity. It is suppressed in the lineage, rises to a height in the higher-order

¹ “一只筷子容易折，十只筷子撑不彎”.

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lineage, and loses its momentum dramatically in the clan and surname group. These three semantic features and four situational contexts of zu provide a unitary framework for the individual to define his or her behavior. In a critique of traditional neglect over the issues of polysemy, Keesing (1972:18) remarks, “There is a way to make the crucial problems of semantics disappear from sight, but it is only a conjuring trick. The trick is accomplished by holding context constant.” In the discussion of zu, a situational or contextual analysis is necessary in order to steer clear of this mistake.

Last but not the least, the concept of zu provides the baseline against which outsiders are defined. Outsiders are those with whom one does not share common descent. Allies are outsiders with whom one’s zu forms a non-kin alliance. In the New Territories, a non-kin alliance typically assumed the form of yeuk (formal treaty), which bound together unrelated lineages against a common foe or for a common task. Historically no yeuk was signed between two cousin lineages. Modeled after sworn brotherhood, the yeuk grew out of defense needs in some cases and of strategic considerations for supremacy, power balance, or economic cooperation in other cases. Different historical periods found the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau side with different allies: the Mans, the Pangs, the Lius, and other small lineages. There were no perpetual friends or enemies. Nor was it unusual that members of two opposing yeuk were comrades in a third yeuk. Empiricism was the bottom line of traditional Chinese politics. The historical caprice of the yeuk contrasts with the steady predictability of natural alliance that features the zu whether it be a higher-order

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1 The only exception is the formation of a yeuk that contained two Tang lineages and several small ones in the Sha Tau Kok Valley. In this case, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau and their cousin lineage at Loi Tung entered into the alliance as separate parties.
There has been speculation that the Chinese zu in the sense of “clan” originated as a local multi-surname congregation of people (Chun 1996:434; Dardess 1974). Stripped of its fancy rhetoric, this speculation rests on the etymology of zu. Indeed, when this word first evolved from “arrow-head” or “arrow,” it was a general term for a grouping of people. The moot point is that words change in their senses and associations. Therefore, the English word meat no longer denotes food in general, a meaning that it retains throughout the King James Bible, as in the expressions “meat for the belly,” “meat and drink,” and “sweetmeat.” The change occurred through a process of specialization in which the referential scope of a word is reduced. The same happened to the Chinese term zu. The specialization of its association with “kin group” occurred at least in the first century. If variation is the rule rather than exception, then the special is always a part of the general. No one can rule out the existence of kin groups when zu was defined as a general grouping of people (M. Yang 1996:446). Nor can one doubt the consumption of animal flesh by English-speaking people when meat denoted food in general. Through etymological change, however, what used to be special in association became standard in meaning. All etymology tells us in the case of zu is that the Chinese kin group denoted by this term today is a special part of what it used to signify, and period.

In reference to the lineage, zu is short for zong-zu. Before we abbreviate the term, it is necessary to take a closer look at the semantic import of “patriarchy” and “ancestjy” that is being passed on from zong to zu in the process of abbreviation. It involves two

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1 See Ban Gu’s definition of zu on p. 33.
important principles that make the Chinese lineage what it is: patrilineal descent system and the ancestral cult.

In the traditional Chinese descent system, inheritance and succession are reckoned along the male line. After marriage, the daughter ceases to be a member of her natal group, leaving the son as the carrier of the family descent line. The descent line continues only where there is a son. So family property is not divided among the offspring of both sexes but goes to the sons only. With the male monopoly of inheritance and succession comes patriarchy, in which the father holds the supreme authority in the family or zu. Because the system dictates transmission of property (e.g. land and housing) from father to son, it is conducive to sons staying together and residing patrilocaly. If the married sons go on to live with their father in joint custody of family property, the result is an extended family, out of which grew the Chinese lineage. Morphologically the Chinese lineage is a localized descent group of males living under the leadership of a patriarch, the most senior member alive.

The ancestral cult is a set of values and beliefs designed to ensure the continuity of the Chinese family system. Its locus is the relationship between parents and son that emphasizes their mutual dependency in perpetuity. Baker (1979:72) has noted that boiled down, this relationship is a reciprocal one. The son is cared for by the parents when he is young. In return, the son is bound by duty to take care of the parents in their old age. The mutual obligations continue after the death of the parents except that they take a different form. Instead of respecting and serving the parents, the son worships and makes offerings
It is obvious that in order for this relationship to be maintained and perpetuated across generations, the fulfillment of duties on the part of the son is of utmost importance. So in the *Analects* (II:v, III:xii) Confucius (551-479 BC) strongly advises, “When parents are alive, serve them according to the rites, when they are dead, bury them and sacrifice to them according to the rites” as if they were present.\(^1\) To stress the point, this obligation is rationalized in terms of filial piety. The way that Confucius defines filial piety, however, is essentially sociological, for it does not presuppose the existence of supernatural power.\(^2\) While its purpose is to perpetuate the family system, the Confucian argument is solely based on moral grounds. For the Master, filial piety is a call of duty, under which the son is expected to venerate the memory of his parents and behave accordingly. By observation of ancestor veneration and its rites, the family will hold together over time and contribute to the stability of society.

Filial piety was sanctified when ancestor veneration was couched in religious terms. The son became the head priest of the family, which was to worship all of its ancestors as demigods in the name of “revering the roots of descent.”\(^3\) The son was also admonished to have male descendants so that the family line would carry on and that the ancestors would continue to be worshipped (Mencius VI:1:xxvii).\(^4\) Fustel de Coulanges

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1. [Note: Assume the notes are citations or references to Confucius' teachings.]  
2. [Note: This is a sociological interpretation of Confucianism.]  
3. [Note: This is a religious interpretation of Confucianism.]  
4. [Note: This is a historical interpretation of Confucianism.]
(1874:118) summarized his role cogently, “The family and the worship are perpetuated through him; he represents, himself alone, the whole series of ancestors, and from him are to proceed the entire series of descendants.” The duties of this role were religious rather than moral. What if the son failed in some of these duties? It was warned that his neglect to sacrifice and worship would make the ancestors become “hungry ghosts,” at whose ill will misfortune would befall the living descendants (Wolf 1974:170). Failure to produce male descendants would relegate one to an “unworthy son.” The label was at once a social stigma that carried negative consequences for the individual and a curse that he and his ancestors were doomed to being “lonely and evil spirits.”

Ancestor worship plays an important role in the organization of the zong-zu. The Chinese lineage is a kin group whose social, political, and economic boundary is ultimately defined by the worship of ancestors who are collectively represented by the founder of the lineage. Descent from the founding ancestor does not necessarily qualify one for lineage membership, which can be denied to long-lost descendants and illegitimate sons or stripped for wrongdoings. To be a member of the lineage is to be admitted into the rights and obligations to worship its founding ancestor. The same is true of membership for a higher-order lineage. The Tangs who consider themselves native to the New Territories, for instance, close the door of their higher-order lineage to the Hakka Tangs of Pat Heung by excluding them from the worship of their common ancestors.

The ancestral cult also organizes the segmentation of a Chinese lineage into different fang and sub-fang, each of which has a focal ancestor. Literally “house,” fang stands for a segment headed by a son. While the son is alive, he is a patriarch. After his
death, he becomes a focal ancestor. Segmentation differs from branching in that it involves the establishment of an ancestral estate to fund the rites of ancestor worship and benefit the descendants. The property is to be inherited jointly and held in trust for all the generations to come. Access to its benefits is available only to those who worship its founder as an ancestor. He who has an ancestral estate established posthumously is a focal point of segmentation, hence the term “focal ancestor.” With forefathers who do not have an ancestral estate, the lineage merely branches. After several generations, the memory of these forefathers will lapse. Ancestor worship acquires regularity only at the focal points of segmentation over time.

Socially, the individual is frequently identified as a descendant of a certain fang. Fang is named after a focal ancestor. If B is the firstborn son of A, then he heads “B Fang” or the “First Fang of A.” In either case, fang is the verbal personification of a focal ancestor and forms a specific group of ancestor worship. My informants of Lung Yeuk Tau specify the individual identity of whomever they are talking about. But their introduction often ends with a remark on his or her fang affiliation. For lineage members, this affiliation is just as important as individual identity if not more, because it provides a way to determine social distance. The more fang and sub-fang two individuals belong to in common, the more ancestors they worship together. It follows that they have a closer genealogical relationship and enjoy a more similar set of obligations as well as rights.

In summary, there are essentially two approaches to the meaning analysis of zu: the etymological and the situational. By drawing a parallel between rigid etymology and fluid reality, the first approach has led to conceptual confusion and unfounded speculation in
the studies of Chinese kinship. To allow for analysis of the polysemy of zu, it will be necessary to adopt the situational approach, which incorporates three semantic features and four contexts to describe the dynamics of Chinese kinship organization. When used as an abbreviation of zong-zu, the term zu stands for the lineage or the higher-order lineage. It conforms to the kin group characterized by patriarchal leadership, descent rules for succession and inheritance of corporate property, and a set of values, beliefs, and rites for ancestor worship. Ancestor worship, which is the religion of the zong-zu, shapes its ideology as well as its structure and organization.

2.2 The Symbolism of Zong-Zu

The zong-zu is a mosaic which is at once a social organization, an economic entity, a body politic, and a religious group. Integrated as a whole and differentiated in function, this mosaic is called a cultural institution. A holistic approach to the multi-faceted reality of a cultural institution will have to be analytical so that each major constituent part of this reality stands out in relief, and synthetic so that the observer captures the institution in its integrity and does not get lost in its parts. It is always a formidable task to study and present a cultural institution, but as always, there is hope of finding a point of entry in its symbolism (Schneider 1972:39).

Following the simplest definition, a symbol is something that stands for something else (R. Needham 1979:3). Elegant as this definition is, it can be dangerously inadequate. What is important to note is the plurality of references that a single symbol signifies. A symbol is a vehicle for more than one conceptions (Silverman 1977:473). This leads Mary Douglas to contrast the multi-reference symbol with the one-reference sign. In her view
symbols have the potential to condense an immensely wide range of reference in a series of statements that may work out a complex representation of different aspects of life at increasingly abstract and inclusive levels of interpretation. Symbols, therefore, are synthetic. Nevertheless, Victor Turner (1961, 1968:44-45) is able to identify analytical symbols in Ndembu divination. Unlike synthetic symbols which fuse many disparate themes together, analytical symbols “discriminate between items that have become confused and obscure.” Finally there are symbols which are empty of denotata (Murray 1977:196). What they carry is a class of semantic features known as a designatum. Each of these symbols takes on meaning only by enumerating a series of referential objects from its designatum. Meaning is context-sensitive. The negotiation between designata on the one hand and meaning on the other is determined by context for all symbols in all cases. Contexts are established by culture, which gives rise to the beauty of a symbolic approach. It is best put by Clifford Geertz (1974:491) when he says that such an approach enables us to mediate freely between the most local of local details and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view. A symbolic approach can be analytic as well as synthetic.

The symbolism of the zong-zu comprises three main elements: blood, land, and ritual. The first two are natural symbols. Blood is a symbol that contains reference in a large number of domains. It, for instance, symbolizes patrilineal descent, kin group, brotherhood, harmony, solidarity, and their underlying values and beliefs. In contrast, land is symbolic of inheritance rules, collective ownership, and common economic status and interests of the lineage brotherhood. Furthermore, in Chinese symbolism blood has the
properties of *yang*, whereas land has the properties of *yin*. The two symbols form an antithesis that is capable of multiple interpretations. At one level, they may complement each other, as in personifying the ancestor whose blood has given life to the descendants and whose land has nurtured and nourished them. At another level, the two symbols may contrast each other, with one promoting an idealized relationship and the other generating a utilitarian relationship or with one producing centrifugal segmentation and the other encouraging centripetal confinement. At a third level, the two symbols may contradict each other, as in the conflict between the rhetoric of agnatic brotherhood and the reality of differential ownership of corporate property. Thus in the workings of these two symbols unfolds the social, economic, and political drama of Chinese lineage culture.

Ritual is a symbolic medium rather than a symbol. Therefore, D. Munn (1973:579) defines it as a “symbolic intercom” that translates complex meanings into social action and events. Proceeding from communication theory (Lyons 1968), some scholars, however, have suggested that since the language used by formalized rituals gives minimal semantic information, there is no real communication taking place in the course of a ritual. This may be true linguistically, but not sociologically. For the actor and observer who participate in a ritual, what is important is not its linguistic load of new information but its sociological message that urges conformity. Victor Turner (1969:8-9) has argued eloquently against the tendency to see human ritualization on a par with animal ritualization, as in Huxley (1966:257), Lorentz (1966:278) and Leach (1968:525ff). According to Turner, the distinction lies both in the motivation of human behavior which is sociocultural and in the semantic structure of human ritual which is multivocal. Mary Douglas (1970:14) has found
that cross-culturally, ritualism is a function of how well the boundaries of power and
territory are defined in a culture. In more closed social groups, there is a greater bias in
favor of ritual. For Emile Durkheim (1912:260), ritualism is certainly a social indicator of
mechanical solidarity. Ritual is by no means "empty conformity."

In its elaboration of values or beliefs, ritual can be thematic. In this sense, ritual is
akin to the notion of structural metaphor developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson
(1980). Structural metaphors are thematic in that recurrent comparison is made between
two objects to illustrate their association. In *Metaphors We Live By*, the authors show
how English speakers elaborate the concept of *time* metaphorically in association with
*money*. With *time* conceptualized in the gestalt of *money*, the systematic association
between the two invokes a full array of structural metaphors.¹ The same metaphorical
association can be found to exist in English between argument and war, and love and
journey. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:61, Lakoff 1977) point out that structural metaphors
provide the richest source of elaboration in language. Similarly, ritual provides the richest
source of elaboration for the values and beliefs of the *zong-zu*. As will be shown, it is a
structural vehicle for the communication and elaboration of the symbolic meanings of
blood and land within the gestalt of ancestor worship. Used in this way, ritual is also what
Parsons (1963b:39) calls "a generalized symbolic medium of social interaction." For
Parsons (1963a, 1963b, 1964), money has no intrinsic value, but it is a paradigmatic
medium for the communication of power, influence, and pleasure.

¹ Such as "Time is money," "to save, spare, buy, spend, waste, squander away (one's)
time," and "to cut the corners in one's schedule," etc.
The symbolic meaning of blood has a conceptual basis in \textit{qi}. Literally “breath,” \textit{qi} can be translated as “a vital force of life or material.” In traditional Chinese cosmology, \textit{qi} is assumed to be the source of blood. According to the first classic of Chinese medicine \textit{Huangdi Neijing (The Medical Classic of The Yellow Emperor)}, \textit{qi} became blood after being condensed to acquire a red color.\textsuperscript{1} The \textit{Yijing Suhuiji}, another classic of Chinese medicine, agreed, “That which is called \textit{qi} produces blood.”\textsuperscript{2} Moreover, \textit{qi} and blood were considered to form the very essence of life. “All the human body has are blood and \textit{qi},” and “The human being owes his life to the presence and circulation of blood and \textit{qi}.”\textsuperscript{3} They were so important to the health of the body and the cultivation of the mind that Confucius remarked in the \textit{Analects} (16:7):

There are three don’ts the gentleman should be conscious of: In youth when the blood and \textit{qi} are still unsettled, he should guard against the attraction of feminine beauty. In the prime of life when the blood and \textit{qi} have become exuberant, he should guard against bellicosity. In old age when the blood and \textit{qi} have declined, he should guard against acquisitiveness.\textsuperscript{4}

The implication that blood and \textit{qi} were interdependent became explicit in the \textit{Lun Heng} or \textit{Critical Essays} by Wang Chong (AD 27-97), a Chinese scholar known for his negative attitude about traditional Chinese cosmology. Yet he conceded:

\begin{quote}
Man lives because of \textit{qi}, and when he dies, this vital force is extinguished. The vital force is able to function because of the blood system, but when a man dies, the blood system ceases to operate. With this the vital force is extinguished, and the body decays and turns to clay (de Bary 1960:253).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{黄帝内经》:《靈樞:決氣篇》, “中焦受氣取汁，變化而赤，是為血。”
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{《醫經溯源集》, “氣者，血之母。”
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{黄帝内经》:《素問:調經論篇》, “人之所有者，血與氣耳。”; \textit{《靈樞:本藏篇》, “人之血氣精神者，所以養生而周于生命者也。”
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{論語: 季氏篇} (XVI:vii), “君子有三戒: 少之時，血氣未定，戒之在色；及其壯也，戒之在斗；及其老也，血氣既衰，戒之在得。”

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Chinese natural philosophy also regarded \textit{qi} as the material basis for human reproduction. Before impregnation, there was believed to be transmission of coalescent \textit{qi} in the form of “essence” (\textit{jing}), which was responsible for generating new life at birth.\(^1\) Elaborated by Song Yan and Yin Wen in the third century B.C., the thesis of “essence” influenced generations of Chinese philosophers (Zhang 1987:186). In line with this thinking, the \textit{Nan Shi}, a Chinese classic of the seventh century stated, “With respect to the relationship of father and son, there is a distinction of form but a commonality of \textit{qi}.”\(^2\) The concept of \textit{qi}, therefore, was extended to stand for blood as well as descent. Shiga Shuzo (1968:55), a Japanese scholar of Chinese customary law, comments as follows:

\textit{Ch'i [qi]} is an incorporeal form of life (\textit{sheng-ming}). To say that brothers are of the same \textit{ch'i} is also a manifestation of this kind of thinking. Brothers are born from the \textit{ch'i} which they partake in common from a single father. Thus, the life which lives among both of them is also the same. According to this analogy, \textit{tsu [zu]} then is founded upon and developed out of a common \textit{ch'i}. (Square-bracketed additions are mine.)

Shiga goes on to point out, since members of the same \textit{zu} are essentially the extension of a common life, there are the Chinese customs prescribing that those of the same surname do not marry and that those of different surnames do not mix in the practices of adoption. In this respect, no significance whatsoever is assigned to the woman’s reproductive capacity (“womb”) in so far as the nature of the life of one’s descendants is concerned. In his view, “That life can only be perpetuated and extended by the male \textit{ch'i [qi]} is a most distinctive feature of the Chinese world ethos.”

\(^1\) 《靈樞·經脈篇》, “人始生，先成精．”
\(^2\) 李延壽, 《南史》, “父子其親，分形同氣．”
This analysis is insightful. The concept of \( qi \) has served to rationalize the importance that the Chinese attach to the descent rules, marriage rules, and adoption rules derived from the considerations of \( qi \) and blood. It is summarized in a famous Chinese saying, first phrased by Confucius and then reinterpreted by Neo-Confucianists to emphasize the metaphysical significance of \( qi \): “Just as people who speak a common language respond to one another, those who share a commonality of \( qi \) will commit themselves to the same goals” (my translation).\(^1\)

Associated with the symbolic significance of blood is the “inside/outside” distinction of kinship. In Chinese, “inside” is \( nei \) and “outside” is \( wai \). Both are relative terms. Wife’s relatives are \( nei-qin \) (inside affinals) in opposition to \( wai-qin \) (outside affinals) who are mother’s parents as well as sister’s and daughter’s conjugal family members. Therefore, wife’s brother is “inside brother,” whereas mother’s father is “outside grandfather,” and daughter’s son is “outside grandson.” However, both inside and outside affines are \( wai-qi \) or “outside relatives,” who are non-consanguines. In contrast, “inside” relatives are defined in terms of consanguinity. The contrast is seen in the dichotomy of “inside nephew” (\( nei-zhi \)) for brother’s son and “outside nephew” (\( wai-sheng \)) for wife’s brother’s son.

As non-consanguines, “outside relatives” are further distinguished by \( jiu \) for mother’s brother, \( yi \) for mother’s sister, \( gu \) for father’s sister, and \( biao \) for her children (cousins). All of them and the more remote affinals are excluded from the inner circle of inside relatives, which is formed by collaterals of the second degree ascending with

\(^1\)《周易正义·乾》，“子曰: 同聲相應，同氣相求。”

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father's brother and descending with brother's son (Fêng 1948:10). Descent from the second-degree collateral male line is indicated by tang (“hall”). Finally, there is the core of grandparents, parents, brother, unmarried sister, and ego. Blood relationship is confined to the core and inner circle of “inside relatives.” Wife’s brother comes closest to an “inside relative,” probably a remnant of the matrilineal system that once existed in ancient China.  

Thus the distinction “inside/outside” draws a series of concentric circles around ego, distinguishing various types of relatives in terms of genealogical and affinal distance. A central feature of this distinction is the definition of “inside” in such a way as to include as many relatives as possible and the use of “outside” to fine-tune the distinction of affinals.

A second distinction associated with the symbol of blood is major descent versus minor descent. This is a primary principle of the descent rules in feudal China, whereby primogeniture was the law. Inheritance and succession were strictly in the order of the first-borns (son, grandson, great grandson, great great grandson) as the heir apparent and the non first-borns as the heir alternate (Ouyang 1992:145). It was institutionalized by the royal family for orderly transmission of the crown across generations. The eldest prince and the male posterity from him constituted the major descent line in succession to the monarchy. The non-first-born princes (bie-zi) formed the feudal nobility, who were made to found major descent lines outside the royal bloodline and under different surnames. This practice is known as the “establishment of an heir alternate as a founding ancestor.”  

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1 The Lüshi Chunqiu (Lü’s Record of the Spring and Autumn Period), a classical work of the 3rd century B.C., for instance, remarks that in the remote past, (Chinese) people knew their mothers, not fathers.”  

2 轉自《吕氏春秋·牧君篇》， "昔太古皆無君也，其民聚生群處，知母不知父。"
a noble family was so established, internal inheritance and succession also abided by
primogeniture. Its non-first-born sons, in turn, would start families on their own, but in the
statuses of a lower order: minister, minor official, scholar gentry, and even commoner (D.
Chen 1985:188). Not allowed to have a different surname as did a royal prince, these non-
first-borns would head minor branches of a major descent line carried on by the first-
borns.¹ In this way, the whole society of feudal China was built on a huge web of major
and minor descent lines, radiating from the royal family through its descendants. It is
pertinent to note that the concept of “major descent” is a relative one. A noble lord, for
instance, represented the major descent line in his fiefdom, but he stood in a line of minor
descent relative to the monarchy.

The principle of major and minor descent lost most of its social impact after the
feudal period ended in the third century B.C. Outside the royal family, primogeniture gave
way to a system of inheritance in which all sons had an equal claim. Even the heir alternate
(bie-zi) of the royal family and his younger brothers (shi-zi) were now able to keep their
regal surname. But after A.D. 265, the concept of major descent was resuscitated in the
organization of esteemed clans (“wang zu”) by the newly-emerging gentry and then in the
rise of the zong-zu during the Song period (960-1279). The Book of Rites explains why:

Some ancestors are worshipped for a hundred generations while others are
forgotten after five generations. In the former case, a group of descendants
worship an ancestor who is the founder of a major descent line or bie-zi, so
they are able to stay focused on him forever. In the latter case, the ancestor
heads a line of minor descent, and his descendants will choose to worship a
more recent ancestor after five generations.² (Translation mine)

¹ 繼禩為宗。
²《禮記·大傳》, “有百世不遷之宗，有五世則遷之宗，百世不遷者，別子之後
也，宗其別子之所自出者，百世不遷者也。宗其繼高祖者，五世則遷也。”
Another question arises: Why five generations? By definition, the *zong-zu* consists of relatives along the male line from the great, great, great grandfather (five generations above Ego) to great, great grandson (four generations below Ego). Unless Ego is in the line of major descent, his descendants will switch to the worship of a new great, great, great grandfather or a new fifth-generation ancestor. Therefore, in reference to a minor descent line, Confucius said, it does not exceed six generations.¹ A major descent line is resistant to the centrifugal effects of such branching, so it provided an important principle for the organization of Chinese kin groups.

But all Chinese *zong-zu* did not boast of an ancestor who was an heir alternate (*bie-zi*) who represented a major descent line. How did they manage to perpetuate ancestor worship then? The answer lies in the extension of “*bie-zi*” to any non-first born male beside the heir alternate. Eager to rationalize the revival of archaic descent rules, Neo-Confucian scholars argued that literally “other son,” *bie-zi* could be any scholar-official who started a descent group outside his hometown (Pan 1993:355). What the Neo-Confucianists offered was secondary rationalization. We cannot but wonder why the Chinese *zong-zu* should have chosen to adopt an “aristocratic” institution, even long after the esteemed clans had also collapsed. Fustel de Coulanges (1874:132) is enlightening here, with his remarks about the *gens*, a unilineal descent group in ancient Rome and Greece:

> It was through their internal organization that the patricians of Rome and the Eupatrids of Athens were able to perpetuate their privileges for so long a time. No sooner had the popular party gained the upper hand than they

¹ 《禮記·大傳》, “六世親屬竭矣.”
attacked this old institution with all their power... But it was singularly endowed with vitality, and deeply rooted in their manners, and they could not entirely blot it out. They therefore contented themselves with modifying it.

The same can be said of the Chinese zong-zu in which the archaic descent rules are inherited as well as modified. The steadfastness with which a zong-zu focuses on the worship of its founding ancestor is an example of major descent in action. The kin group acts as a collective “heir alternate,” perpetuating the rituals. Modification comes in the make-believe of a major descent line as if the founding ancestor was an heir alternate and in the inheritance of ancestral property jointly rather than by primogeniture. The patriarchal system is also modeled after the archaic institution of zong-zu, the “heir apparent” who exercises the supreme authority and becomes the lineage head. Finally, considerations of major and minor descent are still relevant when affinity to the ancestral bloodline is a concern, as in religious rites and rituals.

The last distinction is a “close/distant” one, which was once ordered by the “five mourning grades” (wu-fu). An official system of individual mourning duties for deaths in one’s dear and near, wu-fu was also a code for differentiating degrees of kinship in imperial China. The first degree of kinship was limited to the parents, for whose death ego had to don an unhemmed coarse hemp dress and mourn for 27 months. The second degree of kinship embraced the spouse, siblings, offspring, and brother’s children in addition to father’s parents and siblings. The mourning duty for each of them consisted of donning a coarse hemp dress and mourning for a year. Grandchildren, daughter-in-law, and paternal uncle’s children belonged to the third degree of kinship, each calling for nine months’
mourning in a course cloth dress upon his or her death. So on and so forth until the four-generation ascendants and descendants from ego were included. Officially implemented and sanctioned by punishment for centuries, this system is no longer in effect now, but the underlying concept of distinguishing between the close and distant relatives is ingrained in the mind of the average member of a Chinese kin group.

This distinction also applies to adoption. To ensure the continuity of a descent line, the Chinese kin group allows for inheritance and succession by adoptees in the absence of natural descendants. There are two types of adoption: the close and the distant (yin-ji and yuan-ji). Close adoption, which has primacy over distant adoption, is confined to candidates within the wu-fu. Emphasis is on the priority of candidates of close consanguinity, such as brother’s son. Distant adoption outside the wu-fu is not allowed unless a lack of candidates has failed close adoption. When distant adoption becomes an option, it is to be limited to candidates of remote consanguinity.

In many zong-zu, explicit negative sanctions are stipulated against violation of the adoption rules (Ouyang 1992:146). The rationale behind these rules is a concern with the purity of bloodline and the impropriety of having a stranger worship the ancestor. Neo-Confucian scholars, in particular, warned against such impropriety. In “The Spirits,”¹ Chen Chun (1159-1223) admonished that the spirits did not accept sacrifice from persons who had no blood relationship to them and that it was a way to extinguish the lineage for some member to “secretly adopt a child of a completely different surname” (van der Sprenkle 1962:152). The denunciation was apparently directed against a social phenomenon which

¹ 陳淳，《北溪字義·鬼神》.
was a surreptitious undercurrent. In view of its "blatant" impropriety, however, the author was riding a high horse or using hyperbole to drive his point home.

Based on this classical passage, John Chun (1985:96) argues that with the presence of indiscriminate adoptions, the Chinese notion of descent is "logically inconsistent" with blood relationships and that the zong-zu cannot count as a descent group. This entails an examination of the rule of *reductio ad absurdum* that he is using to arrive at his conclusion. According to this rule, a proposition negates itself if and only if it contains a contradiction that is derived from the proposition. Therefore, just because there is adultery, it does not mean that marriage is conjugal infidelity. To commit adultery is to overstep the boundary of marriage, so the contradiction is not derived from the proposition "marriage," and the rule is out of place. Likewise, when a Chinese adopted a child of a different surname surreptitiously, it does not necessarily mean that the traditional Chinese notion of descent is a joke. Chun would have to prove that this notion contains a contradiction in the sense that it sanctions or allows for the practice of indiscriminate adoption. Only then can he affirm its negation and dismiss it as "logically inconsistent." Or else his conclusion is illogical rather than logical.

A unique feature of the Chinese zong-zu is the compilation of written genealogies to keep track of its descent and brotherhood (Meskill 1970:159). It is not without reason that the zong-zu takes its genealogy seriously. First of all, there is the need to organize lineage members into social groups, and by "ascertaining the lineage pedigree and ordering agnatic statuses," the genealogy provides a well-defined hierarchy for that purpose (Lo
1971:306).\(^1\) Besides, the genealogy serves to “rally lineage members around the veneration of ancestors and integrate them into a (descent) group”\(^2\) (Ouyang 1992:142).\(^2\) Thirdly, it helps allocate access to limited resources among lineage members and maintain group solidarity against infiltration by outsiders (Fried 1957). This list goes on with a host of other reasons, including stipulation of lineage rules for behavior, overseeing of individual adoptions, recording of important events and honors, registering of corporate property, and so on. Functionally, the Chinese genealogy goes far beyond what it literally means in English.

It is true that the Chinese genealogy records facts not only biologically but also socially. Typical in this regard is the following eighteenth-century editorial statement for genealogical compilation: “Any lineage member who has committed an abominable crime is to be excluded, and so are those who are reverted to a different surname, adopted from the outside, or have no birth records in the genealogy.”\(^3\) Therefore in certain cases, descent recognition is taken away by striking out the name of a man in the genealogy to cut him and his descendants off from the lineage socially. It is also a common practice for the genealogy to be concerned only with the commendable facts of the lineage and exclude all the bad ones (Taga 1960:11). As if by a poetic license, some genealogies may lavish fanciful honors on the founder of the lineage or trace ancestry to a remote source of high status through an imaginary connection. But on the whole, a genealogy is likely to be a

\(^{1}\) In Huangming Jingshi Wenbian.
\(^{2}\) In Huangming Jingshi Wenbian.
\(^{3}\) "贤系世，辨昭穆。"
\(^{2}\) "尊祖敬宗收族。"
\(^{3}\) "干犯名義者不書，逃入二氏者不書，螟蛉抱養者不書，不詳所出者不書，防亂宗也。"
fairly good statement of historical events (Freedman 1958:70), and the lines of descent, the pedigree, and the records of corporate property are the most reliable (X. Wu 1993:112). Usually lineage members believe implicitly in their history as it is recorded and are prepared to act on that belief.

The main part of a genealogy is the pedigree, which includes a genealogical chart (shi-xi-biao) and the patrilineal lines of descent from the founding ancestor down to his progeny of the present day (shi-xi-lu). Under the name of each descendant are the dates of birth and death, brief information about the person's wife or wives, scholarly honor and official title if any, the location of burial site, the number and names of offspring, and the family name of son-in-law. The genealogy is usually updated every fifteen to thirty years. But its revision goes on continuously, involving the registration of every birth, marriage, death and adoption, the recording of important events and honors that happen to the lineage, and the change of ancestral property.

The lineage head and his assistants take care of the collection of new information, but the updating of an old genealogy is usually entrusted to a scholarly member of the lineage. Genealogical revision and updating are an ongoing ritual that is thematic, revolving around ancestor worship. Upon the birth of a baby, the parents must announce the news to the ancestors at the family altar and the ancestral hall. The entry of a male infant into the genealogy is accompanied by formalized ancestor worship (Chan 1995:36). Ancestor worship is an integral part of the celebrations of a marriage. Accepting a bride into the lineage is admitting her into the worship of its ancestors. The death of a parent means that the family has one more ancestor or ancestress to worship. In the case of an
adoption, the prospective parent must report his intention to the ancestors and notify the lineage head, his assistants, and the whole zu of this fact (Hu 1948:44). It puts the intended adoption under public scrutiny for approval before the child can be entered into the genealogy as an adopted heir. Once again, if membership is granted, it comes with the rights and obligations to worship the lineage ancestors.

To sum up, blood is symbolically multivocal. Its symbolism can be horizontal (brotherhood), vertical (descent), and both. This fact is captured in its contrasts of what is inside, major, and close with what is outside, minor, and distant. As a symbol, blood arrives at a new plane of significance when it is associated with qi, a theoretical construct of Chinese natural philosophy. The Chinese conceptualization of blood emphasizes male qi and assigns a material characteristic to it. Within the zong-zu, descent and brotherhood are translated into social action through the performance of rituals structured thematically around ancestor worship. Genealogical compilation is an integral part of the belief of the zong-zu in ancestor worship and blood relationships.

Symbolically land is many things to the zong-zu as it is to the Chinese family. For both, land is the most important form of property, and there is good reason. Land is the very foundation of family economic life. Without it, a farm can never be settled, nor can its members have a sense of security. For a family to be without land is to be without a life of its own. In traditional China, no other investment was sought after as land was. The zong-zu was often started with the bequeathal of landed property by an ancestor, and the estate was to be inherited by the sons in trust for future generations. As time went by, the male descendants of that ancestor kept staying together on the ancestral land, and a new lineage
was born. Just like the traditional Chinese family, the zong-zu is earth-bound in the sense that it has no existence independent of land.

Land represents wealth that generates power. Secure and permanent, land gives social prestige and influence. The status of a zong-zu is built on its landholdings. Historically, powerful lineages were big landlords, as evidenced by the “Five Great Clans” of the New Territories in south China (Baker 1966) and the gentry lineages in the Yangtze Valley of central China (Beattie 1979; Tanaka 1992). It is the dream of the average zong-zu to come into possession of increasingly more landed property. To augment lineage estates, a descendant has the option of contributing his own wealth to an existing ancestral estate or using it to start an ancestral trust for his descendants. In the first case, the contributor will be accredited with honor, which is considered a crowning achievement by someone with noble ambition (Hsiao 1960:335). In the second case, the individual will become a focal ancestor worshipped by his own descendants.

As a form of wealth, land is unevenly distributed within the zong-zu, which produces internal differentiation of prestige and power. A zong-zu is segmented as many times as there are ancestral estates (Baker 1968:99). The status of a segment is largely dependent on the size of its ancestral estate. Jack Potter (1970a:122-23) has noticed, the points of lineage segmentation that lead to the formation of prestigious branches coincide with the genealogical location of sizable ancestral property. As a rule, the growth of lineage wealth is asymmetric, with some segments owning more collective property than the others. There are also branches without ancestral trusts of their own. Such a branch does not form an exclusive group of collective property or ancestor worship. In internal
politics, it stands little chance of competing against a segment which is more affluent and closely knit, with its members sharing an exclusive trust of landed property. Brotherhood is not always equal.

The asymmetric growth of lineage wealth leads to differential ownership of corporate property. Let us picture a lineage that has persisted for hundreds of years. In the course of time, its eight maximal branches have succeeded differentially. Three of them are highly segmented, because they produced officials, scholar-gentry, and successful merchants who left considerable landed trusts. The other branches, however, had little corporate property, each barely segmented within itself. As a result, there is a discrepancy of wealth, prestige, and power between the two groups of branches. This example is provided by Jack Potter based on his study of the Tangs at Ping Shan (1970a). Hang Mei, the wealthiest segment, controls lineage politics and carries itself as the lineage leader *fait accompli*. Within Hang Mei, there are some thirty ancestral estates, mostly concentrated in one branch, which has six sub-segments, including Tsun Tak Tong, the richest of all. My data from the Tangs of Ping Shan show, descendants of its wealthy branches are so well provided for that they can live comfortably without having to work. In contrast, descendants of the poor segments and branches do not have such luxury. While land stands for wealth, it is also a symbol of asymmetric segmentation and differential ownership of corporate property that characterize the *zong-zu* internally.

In the form of corporate property, land is what turns the *zong-zu* into a corporate group or corporation. The best way to understand it is again by analogy to the family. In the traditional Chinese family, land belongs to all generations (Chao 1983:10). The
individual is only the temporary custodian of the family land; the moment he inherits it from his ancestors, he accepts the obligation to transfer it intact to his descendants, or else he will be condemned in the public eye (Fei & Chang 1945:125). It is reminiscent of the "corporation sole" that Henry Sumner Maine (1861:181) uses to describe the patriarch of the ancient Roman family. Unlike a corporation aggregate, a corporation sole is an individual invested with the qualities of a corporation by a legal fiction. The patriarch enjoys rights in governing the family on its behalf, but he stands under the duty to hold its possessions in trust for future generations. The rights and duties are of the family as much as of his own. "Corporations never die" (ibid.:122). The continuity of the family is not affected by the death and replacement of its individuals, and the corporation is perpetuated by the system of collective property-holding. This is also what the land of the zong-zu symbolizes: a corporate group, patriarchal management, and property inalienability.

The inalienability of lineage land led to considerable accumulation of landholdings in ancestral estates. Chen Han-sheng (1936:37), for instance, estimated that one third of the cultivated land of Guangdong, a province in south China, was lineage land. Based on his 1937 survey of Guangdong, Lang (1946:174) reported that in the majority of the twenty-four cases he studied, the lineage claimed 50% to 70% of the land cultivated by its members, the rest being their private property. In their study of a Hakka village in the New Territories, Hong Kong, Hase and Lee (1992:81) note:

In Sheung Wo Hang, as in many villages of the region, ... the great bulk of the agricultural land -- especially the higher-quality double-crop paddy land -- was owned by the communal and ancestral trusts. In Sheung Wo Hang, 89 percent of the double-crop paddy land was owned by village trusts in 1905, although only 31 percent of the dry cultivated areas high on the hillsides,
much of which would have been opened by individuals, was owned by the trusts.

The high percentage of land held by ancestral estates in this case is no rare exception. Baker (1979:136) has remarked that long-established zong-zu inevitably took more and more land into trusts as the generations went by. For instance, while the Liu lineage of Sheung Shui held over 50% of its land in trust, over 90% of the land in a nearby village was in trust.

All these examples are attributable to the inalienability of ancestral land, but a note of caution is in order. Both Freedman (1966:35) and Potter (1970a:133) have noticed the likelihood of a constant ebb and flow of ancestral estates in small lineages. Along the same line, Osgood (1963:131) had this to say, "It was ... stated that lineage land could not be alienated although perhaps, in reality, this meant that none was known to have been." Now there are some known cases. In a forthcoming study, for example, Patrick Hase and Lee are able to reconstruct the process whereby the Lees of Sheung Wo Hang bought out the ancestral land of rival lineages between 1720 and 1911. Based on the historical vicissitudes of the "great clans" in the eastern New Territories, Hong Kong, Faure (1986:24-41) concludes that lineage trust land was actually alienable.

Despite the fact that the inalienability of land is not absolute, it is greatly encouraged by the importance of ancestral estates to the zong-zu. In a review of this socioeconomic phenomenon, H. F. Schurmann (1959:507) argued that two basic characteristics of property relations in capitalist society were absent from the traditional Chinese conceptualization of property. They are maximal alienability of property and
Identification of property with the individual. In classical Chinese, property is typically termed *tian* ("cultivated land") or *chan* ("productive medium") or *ye* ("extensive material possession"). In the case of landed property, what was emphasized was its productivity instead of ownership. Land was to produce and stay within the family rather than to own and transfer as an item of *Freies Eigentum* (commodity). In fact, "the European distinction between ownership and possession was unknown in China" (Schurmann 1959:509). Although land was freely transferable since the Tang period (618-907), its alienability was suppressed by certain restricting forces. Among them were joint ownership, preemptive purchase by kinsmen, and limited tenure or *dian-mai*, in which a land transaction gave the seller a prolonged grace period to redeem the object. In conclusion, Schurmann held that traditional property concepts in China were far from the concept of *Freies Eigentum* that permitted the rise of a capitalist organization for the whole of society.

Schurmann's analysis deserves credit to the extent that it reveals how easily land might become inalienable in traditional China. The inadequacy of his analysis, however, becomes apparent when we examine how an individual might be worshipped as an ancestor forever in traditional China. To begin with, he must establish an estate with the fortune he had amassed. In order for this to happen, it was necessary that land be alienable as a commodity on the market. Since maximal alienability of land was in his best interest, he embraced it and, in most cases, endeavored to encourage it. Upon his death, the estate he had established was bequeathed as a trust in his name. By so doing, his ownership (not possession) of the land was perpetuated, for legally and officially it always identified with
him as his property. Is there a better way to claim absolute ownership of property? In fact, were it not for alienability of land and identification of property with the individual, there would be no ancestral estates. The elements of capitalist property concept began budding long before there was capitalism. This was also the case in China. In no society is capitalism brought about by simply maximizing the alienability of land and identifying landed property with the individual. The rise of capitalism is due to the adoption of a new mode of production which in turn revolutionizes property relations, not the other way around.

In south China, an ancestral trust is called *tso* or *tong*. Baker (1968:62) has reported that the most distant ancestral grave worshipped by the average Chinese family is that of a great-grandfather. Dedicated to use for the worship of an ancestor, a trust saves the ancestor from extinction of memory by promoting and financing communal grave worship above the family level. Here lies the intimate relationship between ancestor worship and corporate property. Ancestor worship needs a material basis in order to be perpetuated. Akers-Jones remarks:

This formation of the *tso* is ... to ensure that the head of the family can be sufficiently revered by the succeeding generations by means of using the income or some of the income from the property. It also ensures that the family stays together as a group... The first claim [of the income] is for veneration of the common ancestor, that is the religious rites and ceremonies throughout the year, for keeping the [ancestral] temple, if there is one, in a good state of repair, for education, and thereafter any surplus would be divided, if there is a surplus... The custom is to preserve it intact. Those who are at present managing it have to pass it on intact to succeeding generations and not to do this would indeed mean an abrogation of their custom, traditions. (Mills-Owens 1966:29-32)

So ancestral land is symbolic of both blessings for the descendants and obligations to the
forefather. The acceptance of ancestral land by the descendants creates a debt which can only be paid in ritual and filial terms, that is, by offering products of the land as sacrifice to the ancestor and by passing on the land to future generations.

In summary, land is symbolically multivocal. Its symbolism involves two domains: the economic and the social. In the economic domain, land signifies a material basis for the sustenance of such superstructure as the family, the zong-zu, and ancestor worship. In the social domain, land symbolizes a host of principles that shape the status, structure, and property ownership of the zong-zu. Ancestor worship is the link of land between the two domains. It makes land central to the continuity of the zong-zu both materially and ideologically.

2.3 Reality, History, and Models

Reality is never cut and dry. This is also the case with zu organizations, which form a continuum stretching from one extreme where a group of people can be traced to a common ancestor with proven genealogical links, to another extreme where common descent is virtually assumed. Any attempt to divide up this continuum into a set of categories is essentially arbitrary and bound to have border-line cases.

Zheng Zhenman, for instance, has observed that during the period 1368-1911, certain “lineages” in Fujian of south China were not necessarily the result of common descent. In the absence of demonstrated descent, some of them came into being through voluntary association and others through contractual arrangement. Zheng (1992:192-95) traces their historical origins to two sources. One was the Governor’s order that all
households be taxed through the descent group after 1669. To comply with the order, many households that came from outside Fujian organized themselves into kin groups by fabricating common descent or by worshipping legendary beings. The other was the rise of a trend around 1750 in which branches of a surname group committed themselves contractually to the building of a common ancestral hall for the performance of ancestral rites. In either case, it produced a type of kin group that Zheng (1992:191) calls “scattered-residence zong-zu.” Without demonstrated descent, however, the use of zong-zu is a misnomer. What he refers to is actually fictive kinship. The misnomer becomes double jeopardy, when Siu & Faure (1995:7) choose to translate it as “lineage.” In fact, Zheng (1992:151, 197) agrees that these cases are deviations from the zong-zu.

Some scholars are of the opinion that the family is not necessarily the raison d’être of the Chinese zong-zu. They argue for the diffusion of the Chinese zong-zu “from the top down,” that is, from the monarchy through aristocracy and scholar-gentry down to the folk. The opposite view is that the Chinese zong-zu evolved “from the ground up,” that is, with its roots planted in the corporate property created by the joint family. In spite of this theoretical polarity to which I will return later, there is general agreement that the emergence of the zong-zu during the Song period (960-1279) had economic, political, and ideological causes.

After coming into power, the Song rulers decided to abolish the restrictions on individual landholdings that had caused the disintegration of the “esteemed clans.” It

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1 This is known as “liang-hu gui-zong” or “糧戶歸宗.”
2 It is called “tong-ci he-ji” or “同祠合祭.”
3 San-ju zong-zu, “散居宗族.”
opened the floodgate to land amalgamation. Between 1023-40, a huge amount of cultivated land fell into the hands of official-gentry and big landlords (T. Wu 1987:3). According to historical records, all the land in the vicinity of the Song capital belonged to officials and ministers,¹ and half of the nationwide fertile lands were grabbed by people who had cashed in on the lack of landholding restrictions.² Land amalgamation went from bad to worse after AD 1112, when privileges were accorded by imperial decree to official-gentry in tax and corvée (Fan 1988:253). In 1246, even an Imperial Secretary felt obliged to warn the Emperor, “The lowly peasant is losing land every day, and yet his burden of corvée labor remains unchanged; high officials are gaining land every day, but they are free from corvée all the time. The mighty is encouraged to prey upon the weak through the rampage of land amalgamation, leaving peasants little chances of survival in such a situation.”³ (My translation)

Those who suffered most were independent peasants with twenty mu of land or less.⁴ Their tragedy was multifold: high land taxes (collected twice a year), heavy corvée labor, natural calamities, and the pressure of land amalgamation. Bankruptcy was so frequent among them that land transactions reached a historical high (Fan 1988:263). All in all, the Song policies favored a landlord economy instead of peasant economy. But there was no guarantee against the disintegration of a landlord’s estate however large it might

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¹ 《續資治通鑑長編·真宗記》：“近畿寰閭之間，悉大臣資產之地。”
² 《山堂先生群書考索後集·民門，農田》：“謂天為田疇，半為形勢所占者。”
³ 《宋史·食貨志》，殿中侍御史謝方叔奏曰，“...小民田日減而保役不休；大官田日增而保役不及，以此弱之肉強之食，兼并浸盛，民無以遂其生於斯時也。”
⁴ The fifth-grade household (on a scale of nine grades) that formed the majority of lower-middle peasantry during the Song period.
be. The rules of inheritance in traditional China dictated that all sons have an equal share of family property. With the fragmentation of landed property across generations, the descendants of a landlord would be reduced to independent peasants and exposed to the threat of amalgamation. Therefore, traditional wisdom had it that family eminence seldom lasted beyond three generations (M. Yang 1945:149). One way to forestall the doomsday was for the descendants to stay together without dividing up their ancestral land. The rationale behind it is affirmed by a survey that Pan Guangdan (1947:94-96) did of ninety-one most eminent “clans” in Jiaxing, Zhejiang earlier this century, and all of them had indivisible ancestral land. 75% of these “clans” had endured more than five generations, and over 28% of them, more than ten generations. The average was 8.3 generations.

Politically, the Song period is known for its efforts to introduce reforms, first between 1043-1044 and then between 1070 and 1076. The reformers endeavored to adapt the principles of the Confucian state to the new situations of reality. This was especially apparent with Wang Anshi (1021-1086), who tried to strike a balance between the Confucian tradition of rule by moral persuasion and the Legalist practice of rule by power (de Bary 1960:468). These reforms were short-lived due to overwhelming opposition from the Neo-Confucianists. But the modification of civil service examinations by the reformers to recruit talent from the populace survived and produced a new ruling elite, the scholar-gentry. The scholar-gentry initiated the establishment of large estates and formalization of the *zong-zu*. Large ancestral estates provided financial stability for the underwriting of the long and arduous education whereby its descendants might rise to high office. Furthermore, the *zong-zu* organizations served to fill in the political void left by the
moribund aristocracy at the local levels.

Many studies maintain that the zong-zu has its roots in the family system (Hu 1948; Hsu 1963; Baker 1979; Chen & Zheng 1987). If this is true, then the zong-zu system that we know today is a product of secondary formalization during the Song period. The scholar-gentry took over an old institution and turned it into a kinship organization complete with corporate property, ritual unity, focal graves, ancestral halls, and written genealogies. So formalized, the zong-zu became a tool of the new elite to perpetuate its privileges (Fei 1953), exploit opportunities for its economic well-being (Young 1974), and secure its interests in the local power struggle (Beattie 1979).

Ideologically the scholar-gentry followed the footsteps of Neo-Confucianism. They idealized the ancient order and saw a revival of its institutions as the only solution to the problems of their time. Chen Yi (1033-1107), for instance, suggested resuscitating the system of primogeniture and applying it to the family and the zu. By attaching importance to the elevated status of zong-zi (eldest son of the major descent line) in the family or zu, he hoped to ensure that the unity and loyalty of the group have a rallying point (Hu 1948:27). This idea was shared by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), who assiduously annotated the Confucian classics to promote the concepts of filial piety and ancestor worship. It was from this standpoint that he lashed out at Buddhism and Taoism, accusing them of violating loyalty to the family in pursuit of selfish individual salvation. "In deserting his father and leaving his family, the Buddha severed all human relationships. It was merely for himself that he lived alone in the forest... Such is not the mind of the sage, nor is it the mind of a gentleman" (de Bary 1960:533). Following Confucius, he called for "the
Thus there was reason that zong-zu began to thrive during the Song period. The moot point is whether the zong-zu was a descent group. James L. Watson (1982:616-618) argues that the Chinese lineage represents a new social form reflective of the change in the conceptual structure of the Chinese kinship system at that time. It was a change from the principle of alliance to one that stressed descent. After the new elite had fostered an ideology that placed primary emphasis on agnatic relations, the bonds of common descent came to be valued over the need to build alliances with affines. There are two lines of evidence in favor of Watson’s argument. One involves the emergence of a generalized cult of ancestor worship during the Song period that not only went beyond the four ascending generations to reach remote forebears (Johnson 1977:94, 108) but also included graves as a locus of veneration (Ebrey 1978:91). The other is the contrast between the preoccupation of class endogamy by pre-Song aristocracy and the prescription of exogamy by the zong-zu as a strategy to maintain the group boundary (Twitchett 1974; Johnson 1977). All things considered, Watson maintains that the Chinese lineage is a corporate group characterized by ritual unity and demonstrated descent from a common ancestor. But he (1982:615) concedes that historically it applied only to the kin groups of the Song elite, not to those of the rural poor which followed an open, incorporate strategy of recruitment.

In an oracular rejoinder, Denis Twitchett takes exception to the idea that the Song

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1《朱子語類》(12.8): “克己服禮。”
lineage was a decent group. For him (1982:625), it simply means a group of families which chose to live together but whose grouping was based on a choronym or a place of origin rather than common descent. Such an aggregate was certainly too all-embracing to qualify as a descent group. Only in late Song times did the concept of the corporate lineage begin to be accepted, but corporate lineages as an ideal social model did not carry the day until the fourteenth century or probably much later. When they did, they prove to have been modeled after Fan Charitable Estate (ibid.:626). However, this charitable estate was hardly a true lineage organization since it allowed for fictive descent in the first place. So Twitchett identifies the Song corporate lineage with a political innovation of the scholar-gentry on the one hand (1959:101) and with heterogeneous large estates on the other (1962:27). In sum, he proposes a genesis of the zong-zu that puts descent on the back burner.

As it is, the fictive-descent model is based on Twitchett’s studies (1959, 1960) of the charitable estate set by Fan Zhongyan in 1050 to provide for the indigent among his kinsmen. It is Twitchett’s belief that this estate or its like was the precursor of Chinese corporate lineages. But his conviction proves to be misplaced. In recent years, it has come to light that Fan’s was not the first corporate estate ever established in China. The Chens of Yimen, for instance, are known to have built their lineage school with land endowment as early as 890. An essay included in the Chens’ genealogy writes:

The Chens are a long-established zu. With the prevalence of harmony among them comes the cognizance that it needs to be perpetuated with rites and music, and refined with poetry and classics. Accordingly, a study hall that houses dozens of classrooms and thousands of books is built some thirty li to the west, at a place called Dongjia, which was selected because of its scenic and extraordinary landscape. The school is endowed with twenty
qing\(^1\) of land to finance the study hall for all lineage youngsters at the age of seven and above.\(^2\) (My translation)

This genealogy dispels the myth that Fan was the first to leave landed property in trust for his kinsmen (Ouyang 1992:160). What Fan did was to adopt an institution already in place and modify it so that his charitable estate could benefit as many kinsmen as possible. It is germane to add that being orphaned as a small child, Fan was brought up by his maternal family and bore its surname until he had become a *jin-shi*.\(^3\) It explains the deviation of his charitable estate from the average Chinese lineage, which is a strictly patrilineal descent group. Facts, therefore, fly in the face of the assumption and conclusion on which Twitchett’s model is based. But his fictive-descent model has exerted quite an impact on anthropological studies of the *zong-zu*.

In her investigation of social inequality and class differentiation among agnatic brothers, Rubie Watson (1982, 1985) reveals the intriguing evolution of a *zong-zu*. The Tangs of Ha Tsuen that she studied are one of the most populous and powerful lineages in the New Territories. According to the author (1982:70), this lineage was formed by a process that involved the fusion of previously independent households and groups around 1751. Pivotal to this process was the building of an ancestral hall to venerate two lineage-founding fathers, who were agnatic brothers descended from a common ancestor three generations back. It strikes Rubie Watson as peculiar that the lineage excludes the

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\(^1\) 頃. 1 *qing* = 6.67 hectares or 16.5 acres.

\(^2\) 徐鍇《陳氏書堂記》: "(陳氏) 以爲族既庶矣，居既睦矣，當禮樂以固之，詩書以文之，遂于居之左三十里，曰東佳，因勝據奇，是卜是築，爲書樓，堂廡數十間，聚書數千卷，田二十頃以爲游學之資，子弟弱冠以上皆就學矣。"

\(^3\) A high degree of scholarship for passing the national civil service examinations.
descendants from the younger brother of a co-founding ancestor. Moreover, while lineage membership is denied to the descendants of those who did not contribute to the construction of the ancestral hall You Gong Tang, forty-eight individuals who contributed 20 taels of silver each, had special privileges granted to their descendants forever. These facts lead Rubie Watson to conclude that the Ha Tsuen lineage is organized along the line of voluntary associations (1985:34, 171).

Three comments can be made here. First, there seems to be evidence that some type of descent group had existed prior to the fusion of “previously independent” groups in 1751. The author (ibid.:30f) dismisses it in a footnote but not the lingering doubt about the date of fusion and the characterization of groups that she gives. Second, from a native point of view, there is nothing peculiar for the descendants of that “younger brother” to be excluded from the Ha Tsuen lineage since they hold no share in its corporate property and do not worship its founding ancestors. A lineage is a unit of ancestor worship and corporate property. Descent from its founding ancestor (either of its two co-founding ancestors in this case) is a necessary condition for participation in its ancestor worship and partaking of benefits from its corporate property. The progeny of that “younger brother” fails this simple test and is duly excluded. Contrary to what the author (1985:33) tries to suggest, descent has a crucial impact on the membership and boundary of this lineage. Finally, the posterity of that “younger brother” opted not to join in the founding of the lineage, which was an act of volition on their part. But it does not change the fact that despite its origins in selective brotherhood, the Ha Tsuen lineage is a patrilineal kin group built on the principles of demonstrated descent. It is misleading to describe it as organized
along the line of voluntary associations unless the lineage is shown to have recruited non-descendants based on their volition.

As Rubie Watson (1985:32) notices, to finance the building of You Gong Tang, there was a general subscription of all Tangs who were descended from the two founding ancestors. Such contributions were compulsory. On top of these were large donations, an option for wealthy descendants that would entitle them to certain privileges. Is it likely that some of the donors were non-descendants but won a “free ride” of lineage membership with generous contributions? Not if there were the restriction of donors to descendants and the existence of a strong taboo against worshipping a non-ancestor. Exceptions, if there were any in this case, need to be established rather than assumed.

Notwithstanding the lapses described above, Rubie Watson’s work is an important contribution to the study of the class structure of lineage society. The Chinese zong-zu is at once homogenous and heterogeneous (Gallin 1966a, 1966b). It is homogenous because there is a strong sense of oneness derived from the common descent of agnates. It is heterogeneous because internal conflict, social inequality, and class stratification are a common denominator of all zong-zu. Much of the social inequality and class stratification within a zong-zu is due to differential ownership of collective property that arises from asymmetric segmentation over time. Rubie Watson (1985:169-171) identifies three more contributing factors: control over local decision-making, involvement in the market economy, and marital patterns. To this list, we might add differential success in civil service examinations in traditional China. Consequently, zong-zu society is an epitome of class stratification and social inequality at large except that the discordance of reality is
modulated in the rhetoric of agnatic brotherhood.

To a certain extent, the voluntary model that Rubie Watson proposes is shared by Amily M. Ahern (1973). In *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village*, Ahern analyzes how ancestor worship is related to the maintenance of the lineage as a corporate group. The point of departure is the creation and possession of ancestral tablets. Two findings are crucial to Ahern's analysis. They involve a systematic correlation that she found between the transmission of ancestral land and the creation of ancestral tablets on the one hand, and between the creation of ancestral tablets and the obligation of ancestor worship on the other. Based on these findings, Ahern tries to prove that the inheritance of land is the sole justification for ancestor worship and that descent is not crucial to the existence of the lineage. There have been charges that Ahern mishandled and misrepresented her data (Yu 1987:115, 118, 126, *passim*). Let us give her the benefit of doubt and take a look at the data she offers.

The sample consists of seventy-five cases collected from the Ong, Lou, and Ui lineages of Ch'inan, northern Taiwan. After tabulation, a total of sixty-four ancestral tablets are found to be present and continue to be worshipped by the descendants, whereas eleven ancestral tablets are missing. Of the sixty-four ancestral tablets in existence, fifty-one are for ancestors who bequeathed paddy land, and thirteen were for ancestors who died landless. In each of the eleven cases without ancestral tablets, there was no inheritance of paddy land from the deceased. From these data, Ahern argues for a direct correlation between the existence of ancestral land and the creation of ancestral tablets as well as the observance of ancestral worship invoked therewith. But it does not stand up to
close examination.

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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
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Table 1: Correlation Between Lack of Ancestral Land and Lack of Ancestral Tablets, Ong, Lou and Ui Lineages (Source: Ahern 1973:145)

First, as Chun (1985:78-9) points out, in cases where no ancestral land was bequeathed (A & C), the majority of people (13 out of 24) still chose to create ancestral tablets. It clearly suggests that the moral obligation to observe and uphold ancestor worship was greater than whatever economic motives there might be. Ahern’s conclusion is not warranted by what her own data communicate to us. Besides, according to Chen Chung-min (1967:173), the creation of a shrine-style collective ancestral tablet for each generation of the deceased is a common practice in Taiwan. It facilitates ancestor worship and relieves individual households of the burden to create ancestral tablets and family altars. An absence of ancestral tablets at the family altars, therefore, does not necessarily spell an absence of ancestor worship. Thirdly, the sample is a curious mixing of tablets in the ancestral hall and those in family altars. As Li Yih-yuan (1986:53) points out, Ahern (1973:143) apparently does not realize that the ancestral hall and family altars focus on different types of ancestors and tablets, which makes her data skewed and biased.
In order to argue that descent is not crucial to the continuity of the lineage, Ahern appeals to cases of adoption and uxorilocal marriage. It is her belief that these "voluntary associations" testify to the importance of property inheritance over the criterion of descent. But the more one looks into her data, the less she appears to appreciate the basic principles of patrilineal descent. For Ahern (1973:121), when a childless man adopts his brother's son as an heir, it is for the latter to worship the former's tablet "in return for inheriting his property." Little does she realize that the property left by a man who dies heirless is by custom to be taken over by his closest agnatic relative. The adoption, which is not even necessary for property inheritance in this case, is mainly to guarantee the continuity of descent and well-being of the deceased.

In addition, Ahern discusses two other cases. One recounts how a non-kinsman bequeathed all his land to the Ui lineage in exchange for the placement of an incense pot in its ancestral hall to receive worship on the side; the other relates how a Li lineage member traded "descent" for property inheritance by consenting to make a tablet for his commanding officer and provide for him in the afterlife (ibid.:130, 139). In her analysis, Ahern fails to understand the distinction between the worship of an ancestor and the worship of a spirit (Yu 1987:136). In Chinese popular religion, one's ancestor is a ghost to non-kin. Arthur Wolf (1974:173) is very perceptive when he remarks:

The crucial point is that the category "ghosts" is always a relative one. Your ancestors are my ghosts, and my ancestors are your ghosts, just as my relatives are strangers to you, and your relatives are strangers to me.

The non-kin land benefactor was obviously not worshipped by the Uis as an ancestor, nor was the commanding officer by the Li man. A more likely motivation on the part of the Li
man was to do his commanding officer a favor and ensure the provisions of the deceased through observance of certain rites for him. But there was no assurance that Li's descendants would continue to worship that man as a spirit. This also accounts for the hesitations and misgivings in adopting a non-kinsman as an heir even in some difficult situation.

In the cases of uxorilocal marriage cited by Ahern, children inherit both property and surname along the maternal line and in return create an ancestral tablet for the mother. But out of consideration for the man who entered into such a marriage, alteration might be made to this arrangement so that the man could have some heir or heirs to carry on his surname. With this, Ahern (1973:150) tries to show “how people judge obligation to be present here or absent there as a result of their particular interests and goals.” Let us look at a case that Ahern founds “especially illustrative.” It involves the descendants of an Iap who had married an Ong woman uxorilocally. These descendants now live on the land inherited from the Ongs, but they are found to revere Iap ancestors to the exclusion of Ong forebears except for the woman who married the Iap man originally. This very example speaks eloquently against Ahern’s assertion that property inheritance is “the only factor” creating the obligation of ancestor worship and that descent is of little consequence in that regard (ibid.:150-151). It may sound ironical, but an analysis of her data of uxorilocal marriage from a native point of view reveals that when presented in an alternative form, the principles underlying the Chinese zong-zu system are actually reinforced rather than eroded (Y. Li 1986:54).

Ahern is misled by an imperceptive conceptualization of patrilineal descent. It
renders her interpretation of the data from Ch’inan wide off the mark. But more importantly, her basic assumptions that landed property is decisive to ancestor worship and that the significance of landed property is to be interpreted simply in economic terms are questionable. Assuming Ahern is right, a host of questions will arise from her data that need to be addressed. For instance, why is it that a lineage without corporate land perseveres, as in the lower Ongs? How to explain away the fact that these Ongs who are devoid of ancestral landed property, “do manage to keep the ancestral hall in repair by means of periodic assessments on each household” and even attempted to build a bigger, more impressive ancestral hall to fit their growing prosperity in the early 1920s (Ahern 1973:29, 100)? What do the “utilitarian” Lis, Lous, and Uis see in their corporate land that persuades them to maintain its collective ownership instead of dividing it up? And why does the average individual in Ch’inan tend to persist in ancestor worship irrespective of property inheritance? None of these makes sense in Ahern’s model. In fact, Ahern never establishes that the meaning of ancestral land is only or primarily economic. She just assumes it to be the case, as did her precursor Maurice Freedman. Hers is merely a more extreme version of Freedman’s functionalist model that once dominated the study of the Chinese zong-zu (M. Chen 1986:65).

The analysis of the zong-zu did not have a unitary framework until Maurice Freedman formulated one in his Lineage Organization in Southeastern China (1958). It is an accomplishment that deserves to be applauded for its move away from the African model developed by Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes in the early 1940s and for its insight into the structure and functions of Chinese descent groups. Maurice Freedman kept
working at this model until 1966. He eventually came up with a unitary theory of Chinese clan and lineage organizations. Prior to Freedman's 1958 landmark monograph, there had been attempts at a more or less systematic analysis of the Chinese clan and lineage. The literature that resulted from these attempts falls into two broad categories, one being ethnographies, and the other being ethnological studies, as in de Groot (1892), Chen Hansheng (1936), Wittfogel (1938), Pruitt (1945), Lang (1946), Fêng (1948), Fried (1953), and Gamble (1954).

Works of the first category invariably concentrate on an orderly presentation of ethnographic data, interwoven with sociological and anthropological analysis, but none of them attempts to build its subject matter and analysis in such a way as to offer a holistic model for the Chinese descent group. Their ethnological import is by and large confined to one particular aspect of the lineage, including familism as in Daniel Harrison Kulp (1925), rural economy as in Fei Hsiao-tung (1939, 1945), social functions as in Martin C. Yang (1945), equilibrium and change as in Lin Yueh-hwa (1936, 1947), and domestic institutions as in Francis L. K. Hsu (1949). The second category, which features thematic centrality, includes Hu Hsien-chin’s *Common Descent Group in China and Its Functions* (1948) and Morton Fried’s essay (1957). Both authors endeavor to outline the defining characteristics of Chinese descent groups and their variation across the board. In the case of Hu, her major concern is to give a relatively complete picture of the common descent group in terms of social organization, membership, ideology, as well as multifunctionality. She virtually covers all the structural elements that constitute what we would call a corporate descent group today. But without the benefit of a holistic perspective that we
owe to Maurice Freedman, Hu’s analysis lacks a unitary framework to tie up its loose ends into an integrated and stimulating account. In spite of this, she (1948:98) is the first to observe that there was a correlation between a weak government and strong lineage organizations in traditional China.

Morton Fried’s “The Classification of Corporate Unilineal Descent Groups” marks the first attempt to introduce lineage theory into the study of Chinese descent groups. It argues that China has both clans and lineages, with their main distinction consisting in the way that the descent principle is incorporated. In clanship, descent is stipulated, whereas in lineage organization, it is demonstrated. The function of demonstrated descent is to define membership and control recruitment as well as access to the resources of communal property in general and land in particular. Moreover, the evolution of the lineage from the egalitarian clan is a process of intensified stratification of social organization and growing parsimony of common descent. This is reflective of Fried’s evolutionist perspective of society. Otherwise, his definition of the Chinese lineage or zong-zu as a kin group characterized by both “corporation” and “unilineality” but differentiated by three variables (ranking, stratification, and descent) is basically in tune with Maurice Freedman’s concept.

Freedman’s model represents nothing short of a revolutionary breakthrough, which is achieved by allowing for analysis of the zong-zu at various functional levels within a single paradigm. To put it in his own words (1958:v, vii), it is “a model of structures” for studying the functions of the Chinese lineage as a “unilineal kinship organization in a differentiated society and a centralized political system.” Two points are underscored in this statement. One is its proposition that the Chinese lineage does not exist in an
acephalous and homogenous society, or for that matter, multiplies itself infinitely through symmetric segmentation, as in the African scene; the other is its view of the zong-zu as a multi-faceted system that can be analyzed in functional terms. They succinctly describe the basic features of the model that Freedman eventually built.

Within this model, the corporate nature of the zong-zu takes the form of land as collectively-owned property, that is, as an estate rather than a territorial dominion. The corporate land is transmitted from generation to generation according to the rules of descent. It is also the life-line of the zong-zu, whose very status, power, existence, and continuity depend on its possession of such property. To depict the variation of lineage organizations in China, Freedman creates a scale of increasing structural complexity from A to Z solely on the basis of progressive accumulation of communal land. In A, a low level of corporate property is accompanied by a rudimentary segmentation and a lack of social differentiation, while in Z, the opposite is true (1958:132). Landed property is structurally deterministic, for the zong-zu is literally built “from the ground up,” namely, on the establishment and ownership of corporate land that began with the joint family. In this way, Freedman is able to use the functional significance of corporate property as the fulcrum for examining other aspects of the zong-zu, including lineage organization, social relationships, power structure, and ancestor worship.

Parallel to the centrality of corporate land in the life of the zong-zu is the prevalence of utilitarian rationalism in the behavior of its members. Implicit in Freedman’s model is the belief that the significance of corporate land is to be interpreted in economic terms. Class differentiation is coterminous with access to the economic benefits of
corporate property, which, in turn, shapes social relationships. The rich leave ancestral trusts in order to benefit their descendants economically, and the poor stay within the lineage because it offers some economic incentive in the forms of prior tenancy and reduced rent. Ancestor worship is a product of the endowment of ancestral property, and there is an "intimate connexion" between the building of ancestral halls which are endowed with landed property and lineage segmentation which creates units and sub-units of ancestor worship (1958:129). By the same token, descent is secondary to the economic concerns of the zong-zu and its members. In fact, the criterion of descent is not crucial to the existence of the zong-zu (1966:22). All in all, individual members of the zong-zu are preoccupied with economically rational activity in order to maximize their material gain and social prestige.

By building his model and theory on a utilitarian type of functionalism, Maurice Freedman distanced himself from Radcliffe-Brown and his successors, in whose theory the structural need of society to maintain and perpetuate itself, not the individual desire to profit, was deterministic. The decline of structural functionalism after the mid-fifties left a void in which Freedman's model was more than welcomed by scholars of Chinese society. Its wide influence has made itself felt in the anthropological and historical writings on the zong-zu, as in Gallin (1966a), Baker (1968, 1979), Potter (1968, 1969, 1970a), Brim (1970), Pasternak (1972), Ahern (1973), James Watson (1975), Rubie Watson (1985), and others.

Nevertheless, Freedman's interpretation of the zong-zu has not gone unchallenged. In a review of Freedman's *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (1966),
Myron L. Cohen took issue with the assertion that lineages differed from clans simply in terms of presence or absence of an economically significant estate. He (1969:168) asked, “What is the point of distinguishing two types of agnatic groupings when they are doing pretty much the same thing?” As if in support of Cohen, Potter (1970a:127) reported that there were also lineages in China that owned little or no corporate property, thus limiting their functions to perfunctory ritual and their cohesion to diffuse solidarity. But it was Morton Fried who confronted Freedman with the question of descent. Citing evidence from the literature and his own field experience, he (1970:31) pointed out, “The difference between demonstrated and stipulated descent does not merely constitute a major source of structural difference between lineages and clans but also has a frequently visible behavioral component.”

There were other criticisms as well. After his assumption that the worship of a focal ancestor was always associated with the presence of an ancestral hall was repeatedly proven wrong, Freedman (1966:131, 1967:88) advanced an alternative theory, allowing the descendants to manipulate the feng-shui of an ancestral grave to individualize fate and “force their ancestors to convey good fortune.” Again, it turned out not to be supported by ethnographic data and field studies (Y. Li 1976:332). Finally, from a comparative perspective, Francis L. K. Hsu (1963) painted a very different picture of the zong-zu. It compelled Freedman to admit, “Harmony and conflict are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary they imply each other” (1966:159). This is well said, but with its emphasis on competition and conflict, the utilitarianism that is built into Freedman’s model clearly does

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1 A more detailed discussion of feng-shui is included in 8.2.
not permit such a balanced analysis.

Utilitarianism actually does not take one very far in the analysis of the zong-zu. With regard to the origins of corporate property, Freedman (1966:50-51) theorizes that it may be initiated in three different ways. Either the estate remains unpartitioned, with the eldest son assuming the management after the death of father, or a special portion of an estate is set aside before the partition, or the sons contribute to such a portion from their individual shares after the partition. Yet, none of these three ways is very “rational” from the viewpoint of the utilitarian individual that Freedman assumes every descendant to be. Then, what makes the agnatic descendants choose to act against their personal interests? Why is corporate land the ideal mechanism whereby common interests are represented? How is it that such common interests are not asserted with affines or non-kinsmen? Why can corporate property be sustained and grow against the individual selfish pursuit? Above all, what is so special about land that it can only be shared and inherited by agnatic descendants? Freedman has no answers to these questions. It is simply taken for granted that from common descent flows an eagerness to share common interest in property. Economically this assumption is not very rational. Empirically, the utilitarian value that Freedman attaches to corporate property is not as explanatory as is assumed.

The latest round of criticisms against Freedman’s “from the ground up” model is launched by John Allen Chun with a “from the top down” model, which is based on the historically documented evidence he has synthesized. To begin with, Chun (1996:431) points out, an ahistorical functionalism cannot explain the interplay between ideology and practice that was responsible for the evolution and institutionalization of the Chinese
descent group. It leads him to look into classical texts involving the rise of ancestral rites with aristocracy in remote historical times, the adoption of surnames by commoners after 221 B.C., the dissemination of elite practices and ideological influences through two conceptual revolutions during the subsequent historical periods, the widespread popularity of written genealogies during the early Ming (1368-1644), the initial discussion of the “first ancestor”¹ in the early Qing (1616-1911), and the appearance of large-scale kin estates in the seventeenth century. In the course of this textual excursion, Chun (1996:436-37) endeavors to prove that the zong-zu is the product of a cultural rationale which originated with the ruling class and did not emerge as “a new ancestral cult” among the populace until about 200-300 years ago. Furthermore, this cultural rationale, which has nothing to do with the Western sense of “descent,” must be sought in the context of meaning that was colored solely by the ideology of the Chinese elite.

The top-down argument is not entirely new, for it bears close resemblance to the underlying assumption of Twitchett’s model and its derivatives (Dardess 1974; Dennerline 1981). What is new is the claim that discussion of the “first ancestor” did not appear until the 17th century. This claim is based on various citations from the works by Patricia Ebrey (1986) and Kai-wing Chow (1988). Chun is by no means amused when Ebrey and Chow find it necessary to issue a disclaimer of any consensus with his interpretation of the citations from their works. In fact, Ebrey (1996:441) announces:

To the contrary, we show not only that ancestral rites to first ancestors existed before scholars authorized them but also that this idea was discussed rather frequently in the Sung [Song], Yuan and early Ming periods.

¹ Literally “generational ancestor” or shi-zu (“世祖”).
True, her book (1986:44-53) gives specific evidence of descent groups in the 12th to the 14th centuries, each with great genealogical depth and established rites to worship its first ancestor. Elsewhere she points out that the early writings by the leading scholars of Neo-Confucianism were used to approve the construction of halls for sacrifice to first ancestors after the 11th century. Let us quote from her discussion of Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals*, a work of the twelfth century (Ebrey 1991:159):

The *Family Rituals* encouraged annual grave rites by including liturgies for them in the chapter on sacrifices. Moreover, in the first chapter it advised endowing ancestral rites by regularly setting aside some land at times of family division. The *Family Rituals* specified that such land should be used for the regular hall-based ancestral rites for four generations, then later for the rites at graves. The fields set aside to support ancestral rites were to be legally registered as inalienable, permanent property.

Furthermore, in a full discussion of “first ancestors,” Chow (1994:103-5) reveals how Neo-Confucianists of the 13th century reinterpreted the concept of *bie-zi* (heir alternate) and conceptualized “first ancestor” as “a person who established himself in a new locality and fathered a group of descent” or “the first ancestor to gain government office.” In contrast, the 17th and 18th centuries witnessed a wide variety of schools of thought that shared no consensus on the subject (Chow 1994:188-201). It is surprising that someone could sensibly regard their diverse views as a source of formative impact on the rise of “a new ancestral cult.” John Clammer (1996:441), who sees some merits in Chun’s approach, also regrets that his model is an example of “paradoxical ahistoricity” because it discounts the existence of popular practice.

Much as I share Chun’s insistence that the ancestral cult is of central importance to
Chinese kinship organization, his conception of ancestor worship is empirically self-defeating and theoretically sterile. Of course, the *zong-zu* is held together by something more powerful than birth. It is ancestor worship rather than birth that ultimately sanctions rights and obligations, conditions behavior toward desired ends, links the present social order with a sacred past, and perpetuates the existence of the *zong-zu*. Be that as it may, Fustel de Coulanges (1874:52) is right when he says that religion did not create the family itself but gave the family its rules. Likewise, ancestor worship did not create the lineage itself. If we regard ancestor worship as the religion of the *zong-zu*, the continuity of this religion is logically contingent upon the existence of the *zong-zu*. To perpetuate the worship of an ancestor, it is necessary that his descendants stay together as a corporate group and that there is always someone of his blood to perform the rites. In Chun’s model, however, ancestor worship is autonomous, carrying on independently of blood relationship and corporate property.

By manipulating textual evidence from the classical works, Chun (1996:432) declares that the ancestral cult had existed over two millennia before it was adopted by the *zong-zu* in the seventeenth century. For him, this late emergence of the corporate descent group establishes the autonomy of the ancestral cult. It never seems to have occurred to him that the family which had sustained the ancestral cult from the time beyond memory is a corporate group *par excellence*. Nor does he stop to think that there can be no ancestor worship without the existence of some corporate group.

Turning to the issues of descent, Chun (1996:433) argues that the transference of *zong* is really the transmission of certain ritual obligations. But this process has little to do
with descent rules, a point he (1996:438) stresses as follows:

While I agree with Sangren (and Scheffler) that the existence of descent rules in no way implies the existence of a descent group, it follows that the constitution of a localized lineage is less a product of descent rules per se than a product of the effect of those rules that define its nature as a local organization within which the descent principle may serve strategic functions.

Boiled down, Chun tries to argue that descent rules are just an "idiom" in terms of which other relations are conceived. Or as Sangren (1996:445) puts it, they are no more than "manifestations of discursive imagination." The problem is that descent rules are very real at the levels of both ancestor worship and property inheritance. Given the interpretation of zong as "the transmission of ancestral rites and obligations," one is obliged to ask how. If such transmission, which is so important to the zong-zu, cannot afford to be arbitrary or "discursive" or "imaginary," then it will entail the application of descent rules that Chun tries so hard to dismiss.

Scheffler (1973:756-58) has voiced regret over the failure of many anthropologists to distinguish between the kinship system and the descent system. While the kinship system is ego-centric, the descent system is reckoned on genealogical connections to a common ancestor. David Yen-ho Wu (1975:88-9) correctly points out that in the case of traditional Chinese society, the descent system receives "great emphasis" even though it does not rule out frequent interaction among kinsmen within the framework of the kinship system. His observation is in line with what Murdock (1949:180-82) has found. Cross-culturally, the relative efficacy of descent in determining the form of kinship terminology is statistically greater than either marriage rules or residence patterns. Descent rules are
important in the study of the zong-zu because they have primacy over any other form of association of persons (e.g. marriage or residency) in ordering the transmission of religious obligations as well as corporate property. To pit ancestor worship against descent rules is self-defeating.

The significance of descent also consists in the politico-jural role that it plays in the relationships of the zong-zu with society at large. Kinship serves to harmonize the internal familial relationships of the zong-zu. It neutralizes the tendency to harden distinctions in social status when the lineage structures authority rigorously along the descent line and the generation ladder. When the lineage deals with the outside world, however, descent carries maximal weight. Because he is the most senior member of the kin group, a lineage head has the jural role of its sole representative. For the society, he represents a corporate descent group in relation to other social groups. Descent is jurally recognized both inside and outside the lineage. In contrast, the gods that ancestor worship creates for each lineage are just ghosts to the outside world. The social status of a lineage does not depend on how piously it worships its ancestors but how successfully it functions as a corporate descent group. For a model of the zong-zu to reject the relevance of descent is to reject a whole area of study and analysis. In terms of productivity, Chun's model amounts to a step backward rather than forward even when it is compared with Maurice Freedman's.

Chun dismisses descent rules as idealistic and falsely mechanical in order to establish that the zong-zu was a political innovation trickling down from the top. It makes him oblivious to "the possible practical rationality" of the rise of the zong-zu (Huang 1996:444) and to the voices of those "who in everyday contexts live out and structure
their lives in the context of corporate kin groups” (Clammer 1996:441). In short, Chun
turns a blind eye to the little tradition of Chinese culture. Robert Redfield (1956:70)
defines the little tradition of a culture as one of “the unreflective many” or one that “works
itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities.”
It, however, is a source of inspiration for the great tradition that is consciously cultivated
and handed down by the philosopher, theologian, and literary man. Indeed, the ethics of
the Old Testament arose out of tribal peoples, and great epics have been born out of
elements of traditional story-telling by many people (ibid.:71). Confucius also called
himself a “transmitter” of ancient ideals (Fung 1937:62). Among these ideals was filial
piety, which had existed among the folk before Confucius elevated it to “the virtue of all
virtues” and incorporated it into the institution of family that he endorsed. It was to
become the cornerstone of ancestor worship that sustained the continuity of the family and
zong-zu systems in traditional China.

Disrobed of its Confucian ritualism, the zong-zu is but a product of the Chinese
family system. As such it has its roots in the little tradition as much as in the great tradition
of Chinese culture. Recently Chen and Zheng (1987) report a case study in which
spontaneous filial piety and fraternal love made the Zous of Dongtou Village form a
harmonious extended family that comprised five generations and lasted over a hundred
years. All this occurred independently of the great tradition. There was no ancestral hall
or written genealogy or other formalization with Confucian ritualism. Living in matsheds
for generations, the Zous had little classic schooling. Life was a constant struggle against

1 福建蒲城縣洞頭村鄭氏家族.
dearth and poverty. To eke out a living, for instance, it was necessary for the Zous to supplement rice farming with income from sideline occupations, including sales of firewood and charcoal that had to be carried to the market on shoulder poles.

Each time the Zou brothers went as a group. Whoever was the first to get on the road always picked the heaviest load. When it was time to stop for breath, the others would vie to take over his shoulder pole.... At every meal, a certain proportion of the steamed rice was prepared from a crude kind of rice, and the rest was made of a more refined grain. Those who ate first invariably chose the crude kind of steamed rice. No one would touch the more refined steamed rice until it was the only choice left. The leftovers from every meal were of this kind of steamed rice. The Zous saw it as a virtue to work hard and live modestly. This tradition had been handed down from generation to generation, and every descendant endeavored to emulate it (Chen & Zheng 1987:328). (My translation)

The authors also attribute the rise of this lineage to two more reasons: environmental pressure and frontier conditions. After comparing the Zous with the formalized lineages in Fujian, they cannot but conclude that spontaneous filial piety and fraternal love among the lowly peasants proved more powerful than empty moral teachings from the elite. In the case of the Zous, the seven sons of the second generation set a good example to follow. Their genuine respect of the parents and sincere love for one another in the face of hardships started a tradition that shaped the behavior of the coming generations. It was a dream that the wealthy formalized lineages had craved but failed to fulfill all too often. After the communists came into power with a hostile policy against the landlord gentry in 1949, these lineages were disintegrated overnight. The Zous were peasants who held out as a single descent group until 1959, when they lost their corporate land to Mao's movement of collectivization to establish "people's communes." Ten years later the Zous divided up the rest of their collective property. Their lineage
probably survived the longest in Mainland China under Mao. The studies of the *zong-zu* have every reason to take account of its roots in the little tradition of Chinese culture.

In recent years, lineage organizations are staging a comeback in parts of Mainland China. Again they do not model themselves after the Confucian ritualism that Chun presents to us. There is no building of ancestral halls, or recompilation of written genealogies, or resurrection of ancestral rituals at gravesites. Mayfair Yang (1996:447) characterizes these lineage organizations as *counterelite* and *counterstate*, emphasizing the spontaneous as well as political nature of their resurgence. Indeed, the *zong-zu* is not necessarily a monopoly of the elite even as a political tool, and it never was. It exists both in the great and little traditions of Chinese culture that are interdependent. To use Redfield’s analogy, there are always two “currents of thought and action, ever flowing into and out of each other” (1956:72). We may well say metaphorically, one is “from the ground up,” and the other, “from the top down.”

In what follows, I will present a case study of the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, a time-honored lineage in the New Territories, Hong Kong. Within this lineage, there is a systematic overlap of social and genealogical relations. It contradicts the aforementioned models in which the *zong-zu* is free of biological roots, and blood relationship is merely an idiom by which political, economic, or religious relations are talked and thought about.

This study will analyze its data within the framework of a cultural approach, under which there is a symbolic system and a normative system. At the symbolic level, this study rejects Chun’s thesis that the ancestral cult is autonomous. Instead, the Tang lineage is found to be based on a set of values and beliefs that have evolved from blood, land, and
ritual. At the normative level, we find rules for behavior that can be subsumed in terms of blood tie, divine land ownership, and ancestor worship. They set the framework for our functional analysis of the adaptive strategies developed by the Tang lineage in its efforts to become a dynamic part of modern society. As will be shown, such analysis is capable of providing answers to the questions that have bedeviled Freedman’s model and its utilitarian thinking.

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are a lineage that was formalized with ritual unity, demonstrated descent, and corporate property as early as 1525. But such formalization is not the only way that the zong-zu is developed. Each culture has a great tradition and a little tradition. Since these two traditions share the same set of fundamental values and beliefs, a cultural approach has room for taking account of both. Based on the known ethnographic evidence, this case study subscribes to the conviction that the zong-zu has a polygenesis in the two different traditions of Chinese culture. Not only is the so-called monogenesis of the zong-zu a myth, but in Chapter 4.4, it will be shown that the formalization of the zong-zu in the great tradition is polygenic as well.
CHAPTER 3
GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Hong Kong is a free port that thrives on its links with the global market (Howlett 1996:48). However, despite its popular image of skyscrapers rising in breathless density, signboards vying for the space of a crowded sky, and streets throbbing with the hustle-bustle of traffic, stalls, people, and tourists, Hong Kong is not all commercial and metropolitan. Apart from its twin-city urban center that sits across Victoria Harbor, the former Crown Colony also comprises an archipelago of some 236 islands and islets most of which are uninhabited, and the mainland New Territories much of which is still rural.

3.1 Lung Yeuk Tau and the Dragon Hill

Situated in the northeast of the New Territories is a rural country called Lung Yeuk Tau. Only about a mile to its west lies the Fanling Railway Station, the center of a rapidly-growing town that boasts of high-rise residential buildings, industrial estates, government complexes, shopping malls, traditional markets, and beautiful temples. But there was a time when its surrounding hills and mountains were the ground of a colonial-style sport described by Rudyard Kipling in From Sea to Sea (1898) as the “Fanling Hunt.” Equipped with the full paraphernalia of cap, horn, stirrup-cup, gun, and imported English hound, the “gentleman hunter” chased the civet cat and the South China Red Fox
across the stony wastelands, eager to make a kill (Morris 1988:59). It is an epitome of what was happening on a broader scale of history.

The early development of Hong Kong as a Crown Colony was a trilogy of colonial expansion by opium trade, war, and conquest. It started with the crackdown of the Chinese government on drug infiltration in 1839 and the response of the British with gunboats. After China was defeated in the First Opium War, Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain by the Nanking Treaty in 1842. It forced open the door of China to a century of humiliation, involving repeated loss of sovereignty over its territories. The Convention of Peking that ended the Second Opium War in 1860, added Kowloon and Stonecutters Island to the new Crown Colony on what began as a perpetual lease but turned absolute cession subsequently (Endacott 1958:110). Finally there came the lease of the New Territories for ninety-nine years, extracted by the British in 1898 to ensure “the proper defense and protection” of the colony (Sayer 1975:130). With this, Lung Yeuk Tau became a part of Hong Kong instead of Xinan County, which remained under Chinese jurisdiction thereafter.

Literally the “Land of the Jumping Dragon,” Lung Yeuk Tau is home to the Tangs, a Chinese lineage steeped in history and tradition. Harold Ingrams (1952:160) was so impressed by the beautiful scenery and rich folklore of Lung Yeuk Tau that he called it “a fairy-tale country.” But its original name was the “Land of Dragon Bones.”¹ After the Tangs came here towards the end of the Yuan period (1206-1368), they changed the name

¹ The original name was “Lung Kwat Tau” or “Lung Wat Tau” (the Land of the Sleeping Dragon).
and brought the “dragon” back to life. The inspiration was derived from the undulating spine of five adjacent peaks that rise into the southern sky of the area. If you look at its silhouette long enough, with a mind open to imagination, a vision will be animated that likens the peaks to the humps of a dragon running aquiver. Delighted at your perceptiveness, the natives of Lung Yeuk Tau would tell you, the hillock to the west is a pearl that the dragon has spat out of its gaping mouth. The whole scene is dubbed “Yellow Dragon Spits Pearl.” Notwithstanding the color epithet, the five rolling peaks are actually covered by a lush green of trees and bushes all the year round. Collectively, they bear the name of Lung Shan, or the “Dragon Hill.”

For the Chinese, the dragon is a sacred creature that governs wind and water. By analogy, it is compared to a meandering terrestrial mountain. Moreover, like its celestial counterpart, the mountain is believed to have an artery or “dragon vein” in which an invigorating force circulates. Where this force congregates or gushes, life will flourish. Such a spot is called a “dragon lair” (Miaomo 1993:72). Good feng-shui exists only where a “dragon lair” or “dragon vein” can be located. This, by the way, is no easy task. There is a multitude of topographic and astronomical variables to reckon with. Armed with a geomantic compass, the feng-shui expert has to take numerous bearings on the static and dynamic features of a site and submit them to abstruse calculations before he can decide whether the site is a “dragon lair” or where the “dragon vein” actually lies (de Groot 1897: 949; Eitel 1873: 22-23). Once found, such a site will presumably bring fortune, prosperity, and good health to its occupants as well as their descendants.

For all the mystery surrounding it, feng-shui arose from the simple observation that
people are affected, for better or worse, by the surroundings, some of which are more propitious than the others (Rossbach 1983:2). Lung Yeuk Tau is blessed in this regard, and the natives interpret its natural endowment in terms of geomantic benefits and potentials. It is more than a choice of words. Behind the thinking of feng-shui is a host of cognitive principles that grew out of the experience of adaptation to physical environments (Sun 1980:23). They guide the Chinese to respect nature by harmonizing man-made structures with land configuration (Needham 1971:61; W. Fan 1992:36) and by managing resources in such a way that they can be sustained (Anderson & Anderson 1973:132).

Good feng-shui is auspicious because it is life-enhancing. But auspiciousness is as auspiciousness does. From the long history of their settlement in Lung Yeuk Tau, the Tangs have learned one more thing: even in this fairy-tale land, nature imposes certain restrictions on human exploitation. A case in point is the village of Tsung Hom Tong that their ancestors built on the hillock in front of the dragon’s gaping mouth. Picture the hillock as a gem produced by the “Dragon Hill” with the essence of its invigorating force and one will understand why geomantically it is supposed to have the best feng-shui in the area. So when illness and bad luck struck the residents of their newly-built village, the Tangs were perplexed.¹ It finally dawned on them that excessive exposure to feng-shui was harmful because it was abusive. Good feng-shui was like a natural resource, and there was a limit to what was the right amount for a proper and fair share. The Tangs eventually abandoned the village, which was occupied by the inhabitants of Shung Him Tong later.²

¹ Oral tradition at Lung Yeuk Tau has it that the illness had all the symptoms of leprosy, a lethal disease in traditional China.
² Speaking of the recent decline of Shung Him Tong, informants from Lung Yeuk Tau
The fairly tale of Lung Yeuk Tau would be incomplete without the Phoenix Water, a stream which skirts the western boundary of the country from the south and flows into the Indus River in the north. The couplet most commonly seen on the household doors of Lung Yeuk Tau is one that extols the picturesque scene of the Dragon Hill standing in the back and the Phoenix Water running in the front. Like the Dragon, the Phoenix is an auspicious animal in Chinese mythology. The propitious “presence” of both in the landscape of Lung Yeuk Tau is a symbol of superb feng-shui, a union of blessings, and a source of pride. In fact, the pride is shared by the people who live in the vicinity of Lung Yeuk Tau as well. Written in huge Chinese characters and posted on the gate of a village, this couplet is one of the first things that catches the eye of a passenger when the train is pulling into the Fanling Railway Station.

To one’s disappointment, the Phoenix Water is now in a sad state of nearly complete dryness as are many tributaries of the Indus River. Seldom is there water enough to cover their riverbeds. The only difference is that the Phoenix Water has an independent catchment area, the Dragon Hill. According to the local people, the Dragon Hill has mysteriously ceased to provide good storage and catchment of water ever since several 50-meter 400-kilowatt electrical cable towers were erected near its top in 1990. All the waterfalls, ponds, and streams are gone without a trace. For the natives, it is a sign of maimed feng-shui. Religious rituals called tan fo were performed to contain the damage, and the government had to pick up the tab. But what was done to the Dragon Hill cannot

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1 “後擁龍山，前環風水．”

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be undone. As a result, the Phoenix Water is reduced to a phantom of what it used to be. The contemporary people of Lung Yeuk Tau often have to choose between modernization and tradition, between the needs of society and their respect for nature. The choice or compromise they make between the two may have long-term consequences that cannot be foreseen.

3.2 The Settlement Patterns

Lung Yeuk Tau is also a cover term for a group of eleven villages, five walled and six unwalled. Built by the Tangs over centuries, most of them nestle at the lower northern slope of the Dragon Hill, and the others sit on raised areas at a stone's throw further north. Of the five walled villages, Lo Wai is the oldest, with a history of over 600 years. It is followed by Ma Wat Wai, Tung Kok Wai, Wing Ling Wai, and Kan Lung Wai in the descending order of historical age (AMO 1978:49). We may think of an unwalled village or tsuen as an overflow from a walled village or wai. The interval between two consecutive wai averaged about 90 years in Lung Yeuk Tau, with the last one completed in 1744. There is reason to assume that after the building of a wai, its resident population started to grow continuously. As the grandchildren and great-grandchildren multiplied and married to produce their offspring, no room was left in the old wai. It resulted in the overflow of its population to a nearby site, usually in fewer than 90 years.

Therefore, Tsz Tong Tsuen, the first unwalled village, is estimated to be about the same age as Lo Wai. By the same token, Ma Wat Tsuen is dated approximately as old as Ma Wat Wai. However, there appeared to be some delay in the building of Wing Ning Tsuen so that it is much more recent than its counterpart Wing Ning Wai or Tung Kok.
Photo 2: (Left) The Gateway of Lo Wai

Photo 3: (Right) A Blockhouse of Kan Lung Wai
Wai. Wing Ling Tsuen is probably contemporaneous with Kan Lung Wai, the last walled village (AMO 1978:90). During the two and a half centuries after the completion of work on the last wai, three more unwalled villages sprang up at Lung Yeuk Tau, namely, San Uk Tsuen, Siu Hang Tsuen, and Siu Hang San Tsuen.

Whether walled or unwalled, the Tang village traditionally features a layout of single-story, green-brick, gray-tiled houses in rows or terraces. The adjacent houses in a row or terrace share a common wall. Each house is rectangular, about 13 feet in width and three to four times as long as it is wide. The front door opens into a tiny entrance courtyard of 25 to 35 square feet, which is left open to the sky or partially covered over by an outspread roof. Known as tin tseng or “skywell,” it functions as a kitchen as well as a washhouse. The house proper stands on a slightly elevated ground with a door in its front wall and a window in its back wall. The space within the house proper is so partitioned that the back third forms a master bedroom with a cockloft on top of it, whereas the rest serves as the main room. Open to the pine rafters, the main room can be ceilinged with planks to fully extend the cockloft into a second “floor,” accessible by a ladder. Nowadays, many of the traditional houses are rebuilt as modern three-story villas on the old sites.

Wai or “encircled village” has an enclosure that assumes the form of a surrounding wall or building. The five wai of Lung Yeuk Tau belong in the first type, each being enveloped by a high brick-wall about two to four feet thick at the base. The use of a high wall in civilian architecture was a privilege for nobility or high officials in traditional China. Because of their royal blood, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were allowed this privilege.
starting with the construction of their first village Lo Wai in the late fourteenth century. In
the past, a wai was very much of a fortress. There were a solid gateway equipped with
wooden bars and iron bolts, blockhouses, and portholes in addition to a drawbridge and a
moat filled with water. The walled village was a product of the frontier conditions
encountered by the early settlers of this region. Apart from their security concerns about
unfriendly neighbors, robbery, and feuds in general, piracy in particular posed a serious
threat to them.

It is well-known that from the fifteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, the
Chinese coast was constantly harassed by the twin evils of smuggling and marauding (Fok
1984:20; Hayes 1983:27). The problems were often attributed to wo-kou or “Japanese
piracy.” This may be true in terms of their historical origins, but with the passage of time,
more and more marauders were found to be Chinese who had nothing to do with
smuggling for Japanese illegal traders or their Portuguese successors (Siu 1984:8). Instead
of bootlegging, these “pirates” looted towns and villages, causing serious destruction to
local economy.¹ To complicate the picture, there were also attacks launched by Ming
loyalists against the Qing rulers, as in Zheng Jian’s assault on the government troops in
1678 (Lo 1959:138-41).² But most attacks that occurred were of a commandeering rather
than political nature. In a 1646 pirate raid, Lung Yeuk Tau was besieged by Chen Yao and
his pirate gang for nine days. The Tangs were able to hold the ground because of their

¹ In XXZ 1819, Vols. XXII and XXIII. Among the most notorious privates of the early
periods were Wang Shiqiao, Lin Feng, Li Kaiqi, and Liu Xianglao.
² A subordinate of Zheng Chengong, the leader of Ming loyalists, Zheng Jian retreated to
Guangdong instead of Taiwan, and later his troops used Lantau Island as a hideout.
village fortifications. The following year saw another wave of pirate raids led by Li Wanrong. It terrorized the whole region and seriously affected the livelihood of Lung Yeuk Tau.¹

**Within a wai,** rows of houses look into the same direction as the gateway. At Lung Yeuk Tau, they are arranged into a square or rectangular block of residence that is bisected by an axis and criss-crossed by a grid of lanes and alleys. Between two parallel rows of houses is a gap of about five to six feet. In order for two pedestrians to pass each other in the narrow alley, they have to walk sideways. The central lane is the widest, measuring up to eight or nine feet. The lanes and alleys of a wai are paved with stone slabs. The same is true of a tsuen, except that its rows of houses do not necessarily face the same direction. When they do, as in Tsz Tong Tsuen, we have a “regular tsuen” vis-à-vis an “irregular tsuen” where they do not but stand in a cluster, as in Ma Wat Tsuen. So all three types of nucleated village layout exist in Lung Yeuk Tau.

Like many rural Chinese settlements, the villages of Lung Yeuk Tau have an order derived from *feng-shui*. It is an order that combines deliberate manipulation of space with an environmental awareness and a regard for recurring patterns (Knapp 1992:5). There appear to be three basic village orientations in relation to the Dragon Hill. One of these orientations has the two oldest walled villages lined up with the highest peak of the Dragon Hill. A second orientation links two other villages with the lowest peak of the Dragon Hill along a line that goes through Lo Wai. In the third orientation, six villages are

¹ Both events are recorded in the essay “The Pirate Raids of 1646 and the Famine of 1648” (丙戌寇荒戌子饑年記) from *A Wan's Record of the Lineage Genealogy of Lung Yeuk Tau, Fanling*. 108
Figure 1: Three Basic Orientations of the Villages, Lung Yeuk Tau

aligned with the second highest peak of the Dragon Hill, either through Lo Wai, the oldest walled village, or Tsz Tong Tsuen, the oldest unwalled village. With a history of about 80
years, Siu Hang San Tsuen is the only village that does not fit into any of these three basic orientations. The inconsistency is reflective of its marginal status to the Tang lineage.

To make sense of the basic village orientations at Lung Yeuk Tau, one needs to know how the Tangs look at the impact of landscape on human existence. Simply put, it is their belief that mountains and hills have an important bearing on fertility, whereas waters are closely bound up with the formation of wealth.\(^1\) What makes mountains and hills virile is the generation of \(qi\), a life-invigorating force that abounds in the “dragon vein” of an alpine landscape and is associated with masculinity above all. On the other hand, waters have an affinity with lucre or money-making because of their contribution to the success of farming and economic life. In light of these beliefs, the basic orientations of the Tang villages at Lung Yeuk Tau start to look sensible.

There was a period during which the Tang ancestors were most concerned about the continuity of the lineage. Alignment of early walled villages with the highest peak of the Dragon Hill indicates an ardent wish for success in begetting male descendants. This period did not last very long. When the crisis was over, the Tangs attended to other concerns, including wealth. Accordingly several Tang villages later were located closer to waters. Overlooking the Indus River, their last \(wai\) was built with the facilities for treasure storage in the mid-eighteenth century, during which the Tangs were engaged in mercantile pursuits. The alignment of Kan Lung Wai and unwalled Wing Ling Tsuen with the lowest peak of the Dragon Hill suggests an attempt to compromise two important lineage goals, fertility and wealth.

Metaphysically, mountains (fertility) and waters (wealth) are of opposite natures, one

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\(^1\) "山管人丁水管財。"
being characteristically \textit{yang}, and the other characteristically \textit{yin}. \textit{Yin} and \textit{yang} are the creator of matter that constitutes the universe. Chinese cosmology emphasizes the complementarity and dynamic balance of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} in everything. When \textit{yin} waxes, \textit{yang} wanes, and vice versa. It depends on the priority of the planner as to how they are to be balanced out in a village orientation. In the case discussed above, the Tang ancestors were trying to delimit the proportions of \textit{yin} (wealth) and \textit{yang} (fertility) in the blessings that their new villages were to receive. While their priority seemed to be “wealth,” they apparently did not want to lose sight of “fertility.” Geomantically it was achieved by associating these villages with the close proximity of waters and a low hill. So parallel to the pursuit of mercantilism was a period after the mid-18th century during which the first and foremost concern of the lineage was to build up its wealth or economic prowess.

Most of the Tang villages, however, are aligned with the second highest peak of the Dragon Hill, which suggests a rather different concern. Flanked by two pinnacles, this peak looks like the central throng of a traditional Chinese pen-holder. From the \textit{feng-shui} point of view, it is a formation that promotes the generation of fame (Miaomo 1993:86).\footnote{The author quotes from an annotated text of \textit{The Burial Classic} by Guo Pu (276-314): “With a beautifully rounded top, a hill/mountain is golden in the sense that it produces high rank and fame” (庚金取其園活出貴也). The pen-holder formation is known as “Three Towers of Flowery Vault” (華蓋三臺).} In traditional China, scholarship was the passport to fame and upward social mobility. As the pillars of the Confucian state, the literati or scholars stood at the top of the social hierarchy. A lineage could use its scholars in many ways: to maintain an internal social and moral order which was based on the Confucian ideologies, to represent the interest of the kin group in local politics, to deal
with the County Magistrate and high officials whose language they spoke, and to offer legal
service and protection to their kinsmen (Chang 1955:54-70). The wealth of a Chinese lineage
was also closely associated with its achievements of scholarship (Fei 1953:31). Scholarship
might give such remunerative rewards that an old Chinese saying compared it to a gold mine.¹
The alignment of many Tang villages with the second highest peak of the Dragon Hill was
motivated by a strong desire to pursue education and scholarship. As we will see, this is borne
out by what the Tang lineage did and achieved in its history.

To a certain extent, time is frozen in space. From the settlement of Tang villages in
space, it is possible to reconstruct the adaptive strategies that the lineage adopted over time.
The meaning that is assigned to a settlement pattern also specifies the strategic goal behind it.
Feng-shui provides the code of meaning. Therefore, the manipulation of space is actually
encoded in both esoteric (geomantic) and exoteric (strategic) terms. It is hard for the lineage to
tell whether the glory of its past is due to the efficacy of geomancy or the wisdom of rational
decision-making. When pressed for an answer, many of its members would consider the
question stupid. To them, feng-shui is also a rational way of thinking.

3.3 The Origins and Legend

The Tangs trace their ancestry to a time of great antiquity. According to The Nam
Yeung Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau (1987), the fourth consort of the
legendary Yellow Emperor was named Mo. One of her descendants was granted a fief
called Man.² During the period of 770-256 BC (Eastern Zhou), someone from the fiefdom

¹ The old saying goes, “Book-learning carries the reward of a thousand picals of grain and
a houseful of gold” (書自有千糧粟, 書中自有黃金屋).
² The modern Chinese for “surname” is a disyllabic term consisting of two parts,
of Man established Kingdom Tang at Nam Yeung in what is now Henan Province. He is known as “Lord Tang, alias Man” in the Chinese classics, such as The Spring and Autumn Annals. This marked the origins of Tang as a surname. When the Kingdom of Tang was conquered in 223 BC, the clan was dispersed. But two and a half centuries later, Tang Yue, a native of Henan Province, helped establish the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25 - 220). He was ennobled as the “Marquis of Ko Mat” on merit of extraordinary military services. His portrait was placed first among those of twenty-eight generals in a special gallery called “Wan Toi.” With this came a golden age for the Tang clan.

Lord Tang Yue (AD 1 - 58) had thirteen sons, whom the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau believe to have fathered all those who bear their surname on earth. From a classic biography of Tang Yue, we know that his descendants compiled one of the earliest genealogies in Chinese history (T. Yang 1993:118). Entitled The Official Genealogy of the Tangs, it enlists a large number of honors obtained by the clan down to the third century, including 29 lords, 2 dukes, 13 generals, 14 ministers and equivalents, 22 high officials and officers, 48 prefecture magistrates, and “numerous” other official titles (D. Yang 1993:7). Considering the stringent censorship this genealogy was subjected to, the

“mother’s name” (xing) and “clan name” (shi). Scholars seem to agree that the Chinese surname originated as “mother’s name,” which was gradually replaced by “clan name” along with a transition of Chinese society from the matrilineal system to the patrilineal society (Wei 1985:204-9).

1 In about AD 150, Wang Fu pointed out that shi (literally “clan name”) could have originated with the name of a dynasty, emperor, kingdom, aristocratic title, office, specialization, occupation, locality of residence, or association with flora or fauna. See Chpt. XXXV of Commentary by Qianfu. 王符《潛夫論》: “或氏號讖，或氏於國，或氏於爵，或氏於官，或氏於學，或氏於事，或氏於居，或氏於志。”

2 Written by Fan Shu, the biography 《鄧禹傳》 is discussed in Supplements from Late-Han Literature 《後漢藝文志》, Vol. II. Also see Giles (1898:724).
authenticity of these details is beyond doubt.¹ The full text of this celebrated genealogy is no longer available, but a substantial part of it has survived in The Nam Yeung Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau (Appendix pp. 31-42).

The golden age of the Tang clan was followed by an exodus. Like many families of noble gentry, the Tangs were forced out of the Central Plain by the frequent eruption of wars and chaos that accompanied the invasion of northern China by forces from without during the fourth and fifth centuries. One branch of the Tangs moved south into Jiangxi Province, where it flourished. The Tangs of the New Territories came from one of its strongholds in Jiangxi: Baisha Village, Jishui County. It places the Tang ancestors firmly in one of the early cradles of the Hakka people.

Literally “guest people” or “stranger people,” Hakka is a label for those who, having left the Central Plain involuntarily, set out on a series of migrations in search of a new homeland (Lo 1989:39).² Over centuries, their descendants were spread far and wide, especially in southern China. Some of them entered what is now the New Territories around the tenth century. Proud of their links to the heartland of Chinese civilization, the Hakkas managed to retain certain traits that characterized the archaic culture of the Central Plain, as in their dialect (Y. Chen 1981; J. Lin 1990; R. Li 1994:120-23), music

¹ Prior to AD 581, all civilian genealogies were to be filed with the government for official scrutiny and endorsement. See the Tong Zhi by Zheng Jiao. 鄭樵《通志·氏族略序》,“自隋唐而上......凡百官族姓之有家狀者，則上之官，為考定詳實，載於秘閣，副在左戶。”
² Generally speaking, the exodus reached southwest Fujian in its second wave (880-1126), and then northeast Guangdong in its third wave of southward migration (1127-1644) (Lo 1965; S. Hsu 1993:88). There was, of course, variation with the individual migrant group, such as the Tangs who ended up further south at a time earlier than the inception of the third wave.
(Wang & Liu 1994:428), and religious system (Z. Wang 1994:287). In terms of settlement pattern, they also preferred to live in a large enclosure building or a walled village (Hsieh 1996:176; Y. Yang 1994:636).¹ To this day, some of these traits still persist at Lung Yeuk Tau (Tanaka 1985:218).

Upon their arrival, the Hakkas were distinctive from the local people. It boiled down to a difference of what A. Irving Hallowell calls “culturally constituted behavioral environments” (Bourguignon 1979:68-72). Two elements stood out in the cultural environment that shaped the behavior of the Hakkas. One was their heritage of a highly-developed culture that generated a strong attachment to traditional Chinese values and beliefs. The other was their frontier spirit. The Hakkas were willing to venture into new frontiers when and where possible. Some scholarly works (Wiens 1954:182; Sahlins 1961:326; Pasternak 1972:138) stress the predatory side of frontier spirit. In the case of the Hakka, however, it spelt endurance of adversity and hardships instead. More often than not, they started by working as tenants or by reclaiming the marginal land unwanted by the local people. Ethnic discrimination and hostility against the Hakkas were common, but it served to strengthen their determination to work hard. It was this undaunted drive to succeed against the odds of life through hard work that made them a formidable rival.

The settlement history of the Tangs in the New Territories is a subject of interest to scholars. But there has been debate about who was the first ancestor of the Tangs in this region (Faure 1986:240-41). Many Tang genealogies claim that it was Tang Hon-fat,

¹ The enclosure house (“weiwu”) is also called tulou (“earthen building”) although it is usually storied and built of bricks.
a retired official whose initial settlement at Kam Tin dated back to A.D. 973. Some Tang
genealogies, however, also contain the conflicting statement that it was his great grandson,
Tang Fo-hip.\(^1\) Interestingly, there is a lot of similarity between the two Tang ancestors in
terms of who they were and how they settled down at Chen Tin, the old name for Kam
Tin. What is different is that the great grandson retired from the post of Nanxiong Cui\(^2\)
and built a famous school called “Lik Ying Tsai” between AD 1102-1106. Lying in ruins,
the foundations of this school were still there in 1819.\(^3\) This school is mentioned in two of
the one hundred poems that Weng Bing composed of Baoan County and described by Huo
Wei in a long essay (Sung 1974:116).

It was also a known custom that the Hakkas carried the bones of their ancestors
when they migrated to a new place. Tang Hon-fat could have been reburied in the New
Territories in this way. Be that as it may, his is the oldest Tang grave in the New
Territories, and accordingly he is venerated as the “founding ancestor.” The tombs of the
first four ancestors from Tang Hon-fat to his great grandson are worshipped by the Tang
higher-order lineage with elaborate rituals every year. Famous for commanding good
funghsui as they all are, it is the gravesite of the great grandson Tang Fo-hip that is most
impressive. Compiled by order of the Qing emperor in 1726, \textit{The Gujin Tushu Jicheng}

\footnote{1 See the two prefaces to \textit{The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin}. The one
written in 1472 presents Tang Fo-hip as the founding father, whereas the one written in
1566 goes with his great grandfather Tang Hon-fat, who was first credited as the
founding ancestor in a 1382 essay in \textit{The Genealogy of the Tangs from Nam Yeung}, pp.
19-20.}

\footnote{2 The holder of this post was a stationed imperial envoy who saw to it that the regional
military strongmen and aristocrats remained loyal to the emperor.}

\footnote{3 In \textit{XXZ 1819}, Vol. XXI.}
(An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Chinese Literature) enlists this gravesite as one of the most renowned in one of its volumes entitled "Prefecture Gazetteers."

Three generations down from Tang Fo-hip, there were five male descendants (see Figure 2). Two of them, who were siblings, became the loci of an important branching. One left Kam Tin to found the Tang lineage of Ping Shan. The other stayed and had four grandsons, three of whom founded the rest of Tang lineages in the New Territories. This brought about a second major branching. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are descended from the eldest of these four siblings whose name was Lam. After his mother was widowed, Tang Lam moved with her to Dongguan, Guangdong Province where, the genealogy says, the Tangs had extensive landholdings. But by a twist of fate, Tang Lam's descendants were compelled to leave Dongguan for Lung Yeuk Tau. They would form the first fang in relation to those at Kam Tin, Ha Tsuen, and Tai Po, who were descended from Tang Lam's younger brothers. The Tangs of Ping Shan, who had branched off further back in time, are a more distant cousin lineage. What unifies all the Tang lineages in the New Territories is a strong sense of the common ancestry they share from Tang Hon-fat down to his great grandson. Such are the historical roots of the Tangs that predate the establishment of Lung Yeuk Tau.

The initial settlement of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau had much to do with the political fallout of what John Kamm (1977:208) calls a "founding myth." It involves a series of events that started with the crumbling of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1227). Lam's grandfather Tang Yuen-leung was the magistrate of Ganzhou. To rescue the

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1 《職方典》: "鄭符(協) 墓在橫州丫髻山。"
Level 1: The Five Great Fang (Tang Yuen-yam, Yuen-hei, Yuen-ching, Yuen-leung, and Yuen-wo)
Level 2: The Tang Higher-order lineage in the New Territories
Level 3: The localized lineages descended from Tang Lam, Wai, and Chi.

Figure 2: The Pedigree of the Tangs and Localized lineages
besieged Emperor, he gathered an army, only to learn on the way that the royal family had been captured by the invaders. This marked the end of his expedition. But Yuen-leung took under his protection a ten-year-old refugee girl, who happened to be a princess in disguise and was later married to his son. The bride was actually a daughter of Prince Kang who would become the first emperor of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279).

However, not until many years later when a truce was effected between the North and the South, did it come to light that the princess was not among the captives brought north. A frenzied search started, and we are filled on its details by two accounts from the Tang genealogies.

One is a memoir in *A Genealogical History of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau* (pp. 13-14). The story goes that an imperial circular was issued, notifying the Guangdong officials of the order to find the missing princess. When the husband learned the true identity of his wife, he was scared but had to reveal her whereabouts to the yamen. The couple was summoned to the palace. As they and their entourage were passing through Keshuxia of Nanxiong County on the journey, some local people jeered and mocked them for no reason, which greatly upset the princess. To cut a long story short, the rendezvous with the emperor resulted in the conferring of the honor of *Kwan Ma* ("son-in-law of a princely family") on the husband in addition to generous grants of land and privileges to the princess. The shower of favors included the right to collect levy on sundry bridges and ferries in Dongguan to subsidize the costs of her make-up, the land ownership of Tang Hill to cover her bathing expenses, and the bequeathal of a thousand *mu* of land as a fund of ancestor worship in her honor. Before her departure for home, the princess complained...
that the folks of Keshuxia in Nanxiong had insulted her. The emperor immediately ordered that those unruly, bodacious people be evicted from their native place and live in servitude to the princess' family in Dongguan forever.

The second account is an attempt to bring the Tangs genealogical records more in line with the known historical facts. Written in 1489, its full version is found in The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin (pp. 90-2). The author Liu Cunye was a high official who held the degree of *jin-shi*¹ and was authorized to compile records for the imperial court. Based on textual research, he saw a connection between the missing of the princess and the flee of the Southern Song royal family under a surprise attack from the north in 1129, which was well documented. He also concluded that the husband died at the age of 36 in Kam Tin. The widowed princess wrote a letter to reveal her whereabouts after her nephew had become the emperor between 1190-95.² It led her to meet with the emperor, who addressed her as *Wong Ko*, namely, "Royal Aunt." Her late husband was honored accordingly. Lam, the eldest son, was appointed to office, and his younger brothers were awarded the honorary title of *she-ren* (youngmen of a noble family). By an imperial order, the princess was to carry the appellation *Wong Ko* posthumously and befittingly, since she was a noble princess rather than a royal princess.³

The *Wong Ko* legend is essentially a combination of the foregoing two accounts.

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¹ The degree of scholarship awarded to those who passed the national civil service examinations.
² To be specific, Emperor Gaozong (1127-63) was her father, Emperor Xiaozong (1163-90) was her brother, and Emperor Guangzong (1190-95) was her nephew.
³ The official status of the princess was *zong-ji* (noble princess), not *gong-zhu* (royal princess).
With all the variation in individual presentations and interpretations, there is evidence that the *Wong Ko* legend was taken seriously by the authorities and worked to the advantage of her descendants.\footnote{*Wong Ko* died in 1246 at the age of 87. As late as 1868, the Magistrate of Dongguan County still found that her burial site warranted his protection. He ordered a forced removal of any graves that had encroached upon its land. To forestall future "stealing" of the land, a stone-tablet was officially erected to emphasize that the entire hill was a land grant for the exclusive use of the Tangs and that stern punishment would be meted out for any violation of their rights. See *The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin*, pp. 93-4.} But it backfired after the Southern Song was toppled in 1279. The Yuan period that succeeded it was a disaster for the Chinese. After a bloody conquest of China, the Mongols instituted a rule of terror, crude exploitation, and racial discrimination. The people of South China who were the last to be conquered, were lowest in status and carried the heaviest burden in tax and corvée labor (Michael 1986:140). Before their downfall in 1368, the Mongols learned of the *Wong Ko* legend and decided that her descendants must change their surname. The political prosecution sent Lam’s great grandsons from Dongguan on a stampede. Tang Tsung-ling who was the youngest, escaped to Lung Yeuk Tau. Most probably the flight occurred after 1343, when his first wife died and was buried in Dongguan.

### 3.4 The Lineage History

The lineage that Tang Tsung-ling (1302-87) founded at Lung Yeuk Tau started small. His first son died young. Tang Lung-kong (1364-1421), who was the second son and only heir, became the most important focal ancestor of the lineage. The genealogy depicts this second-generation ancestor as generous, righteous, fond of the classics, and too proud to bow to wealth. Apart from farming, he lived an idyllic life. Jokingly, friends had this to say: while he was a credit to his ancestors in emulating the tradition of an official-gentry family, his wife was
benefiting their descendants by taking care of the family property.\(^1\) The couple had six sons. In 1450 the lineage consisted of 66 members, headed by Tang Tsung-yan, the oldest son. He and his brothers formed a joint family that was “full of harmony, fraternal love, and aspirations to build an even greater fortune on what had been achieved.”\(^2\) Their efforts were rewarded by a rapid increase in lineage wealth.

By the fourth generation, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau had established themselves as the richest and most powerful lineage in what is now the New Territories. It was marked by the building of Tang Tsung-ling Ancestral Hall in 1525. Endowed with the estates of Lung Kong Tso, this ancestral hall is the oldest in the Hong Kong region and the largest in the Fanling area. Back in the sixteenth century, ancestral halls were the exclusive prerogative of high classes.

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were allowed to have an ancestral hall because of the direct descent (first fang) that they claimed from Wong Ko. Formal recognition was recorded in the writings that government officials contributed to the inauguration of their ancestral hall.\(^3\) All this was made possible by Tang Sau-Tak, a fourth-generation ancestor, who had first championed the idea and then followed it through with the authorities. No other family and no other branch of the Tangs in the region dared to build an ancestral hall until the early 18th century, when the older restrictions were relaxed (DON 12/13/148/59).

The six brothers of the third generation had segmented. Segmentation differs from branching in that it entails the establishment of corporate property in the name of a focal

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\(^1\) *A Genealogical History of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau*, p. 33.

\(^2\) Ibid., “戲公為簪緗之胄天性純篤，善于貿貲而克紹乎先志，孺人......善理家業而垂裕於後昆。”

\(^3\) Ibid., “其昆季和氣溢於門閭，廣澤延於後嗣。”

*Prefaces to the Genealogy of the Tangs in the New Territories*, pp. 90-94.
ancestor. Associated with the segmentation of the six brothers were such ancestral estates as Yin Yee Tong, Tong Ko Tso, Kan Lok Tso, Si Kong Tso, and Kan Yang Tso. Of these ancestral estates, Kan Yang Tso was the richest, founded by the seventh fang to worship Tang Tsung-wo. Next came Yin Yee Tong, founded by the first fang to worship Tang Tsung-yan. Note that the six brothers had a sister who was the second oldest. So Tang Tsung-wo, the youngest of them of all, headed the seventh fang even though there were only six sons. From early on, his segment was the most populous. In the course of time, it fanned out of Lo Wai to most of the other villages except for Tsz Tong Tsuen, which was inhabited exclusively by the descendants of the populous first fang.

The remarkable growth of the Lung Yeuk Tau lineage ground to a halt with the advent of the “coastal evacuation.” In 1662 the Qing government ordered the coast of east and southeast China to be evacuated in order to strangle local supplies for the remnant royalists of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) who were holding out on Taiwan Island. All villages within 50 li (15.5 miles) of the coast were to be leveled to the ground. Xinan County was one of the areas most seriously affected. About two thirds of its territory had to be abandoned, including nearly all of what is now the New Territories.¹ The “coastal evacuation” proved to be a failure in containing the Ming royalists. But it caused severe destruction to the coastal economy and inflicted untold sufferings on people.² At the petition of Wang Lairen, Viceroy of Guangdong, and Zhou Youde, Governor-General of

¹ The area south of a line connecting San Tin and Sha Tau Kok was evacuated (Siu 1984:4).
² The loss of revenue by Guangdong alone was estimated to be 300,000 tales of silver a year, and hunger and disease claimed a high toll of deaths among the refugees during the eight years of evacuation.
Guangdong and Guangxi, the evacuation order was scrapped in 1669.

What with chronic hunger, epidemic diseases, and the hardships of an exile life that went off and on for eight years (Faure 1984:37), the “coastal evacuation” took a heavy toll on human lives. Only two or three tenths of the Tangs from Lung Yeuk Tau made their way back home.\(^1\) Those who did return mostly belonged in the first and seventh \textit{fang}. The descendants of the third and fifth \textit{fang} chose to settle down elsewhere.\(^2\) Furthermore, the chances that a segment survived a major disaster were commensurate with the size of its population. After the “coastal evacuation” was rescinded in 1669, the other two less populous \textit{fang} never really recovered from the aftermath of severe decimation. Their populations kept dwindling until the sixth \textit{fang} eventually became extinct at Lung Yeuk Tau.

Life was hard for all who returned to the coast. One of the Tang genealogies provides a vivid, first-hand description of the dilemma that was haunting the coastal people at large.\(^3\) They were short of supplies, but transport by sea was banned. While everything else was expensive, the price of grain took a nose-down dive. There was little demand for grain even when it was as cheap as 1 or 0.9 maces of silver for one hundred catties.\(^4\) In contrast, pork was sold at 0.32 maces of silver per catty, and sea fish, 0.16 per catty. It took twice as much grain to meet the payment of land tax. There were also ruinous typhoons which played havoc with rice fields and matsheds in 1669. The returnees who had barely survived the “coastal evacuation,” found

\(^1\) See “Evictions out of Village” in \textit{A Wan’s Record of the Lung Yeuk Tau Lineage, Fanling} (《移村記》: “遷移之民十存二三。”)

\(^2\) The third \textit{fang} settled in Yongan, and the fifth \textit{fang} in Beizhou outside of the New Territories.

\(^3\) See the essays “Evictions out of Village” and “Back in the Coast” in \textit{A Wan’s Record of the Lung Yeuk Tau Lineage, Fanling} (《移村記》, 《復界記》).

\(^4\) 1 mace = 1/10 of a tael = 0.5 g or 0.01764 oz.
themselves in deep waters again. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were trapped in the same predicaments when they started to rebuild their lineage. Nevertheless, in a matter of years Lung Yeuk Tau was able to rise from the ruins of the "coastal evacuation" and dominate the Fanling area again.

The renaissance started with the founding of a joint market by the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau and Tai Po. In 1672, they were granted a piece of land next to the "Filial Son Temple" that was located in Tai Po (Groves 1964:17). The temple was dedicated to the memory of Tang Sz-mang, a descendant of Lung Yeuk Tau. Sometime between 1567 and 1573, the young man had valiantly offered himself as a substitute for his father who was being held captive by a notorious pirate. After the switch, he committed suicide lest his parents risked bankruptcy to redeem his freedom. His selfless deed was officially commended. At the suggestion of its first fang, the lineage built a temple in 1595 to honor Tang Sz-mang. Although the "Filial Son" was a descendant of the sixth fang, the first fang felt that it had a ritual obligation above the other segments to perpetuate the memory of this native son. The involvement of the first fang in the building and running of the Filial Son Temple would lead it to play an important role in the management of Tai Po Market.

The Filial Son Temple acquired a newly-found importance upon the establishment of Tai Po Market. The Tangs were the master of the market from whom shops were rented and by whom services of boat ferry were organized. But the market itself was founded on a land

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1 In *The Genealogy of the Tsung-Yan Fong of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau*. In pushing for this project, the first fang was led by Tang Chen-yuen (1561-1640), who also "personally oversaw the construction of the Filial Son Temple" (督率以建孝子寺). Tang Sz-mang, the filial son, was a fifth-generation descendant from Tang Tsung-sun, the patriarch of the sixth fang.
grant to provide revenue for the maintenance of the Filial Son Temple. Fees and income were
collected in the name of the temple. Market regulations were issued by the temple. Standards
of scale, weight, and measurement were established through the temple. Supervisions and
arbitration were conducted on the authority of the temple. The temple was the heart and soul of
the market. Given the importance of the Filial Son Temple, it is small wonder that the Tangs of
Lung Yeuk Tau who owned the temple were in control of Tai Po Market while the Tangs of
Tai Po took a back seat (Faure 1984:36). The master of the market was to provide patronage
and protection for the smooth operation of its trading. When it came to negotiating with the
Magistrate and soliciting the enforcement of law against trouble-makers, the long-established
gentry status of Lung Yeuk Tau also gave it an edge over its partner.

Tai Po Market was a “standard market.” Delineated by a network of traditional patron-
client relationships (Skinner 1967:90), its service area covered the eastern section of the New
Territories, including Fanling. A standard market town was a subsystem of an intermediate
market town, which was Shenzhen in this case. It linked Tai Po Market to Canton, the central
market town. Under Shenzhen, there were six standard markets before 1819. Only two of them
were located in the New Territories, at Tai Po and Yuen Long respectively. Tai Po Market
operated on a 3-6-9 schedule, opening to trade on the third, sixth, and ninth calendrical days of
each ten-day period, whereas Shenzhen had a 2-5-8 schedule. This allowed time for the vertical
flow of goods and services both ways. At the time of the 1898 lease, Tai Po Market had 38
shops, with a population of about 280 people (Young 1974:8). The primary function of Tai Po
Market was to facilitate the exchange of goods, especially farm products and produce. In
addition, it catered to the needs of village peasants for various kinds of service, credit, and
Figure 3: The Shan Segment of the First Fang Lung Yeuk Tau

Tzs Tong Tsuen
Initially Tai Po Market was a lineage venture, and the Tangs were content to collect rent from shop-owners and fees from passengers who used their ferry service. But inevitably, it encouraged the rise of individual entrepreneurship. As time went by, more and more Tangs got into market trading itself. The first fang was the avant-garde of this drive, and an increasing number of its members switched to a merchant career from the pursuit of scholarship. The typical explanation given by the genealogy for such a switch is “resigned to engage in trade after a repeated failure in the civil service examinations.” On the basis of this drive, the first fang produced several very successful merchants, two of whom were brothers named Yuen-wai and Yuen-kit.

The patriarch of the first fang had five sons, the youngest of whom was most prolific (see Figure 3). The segment headed by this son is called “Shan,” and Yuen-wai and Yuen-kit were members of the Shan segment. Their fifth-generation ascendant was the one whose idea had resulted in the building of the Filial Son Temple. This ascendant was so wealthy that the grandfather of the Yuen brothers indulged himself in the sponsorship of divers philanthropic projects or else “spent most of his day...growing orchids, watching gold fish, and reading the classics.” The father of the Yuen brothers had a good command of feng-shui. He took it upon himself to retrieve the bones of many ancestors whose graves had fallen into oblivion or were damaged during the “coastal evacuation.” The bones were then reburied at his costs and in the

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1 “屡試不售改途貿易。”
2 The five segments are Man (文), Mo (武), Wing (勇), Leung (良), and Shan (伸).
3 In The Genealogy of the Tsung-Yan Fong of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau. “公子...号菊軒。終日掩扉，煮水烹茶，種菊花以消遣，觀金魚以自娛，好讀書......而佚游。”
sites that he selected geomantically.

Probably the affluence of this family was running out, and Tang Yuen-wai (1742-1805) started on a mercantile career when he was young. The genealogy describes him as a man of nice disposition and innovative creativity, which made him a great success in manufacturing. With the wealth accumulated, he purchased a sham title of government office at the age of 40. But even more colorful was the story of his younger brother Yuen-kit (1759-?), whom he raised and exposed to the intricacy of trading at an early age. Soon the young man made a fortune by himself and was generous with donations to ancestral estates. Beside being a merchant, Yuen-kit was an avid reader. Abetted by a marvelous memory, it made up for the little schooling that he had had. He became a celebrated master merchant at the age of 32 and purchased a bogus high degree of *jin-shi* at the age of 38.¹ These honors allowed him to build up a close relationship with the Magistrate. Whenever the lineage or its members were involved in lawsuits, Tang Yuen-kit would volunteer his service and come up with an eloquent defense in their behalf. His influence and wisdom won him the respect of local people except the Lius, who made no bones about their slighting attitude.

The Yuen brothers differed from their father, grandfather, and forebears in that they were merchant-gentry rather than landlord-gentry. In imperial China, merchants were at the bottom of society. Owing to the growing importance of mercantilism from the eleventh century onward, such prejudice started to be loosened (Chang 1955:62). Its final breakdown seemed to be around the corner when merchants were allowed to purchase official titles and join the

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¹ See Note 3 on the previous page: “乾隆辛亥年身列成均，嘉慶戊戌年貢陞明經進士。” But the *Xinan County Gazetteer* of 1819, Vol. XV enlists him as a *li-gong*, indicating that he had bought the title of *gong-sheng*. 

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Figure 4: The Shan Shan Segment of the Seventh Fang
Lung Yeuk Tau
the elite as did the Yuen brothers during the mid-Qing period. There was no doubt that a
tremendous wealth was concentrated in the hands of merchants. Commercial profits were so
high that those who reaped them earned the equal of all the income made by officials from their
service of the government and squeezing of people (Stover & Stover 1976:113). However, the
notion that mercantilism was parasitic persisted, and so did legal discrimination against it
(Eberhart 1967:15). Merchant-gentry, who comprised only one per cent of the ruling class,
were vulnerable to a social stigma that could be translated into open disdain. Therefore, in
addition to its achievements with mercantilism, the Tang lineage needed the social and political
leverage that came with scholarly successes before it could restore its old eminence.

Scholarship was never the forte of the first fang, which secured merely four imperial degrees
between 1390 and 1915. This is where the seventh fang stepped in.

The patriarch of the seventh fang had four sons (see Figure 4). The youngest one was
named Tang I-tak, and his descendants form the “Shan Shan” segment, which excelled in
scholarship, especially with its first and fourth branches. After the Shan Shan segment
overflowed Lo Wai in the late fifteenth century, its first branch went to settle in Wing Ling Wai
while its fourth branch inhabited San Uk Tsuen, where there was a lineage study hall.

For the first branch, it was an episode of high glory when one after another, four of its
six fourth-generation descendants became sheng-yuan. ¹ Then along the line of one of them,²

¹ The degree sheng-yuan was awarded to those who passed the civil service examinations
at the county, prefecture, and district levels (縣考，府考，院考). It qualified one for
sitting in the examinations at the provincial level to compete for the next degree of
scholarship ju-ren. A candidate of sheng-yuan (補邑 / 郡庠生) was one cleared by one
or two of the three examinations that the sheng-yuan had to pass. A sheng-yuan is also
called a xiu-cai.
² His name was Tang Fung-shi.

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two sons and three grandsons obtained the same academic degree. Finally, one of the grandsons advanced to the honor of gong-sheng. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are very proud of the extraordinary performance of scholarship by this branch in three consecutive generations. To this day, they call Wing Ling Wai Luk Uk (the Six Houses). It is a reminder of the time when Wing Ling Wai was occupied by the six households of over-achievers. Just as impressive was the scholarly tradition of the fourth branch, which boasted the first licentiate of sheng-yuan of the entire Shan Shan segment. It occurred in 1572, when Tang Hei-chiu was only aged 19. His fine scholarship, in turn, was carried on by his three sons, a grandson, and a great grandson, all of whom were sheng-yuan.

The two branches of the Shan Shan segment alone produced 15 sheng-yuan and 1 gong-sheng between 1572 and 1741. If we figure in the scholar-gentry produced by the other branches and segments during this period, the total number exceeded 25, including three degrees of gong-sheng. Two of these gong-sheng degrees led to the appointment of their holders as officials. To put these numbers into perspective, the civil service examinations qualified eight to eleven candidates for the degree of sheng-yuan triennually in Xinan County. The whole county was estimated to have an average of 150-200 sheng-yuan at any given point in time. These degree holders constituted only 0.08% to 0.1% of the population (Ng 1984: 112). In contrast, Lung Yeuk Tau averaged 4.46 degree holders per generation (30 years),

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1 The gong-sheng, whether it was en-gong (恩貢), sui-gong (歲貢) or ba-gong (拔貢), was a degree given to a small number of sheng-yuan, who did not pass the provincial examinations for the degree of ju-ren but whose qualifications were outstanding. They could be recommended for a special examination in the capital whereupon they might be appointed as officials, but of a lower rank than the jin-shi who had acquired the degree of ju-ren and passed the regular examinations at the national level.
which amounted to 0.56% of its population (800). As for gong-sheng, only thirteen holders of this degree were recorded from the region of the New Territories by 1819, and Lung Yeuk Tau claimed four of them.

Of the twenty-five licentiates of the sheng-yuan and gong-sheng degrees, only seven did not survive the "coastal evacuation." The rest were a great asset to the Tang lineage in its efforts to rebuild Lung Yeuk Tau. A sheng-yuan enjoyed certain privileges that put him among the local ruling elite. He did not have to kneel down and kowtow when he had audience with the Magistrate. He could present himself as a "zi-di" (younger brother of the same hometown). He was at home with the ruling ideology to negotiate favorable treatment from the government. He was taken seriously since he had connections with or could pull strings to reach high officials (Fei 1953:83). Needless to say, Lung Yeuk Tau had a vested interest in the successes of its degree holders. A handbook, for instance, was compiled for them that drew on centuries of experience to detail the code of address and behavior in dealing with officials at various levels and in diverse situations. Of course, its contents were only for the eye of the lineage members.

The twin strategies of mercantilism and scholarship worked so well that once more Lung Yeuk Tau was rolling in wealth and prestige. As of 1819 the lineage had purchased sixteen titles of bogus office or scholarship. These purchases were made by individual decision, but they were also an indictor of lineage wealth, not to mention their contribution to the overall prestige of a lineage over its rivals. The number of title purchases during the this period was

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1 The handbook is carried in The Historical Literature of the New Territories, Miscellaneous Series. Also see David Faure (1986:221).
three for the Tangs of Ha Tsuen, five for the Liус of Sheung Shui, and six for the Tangs of Ping Shan (Wu 1982:56). Far ahead of them, Lung Yeuk Tau was next only to Kam Tin which had made twenty purchases.

After the mid-nineteenth century, however, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau ran into a mounting challenge from its rivals. The challenge was twofold. Starting from 1861 onward, there was a remarkable increase in the number of ju-ren produced by the Liус of Sheung Shui. The last time when Lung Yeuk Tau had a ju-ren was with Tang Tsin-lo back in 1641. Since then, the highest degree that the Tangs had obtained was gong-sheng. Although the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau won several senior military degrees during the second half of the 19th century, the tables were turned as far as scholarship was concerned. On the other hand, the centuries-old mercantile control of Fanling and Tai Po by the Tangs also started to erode. First the Liус of Sheung Shui opened Shek Wu Market around 1819, even though it posed a mild threat at best. Then there was the establishment of Tai Wo Market by the Pangs and the Mans in 1893, whose rivalry and competition would cut deep into the coffers of Lung Yeuk Tau (Groves 1964:18).
CHAPTER 4
POPULATION, FAMILIES, AND BLOOD TIE

After about a century of settlement in Lung Yeuk Tau, the Tang lineage came to have forty-five males descendants in 1450. More centuries went by, and 1719 witnessed the lineage contribute 22.9 taels of silver on behalf of its 229 male descendants to the estates of To Hing Tong, the ancestral hall of the Tang clan in Dongguan. As generations of fathers, uncles, brothers, married sons and nephews continued to live together in Lung Yeuk Tau, the lineage gained more complexity in structure and grew in size. But this trend is not without ups and downs.

4.1 Population Demographics

The first modern census of the Lung Yeuk Tau lineage was attempted by Lockhart shortly before the 1899 British takeover of the New Territories. He (1898:22) sampled three of its eleven villages. In the sample, two were indicated as Punti villages, with a population of 260, and the third one (Wing Ling Tsuen) was given as a Hakka village, with a population of 80 (see Table 2). The most important criterion whereby Lockhart (1898:7) differentiated between the Punti and the Hakka villages was the dialects they

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1 In *A Genealogical History of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau*, pp. 30-33.
2 In *The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tim*, p. 34: “Each male Tang descendant was to donate 1 mace of silver” (每丁科銀一錢).
used. He must have overheard the use of *wai tau wa*, the local dialect of Lung Yeuk Tau, in Wing Ling Tsuen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>1898 Lockhart Sample</th>
<th>1911 HK Census</th>
<th>1968 Tasa Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo Wai</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsz Tong Tsuen</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma Wat Wai</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma Wat Tsuen</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tung Kok Wai</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wing Ling Wai</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wing Ling Tsuen</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kan Lung Wai</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Uk Tsuen</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siu Hang Tsuen</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siu Hang San Tsuen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>340</strong></td>
<td><strong>632</strong></td>
<td><strong>329</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Census Data of Lung Yeuk Tau, 1898-1968

The 1911 Census of the Hong Kong Government surveyed all the villages of Lung Yeuk Tau except for Siu Hang San Tsuen, which had barely taken shape then. It was found that the population of the Tangs totaled 632. Compared with Lockhart’s sample, however, the Tang population was curtailed. A breakdown of the 1911 Census shows that the three villages sampled by Lockhart had lost 92 members, amounting to over 27% of their population before the 1899 British takeover. It allows us to track retroactively and estimate that the population size of the Tang lineage was in the area of 860-870 back then. After a decade of the British rule, it was cut down by about 220 individuals. In retrospect, my informants attribute it to the defeat of a 1899 armed resistance against the British in

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Tolo Harbor of the New Territories. After this abortive resistance movement, many Tang lineage members who had taken an active part in it fled and never returned for fear of retaliation. Among them was the great grandfather of my principal informant, a lineage elder in his seventies.

According to Taga Akigoro (1982:55-6), the population of Lung Yeuk Tau jumped to 2,490 in 1968 and, therefore, almost quadrupled as against 1911. After the exclusion of the 34 non-Tang households with a population of some 150, the Tangs still number over 2,300. This figure is greatly inflated. Tanaka (1985:223), however, takes it for granted when he tries to make sense of the demographic data gathered from the 1983 records of Ta Chiu in Lung Yeuk Tau. The list of sponsors for this festival was supposed to include each and every male descendant in the lineage, but on record they added up only to some 430. The total population was found to be 871, which was equivalent to its size on the eve of the British takeover but fell well short of a half of what was expected. The “gap” that Tanaka (1985:420-21) perceives leads to his assumption that the festival involved only descendants of the first, fifth, and seventh fang but was ignored by “two other fang.” In conclusion, there were pockets of area in this single-surname community over which folk religion had lost control. The problem with this conclusion is that the so-called “two other fang” were actually non-existent.

A selective check of the records of the 1993 Ta Chiu against the facts of Tung Kok Wai and Wing Ling Wai shows that they are fairly reliable. It follows that Tanaka’s 1983 findings are far more accurate than he thinks. The demographic information contained in the 1993 records also suggests that the Tang population was bouncing back
from a loss throughout the 1960s. Historically, the lineage of Lung Yeuk Tau suffered four major losses of population, associated respectively with the “coastal evacuation” of 1662-1669, the 1899 British takeover, the 1944-45 Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, and the waves of emigration between 1959 and 1968. Except for the first one, three of the losses occurred in modern times and involved the dispersal rather than physical destruction of a part of the lineage members. But they had a negative impact on the fertility and size of the lineage population just the same. So within the period from 1899 through 1983, Lung Yeuk Tau was demographically eventful and underwent repeated decimation, but after some eighty-five years, it finally recovered its population size around 1983.

Today the Tang lineage of Lung Yeuk Tau has a population of about 1,031, with 538 male descendants and 493 female members. These figures are tallied from the lineage records of sponsorship and participation for the 1993 Ta Chiu after the repetitions of entry are carefully eliminated. One thorny issue is the claim of the Tangs that about a half of their lineage members are still abroad. Upon a closer look of the records, however, those who were part of a stem or extended family at Lung Yeuk Tau are enlisted as absentee sponsors or participants for the 1993 Ta Chiu, so they are already included in the demographic figures calculated above. Those whose stem or extended families had become history might have been excluded from the records. They were left out in two situations: either the message from the lineage to urge their absentee sponsorship and

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1 The main problem in tallying numbers from these records (《醮信錄》) is to eliminate repetitions. A family was entered as many times as it had males, each time with a different male descendant enlisted as a sponsor of the Ta Chiu and followed by all the family members. The nine thick volumes of the records contain some 5,000 entries.
participation had fallen on deaf ears or the lineage had lost contact with them. There is no
telling what is the exact percentage of these left-out members in relation to the whole
lineage population. An informed guess would put it around 30% in 1993.¹

Based on the 1991 official survey, the Demographic Section of the Census and
Statistics Department, Hong Kong has graciously provided me with a breakdown of Lung
Yeuk Tau’s age groups (20 and above) and their relative frequencies. Tabulated as
follows, the data clearly reveal the impact of emigration on the demographic composition
of the population under study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>20-24</th>
<th>25-29</th>
<th>30-34</th>
<th>35-39</th>
<th>40-44</th>
<th>45-49</th>
<th>50-54</th>
<th>55-59</th>
<th>60-64</th>
<th>≥ 65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The Percentage of Age Groups at Lung Yeuk Tau, 1991

Instead of assuming the shape of a pyramid, the distribution of percentage in Table
3 dips in the middle, squeezing the age groups of 40-44, 45-49, and 50-54 so that they are
of unusually small size. The abnormality is apparently attributable to their losses to the two
waves of emigration that occurred between 1959 and 1968, when members of these three
age groups were in the prime of their life, mostly between 18 and 32. Many of them went
abroad and never returned. It caused serious atrophy of percentage for the age groups
between 40-54 in the 1991 survey. Compared with the age groups adjacent to this range,
the ones within the range are less than half the percentage they would normally assume.

¹ Based on the data from two most populous villages, absentee sponsors and family
members amounted to some 17.8% of the whole population in 1993 Ta Chiu.
One can say with reasonable accuracy that about 50% of the Tang lineage members between 40-54 years of age are now living abroad.

4.2 The Family Types

The family is patrilineal in the New Territories. Therefore, its patriarch receives far more recognition than the other members of the family, who are typically referred to as his wife, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, grandchild, or mother if she is widowed but still alive. Within the lineage, the corporate group that the family head represents is also named after him, as so-and-so’s family. But even the family head is somewhat effaced as an individual. Often times, he has before his name an appellation indicating the branch or fang of which he is a member. A segment or fang can be viewed as a large joint family without the final division of ancestral property by married brothers. There are, of course, branches that do no have the endowment of ancestral estates. But irrespective of which branch, segment, or fang they are affiliated with, all the Tang families in Lung Yeuk Tau are entitled to a share of the benefits from Lung Kong Tso. This oldest ancestral estate unifies all the Tangs of the Lung Yeuk Tau into “an extended family writ large.”

By definition, the extended family is a domestic unit of parents joined by sons at least two of whom are married. The joint family is a domestic unit of brothers at least two of whom are married. The stem family consists of parents and a married son. The nuclear family consists of a male either unmarried or married with/without young children or of a group of brothers who are unmarried. From the records of sponsorship for the 1993 Ta Chiu, I identified 138 families of various types, which are tabulated as follows.
Table 4: Family Types at Lung Yeuk Tau, 1993

As is shown in Table 4, Lung Yeuk Tau has a relatively high percentage of extended families. It compares favorably with the data from several studies of Chinese villages. The percentage of extended families is 16% in a Hokkien village and 18% in a Hakka village of northern Taiwan that Chuang Ying-chang has recently studied (1994:79 & 83). At a mixed-cropping Taiwan village studied by Chung-min Chen (1977:116), 1.9% of the families are of the extended type. In Pasternak’s study (1972:81), extended and stem families are conflated as one family type, the percentage of which is 26.4% for a Hokkien village (1968) and 35.6% for a Hakka village (1964) in southern Taiwan. Following the same practice, Elizabeth Laminska Johnson (1978:290) reports a conflated percentage of 52.6% from an urban lineage village of the New Territories, as against 60.1% that we find for the combined percentage of extended and stem families at Lung Yeuk Tau. This percentage is significant, for we may take it as an index of the overall cohesion of a Chinese lineage.

One may wonder if some of the extended families at Lung Yeuk Tau are not the so-called “rotating stem families.” This system is adopted by married sons to support and accommodate their parents on a rotating basis after the property division of an extended family is completed (Y. Li 1967). At Lung Yeuk Tau where the family head must be a male, a “rotating stem family” might appear as an “extended family” in our data if the father is still alive. The distinction between the two different types of family consists in the
complete division of family property and the lack of it. It is important to note that at Lung Yeuk Tau, the father usually holds on to some corporate property. Aside from the fact that he is entitled to a share of the compensations by the government for resumption of ancestral land, he also has his own “male-descendant house,” which cannot be divided until after his death. Such being the case, the division of family property remains incomplete. Even if there are “rotating arrangements,” what he heads is an “rotating extended family” rather than a “rotating stem family.”

Things are also more complicated than have been anticipated by those studies that predict a steady growth of the nuclear family at the erosion of the extended, joint, and stem families in contemporary society. W.T. Liu (1977) has shown that this belief can be a myth, as family size and structure are also susceptible to the choice of “family strategies” in response to reality, including the supply and demand of housing, economic conditions, and government policies (M. Li 1991:163; Glenn 1983). Under certain circumstances, the dominance of nuclear families in contemporary Chinese society may be attenuated in favor of larger types of families (Fei 1985:100). Let us look at the data of San Uk Tsuen, the most populous village at Lung Yeuk Tau.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Extended</th>
<th>Joint</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83 Number</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93 Number</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 Percentage</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93 Percentage</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference %</td>
<td>- 0.8%</td>
<td>+ 3.6%</td>
<td>+ 4 %</td>
<td>- 6.8%</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Family Types at San Uk Tsuen, 1983 and 1993

1 Since 1972, each indigenous male descendant is entitled once in his lifetime to build such a “tin uk.” A full discussion of this official policy is included in 9.1.
During the period of 1983-1993, the stem family had the greatest gain in terms of number and percentage, whereas the nuclear family waned and lost its dominance at San Uk Tsuen. In fact, if we group the extended and joint families under the category of “large family,” its frequency also increased as did that of the stem family. This leaves the nuclear family the only loser in relative percentage.

By tracing the transformation of the fourteen stem families recorded in 1983, I find that they gave rise to roughly three “large families” for every two “nuclear families” growing out of them. This means that the stem family was more inclined to expand than to break down during this period. When the extended family divided, it was also inclined to produce about three stem families for every two nuclear families that it yielded. These two tendencies reinforced each other to constrain the growth of nuclear families. The question naturally arises: What was going on behind these two tendencies?

Two major causes can be postulated. One is an increased birth rate, and the other is the delayed division of property because of the need to pool resources to finance the building of ting uk (male-descendant house). Table 6 shows the growth of population at San Uk Tsuen during this period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>M. Descendants</th>
<th>F. Descendants</th>
<th>Spouses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83:93 (%)</td>
<td>100:128</td>
<td>100:128</td>
<td>100:157</td>
<td>100:135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: The Tang Population of San Uk Tsuen, 1983 and 1993

The total population recorded an increase of 35%, and the number of spouses jumped by
57%. Both point to an enhanced rate of fertility that facilitated the expansion of the nuclear and stem families. But more importantly, the division of families was slowed down, as the nuclear family had difficulty in building a modern-style, three-story "male-descendant house" on its own. The costs of such a project generally run up to some HK$ 800,000. Since the average annual salary of Hong Kong is about HK$ 103,000,\(^1\) it often entails that the family remain one financing unit to cover the expenditure for the building of "male-descendant house(s)." Consider a stem family that has the parents, a married son and his spouse, and one or more unmarried sons. The "male-descendant house" that the family builds for the married couple holds them liable for contributing to the similar construction project(s) lying ahead. It results in the delay of family division.

The same is true of the two joint families in San Uk Tsuen. Neither of them has enough land on which to build a tin uk for each of its married brothers. To meet the temporary housing needs of the family, the jointly-owned ancestral housing is converted into a tin uk for the eldest married brother. It creates a debt for him to contribute to the tin uk projects when the government grants building lots for the other married brothers. This decision to pursue the construction of tin uk as a joint venture postpones the division of family. The function of the joint family in this case is no longer to meet the labor demands of farming as Cohen (1968) has discovered from Taiwan or to form large family businesses as E. L. Johnson (1976:304-5) has found from the New Territories. Rather, it lies in pooling resources to finance the housing needs of the family.

There is, of course, another side to the picture. Although somewhat checked, the

\(^1\) This is for 1995 and calculated according to the figures provided in Howlett (1996:115).
trend toward more nuclear families is still alive. There were four more nuclear families in 1993 than in 1983. The average family of San Uk Tsuen was downsized from 7.0 to 6.35 concomitantly. The appeal of the nuclear family is obvious to the young married couple of San Uk Tsuen, who live in a modern society that encourages individualization. The young couple may turn to alternative ways of financing the construction of the “male-descendant house” instead of relying on help from the extended, stem, or joint family.

But there are prices to pay. The nuclear family typically loses two thirds of the floor space of its tin uk to the private developer who bears the costs of its building project. As the nuclear family tries to expand, it will continue to suffer housing shortage. Nine of the sixteen “old” nuclear families recorded from 1983 were retained in 1993. This rate (56%) is much higher than the retention of either the stem or extended families during the same period. Associated with a high retention rate of “old nuclear families” are delayed marriage and suppressed fertility. In order for the nuclear family to be a sensible choice of adaptation, it has to get out of the dilemma caused by chronic housing shortage.

The new tendency in Lung Yeuk Tau is for the nuclear family to break off after it has a “male-descendant house” entirely to its own. To this end, its members may have to stay within a stem or extended family until the dream of one ting uk for each son is fulfilled. After its break-off, such a nuclear family is viable in the sense that its natural growth is blessed rather than checked. How soon the nuclear family will regain its dominance at San Uk Tsuen and Lung Yeuk Tau depends on how well the stem, joint, and extended families exploit their adaptive advantage to meet the housing needs of their members and provide viable candidates for the nuclear type of family. In view of the new
tendency and the housing shortage that exists, the recovery of dominance by nuclear families is likely to occur in a long run, but not in the near future. However, for various reasons, some people are willing to be taken advantage of by private developers and obtain a short-term solution to their immediate need. There is always possibility that this may bring about a temporary surge of nuclear families. The data from the 2003 Ta Chiu will shed more light on how the Tang families actually choose between the long-term and short-term fixes of housing shortage.

4.3 From the Family to the Branch Household

Turning to its internal change, the family or jia needs to be distinguished from the household or hu. A household is a group of people who live together and are officially registered as a domestic unit (Gallin 1966a:137). It follows that the household is a residential entity with certain legal rights and obligations. In the literature of Chinese studies, this term carries the connotation of biological relationship but allows for the inclusion of distant relatives, such as affines, and non-relatives, such as laborers and servants (Johnson 1976:287; Gallin ibid.). In contrast, the family is a domestic entity whose members are bound by the immediate ties of blood and marriage exclusively. A family may or may not coincide with a household. And it does not have to be co-residential, either (Cohen 1978:183). The larger a family is, the less it is likely to be co-residential. In fact, it is not unusual that a family of the average size (7.47 individuals) has a son live outside of Lung Yeuk Tau lest he commutes long hours to and back from work every day. Structurally, a family can be fragmented into co-residential units which are reckoned by kitchens (Chao 1983:17). Such a family unit eats from the same stove and has
a common budget as does the family before the fragmentation.

What defines the family and holds its units together is the ownership of collective property by its members (Cohen 1976). It is not necessarily accompanied by the sharing of a common budget as Lang (1947:13) assumed for his “economic family.” Rather than an “economic unit,” the family is primarily a corporate group. At Lung Yeuk Tau, a large family often consists of a main household which controls the corporate property and one or more branch households that have a legitimate claim to the property but maintain a separate budget. According to Baker (1979:3) and in line with our definitions given earlier, we may categorize this group of households as a “stem family” or “extended family,” depending on whether the parents are joined by one or more married sons to form a single corporate group. Since a branch household possesses some corporate property of its own (furniture, savings, etc.), it also qualifies as a “family.” But much or some of its corporate property is still tied up with the stem or extended family to which it belongs, so we call it a “branch family.”

Organized around a married couple, the branch family is a product of “family division” in its early stages. Theoretically, there are three stages in the division of an extended family. The first stage involves “dividing to eat,” “dividing to live,” or “dividing to eat and live.” The result of this stage is the formation of branch families without the division of property. In the second stage, partial division of the family property occurs, when the parent (father or widowed mother) decides to partition the family property among the sons after setting aside a portion for himself or herself. The final stage comes with the death of the surviving parent, whose portion of property is then divided among
the sons. This marks the end of an extended family and the elevation of its branches to independent families unless the brothers decide to stay together as a joint family. With the stem family that has only one married son, the first two stages of division do not necessarily occur, but they may. The final stage will be one of succession and inheritance by the only son exclusively or by the married son and his unmarried brothers equally.

In reality, the process of family division may not be so discrete. For instance, its first two stages will collapse into one if the formation of branch families occurs with partial division of family property simultaneously. Likewise the last two stages will become one if certain agreement is reached on complete division of property while the parents are alive. In one arrangement, the son who continues to live with and takes care of the parents will get an extra share of property for good. In another arrangement, property is divided evenly among the sons, who will take turns to provide for the parents thereafter. In either case, the two stages of property division are reduced to one. When this is implemented in concert with the formation of branch households, the whole process of division can be completed at one stroke. In Lung Yeuk Tau, however, most well-to-do families prefer the three-stage division. They cherish the dream of “five generations living under the same roof” and tend to postpone the division of property as long as they can. Once the division of family and property becomes inevitable, a portion of the family estate will be left unpartitioned. It ensures that the parent(s) be independent of provisions from the sons and continue to possess something that will attract their “filial” attention. Moreover, if they want to, they can leave it as an ancestral estate for future descendants.

The branch family makes its existence felt in many ways at Lung Yeuk Tau. The
Tangs call a branch family *siu ka* ("small family") in contrast to *tai ka* ("large family"), namely, the stem, joint, or extended family of which it is a part. There is also an expression for the establishment of a branch family: *li mun tau*, meaning "set up a household." This makes sense, for a branch family often coincides with a branch household.

If the branch household is the result of a family "dividing to eat," the process is always accompanied by the establishment of separate budgets by the main household and the branch household. But chances are that financially the main household and its branch households are not entirely independent of each other. A branch household may contribute to the purse of the main household with "tea money" or "pocket money" for the parent(s). The main household may subsidize a branch household that is hard up. Generalized reciprocity is very much of a factor in their relationship, not only after the family "divides to eat" but also after it "divides to eat and live."

Where the branch household is the result of a family merely "dividing to live," its members are expected to pay the main household for meals but maintain a separate purse to take care of the other needs of their own. There can be considerable variation in the amount of money paid for such "meals." It is a modified form of generalized reciprocity. If the young married couple have a good income, they pay more than the cost of food. If they have a low income, they may pay a fraction of the cost. What is the fair amount is up to the parents to decide after some informal negotiation with each son. Given the variation in the "fair amounts" that are demanded of different branch households for the same meals, the parents must command sufficient respect from the married couples in order for this arrangement to be sustained. In the cases that I found at Lung Yeuk Tau, each has a
mother who is caring and capable and a father who is authoritarian and relatively well-to-do.

In the absence of the final division of property, a family is merely branched, whether in the form of “dividing to eat,” “dividing to live,” or “dividing to eat and live.” A branch family is a branch household, but not vice versa. At Lung Yeuk Tau, a married couple perforce constitutes a “branch household,” notwithstanding the fact that they may live under the same roof and eat at the same table with the parents and that no division of any kind has occurred. The native term mun tau (“household”) is so defined that it can refer to any reproductive unit created by marriage, including the newly weds. Implicit in this loose usage of the “household” is the wish that the newly-wedded couple will beget offspring and become a real branch household in the near future.

All the “households,” real or potential, are accorded the same status in the celebrations of certain rites of passage at Lung Yeuk Tau. It is imperative to treat them alike on these occasions. For the host family that is distributing gifts for a marriage or a birth, knowing the total number of “households” that should be covered is essential. The lineage keeps an updated record on the “household” heads, and included in it are all the married male descendants. Marriage is the passport to “household” headship, which is denied to an unmarried son unless both of his parents have died, leaving him in charge of the family. Celibacy is openly discouraged.

When the Tangs are celebrating a marriage, the host family will give out wedding cakes from door to door. This is known as pai mun tau or “distributing gifts by the household.” A recipient family gets as many bags of “wedding cakes” as it has had
marriages. The bottom line is one, with or without a marriage in the family. While *pai mun tau* follows these principles invariably, the scope of its gift-giving may vary greatly. The marriage of a son is supposed to be accompanied by lineage-wide *pai mun tau*, because it is bringing a new member into the lineage and constitutes an occasion of celebration and a matter of concern for all the Tangs. Daughters are to be married out, after which their lineage membership is terminated. The matrimony of a daughter is an occasion for the individual family, not the lineage, to celebrate. How extensively the family does *pai mun tau* for a bridal daughter is usually correlated with how far her wedlock will extend its alliance and enhance its prestige. It is generally done without the fanfare of lineage-wide distribution of gifts. But if the daughter is wedded to a celebrity, her marriage can be easily turned into an occasion of celebration for the whole lineage.

There are dinner parties after the wedding of a son. I was invited to one of them. According to the father of the groom, when he himself was married over thirty years ago, the wedding feasts were given in the main ancestral hall of Lung Yeuk Tau. This time, the newly weds would go there to worship the ancestors briefly, but the fellow lineage members would be feasted at a restaurant on two consecutive evenings, with a total of twenty-five round tables of food. At the dinner parties, each “household” offered a red packet of gift money (HK$ 300) to the host family. Most lineage leaders and elders came to the feast of the wedding day.

The bride was the real center of attention. Led by the groom from table to table, she paid respect to every guest with a toast and received congratulations in return. The

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1 Each round table seats about twelve guests.

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one congratulation that never failed to bring up cheers at the table was "Welcome to be a
daughter-in-law of the Tangs!" With this, the bride was publicly and joyfully initiated as a
member of the lineage. There was no abandon of amusement and excitement. Pranks that
were an integral part of the traditional Chinese wedding feast were kept to a minimum.
While everyone was free to poke fun at the newly weds, womenfolk were conscious of the
presence of lineage elders and leaders, and the males were prone to be more protective of
the groom than hilarious at his cost. Besides, joking relationship is so structured in the
Chinese lineage that it is not really encouraged between one and his sister-in-law or
daughter-in-law.¹ All this, however, did not keep the guests from being light-hearted.
Lineage solidarity demanded that such an occasion be one of merriment, temperance, and
harmony. So it turned out to be.

In the celebrations of a child-birth, eggs that are dyed red are to be distributed. The
gift-giving for a birth follows the same principle of pai mun tau, but its distribution tends
to be confined to a limited area, the boundary of which is traditionally defined. It may
comprise a single large village or a number of small villages that reciprocate frequently
among themselves. In place of eggs, a type of traditional food called tsin tue is often used.
Made of glutinous rice flour, tsin tue is deep-fried dumplings with or without fillings.
Literally "fried pair," such dumplings are always given out in even numbers by the family
which hopes for the happy occasion to repeat and double itself. Depending on its
relationship with the host family, the recipient may be presented with an additional bowl of

¹ After the death of the parents, an unmarried son is expected to consider his eldest
brother's spouse as a mother figure. Usually an authoritarian figure, the father does not
joke with his son, let alone his daughter-in-law.
*keung cho*, a dish of pork trots cooked mainly in soybean sauce and vinegar, as the name suggests. My informants are not sure about the significance of this antiquated custom. But there is general agreement that pork trots symbolize fecundity. It could be that the host family would like to share its blessings of fecundity with some close relatives or to assure senior relatives of its commitment to the goal of a large family.

For all the newborn babies who are male, a ceremony is held during the second week of the first lunar month amidst the celebrations of the Spring Festival. The Tangs choose to report to their ancestors the happy tidings of lineage growth at the best time of the year. A lantern is lit for each male baby in the main ancestral hall, and offerings are presented in his behalf on the altar of Tang ancestors. The ceremony is properly named *tin tang* or “lighting a lantern.” Lung Kong Tso, the oldest ancestral estate that sponsors this annual event, puts up a huge lantern in front of the altar. With its approval, each family that gave birth to a son, grandson, or great grandson in the past year contributes a small one. Hanging from the tussle of each small lantern are a name card of the baby, a lucky charm, and objects that sound auspicious in Cantonese: oranges (“homophones with good luck”), taros (homophonous with “affluence”), and chopsticks (homophonous with the expression of “have son soon”). A baby who has a lantern lit for him in the ancestral hall is officially recognized as a male descendant of the Tang lineage and admitted into its genealogy. It is a formalized ritual for recruiting male lineage members.

The ceremony ends on the night of *Yuanxiao* (the 15th of the first lunar month) with a communal feast in the main ancestral hall.¹ The food, which is a mixture of pork,

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¹ In 1995 it came on March 4. A time to light lanterns and enjoy sweet dumplings.
cabbage, carrots, celery, bean-curd products, and so on, is served in a large aluminum basin for each table, hence the name “basin-meal” or pun choy. The attendance of the feast is so large that it takes a regular team of four people plus extra hands nearly a week to prepare.

Towards the end of the feast, the small lanterns are returned to their owners, and the large one is lowered from the ceiling. All of a sudden, chaos breaks loose. People whose families are hoping for male babies, rush to tear pieces off the big lantern, which they will take home and place on the family altars. The scramble involves men and women of all age apart from boys and girls. Scarcely is it over when fireworks are let off to conclude the four-day ceremony.

Marriage, birth, and death are the notes of a symphony that depicts the change of a human population over time. No symphony can make do without the variation of legato, staccato, crescendo, and decrescendo. The family that constitutes the basic unit of population at Lung Yeuk Tau also grows, expands, and divides with marriage, birth, and death. But as will be discussed in Chapter 8.1, the Chinese lineage turns death into a song of ancestor worship that inspires marriage and birth.

4.4 Descent and Brotherhood

He is an old gentleman who returned to Lung Yeuk Tau from abroad in order to perform the tin tang ritual for his two grandsons. But because the lineage allows a family to light one lantern at a time in the ancestral hall, the gentleman is coming back the next Spring Festival to repeat the ritual for his younger grandson, who was born in a different

_Yuanxiao_ marks the end of celebrations for the Spring Festival.
Like this gentleman, many of the Tangs overseas make so much of their blood tie with the lineage that they travel all the way back to Lung Yeuk Tau, bringing their descendants along. It is at once a pilgrim to the homeland and an initiation ritual of the young who were born abroad.

There are quite a few temporary returnees on the scene of the basin-meal to celebrate of the completion of tin tang. I am seated at the same table with three of them, a father and his two sons, who have both finished college abroad. This is their second trip back to Lung Yeuk Tau. Our conversation indicates that a major purpose of their journey is to reconnect with their roots. What it means can be just to familiarize the young with the past and glory of the Tangs, or to arrange for the retirement of the old man in Lung Yeuk

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Only babies born to the same family in the same year can share a lantern.
Tau, or to renew the memory of their lineage membership, or all of above. As time goes by, the lineage is becoming more and more parsimonious in viewing its blood tie with overseas members and may terminate it with an entry of *shik pai* ("inanimate branch") in the genealogy after contact is lost.

"What do you see in Lung Yeuk Tau that is appealing?" I directed the question to a group of young people, with whom I spent five days and four nights on a tour of Dongguan in Mainland China. My respondents enumerated a large number of merits that Lung Yeuk Tau held for them, ranging from good feng-shui, idyllic scenery, spacious housing, easy access to the fun of urban life, low crime rate to the blessings of ancestral property. The enumeration might vary from person to person, but the benefit of living among relatives tied by blood was invariably on the short list of each response. I understood what it meant when a Tang lineage member, being mute and deaf, was targeted by gang theft during the tour. An angry crowd of Tangs stormed into the local police station and pressed it to look into the leads that they had. Blood tie in this case means a spontaneous collective consciousness of "one for all and all for one" when there is threat from without.

Blood tie has two dimensions. One is descent which is vertical, and the other is brotherhood which is horizontal. While descent is tracked by the line from father to son, brotherhood is a biological relationship that exists among the male members of a descent group. Wang Sung-hsing (1991:11) points out that the Chinese kin group weaves descent and brotherhood into its structure as a fabric interlaces warp with weft in its texture. Blood tie is to the Chinese kin group what thread is to fabrics. In the dualism of blood tie, descent and brotherhood are binary oppositions. It, of course, does not rule out the possibility that
they may correlate with each other. For instance, there is a positive relationship between the depth of descent and the range of brotherhood. But descent and brotherhood are typically assigned differential importance so that one may have priority over the other in the organization of a specific type of kin group.

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau define their lineage boundary primarily by common descent. Such a lineage is the product of incomplete division of the property bequeathed by a founding ancestor. Chinese anthropologists (Tai 1945:231; Chuang 1983:199) have a descriptive term for the formation of such a lineage, namely, *jiu-fen-zì*. It refers to a type of property division in which lots are drawn by the sons to determine which portion of the ancestral land goes to whom, and the extra portion is to be owned collectively as an ancestral estate. In the resultant lineage, membership strictly depends on descent from the founding ancestor, and collective ownership of the ancestral estate is inherited along his bloodline. It gives rise to the term the "hereditary lineage," where descent has priority over brotherhood as the principle of organization (Zheng 1992:63).

At Lung Yeuk Tau, the incomplete division of ancestral property created its first ancestral estate, Lung Kong Tso. Tang Lung-kong (1353-1411) was survived by his wife (1366-1449), whose management of family property was instrumental in the rise of the Tangs to prosperity. The genealogy extols her role and insight, comparing her to the "virtuous mother of the good old times."\(^1\) After she passed away, her six sons formed a joint family, and the ancestral property remained undivided.\(^2\) It was the descendants of the

\(^1\) "凡植家成務至有今日者，多其力也......人咸稱其知識。由是田園廣置.....視古之賢母亦不多讓” in *A Genealogical History of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau*, pp. 32-3.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 33: "其昆季和氣溢於門閥，廣澤延於後世。"
next generation who built the main ancestral hall in 1525 and set up an endowment estate in the name of Tang Lung-kong to benefit all the descendants from his bloodline. In this way, a “hereditary lineage” was born.

There is another type of Chinese lineage. The Liu lineage of Sheung Shui, for instance, did not found its ancestral estate Man Shek Tong until 1751, that is, about 400 years after their first ancestor arrived in the New Territories (Baker 1968:28, 31). So for centuries, the Lius did not own any corporate property among themselves. The formation of a lineage in such a case starts with the recognition of genetic affinity by a number of agnatic brothers who are bound by blood. It is followed by tracing their demonstrated descent to a specific common ancestor, in whose name an ancestral estate is set up. But the lineage that comes into being subsequently defines its boundary primarily by selective brotherhood rather than common descent. Recognition of lineage brotherhood is denied to those who can not contribute to the establishment of the ancestral estate, even though they are of common descent. When some of them are admitted as an ancillary branch, they are not entitled to the inheritance and management of the ancestral estate.

Chinese anthropologists use the term *he-yue-zi* or “contractual agreement” to describe the formation of this type of lineage (Tai 1945:231; Y. Chuang 1983:199). It refers to the fact that the so-called ancestral property is not bequeathed but contributed by shareholders on condition that they and their descendants remain its exclusive owners and beneficiaries. What brings these shareholders together is the idea of agnatic alliance for mutual benefits. This motive is typical of the “contractual lineage,” where selective brotherhood has priority and can override descent. But over time, a “contractual lineage”
may iron out its internal inequality to become a look-alike of the "hereditary lineage" (Zheng 1992:22).

Conversely, a "hereditary lineage" may reorganize itself on a "contractual" basis when it is on the verge of falling apart or has disintegrated. It is unrealistic to think that the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau have never undergone any reorganization. They apparently did when, for instance, the third fang chose to siphon off and settle down in Beihai after the "coastal evacuation." But since it was a time when free land was available in the coastal region and had no property value, Lung Kong Tso survived the crisis. There were also minor siphon-offs, one of which involved the forefathers of those who inhabit Siu Hang San Tsuen. These ancestors belonged to a branch descended from the second son of Tsung-wo. They left Lung Yeuk Tau to settle Nam Tong at an unknown time but returned some eighty years ago. Their descendants are now denied lineage membership as well as the benefits of Lung Kong Tso. It is unlikely that this branch ever took out its share of the ancestral estate, since there is no discrimination against those descendants who belong to the same branch but whose forefathers never left Lung Yeuk Tau. What is at issue is descent, which can be cut off by the lineage if a bearer is uprooted and fails to fulfill his obligations.

No matter what reorganization the lineage of Lung Yeuk Tau might have gone through, there is no evidence that it ever resulted in the complete division of the estates of Lung Kong Tso. This dissolution is a necessary condition for the reorganization of the Tangs on a "contractual" basis. Because the Tangs have steered clear of it, the lineage remains a "hereditary" one. Its membership is strictly granted by descent, the management of Lung Kong Tso is rotated among the different fang, and its benefits are evenly distributed.
among the lineage members. Admittedly, no lineage is free from an inequality of wealth as long as it has several ancestral estates that are established differentially within it. But in the "hereditary lineage," each ancestral estate is owned by all the descendants of its founder, whether they are rich or poor. There is a strong sense of egalitarianism among the heirs. Only on moral grounds can an individual heir stripped of his rights that come with descent.

4.5 Adoption: The Circles of Discretion

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau monitor the heirship of corporate property by such mechanisms as the genealogy, lineage rules, and public sanction. At the heart of succession and inheritance is descent. When a male has no natural son, his line of descent is in danger of breaking down patrilineally. If he dies without a male heir, it is a serious breach of his moral obligations to the ancestors. In the Tang genealogy, a remark will be added to the entry of his bloodline that says "defunct" or "inanimate" instead of "extinct." According to the genealogy of Lung Yeuk Tau, it is not that the deceased man does not deserve the harsh word, but that the lineage is too overcome with sorrow and compassion to scold him for the tragic extinction of his bloodline. Inevitably adoption, which is a remedy for natural inadequacy, has an appeal to the individual as well as the lineage.

Nevertheless, the lineage of Lung Yeuk Tau enjoins the adoption of any son who is not a descendant of the Tangs. It is also stipulated that the first candidate for adoption is a son born of one’s younger brother. If this choice is not available, the candidate must be

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1 In A Genealogical History of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau, p.20: "(繼嗣)又無相應者，不得已書曰止。不書絕而書止者，不忍斥言，以深致不幸之意。"

2 Ibid.: "男子不許出繼異姓亦不得以異姓子為後。或有無嗣者，以親弟之子繼之。若無可繼者，於族中取其行分相應者繼之。"
someone from within the zu who is of the appropriate generation and branch. From our discussion in Chapter 2.1, the Chinese term zu is polysemic. Since it can stand for a variety of descent groups, the lineage rule in question delineates a series of concentric “circles of discretion” for adoption. The innermost circle is limited to the patrilineal nephews of Ego. The next one expands to include all the candidates within the zu as a lineage organization. Further out are the circles that overlap the boundary of the zu at the higher-order lineage, clan, and surname levels respectively.

Each “circle of discretion” defines a range of options as against choices that are considered inappropriate and excluded accordingly. To be “discrete” is to stay within the circle. Only a lack of right choices vindicates a move to the next circle. Together, the “circles of discretion” prescribe a discovery procedure to be followed in search of a candidate for adoption — by progression from the inmost circle to the outermost one in a fixed order. There are no leaps or bounds. Otherwise the rule is violated. The function of “circles of discretion” is to sanction both lineage supervision and public discrimination. As we will see, while lineage supervision is concerned with the “legitimacy” of an adoption, public sanction or discrimination accompanies the procedure every step of the way.

It is reported that over centuries, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau had adopted a lot of sons of Hakka origin (Tanaka 1985:213). Without the benefit of data that lend support to this statement, it is hard to assess its validity. But genealogies do show that once in a while the Tang lineage endorsed the adoption of sons from the Hakkas who bore the same surname. Of the twenty-five adopted sons recorded in The Genealogy of the Tsung-Yan Fong of the Tangs from Ancestor Yuen-Leung over a period of some 450 years, two were
were from Hakka Tangs. Except for a remark indicating their Hakka origin, the genealogy of the first fang treats them and their descendants as its members. But in the two other cases that involve adopted sons of unknown origin, their descendants are simply left out of the genealogy. Evidently, adoption is left to individual choice at Lung Yeuk Tau, but the lineage does exercise the right of sanction in accordance with its rules. It takes upon itself to make sure that the discovery procedure is followed and that the final boundary set by the "circles of discretion" is not overstepped. The "legitimacy" of an adoption lies in its ultimate acceptance by the lineage in its genealogy.

Public discrimination steps up as the "circle of discretion" expands to include a larger group of candidates each time. When one crosses the boundary of the family into the lineage in search of a candidate for adoption, discrimination is minimal. The public will endorse the adoption readily if the discovery procedure is followed. Whoever is adopted in this case is a descendant of the lineage-founding ancestor. For the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, it is like grafting a twig from one branch to another of the same tree. There is no tampering with the bloodline of the lineage-founding ancestor. Nor does it alter the collective heirship of his estates in any way. The common ancestry shared by the lineage brotherhood justifies the grafting of adoption. Once deceased, the father will be akin to an ancestor rather than a ghost to the adopted son. Without the common ancestry, the father will be a ghost and remain so to the adopted son (Wolf 1974:173).

There is a drastic increase of public discrimination when one moves across the boundary of the lineage. The two sons adopted by the first fang from Hakka Tangs were clearly discriminated against. By the second generation, their descendants had all left Lung
Yeuk Tau save one. Public discrimination is reinforced by the lineage rule that no adopted son from outside the lineage or any of his descendants is allowed to head a fang or branch, let alone become a lineage head. These “outsider” Tangs are also subject to unwritten discrimination, which makes them underdogs in whatever dispute they may have with other lineage members. As always, the collective consciousness of the Tangs is very much conditioned by the distinctions of inside/outside, close/distant, and descent/brotherhood. There is a tenacious awareness among them that once their common descent is adulterated, their ancestral property may fall into the hands of non-descendants from Tang Lung-kong. Naturally, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are inclined to gang up and “squeeze” out any intruder who threatens to tamper with their descent line and, for that effect, their collective inheritance of property. This is where public sanction takes over from the genealogy and lineage rules as a powerful means of maintaining the “thorough breed” of descent.

To venture outside of the surname group incurs the maximal public discrimination and negative sanction. As recently as 1987, the Tangs made no bones about their hostility against adopted sons who are not their flesh and blood. Updated that year, their genealogy reiterates the old punishment for the adoption of a non-Tang son with a removal of the right to lineage ancestral property. Even where the restriction is ostensibly relaxed, as with the Tangs of Kam Tin, it only means that the lineage couches its negative sanction in a mild

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1 There were five of them. We do not know what happened to the descendants of Tang Fo-yao, the one who did not leave, for the genealogical records ended around 1840.
2 In *The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin*, p. 67. 《異姓人嗣》: “假如出外鄉擇立為嗣者……一概不準為房族家長首事之例，即其後裔亦然也。”
3 In *The Nam Yeung Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau*, p. 23: “冒姓之子，生齒之盛，亦必黜之……惟養父田產許其承管。”
form. Instead of leaving these adopted sons out, the genealogy records them as "alien-surname descendants" in a separate category and attributes this tolerance to the increasing difficulty the individual has in finding a right candidate from within the lineage. The message is loud and clear: they are to be treated as the descendants of individuals rather than of the lineage ancestors. The basis for public discrimination against them remains as intact and strong as ever.

Therefore, the Tangs endeavor to place adoption within the framework of the blood tie. The blood tie also provides a framework for alliance. At once vertical and horizontal, it allows a Chinese kin group to expand its boundary in space by tracing its descent back in time. The Tangs of the New Territories, for instance, form a higher-order lineage by recognizing common ancestry from Tang Yuen-leung's father. In forming the Tang clan, common ancestry is pushed further back to Tang Yuen-leung's great grandfather so that all the "Five Great Fang" descended from this man are included. Members of the Tang clan or the "Five Great Fang" are now spread far and wide in the old Xinan County that included Hong Kong. Finally there is the "greater clan" of Tangs, which traced ancestry to its first patriarch in the Eastern Han period (AD 25 - 220) and built an ancestral hall in the capital of Guangdong Province lest "members of the same bloodline became strangers to each other, and bearers of the same surname divided into secluded groups."

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1 In *The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin*, p. 67: "自民國成立後，衆以撫撫甚難，擬以異姓亦得僅立為嗣。"
2 In *Prefaces to the Genealogy of the Tangs in the New Territories*, p. 73.
3 They were headed by Yuen-yam, Yuen-hei, Yuen-ching, Yuen-leung, and Yeun-wo, who were born of two agnatic brothers descended from one grandfather.
If our discussion of public discrimination is any indicator, it speaks volumes about the distinction that Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau make between what is real and what is fallible and metaphorical on the issue of the blood tie. Within their lineage, the blood tie is very real. It is a biological bond that has been monitored meticulously by the genealogy and purged by public and moral sanctions. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau have produced more genealogies than any of their lineage cousins in the New Territories (Tanaka 1985:213), and there is little doubt about the authenticity of their generational records since the lineage-founding ancestor. The horizontal affinity of blood licensed by common descent and ancestor worship yields a bond of brotherhood that ties ten villages into a closely-knit community and defines the boundary for the holding of corporate property. Blood relationship is not a metaphor but a badge of the kin group that inhabits Lung Yeuk Tau.
CHAPTER 5

THE ECONOMY

The twin basins of Fanling and Ta Kwu Ling are likely to have been a freshwater lake or lagoon that became swamps as recently as 1,500 years ago (Grant 1960:106). After the land had completely emerged from the water, it turned black with a high content of organic matter from the decomposition of mangroves. In the pedology of the Hong Kong region, soils from the twin basins form a unique classification series, called the "Fanling Association." Until thirty years ago or so, the Fanling basin boasted some of the most intensively cultivated land in the world, with a very high density of agricultural population, especially in the vicinity of its two main towns Fanling and Sheung Shui.

5.1 The Rice Cultivation and Ecology

For centuries, Lung Yeuk Tau had a rice-based economy. In rice-farming, the use of land revolves around the exploitation of three ecological conditions: water, solar energy, and soils. Lying at 114°09' of eastern longitude and 22°30' of northern latitude, Lung Yeuk Tau has a subtropical climate. With an annual mean of over 2,200 millimeters, rainfall provides an abundant source of water for the cultivation of paddy rice in this area. The winter monsoon brings light rain, and the summer monsoon, heavy rain. About 90% of the annual precipitation tends to concentrate in the months of April through October (Davis
1949:66), which happen to be the growing seasons of paddy rice. In addition, the Dragon Hill, which rises to a height of 325 meters, provides a powerful orographic lifting of airstreams that is rain-prone. But nature can be treacherous. As peasants of Lung Yeuk Tau knew very well, the precipitation of rainfall might vary so much from year to year that it could not be taken for granted. Still fresh in the memory of many old people are the major droughts that hit Lung Yeuk Tau in the spring of 1956 and the summer of 1965.

Easy access to the Phoenix Water from the south and the Indus River (Ng Tung River) from the east was a godsend for the agriculture of Lung Yeuk Tau. But of these two sources of water supply, the Indus River was by far the lifeline of local rice-farming. Winding across the Fanling Basin from the east and emptying into the Shenzhen River along the northern Hong Kong border, this river system had an extensive catchment area that partially captured the headwaters of the Ta Kwu Ling Basin. The interception resulted in a relative inadequacy of water supply for the Ta Kwu Ling Basin, rendering it much less productive than the Fanling Basin in terms of rice yield per unit of land.\(^1\) Double-cropping was widely practiced in both basins, but a catch crop during the winter was possible only where there was sufficient water. Lung Yeuk Tau was able to grow three crops a years (Grant 1960:108).

Not only was Lung Yeuk Tau well-watered, but historically it was free from inundation. Wet rice is resistant to minor flooding, but major inundation can cause crop

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\(^1\) Most tributaries of the Indus River system have run dry since its own headwaters were diverted into the Plover Cover Reservoir (船灣淡水湖) in the mid-1970s. The diversion was planned and engineered to meet the growing needs of fresh water supplies for the Hong Kong region at a time when farming had ceased to be an important economic activity in the New Territories.
damage or failure. The Fanling Basin drains into the Shenzhen River, which is tidal and connected with the seas. If a heavy rain coincides with a high sea, serious floods can result from an overflowing Shenzhen River. Within the Fanling Basin, flooding and waterlogging used to be limited to the Sheung Shui area, where people had learned to live with it for centuries. In recent years, however, Siu Hang San Tsuen, the northernmost village of Lung Yeuk Tau has started to be bothered by flooding, albeit to a minor degree. The Tangs attribute the aggravation of this problem to the alteration of regional topography or feng-shui by the urbanization projects along the Shenzhen River, which seem to have put some of the Fanling drainage systems into disarray.

Being subtropical, Lung Yeuk Tau has 365 days of growing season. There is plenty of sunshine except for January, February, and March, when the sky tends to be overcast and the sun shines through barely over two hours a day. During the rest of the year, the availability of sunshine averages 6.86 hours a day (Grant 1960:135). In the summer time, sunlight is so intense that the soils wetted by a diurnal rain have a tendency to become baked. This is why the vegetation on the northern slope of the Dragon Hill, which faces Lung Yeuk Tau, is much richer than the more exposed and barren southern slope. The same effect has been observed on nearby Tai Mo Shan, the highest mountain (957 meters) of the Hong Kong region. For the rice farmers of Lung Yeuk Tau, it was very important in mid-summer to loosen baked soils of the nursery from time to time before the seedlings were transplanted for the second rice crop of the year.

With all the solar energy beating down on it, Lung Yeuk Tau has a very mild weather. Its lowest temperature, normally recorded in January, tends to hover above 50° F so that
ground frosts are rare. At the other end, its highest temperature often reaches 90° F and above, especially during June and July. Notwithstanding a relatively high average temperature, there are four distinct seasons. Winter is cool and short, lasting from December to January; summer is sultry and long, lasting from June through September. In between, spring is rainy and warm, whereas autumn is crisp and dry. When it is cold or very hot, the high humidity that dominates the region for most of the year, takes its toll on bodily comfort and somatic vitality. The rawness of winter that results from its humidity, particularly makes this season feel much cooler than it is. A lingering "cold spell" with a temperature of 45° - 48° F, for instance, may prove to be bitterly frigid and even life-threatening.¹ Should it occur, which is seldom, extensive damage can be done to winter crops and garden produce.

The folk of Lung Yeuk Tau lived mainly by the rice-farming cycle rather than the cycle of natural seasons. For them, the most productive part of the year was from April to October, during which they were fully devoted to the cultivation of two main rice crops. It formed the essence and rhythm of village life (Aijmer 1980:89). The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were master farmers who were at their best in rice cultivation. And they went at it gracefully, with a rhythm accentuated by a cycle of festivals. The first transplantation of seedlings from the nursery to the fields, for instance, cannot be done before Qingming, the festival of sweeping ancestral graves in early April (the 17th day of the second lunar month).² The first rice harvest and the sowing of the second rice crop are preceded by Duanwu, the Dragon Boat Festival that comes in late

¹ Such a cold spell caught the people unawares in early 1996 and claimed dozens of lives in Hong Kong.
² Developed in ancient China, the lunar calendar defines the month by the waxing and waning of the moon but incorporates twenty-four solar terms (e.g. solstices and equinoxes) into its reckoning of the year.
June (the 5th day of the fifth lunar month). The second harvest is to follow the celebration of Chongyang, the Double-Ninth Festival, by sweeping ancestral graves again in late October (the 9th day of the ninth lunar month). Such was the rhythm that set the pace for life at Lung Yeuk Tau. Rice farming was more than an economic pursuit that involved the use of land. Rather, it was a way of life that made the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau who they were.

Some of the solar energy that the coast of south China receives is translated into typhoons. They are of most frequent occurrence in August and September, thus providing a break from the unbearable heat of mid-summer. But rice farmers had good reason to dread the typhoon, as its cyclones often carried a wind speed of some 100 m.p.h., which was destructive to the second rice crop. According to Claxton (1931), four out of every five typhoons that affect Hong Kong cause easterly gales. Only about five miles away from the seas, Lung Yeuk Tau is fortunate to have its east side shielded by rolling mountains and hills, except for a narrow opening left by the Sha Tau Kok valley. Twisting and turning, this valley runs down from the Mirs Bay in the northeast and serves as a corridor for some destructive gales. To this day, after agriculture was phased out for about thirty years, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau still have an aversion to easterly winds. They compare them to sat hei or the "evil breath" of feng-shui that brings illness and bad luck, as against the invigorating force of feng-shui that nourishes life.

The soils of Lung Yeuk Tau belong in the Fanling Association. Originally derived from extrusive volcanic rocks rather than Tai Mo Shan porphyry (Williams 1971:6; Allen & Stephens 1969), this lacustrine or lagoonal series features a loamy mixture of sand, silt and clay, often with an abrupt transition to the laterite clay subsoil. The top 12-18 inches of earth at Lung Yeuk Tau are of a unique black color. But this can be misleading, for a soil which
appears to be very good does not necessarily grow very good rice crops. When left to dry out, for instance, the soils of Lung Yeuk Tau bake easily. But the exact reason that restrained the rice productivity of these soils may never be known, as farming is an economic pursuit of the past now.

In retrospect, the Tangs wish that there were greater soil depth. They often quote an old saying to illustrate the point, “While Dongguan was never good enough to produce a *zhuang-yuan*, Baoan was not good enough to produce even a *han-lin*.\(^1\) A *han-lin* was a member of the Imperial Academy. His scholarly achievement was considered inferior to that of a *zhuang-yuan* who finished first in the national civil service examination held every three years. What they are saying is that in terms of soil depth, Dongguan is deficient, but Baoan, which is the old name for Xinan County and the Hong Kong region, is even worse. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau believe there to be a correlation between soil depth and soil productivity. With an average yield of 250-300 catties per *tau chung*,\(^2\) the land of Lung Yeuk Tau was of moderate rice productivity when compared with those pockets of area where fresh-water rice yield could reach 400 or more catties per *tau chung*. Nevertheless, within the twin basins of Fanling and Ta Kwu Ling, Lung Yeuk Tau was one of the most productive rice-farming areas.

### 5.2 The Vegetable Revolution

The rice-based economy of Lung Yeuk Tau started to diversify in the early 1950s, when there was a massive influx of immigrant farmers from Mainland China. Up till then, little

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1. “東莞無狀分，寶安無翰林．” It is difficult to translate into English the pun “狀分,” which means both *zhuang-yuan* and “shape” in this old saying. The Tangs made it clear that by “shape” they referred to “soil depth” (地皮).
2. A unit of farmland covered by one decalitre or seven catties of seeds and equivalent to 7,800 square feet. A catty is 1.33 lbs. 100 catties make one picul.

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change had occurred to the New Territories, which was left with “its own complete economy of the life of old China” (Abercrombie 1948:19). In Lung Yeuk Tau, the primary economic pursuits consisted of rice-farming, aquatic pond-culture, and forestry, with their significance falling into that order. Many of the immigrant farmers from Guangdong, however, were skilled farmers who specialized in vegetable cultivation (Topley 1964:157). They fell in love with the black soils and abundant water supplies of the Fanling Basin. The result was a large congregation of immigrant farmers in this area.

Living in temporary structures as “squatters,” immigrant farmers grew garden vegetables on land rented from the local lineages or landowners and sold their produce on the urban Hong Kong markets. As of 1960, the number of immigrant farmers in the Fanling-Ta Kwu Ling Plain had reached some 12,000, and the paddy acreage of the area had dropped by about 36% since 1950 (Sit 1982:83; Grant 1960:107). Furthermore, over 40% of two-crop paddy land was also used for growing additional crops of vegetables during the winter (ADR 1960:21). This is known as the “vegetable revolution.” Beginning in the Fanling area around 1950, it soon swept the entire New Territories. In the course, the economic activities of Lung Yeuk Tau further expanded to pig-farming and poultry-farming, but neither had such an impact on the Tang lineage as did the vegetable revolution.

The vegetable revolution was essentially a drive to intensify and commercialize agriculture. Its economic benefits were obvious. Jack Potter (1968:84-7) has calculated that in the early 1960s, one tau chung of rented land yielded a net annual profit of HK $107 on two

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1 The 1961 Census showed that there were 47,223 full-time agricultural workers, most of whom were engaged in vegetable and rice farming (Barnett 1962:51-4).
crops of rice, but the profit would increase to HK $2,251 on five crops of vegetables provided the land was more intensively exploited. In terms of land use, vegetable farming was at least twenty-one times as efficient as rice-farming. Both Potter and James Watson (1975:44) have noticed that the maximal yield of vegetables in the Hong Kong region could be as high as eight crops a year. In that case, the gross annual income would jump to some HK $4,000 per tau chung of land. Working on the land of Lung Yeuk Tau, some innovative vegetable farmers were known to be able to grow six to seven crops.

The vegetable revolution, however, was a mixed blessing. The intensity of labor in vegetable gardening could be back-breaking. Watercress, for instance, needed to be sprinkled several times a day in order for its leaves to stay soaked and fresh. It was done manually, with water fetched in two wooden barrels. Carrying them on a pole over his back, the farmer moved between the rows of vegetables, spreading a thin film of water over plants each time he tilted the barrels on a quick swing backwards. Two barrels of water made one dan ("pole-load") of water, which weighed over eighty pounds. A watercress grower normally had to carry and sprinkle two to three hundred dan of water a day, and most of the other vegetables were watered in the same way (Aijmer 1980:27). This was only a part of the strenuous labor required by vegetable farming, and the demand of continuous labor input, too, did not sit well with the rhythm of a village life that was traditionally based on rice farming and its ritual cycle.

The key to maximization of profits from vegetable cultivation was a keen sense of supply and demand. Fast-maturing vegetables were optimal, but they normally did not bring high market prices. It was ideal to cultivate a mixture of vegetables, some of which took a
longer time to grow but were more cost-effective in terms of labor investment and profit benefit. Vegetable prices fluctuated from time to time. It was important for the farmer to optimally plan and time the cultivation of diverse vegetables so as to stay ahead in meeting market demand. In short, vegetable cultivation made farming entirely market-oriented. For rice farmers whose economy was a combination of self-sufficiency and market exchange, it threatened to take away their economic autonomy and subject them to the tyranny of market economy exclusively.

There were three ways that the Tangs could get involved in the vegetable revolution: to rent out their land to vegetable cultivators, to grow winter vegetables between two rice crops, and to switch to vegetable farming exclusively. The Pangs, another powerful lineage in Fanling, seemed to know how to exploit these opportunities. It led to "a sudden rise in the income and standard of living of the Pangs" (Baker 1966:29). Lung Yeuk Tau, however, was more conservative. The Tang lineages do not have any rules against renting land to nonkin as Grant (1960:107) has assumed in an attempt to explain why Kam Tin and Ping Shan chose not to take immigrant farmers as tenants. Historically it was very much in the tradition of the Tangs of the New Territories to have nonkin tenancy (Hayes 1993:20; Smith 1984:74; Shephard 1900:266-69). The uncharacteristic wariness of Lung Yeuk Tau, Kam Tin, and Ping Shan had much to do with their tremendous losses of land to tenants after the British takeover of the New Territories. It engendered strong reservations as a landowner of Sha Tin put in the following statement (Aijmer 1986:220):

[Encouraged by what happened in the past, the] farmer who cultivates a piece of land will think that this piece of land belongs to him... This is very common in the New Territories, and a lot of villagers would rather have their land deserted than rent it to outsiders.
Furthermore, whether a landowner was willing to take immigrant tenants also depended on if there was an economic incentive. It turned out that landlordism did not produce a sure profit. By “landlordism,” we mean renting or subleasing one’s land to tenants. Depending on soil fertility, the annual rent for one *tau chung* of cultivable land in the Fanling area was between 4-6 piculs of unhusked rice in the 1960s. Converted into the market price of 1962 (HK $37 per picul), the average yearly rent came to HK $185 for one *tau chung* of land. This was less than the net income that the land owner would make by working the land himself to produce two rice crops on the high side of yield, i.e. 600 catties. In that case, the net income from rice farming was HK $206 after the costs of seed, fertilizer, and the depreciation of farm tools were defrayed.\(^1\) By fetching HK $185 only, landlordism actually operated at a loss. Even if the two rice crops were average, totaling 550 catties and bringing in a net income of some HK $162.5, landlordism did not make much difference there. After we figure in the winter catch crop that many people of Lung Yeuk Tau used to grow, landlordism again failed to cover the loss of income from rice farming. Only for those individuals who could not work all the land they owned, was it an economically viable option.

In all likelihood, the Pangs had more small landowners than the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau. Because of the Pangs’ late rise to wealth, land was concentrated in individual hands rather than ancestral estates. As a rule, where large landholdings are tied up in ancestral estates, lineage organization tends to coincide with high rates of tenancy (Stover &

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\(^1\) To grow two rice crops on one *tau chong* of land, the costs were HK$ 10 for seed, HK$ 40 for fertilizer, and HK$ 1 for the depreciation of farm tools (Potter 1968:85).
Stover 1976:153). This was true of Lung Yeuk Tau, where most of its inhabitants worked on lineage ancestral land as tenants. Purely out of economic consideration, these tenants were in favor of farming rather than subleasing the rented ancestral land. What they did was to grow winter vegetables in addition to two rice crops. On top of the payment of rent and various expenses, it could generate a hike of net profit from HK $107 to about HK$ 400 per tau chung of land, which greatly exceeded the benefits of landlordism. A rice-based economy was relatively self-sufficient, and the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau had always cultivated some simple garden produce on the side for domestic consumption. To grow a winter vegetable crop for market was no big deal if they did not mind the intensity of labor. Unfortunately, this option was not going to last long, as the vegetable revolution had triggered a crisis of rice farming that was deepening quickly.

Compelled to terminate its laissez-faire immigration policy in 1953, the Crown Colony was awakened to the uncertainty of its relations with the People’s Republic of China. It led to the decision of Hong Kong to diversify its food suppliers. As the first step in that direction, the vegetable revolution was warmly embraced by the government. In the meantime, Hong Kong started to import rice from Thailand in case there was a China’s blockade or a breakdown of its supplies (Morris 1988:282). The long-grain Thai strains were of excellent quality, and yet they were cheaper than the home-grown ones. The market demand for indigenous rice started dwindling, except for some special grains

1 The Hong Kong Government, for instance, established the Vegetable Marketing Organization to provide a trucking service for the daily transportation of garden produce to the urban markets, which effectively eliminated the parasitic middlemen and improved the profitability of vegetable farming (Potter 1969:19; Kelly 1987:68).
grown in Yuen Long. To make the matters worse, the cost of hired labor in the New Territories was shooting through the roof (Watson 1975:49-50). Potter (1968:77) found that the average daily wage for temporary laborers around Ping Shan in 1961 was HK$7 plus meals for men and HK$5 plus meals for women. In the Fanling area, where there was a greater concentration of labor-intensive vegetable plots competing for able-bodied manpower, workers were demanding a daily wage of up to HK$9 plus meals. For the rice farmers, it was too high to be affordable. Last but not the least, the prevalence of a cash economy added to the nightmare of rice cultivation, which traditionally depended on credit to finance the expenses of its production.

The crisis of rice farming was traumatic to the people of Lung Yeuk Tau. It is registered in their bitter memories of the late 1950s. Suddenly, rice cultivation was no longer worth its while, which left them at loose ends. There was, of course, the option to switch to exclusive vegetable farming, but they did not have the skills for the cultivation of a wide range of vegetables, each with individual requirements of water, fertilizer, and labor. Again take watercress for instance. It needed to be transplanted from the nursery to fields when its first leaves had appeared. In addition to the strenuous task of watering the plants, their growth must be kept under meticulous control, and fertilization was an important part of this process. As Aijmer (1980:29) has observed, “In horticulture and floriculture, each species demands its own special treatment and care.” There was a whole array of fertilizers and insecticides that a vegetable farmer applied for different purposes and to different crops. They were also used strategically in relation to time. Despite the fact that none of these obstacles was insurmountable, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were
never really enthusiastic about making the switch.

5.3 Constrained Man-Land Ratio: Going Abroad

By the end of the 1950s, the vegetable revolution had taken over Lung Yeuk Tau, forcing many Tangs into landlordism. There was not much money in subleasing ancestral land to vegetable gardeners, pig-farmers, and poultry-farmers, but they had no other choice. What happened to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau is reflective of a general trend of the time:

In the past decade vegetable cultivation has spread rapidly in those areas of the New Territories where good road or sea access is available, replacing rice, the staple food crop. Very often the switchover to vegetable growing is accompanied by the renting of fields to immigrant farmers with more experience of this form of agriculture, whilst the indigenous country people prefer to draw an income from the renting of their land ...(ADR 1960:20).

Was the rent from landlordism sufficient to maintain the livelihood of the average household at Lung Yeuk Tau? Based on the studies by Hase (1981) and others (Faure 1989a:46-57; Hase & Lee 1992:83), it took some 5.65 tau chung of cultivable land to meet the subsistence needs of a traditional average-size household in the New Territories. We can use it as the bottom line. In 1962, this amount of two-crop rice land would bring a net income of some HK $605 after the payment of rent, which averaged HK $99 for every tau chung of ancestral land (Potter 1968:85). By subleasing the land, however, the same household would obtain less than HK $490. It represented a roughly 19% decline from the income of rice farming. Hence, everything else being equal, landlordism meant a deterioration of living standards. To avoid falling below the minimal living standards, it was necessary for the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau to have 7.03 instead of 5.65 tau chung of
cultivable land per household. Some households did and managed to get by, whereas others did not and were on the rocks.

Not resigned to be the victims of Hong Kong’s changing economy, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau tried to find alternative employment, but the opportunities of non-agricultural employment were few and far between in the New Territories throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In increasing numbers, the Tangs went abroad to seek employment as immigrant workers. In 1959 alone, over one hundred of Tang menfolk left Lung Yeuk Tau and headed overseas. This was the beginning of a new period during which Lung Yeuk Tau would become an emigrant rather than rice-farming community.

At the heart of this transition was a constrained man-land ratio. In an excellent study of the relations between emigration and the Chinese lineage, James L. Watson (1975:54-5) examines the “push-and-pull” theory. Among the “pull” factors that enticed the emigration of New Territories peasants were the lure of high-paying jobs overseas and the network of kinsmen already established abroad. The primary “push” factor was a declining rice economy. But there was variation in the extent that New Territories communities were affected by the crisis of rice farming. The Tangs of Kam Tin and Ping Shan, for instance, were not attracted to the idea of immigrant workers. Nor did many of their lineage members go abroad, save to study there. The reason for this was that their man-land ratio was much less constrained. If the average household was able to rent and sublease 7.03 tau chung of ancestral land, then it could afford to be content with

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1 As of 1971, the manufacturing establishments in the four major industrial districts of the New Territories employed 18,758 persons, which amounted to only 2.8% of the total manufacturing employment in Hong Kong (Sit 1982:73).
landlordism. In Ping Shan, for example, one of its ancestral estates alone had more than enough land to meet this demand for the whole lineage. Moreover, the proximity of their landholdings to Yuen Long also involved them in early urbanization projects (Potter 1968: 58), which provided both an increased value for their landed property and a better chance of local employment.

Without these benefits and pushed by a constrained man-land ratio that concurred with a declining rice economy, Lung Yeuk Tau had to turn to emigration as the catalyst of an economic recovery. There were basically two waves of migration overseas. One was associated with the disengagement of many Tang households from rice farming during 1959-62, and the other was related to the agricultural recession caused by bad weather and poor prices for farm produce during 1964-67.

It was officially reported that the farming population of the New Territories decreased by some 40 per cent between 1961 and 1966 (Wong 1971:21). As is shown above, this trend had started earlier at Lung Yeuk Tau. The Tang emigrants ended up in Britain and other parts of Europe, such as Scandinavian countries. Most of them went into restaurant business, and quite a few had their share of success in the restaurant boom of Britain during the early 1960s. Others joined in industrial employment and household services. Throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s, the remittances they sent home constituted a primary source of income at Lung Yeuk Tau. The lineage also depended heavily on their generous donations to finance public events and projects.

1 By the late 1970s, this ancestral estate still owned over 900 tau chong of arable land.
2 Their donations to the renovation of the Tin Hau Temple alone, for instance, amounted HKS 44,000.
CHAPTER 6

LAND AND LUNG YEUK TAU

The topography of the New Territories is so mountainous that only 13% of its land area is cultivable (ARDC 1970:3). Most of the hills in the New Territories run straight down into the sea, indicating a eustatic retreat of sea-level or an isostatic elevation of land in recent geological times. The absence of any well-marked coastal plain is conspicuous, except for one in the northwest. Known as the Yuen Long Plain, it has some 7,270 acres of arable land (Grant 1960:83, 104). The second substantial area of low-lying land is the twin basins of Fanling and Ta Kwu Ling in the northeast, which form an inland plain with some 3,520 acres of arable land (ibid.:108).

6.1 The Rise of Lung Yeuk Tau in the Region

Together, the two coastal and inland plains add up to approximately one third of the total acreage of the New Territories (ADR 1960:20). The remaining two thirds are mostly small-scale, isolated pockets of land on terraced slopes or in narrow, deep-cut valleys, where soil erosion poses a serious problem. S.G. Davis (1949:57) has concluded that only the flat agricultural districts of Hong Kong have any great depth of soil, and elsewhere “the soil cover is usually thin, sometimes no more than two or three inches.” Nevertheless, it is not the soil quality but the superior size and carrying-capacity of the
two plains that set the stage for the rise of powerful localized lineages after the tenth century. Kin groups that dominated the land ownership of the Yuen Long Plain and Fanling Basin, always dictated regional politics.

On the eve of the British takeover in 1898, it was the “Five Great Clans,” namely, the Tangs, Haus, Pangs, Lius, and Mans who kept the whole region under their thumbs (Baker 1966). Imperial China adopted an “indirect rule” below the county level, leaving much of local administration in the hands of self-governing bodies. The dominance of the “Five Great Clans” was well represented in the civilian councils of kuk, tung, and heung which were vested with quasi-legal power at the levels of region, district, and cluster of villages (Hayes 1962:83-5). In addition, the “Five Great Clans” built all the major market towns in the New Territories (Siu & Siu 1982:44-5). With each of these market towns serving as a socioeconomic center of the surrounding area (Skinner 1967:85), the “Five Great Clans” established a network of power and influence that extended far and wide in the region.

As the earliest settlers, the Tangs evolved into three localized lineages at Kam Tin, Ping Shan, and Ha Tsuen, dominating the Yuen Long Plain to the exclusion of the other great “clans.” They formed an alliance with the Tangs outside the plain to establish an unsurpassed supremacy of landholdings and power in the New Territories.\(^1\) Within the Fanling area, the geopolitical landscape was more complicated. It featured a dynamic balance of power and rivalry shaped by the acquisition and change of land ownership over

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\(^1\) Apart from the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau and Tai Po, there are also relatively small Tang lineages at Loi Tung and Au Ha.
centuries. Land was what Pasternak (1972:18) calls a “strategic subsistence resource.”

The Haus came to the Fanling area first and settled at Ho Sheung Heung in the early twelfth century (Leung 1980:52). Then arrived the Pangs, the Tangs, and the Lius during the fourteenth century, probably in that order. There was differentiation in their successes, though. During the next three hundred years, when Fanling was administered as a part of Sheung Ue Tung or “The District of Twin Fish,” the Pangs and the Lius were linked with tenancy rather than landlordship.¹ Neither of them were included in the list of “pedigree lineages of Sheung Ue Tung” as were the Tangs, the Haus and the Mans who had settled the fertile valley of Lam Tsuen and become big landlords in the fifteenth century (Faure 1986:158). Up to 1688, the “great clans” of the Hong Kong region had only three members instead of five.

Lung Yeuk Tau had a somewhat bumpy start in its rise to big landlordship. The first lineage ancestor Tang Tsung-ling toiled and moiled before coming into possession of about a hundred mu of farmland. In addition to sweat, it incurred a price to be paid in the long run, namely, the rancor of the Pangs, who had pioneered the settlement of Lung Yeuk Tau but ended being driven out by the Tangs.² Then there was victimization by the treachery of Ho Chan (1322-1388), the Earl of Dongguan. By hook and by crook, Ho Chan had made the Tangs register their land under his name in exchange for patronage and tax breaks. Nevertheless, when the Ming government was updating its records of

¹ Sheung Ue Tung is the name used in the 1688 edition of the Xinan County Gazetteer. This district comprised what are now the Fanling, Ta Kwu Ling, and Tai Po areas.
² The Tangs recognize Pang Kwai, the founding ancestor of the Pang lineage as the earliest settler of Lung Yeuk Tau.
households and land for tax purposes in the late 1380s, the Hos declared outright ownership of the landholdings commended to their aegis. It was nothing short of a lucky break to the victims when the late Ho Chan was implicated in a case of treason in 1393, and the Hos lost influence. As a result, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were able to regain their lost landed property.

It was likely that during the fifteenth century, the Ming government awarded the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau land rights because of their gentry status (Faure 1986:27). For three consecutive generations, Tang Tsung-ling’s forefathers were officials of the Southern Song. Among them was Tang Lam, the eldest son of Wong Ko. There is an oral story called “Ancestor Lam Releasing Goose.” Made of wood, the “goose” was the embodiment of land rights. Legend has it that Tang Lam would set the wooden goose on a river and follow it until it drifted to a stop. By the imperial order engraved in the wooden goose, the local government was to ensure that the land on the river banks covered by the drift of the “goose” was all Tang Lam’s. This legend, of course, is not to be taken literally. What is significant, though, is its indication of an aggressive expansion of landed property by the Tangs. Pursued in the name of largess from the royal family, it paved the way for Lung Yeuk Tau to become one of the biggest landlords of the sixteenth century in the Hong Kong Region.

According to the oral history of Lung Yeuk Tau, it was the time when its lineage

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1 In *The Hos from Lujiang Prefecture.*
2 His great grandfather Tang Lam held the honorary post of *Digonglang* (迪功郎), his grandfather Tang Im-lung was an official with the degree of *jinshi*, and his father Tang Chiu-an was a judicial official (*六四判簿*).
rice paddies stretched west of Fanling, east of Kwan Tei, and around Sheung Shui in the north. If this is true, then at least a half of the 2,100-odd acres of arable land within the Fanling Basin were once owned by the Tangs, who also replaced the Haus as the Number One landlord of this area. Their vigorous pursuit of landholdings within the Fanling Basin appeared to be contained only by the natural barriers of the Dragon Hill in the south, the highlands of the Tai Mo Shan in the west, the rugged terrain in the north, and the Queen’s Hill in the east.

There is also evidence that the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau had extensive landed property outside Fanling, as in Kowloon, Sham Shui Po, Sai Kung, Lam Tsuen, Guishan, Dongguan, Zengcheng, and Shiqi of Zhongshan County (Smith 1984:74, Faure 1986:112, 190, 191). To collect rent grains, it is claimed that a team of agents and hafu (servants) had to spend almost the whole year on the road. Furthermore, the 1525 Land Register Book of Dongguan District also recorded the Tangs as the owner of Chek Chu Shan. Literally “Vermilion Pillar Hill,” Chek Chu Shan is the old name of Hong Kong Island. Not only is the Hong Kong Island referred to as such in the 1819 gazetteer of Xinan County, but the name “Chek Chu” has survived in the Chinese translation of Stanley, a famous resort and residential area of the island. My informants at Lung Yeuk Tau still recall the “good old days” when a rent collection party was sent to Aberdeen on the southern side of the island every year in the fifth and ninth months. The sixteenth century was certainly the era of Lung Yeuk Tau, whose leading position was challenged in the New Territories (Faure 1984:36).

6.2 The Geopolitical Landscape of the Fanling Area

The ascent of the Lius to big landlordship in the late 17th century, however, tipped
the old balance of power in the Fanling area. The first walled village of the Lius was built in 1646, namely, about three hundred years after their first ancestor had come to Fanling.¹ At the time, it seemed that they had a long way to go in competition with the long-established Haus and Tangs. What the Lius achieved following the 1669 rescission of the “coastal evacuation,” however, proved this false. There was a sudden explosion of their wealth, which led to the building of a second village around 1688 and the formation of a lineage in 1751 (Baker 1968:31).² All these seemed to start with a large transfer of landholdings from the Tangs to the Lius upon their return to the coastal area.

After 1669, only a small portion of the coastal population returned alive.³ Since many lots of arable land in the coastal areas were lying waste, the government decided to recruit farmers from outside. By 1673, the land cultivated by these recruits had amounted to some 38% of the total acreage in the region (He 1988:55). Consequently, aside from the previous coastal residents, there were also newcomers of Hakka origins. Based on his observation of the Linguistic Atlas of China, Wang Gung-wu (1994: xxviii) has concluded that where the Cantonese and the Hakka lived close together, “the Cantonese always lost out to the latter.” The process was characterized by a gradual transfer of economic leadership and majority status into the hands of the Hakka. In our case, this generalization

¹ According to the Genealogy of the Lius, the lineage founding father Liu Chung-Kit left Tinzhou of Fujian for Sheung Shui in the middle of the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368). NDB (1994b:11) sets the initial settlement of Sheung Shui Wai, the first lineage village of the Lius, in the third year of the Shunzhi Reign (1644-62).
² The Liu lineage was formed on the establishment of Man Shek Tong and its ancestral estates.
³ It is recorded that of the 16,000 persons driven island from Xinan County, only 1,648 returned in 1669 (Hayes 1983:25).
also has an element of truth if we substitute *Punti* for Cantonese and reinterpret it from a historical perspective.

In the beginning, the Punti were a group of Cantonese people from other parts of Guangdong. After having replaced the indigenous non-Han peoples, they claimed to be “native” or *punti* to this region (Siu 1984:1). But the composition of the Cantonese-speaking Punti soon became heterogeneous. They were joined by early Hakka settlers who had been assimilated. On the other hand, there were also Hakka settlers who had not turned native due to their relatively short history of settlement. In view of this, the distinction between the Punti and the Hakka is actually one of custom, dialect, settlement recency rather than ethnicity (Woon 1984:7). When so used, the term *Punti* is a relative one, as in the case of the Lius of Sheung Shui. Originally Hakka, they are “Punti” to the late Hakka settlers. But to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, the Lius are still “Hakka” because of their status as *nouveaux riches*. Here the labels are being used to distinguish between the old and new Hakkas. Interestingly, the same drama that characterized competition between the Cantonese and the Hakkas might well unfold between the old and the new Hakkas.

Where there was an excess of farmland, the key to an agricultural recovery was manpower. A big household of Kam Tin, for instance, was able to claim 115.5 acres of farmland as a “returned landowner” (He 1988:55). This reflects the extraordinary indulgence of a government policy eager to encourage the revival of full-scale farming.

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1 The New Territories used to be a part of Guangdong, and the indigenous population of this region was composed of the Che, the Yao, and the Yue peoples.
With land virtually available for free, the more populous a lineage was, the more land it would come to possess. The Lius had survived the depopulation impact of the "coastal evacuation" better than had the Tangs. It meant a windfall of landholdings at the cost of those lineages that returned decimated or never returned. The Tang lineage did come back to Lung Yeuk Tau, but its population had diminished severely. As a result, they lost extensive landholdings around Sheung Shui.

The oral tradition of Lung Yeuk Tau associates the loss with a sixth-generation ancestor whose daughter was married to a Liu licentiate. This widowered ancestor had no sons, so he threw in a large part of his landholdings as the dowry of his daughter, hoping that the descendants of the new couple would remember him like an ancestor. The Lius were Hakka, in whose vernacular there was no distinction between the appellations for a paternal grandfather and a maternal grandfather. One day, this Tang ancestor heard his daughter's son calling him. He responded, but the child retorted, "I was calling out to my own grandpa!" It was a wake-up call, and he remarried a young Liu woman, who bore him two sons. But his extensive landholdings around Sheung Shui were gone and used by the Lius to launch their march to power and prestige.

The Haus, who shared an extensive border with the Lius, were soon eclipsed (Baker 1968:168, 190). For the next two centuries, the Lius would also serve as a major counterweight to the dominance of the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau. But often times the relationship between the two was one of allies rather than rivals. There were a lot of inter-marriages between them. Both had bad blood with the Pangs of Fanling whose land bordered on Lung Yeuk Tau in the east and Sheung Shui in the north. Feuding between
the Tangs and the Pangs over land and water dominated the history of the Fanling area in recent memory, even though no wars or deaths are remembered. To strengthen its hand against the Pangs, Lung Yeuk Tau entered into a series of alliances with other village groups. The most important of these was with its lineage brethren of Loi Tung to the east, and the small villages in-between. This alliance was formalized as the Sze Yeuk ("Alliance of Four").\(^1\) Strategically it was also necessary that Lung Yeuk Tau be allied with the Lius, who loathed the Pangs almost as much as did the Tangs.

The Pang lineage became an upstart in the late 19th century (Faure 1986:27). To countervail the attempt of Lung Yeuk Tau to surround them, the Pangs allied with the Haus. Whenever the Tangs and Lius took a side, almost by natural reaction, the Pangs and Haus would choose the other side, as in the war between the villages of Wong Pui Ling and those of Ta Kwu Ling in the 1860s. In the mid-1890s, several small villages in the Tai Po area organized a formal alliance called the "Hall of the Harmonious Six." Their goal was to break up the monopoly of Tai Po Market owned by the Tangs. For the Pangs, it was an ideal way to cause pain and vexation to their arch enemy at Lung Yeuk Tau. Their participation in the alliance expanded it into Tsat Yeuk (the "Alliance of the Seven"). A campaign was launched for the founding of a new market in the vicinity of Tai Po Market. The Mans of Tai Hang, who were eager to resurrect their declining influence,\(^2\) came to the assistance of the Pangs by preparing all the legal documents and persuading the Magistrate

\(^1\) The four parties were Lung Yeuk Tau, Loi Tung, Lau Shui Heung, and Tan Chuk Hang.

\(^2\) The Mans, who were the only member of the "Five Great Clans" without any landed property in either of the two plains, were peripheral to the center of political power. After 1908, the Mans of Tai Hang had to sell their share of Po Tak Temple, an exclusive alliance of the "Five Great Clans" inside the Fanling-Ta Kwu Ling area.
not to reject the petition as he repeatedly had. In 1896, Tai Ho Market was established, greatly reducing the importance of its counterpart at Tai Po (Hase 1995).

The 19th-century politics of the Fanling area teetered on a rather fragile peace among its four powerful “clans.” Mutual enmities were usually kept under wraps because the two camps were too closely balanced for either side to risk outright impudence. There was internal contest simultaneously, as each bloc comprised old-time and upstart lineages that were locked in competition for the overall control of one strategic subsistence resource -- land. Time and tide seemed to favor the latter. Therefore, not only did the Lius expand their landed property into the relatively uncontested area of Ta Kwu Ling in the mid-19th century, but they obtained some land previously owned by the Tangs in Sai Kung and Lam Tsuen (Faure 1984:35-6 & 1986:111). Landholdings around Fanling, too, gradually changed the hands, primarily from the Tangs to the Pangs. Nevertheless, Lung Yeuk Tau remained the most powerful lineage throughout this century.

6.3 “My Homeland”

Notwithstanding the discord of the “great clans,” the imminent British takeover of the New Territories brought them together.¹ At a meeting convened on April 1, 1899, these five “clans” decided to put up armed resistance (Liu 1988:108-9). It was their belief that the British were coming to change their customs and confiscate their land (RNT 1899:27). Earlier on March 24 and 28, F. H. May, Captain Superintendent of the Hong Kong Police had tried to find sites at Tai Po and Ping Shan for the erection of police

¹ The convention was signed on June 9, 1898, but the actual takeover occurred in the next year.
stations, which provoked strong opposition from the natives on the ground of interference with local feng-shui. On April 3, when two matsheds were set up on a Tai Po hill, crowds of angry people from the nearby villages descended on Captain May and his party, forcing him to order a withdrawal hurriedly. The matsheds, one of which was for the forthcoming takeover ceremony, were burnt down. The colonial authorities came to the conclusion that the opposition was organized, and it was.

On the morning of April 15, twenty-five policemen and a company of the Hong Kong Regiment were shipped to Tolo Harbor of Tai Po. Upon landing, they were greeted with musketry fire from a force of about 1,000 men who had occupied the surrounding hills. The resistance force was mostly composed of the militia run by local lineages and sanctioned by the Chinese government. Known as “trainbands,” they came from all over the Fanling and Tai Po areas in addition to Kam Tin. Among their leaders was Tang Tung-tsuen of Lung Yeuk Tau, whose name would go on the list of men wanted by the colonial authorities. A holder of senior military degree,¹ he deployed his men in a northern hill of Tai Po Market, keeping the British troops at bay until the afternoon. After the British warship Fame arrived with a reinforcement army, it shelled the Chinese encampment and “cleared away the assailants” (RNT 1899:22).

Sir Henry A. Blake, Governor of Hong Kong issued a proclamation to the people of the New Territories on the same day. He promised that “your commercial and landed

¹ So did his two brothers, who were also involved in the armed resistance. Six of their descendants in the next generation, too, were degree holders. The Tangs call them “a family of nine xiu-cai” (門九秀才). They came from one of the two branches of the seventh fang that inhabited San Uk Tsuen and excelled in scholarship.
interests will be safe-guarded” and that “your usages and good customs will not in any way be interfered with” (RNT 1899:21). Urging Her Majesty’s new subjects to obey the laws that were made for their benefit, his proclamation ended with the admonition, “All must render implicit obedience.” The five “great clans” apparently did not. Their relationship with the colonial administration started on the wrong foot from the very beginning. This had both short-term and long-term consequences.

Accompanied by three companies of the Hong Kong Regiment and one company of the Asiatic Artillery to take over the whole New Territories, Major-General Gascoigne came to Tai Po and hoist the Union Jack on April 16, announcing the formal assumption of British Administration. Shortly after the ceremony, the British forces were attacked again, but the firing was too distant to cause any casualties. The two-day combat is called the Battle of Kwang Fuk To by the Tangs, after the place where most bloodshed occurred. They admit of heavy casualties among the Chinese militia, many of them being Tangs. As for their resistance, Major Browne of the British reported that the militia had chosen their positions well and that if they had only fired well, the British troops would have fared very badly (Lockhart 1899a). Lockhart, the Colonial Secretary, agreed, “Over a thousand men offered resistance yesterday, and, if their weapons had been of a modern type, would have given our troops a warmer time of it” (1899b).

For five days, the natives of the New Territories refused to give up, halting the British troops in their westbound advance from time to time. Following the lineages of the eastern New Territories, the Tangs of the Yuen Long Plain became a thorn in the side of the advancing army. Near Kam Tin, it ran into the resistance of about 2,600 armed men,
many of whom were Tangs from as far away as Dongguan. Determined to humiliate the Tangs, the British blew up the entrances of two walled villages at Kam Tin and took the iron gates to London as a trophy. After the armed resistance was subdued, most of its leaders escaped, but not without the anguish voiced in a poem composed by one of them:

Heart-broken over my homeland being carved up,
I exile myself to avoid the persecution by foreign rulers;
Alas, the decline of a land of civilization and refinement,
Once crumbling, its soils are possessed by the barbarians.  

6.4 British Land Policies and the Eclipse of Lung Yeuk Tau

The 1900-1904 land registration radically changed the land tenure system of the New Territories. As Chun (1986:3) and Norman Miners (1982:1) point out, the British acted as if the New Territories was annexed rather than leased. In line with this, the “Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance” of 1900 declared that all land “within the limits of the Colony” belonged to the Crown and was to be leased to its holders on payment of Crown Rent. It brought the colonial government into a collision course with landlords, who were reduced to the status of lessees and whose property rights were curtailed.

By Chinese law, land ownership consisted of both “bottom-soil” rights and “surface-soil” rights. Surface-soil rights were the use rights of land, whereas bottom-soil rights were what officially defined land ownership. The latter, upon which the former were contingent, were legally certified in the form of a “land title” issued by the government to

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1 The gates of Kat Hing Wai (吉慶圍) were returned on May 26, 1925 at a ceremony attended by Sir Edward Stubbs, the then Governor of Hong Kong.

2 My translation. The poet is named Tang Yee-shek (鄧幾石). “河山割裂劇堪悲，為避蠻氣始徒岐；太息衣冠文物地，一朝瓦解屬夷矣.”

3 The Chinese terms are di-gu-quan (“land-bone rights”) and di-pi-quan (“land-skin rights”).
each landowner. But typically a Chinese landlord would lease the surface-soil rights or use rights of his land to tenancy through contracts called “land deeds.” Once signed, the contract would remain in effect forever unless otherwise specified. The British called it a “perpetual lease.” While the lessor was responsible for paying land tax to the government, he was entitled to collecting rents from the lessee of his land. Such was the law or custom that regulated the land tenure system of south China in imperial times.

The system, however, was not without intricacy, stemming especially from its allowance for the perpetuity of a lease, in which the tenant was able to become the de facto landowner. Lockhart (1900:19) noted:

[Under Chinese rule] The relation between landlord and tenant is often a complicated one, chiefly owing to the system of perpetual lease. Under such leases the landlords have practically renounced all rights to the exercise of ownership, and are contented to do nothing further than to receive a yearly rent. They can sell this right of receiving rent, but the land is otherwise under the absolute control of the cultivators, who often sell their perpetual leases.

If the tenant opted to sublease the land, he became a surface-soil landlord subject to payment of rent to the bottom-soil landlord. The bottom-soil owner was usually an absentee landlord in the sense that he did not live in the same community and had little idea of what was going on in the use of his landed property. It was not unusual that after several generations, his descendants could not even tell the exact location or amount of the landed property that they owned. All they did was to pay land tax to ensure the right of rent collection. The British Administration coined a new term for this type of landowner --

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1 Land titles were called hung kai (“red deed”) as they were stamped with the official seal in red; land deeds were called pak kai (“white deed”) as they were devoid of such a stamp.
As of 1904, the Land Court of the New Territories had handled some 354,277 cases, mostly involving disputes over the double ownership of a single lot by two parties, one claiming the bottom-soil rights and one claiming the surface-soil rights (Endacott 1958:267-68). The double-ownership system had worked well in south China, because it allowed for a greater security and autonomy on the part of the tenant, thus encouraging him to raise land productivity to the best of his ability (Rawski 1972:18-20). But the colonial administration decided to grant one Crown Block Lease for each lot. Almost invariably, the Land Court let the tenant have it to uphold a policy that was determined to do away with the bottom-soil rights.

Land tax used to be low in the New Territories. After the imposition of the Crown Rent Roll, however, its increase was enormous: “at the lowest figure 200 per cent, at the highest nearly 3,000” (CSO 1906:12). The taxlord suddenly found himself in a situation where he had nothing to gain. Based on this, H.H.J. Gompertz (HKGZ 1901: 920) argued that since land was no longer profitable to the taxlord, the government had good reason to “make the perpetual lessee responsible for the Crown Rent.” But what about the taxlord’s demand to take back the property for his own use? The Land Court said no. Cecil Clementi, a member of the Court and later Governor of Hong Kong (1925-30), was frank about the intent of the British land policy to get rid of the majority of old big landlords (CSO 1904). It was also designed to benefit the Hakka tenants at the cost of the Punti landlords. As a District Commissioner of the New Territories put it, historically “the Hakkas are our friends and the Puntis are our enemies” (Constable 1994:44). What the
colonial administration did not foresee was that this land policy sowed the seeds of a persistent tension in its relationship with many lineages, Punti or Hakka, whose ancestral estates were “taxlords.”

In fairness to the Land Court, it did not throw out all the land titles produced by owners to contest the land deeds of tenants. There were a few exceptions to the standard practice of ruling in favor of the tenant as the Court did in other hundreds of thousands of land disputes. In accordance with court rulings, the colonial administration finally agreed to compensate fourteen landlords with a total grant of 252.33 acres of vacant land, free of Crown Rent for the first five years (RNT 1912:5; Kamm 1977:213). Needless to say, it only amounted to a small fraction of what the Punti landlords had lost. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau claim that their ancestral estates suffered a huge loss of landholdings in the process.1 Only in isolated cases did the tenant who could not bear the burden of new Crown Rent return his land to Lung Yeuk Tau (CSO 1906:11).

The land registration of 1900-1904 resulted in another major transfer of landholdings to late Hakka settlers. Not only was the economic power of the Punti landlords crippled, but there were profound changes in the geopolitical landscape of the Fanling area as well (Faure 1986:44). Shung Him Tong became a rising star that shone for decades and adumbrated all the “great clans.” Situated close to the villages of Lung Yeuk Tau, Shung Him Tong is a Hakka community founded by immigrants from the north in

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1 The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau estimate their losses to be around 60% to 70%. The Sz Kim Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Kam Tin (p. 82) sets the losses of its lineage land at over 2,000 mu. According to James Hayes (1983:88), the Tangs of Kam Tin are known to have exacted rent for more land than was registered with the Chinese authorities, and it was a common practice back then.
1903. Unlike their precursors, these immigrants were no farmers but worked for the Basel Missionary Society, whose evangelizing efforts in China had traditionally focused on the Hakkas (Voskamp 1914; Yu 1987). The success story of Shung Him Tong is one of Western-style education and intimate ties with the colonial administration (Constable 1994:58-60). Its production of several high-ranking government officials and celebrities after the mid-1920s, in particular, made Shung Him Tong invincible in whatever dispute it had with the local lineages.

The political landscape of the Fanling Basin after the British takeover was a curious replica of the past. The colonial government introduced a dual system for the New Territories, featuring a scheme of District Officer administration and a network of local consultation that approximated the representation of *heung* (cluster of villages), *tung* (district), and *kuk* (region) (Kelly 1987:13-14). This dual system closely paralleled the one adopted by the County Magistrate of imperial China (Baker 1968:11-12). What is different is a more active role that the District Office plays in local administration than did its counterpart. In theory, the local institutions of consultation are devoid of statutory rights, but their role as the bridge between the District Office and people at large makes them powerful. It was no coincidence that the “new gentry” who controlled the self-governing consultative institutions was also one of big landlordship.

With the eclipse of the “great clans” after 1904, the core of big landlordship was different, but whoever became its new members were able to manipulate and dominate local politics just as well. Shung Him Tong owed much of its power and influence to its leader and founder Pang Lok Sam, who was a close friend of Governor Clementi. A
pastor by training, he started a mortgage company that gradually bought out Punti property, especially landholdings which belonged to Lung Yeuk Tau (Constable 1994: 134). It paved the way for him to become the chairman of the Heung Yee Kuk, N. T. (Consultative Bureau of Rural Districts of the New Territories), a post that he held for four terms, starting in 1929. For many years, he was the Number One middleman in the rural politics of Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the diminution of landholdings continued at Lung Yeuk Tau. As has been shown, it led to a constrained man-land ratio in the 50s and 60s.

The decline of agriculture in the New Territories was contemporaneous with the government efforts to urbanize and industrialize the area in the early 1970s (Sit 1982:72-4). It magnifies the importance of a resource which development projects need above all else -- land. Admittedly, the landlord is only allowed to claim the right of surface soils subject to the terms of Block Crown Lease. But in the case of land resumption, he is entitled to be compensated. The biggest landlord of Shung Him Tong was the Tsuis, one of whom had headed a department of the Hong Kong Government until his retirement. When their landed property around Fanling was zoned for the development of a New Town in the 1970s, the government had to introduce an installment plan for the payment of astronomical compensations to them. The family took the wealth abroad, and it put an end to the prominence of Shung Him Tong ever since. In contrast, the Tangs of Lung

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1 These terms included the specifications of lease duration, rent, and the type of land use allowed. Renewal of the lease was virtually always granted unless the lessee had defaulted the payment of rent. Crown Block Lease, therefore, was like a “perpetual lease” that ended three days before July 1, 1997.

2 Over two billion HK dollars. There was extensive media coverage of the compensations.

3 Its wealthy residents being gone, Shung Him Tong is a dismal reminder of what it used to be politically and economically just decades ago.
Yeuk Tau adopted a different approach, which enabled them to return to the spotlight of the Fanling arena after an eclipse of over sixty years.
CHAPTER 7
ANCESTRAL ESTATES

Tso or tong is a Chinese institution of ancestral estate whereby land derived from an ancestor is to be retained intact and enjoyed by all his male descendants from generation to generation in perpetuity. Tso is always named after the ancestor. Tong is often named after the ancestral hall, study hall or temple that a tso built and endowed. But it can also be a name selected by the ancestor or his descendants for the management of a tso. In either case, tong is synonymous with tso.

7.1 The Tso and Tong

At Lung Yeuk Tau, a male lineage member is entitled at birth to an interest in the lands and property of Lung Kong Tso for his lifetime. The estates of a tso or tong may include shops, markets, and buildings in addition to farmland, and the distribution of their benefits are governed by the same principles. The interest of the individual lineage member at any given moment depends on the number of male descendants living then. Upon his death, his interest merges to enlarge the interests of the surviving male descendants. The institution of tso and tong turns the Chinese lineage into a corporate group that lives on irrespective of the death of its individual members.

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The sons of a landowner who has died intestate are not bound to form a *tso* or *tong*. Nor does it entirely depend on their conception of filial duty. James L. Watson (1975:34-5) holds that where there was intense competition for land and a great need for cooperation across agnatic lines, small agnatic groups were more likely to develop into a single lineage. His analysis seems applicable to the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau. The establishment of their *tso* and *tong* was also strategic. Entailed by the desire to survive and succeed in an environment where land was subject to an intense scramble, it rallied an increasing number of Tang male descendants around a core of ancestral estates and awarded them the advantage of unity and organization against individual efforts in competition for land. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau were one of the first kin groups to adopt the institution of *tso* and *tong* in the Hong Kong region, and it enabled them to come out on top in the Fanling area from early on.

Lung Yeuk Tau has over a dozen of *tso* and *tong*, at the top of which is Shui Wan Tong, the general management of ancestral estates. We may think of its *tso* and *tong* as hierarchically organized. The members of Lok Sin Tong, for instance, have a share in Kan Yang Tso, whose members, in turn, have a share in Lung Kong Tso. But the estates of Lok Sin Tong are not to be appropriated by the two *tso* above it. Essentially self-contained, the property of a *tso* is managed in turn by the representatives of its branches. If the income of a *tso* proves insufficient to cover its expenses, resort is typically made to the resources of a branch *tso* whose representative happens to be managing the main *tso*. In the past, for instance, Kan Yang Tso had baled Lung Kong Tso out of such a situation more than once. It does not mean that the branch *tso* are liable for a deficiency in the main
tso. Any financial assistance to the main tso is granted on a temporary basis and has to be made good from its future income. A branch tso answers to its own members, not the main tso above it. But in case the main tso is in danger of financial dissolution, its branch tso may take measures to salvage it, pending unanimous consensus from their members.

Not all the tso and tong of Lung Yeuk Tau were founded upon intestacy. Tue Kam Tong, for instance, was created by one who had willed his estates to be enjoyed by his nephews and their descendants as an ancestral trust. There were also cases in which a living male descendant, on purchasing property, contributed it to the tso of his ancestor, as in the case of Tang Yuen-wai discussed above. Contributions like this serve to replenish old ancestral trusts that have run low through the gradual erosion of increasing demand, exigencies, and so on. After all, time and tide wear out a stone. Therefore, Po Pen Tong of Ping Shan had to be rejuvenated with the contributions of landholdings from its branch tso in the 1960s. The number and size of tso and tong are an indicator of the overall economical prowess of a Chinese lineage. A decline of such prowess is usually accompanied by a loss of corporate property that reduces some tso to an existence in name only. Instances of this kind are described as “tso without tong,” meaning that there is no real property management.

The income from a tso is primarily dedicated to the purposes of worship. At Lung Yeuk Tau, the lands of a tso are collectively known as tsing sheung, literally “the autumn and winter rites of ancestor worship.” But some tso also set aside a part of their lands for

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1《詩經·小雅·天保》: “秋季曰嘗，冬季曰蒸。”《禮記·祭統》: “春季曰祫，夏季曰禘，秋季曰嘗，冬季曰蒸，祫禘陽義也，蒸嘗陰義也。”

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other purposes, such as education. The worshipping land, which was only a part of their total *tsing sheung*, is termed “*tsai sau* land.” In the case of Sin Sui Tong, the proceeds from its landed property came in two portions. One was to cover the costs of worship (*tsai sau*); the other, derived from its “educational land” (*hok sheung*), was to finance the running of a study hall that accommodated about 40 students. There were also subsidies for descendants who sat for civil service examinations. Whether a *tso* had educational land or not, it invariably offered prize money\(^1\) for the acquisition of imperial degrees by its descendants. Nam Kai Tso of Kam Tin had a fixed expenditure for the celebration and commendation of each academic success — 44.64 tales of silver, the bulk of which went to the degree winner. After a descendant obtained an imperial degree, Lung Kong Tso would grant him the rental income of a piece of its educational land for a number of years. The length of such a grant was in proportion to the credit that his degree brought to the lineage. It was an honor to “eat on (an income from) *tso sheung*,” where *tso sheung* is synonymous with “ancestral land.”

Certain public works were maintained by the *tso* and *tong* that owned them. Since roads, bridges, pavilions, temples, and shrines for the God of Earth were generally for free access, these *tso* and *tong* took on a charitable function by undertaking to keep the public works in repair. This function often started with the philanthropic efforts of an individual. After the patron became a focal ancestor posthumously, the *tso* he founded also inherited his charitable responsibility. Should he die without becoming a focal ancestor, the *tso* of which he was a member had the right to take over the duties and rights of his benevolence.

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\(^{1}\) "花紅銀。"

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This is what the Yin Yee Tong of the first fang did with regard to a pavilion and some roads in Tai Po when Tai Po Market was founded. Public services were organized through Shui Wan Tong. Under its auspices, Lung Yeuk Tau had a patrolling force, which employed eight guards to ensure the safety of the community and its rice fields. Armed with guns, these guards were a fixture all the year round except for the first lunar month, when, in the deep of winter, there was little activity going on at Lung Yeuk Tau. But lineage sponsorship of reliefs is alien to my informants. They are sure that historically Lung Yeuk Tau developed little, if any, social welfare for individuals. No pak kam or "condolence money," for instance, was ever paid to the family members of a lineage member who deceased at the age of 51 or over. Nor did any tso or tong at Lung Yeuk Tau set up a reserve of land designated to fund reliefs as in Ping Shan and elsewhere.

Any surplus of a tso is traditionally distributable per stirpes so that each of its branches obtains an equal share. At Lung Yeuk Tau, individual entitlements of this kind are doled out on the same day when the ceremony of lighting lanterns for newborn male babies is concluded. The accounts are made available to whoever wants to check them. But since the number of individual members of a branch varies considerably, so does their individual entitlement of income. The distribution of benefits from a tso is a source of tension among its branches. A strong branch, which is so named because of its larger membership, naturally prefers distribution by capita. With distribution per stirpes, its members may get only a half, third or even fourth of the individual entitlement for their counterpart of a weak branch, and yet they are descended from the same focal ancestor. By commanding a majority of votes, strong branches tend to dominate internal leadership
and the outcome of group consensus at meetings. Such being the case, weak branches are likely to complain of pressure from strong branches on issues of distribution.

Efforts are made to reach a compromise before a new mode of distribution goes into effect at Lung Yeuk Tau. Of course, when a large sum of money is at stake, the compromise is harder to come by. The North District Office of the New Territories alone has had to mediate many cases in which no agreement could be reached between the strong and weak branches of a lineage after some of its landed property had been resumed. As a result, the compensation money sat there unclaimed, and it still does in some cases. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau seem to be good at coming up with compromises, which may involve the distribution of one half of the benefits \textit{per stirpes} and another half \textit{per capita}. Depending on the situation, the percentage may be split differently. Kan Yang Tso, for instance, has set the split at 30\% \textit{per stirpes} and 70\% \textit{per capita}. As of mid-1995, a total of several millions of square feet of land that originally belonged to Lung Yeuk Tau had been resumed, and the lineage worked things out without a single case of gridlock among its kinsmen. This was largely due to the flexibility and ingenuity with which the managers of its \textit{tso} and \textit{tong} rose to the call.

7.2 Management and the \textit{Si Li} System

The corporate nature of \textit{tso} and \textit{tong} determines the rules for their management, namely, collective ownership and property inalienation. No corporate property, however, is safe from the danger that a trustee may misappropriate it. This practice is known as \textit{pin tai kong} ("cheating an ancestor"). One way to avert it is to rotate the management of a \textit{tso} among its branches, instituting collective supervision. In fact, the Chinese lineage
developed a whole set of rigorous rules and procedures for the management of tso and tong (Z. Chen 1991:72). An important part of tso management is book-keeping, which was once done with professional accountants at Lung Yeuk Tau. The accounts detailed the acreage and grain quota of each tenant, the total collection of rental grains minus spoilage, the rate of grain-silver conversion, the sum of rental income from rice fields, ponds, hills, etc. and the itemization of expenses for taxes, corvée labor, maintenance of irrigation works, and so on. In the past, on the mornings following the days of spring and autumn ancestor worship, patriarchs from various fang and segments would gather in Shui Wan Tong to go over its accounts. Another mechanism against corruption is the use of lineage rules. The genealogy of Lung Yeuk Tau stresses the virtues of honesty and integrity. If a descendant is found to commit fraudulence in the accounts of a tso, he may be declared an unworthy son and barred from participation in worship of the ancestors. This used to carry serious consequences for the lineage membership of the offender.

The rule that tso property is inalienable is never absolute. It is subject to the overriding decisions of any family meeting agreeing to sell land for a good purpose. With group consensus, alienation of a part of tso property may be acceptable for the renovation of an ancestral hall, the repairs of ancestral tombs, the raising of fund for building a school, making a donation to it, updating the lineage genealogy, and so on. The Chinese lineage has two mechanisms to mitigate the impact of such alienation on corporate property: preemptive purchase by kinsmen and mortgaged tenure in which a land transaction gives the buyer full use of the object but conditional ownership. Such ownership is conditional in that the seller has the right to redeem the object during a period of time. If he is unable to
do so, full title will revert to the buyer. These two mechanisms have the effect of minimizing the dissolution of corporate property. Often times, a *tso* transfers alienated landholdings to another *tso* such that they remain a part of the lineage corporate property. At Lung Yeuk Tau, there are quite a few cases in which several *tso* and *tong* co-own a single lot of land, indicating a possible transfer of land ownership between them. In the absence of historical records, it is hard to reconstruct the formation of co-ownership in these cases. But we do have data from Ping Shan that can shed light on the process.

A case in point is the way that the landed property of Kai Chi Wai changed hands over a century. Yat Tai Tong, the oldest *tso* of Ping Shan, used to own all the 12.8 acres of land at Kai Chi Wai. By 1877, however, its landholdings had been reduced to less than 0.8 acres, and the rest was alienated. 1903 was a very difficult year for this *tso*. For 500 dollars, a kinsman bought complete ownership for a quarter of the lands on which he had held a mortgaged tenure. Then the financial situation of Yat Tai Tong started to improve. In 1908, it was able to redeem 3.5 acres of land from two branch *tso* after a mortgaged tenure of at least over 30 years. But the latter were not totally bought out, and each was allowed to retain about 0.6 acres of land. The following year saw Yat Tai Tong redeem all the 4.7 acres that it had alienated to two lineage members by mortgaged tenure. All together, the redemptions cost Yat Tai Tong 1,122 dollars. Since 1909, the property of Kai Tsi Wai was co-owned by three *tso* and one family until the Hong Kong Government resumed the lands in 1986.

Two observations can be made from the data. First, the grace period of a

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1 These two *tso* were Wai San Tong (維新堂) and Chi Sin Tong (資善堂).
mortgaged tenure was very long and could be unspecified. In compensation for this, the buyer might be admitted into perpetual co-ownership when the land was redeemed. This was the case with the two branch tso, which eventually obtained a 0.6-acre perpetual share of the land ownership. Therefore, after 1909 each of them began to pay to Yat Tai Tong an annual fee of 1.43 dollars to cover its part of the land tax. Second, alienation of tso property could occur on top of mortgaged tenure. In the one complete transaction of land to a kinsman, the deed states categorically that the purchase was final, permitting no demand of redemption or price subsidy from the seller in the future. But the history of this case is short, covering a little more than one hundred years. Given more time and favorable conditions, the only co-owner that was an individual family might become a new tso. This is what preemptive purchase by kinsmen is all about. It was designed to keep land within the lineage for future incorporation into corporate property.

Property inalienation, however, runs counter to the English Common Law, which stresses the rules of equity and pits compulsory partition against any mode of devolution that creates perpetuities (Mills-Owens 1966:15-17). It would allow a co-owner of the property of a tso or tong to demand a compulsory partition for his individual share of the lands. To forestall it, the “New Territories Ordinance” obliges the Hong Kong Court and the District Office to enforce the customs of tso and tong in relation to land. Moreover, under Section 15 of the Ordinance, provision is made that a tso must have a registered manager or Si Li, “who shall, after giving such notices as may be prescribed, have full power to dispose of or in any way deal with the said land as if he were sole owner thereof,  

1 “其田即永遠歸(鄧)翼庭收租管業，……過割歸戶，日后毋得言貼言贖。” 208
subject to the consent of the Land Officer....” Legally the lands of a tso or tong are viewed as the property of the registered manager, leaving no ground for anybody else to claim individual rights to it. Any transaction signed by the Si Li with the approval and in the presence of the Land Officer is deemed to be effectual as if it was signed and executed by all the members of the tso or tong.

Si Li is an elder elected to manage the property of a tso or tong. At Lung Yeuk Tau, he is not necessarily from the most senior generation, which is the 22nd and provides the lineage with patriarchal leadership. Many of the lineage elders who are sixty and older are of the 23rd and even 24th generations. So for the election of Si Li, there are more than one pool of candidates. Elders from the most senior generation enjoy the greatest respect. However, they may not have an edge when other qualifications are taken into consideration. Based on the elders who are in charge of Sui Wan Tong, we can profile a Si Li as follows: He is an elder who is resourceful, knowledgeable, successful, relatively well-to-do, and most likely to come from a strong branch.

The members of the most senior generation, however, are from weak branches (in terms of size). What makes a branch weak is primarily late marriage, the accumulative effect of which lengthens its generation age, progressively delaying the parturition of a new generation (Baker 1968:26; Freedman 1958:19). Over time, a weak branch becomes more senior than a strong branch, generationwise. Appointed solely on the basis of seniority, the patriarchal heads of a lineage tend to come from weak branches. It is not impossible that a single family of a weak branch provides lineage patriarchs generation after generation, as in the case of one of my primary informants. But the small size of a
weak branch hurts the chances of its representative to get involved in the management of high tso or tong. This is generally the case unless its representative is extraordinarily influential and/or charismatic.

In its early days, the Si Li system lacked transparency to the extent that it encouraged corruption. This had much to do with the status of Si Li as the sole trustee of ancestral property and the potential alienability of such property. Nowadays, a public review is institutionalized. For each transaction of tso property pending official approval, a notice will be issued by posting copies thereof at the District Office and the Rural Committee and on the notice-board of the community for thirty days in order to make sure that there is no objection to the transaction. But before the 1960s the Land Officer dealt with the Si Li exclusively. As the system operated with no further mechanism of checks and balances back then, the Land Officer had to take the Si Li’s words at their face value, his mentality being “Who am I to challenge what his tso has decided to do?” It left room for the Si Li to abuse his position and misuse the ancestral property. One of the Village Representatives of Lung Yeuk Tau recalls:

When the Si Li (system) was first introduced, the authorities wanted us to believe, it was the same as the traditional management (of lineage property). It turned out, the Si Li was responsible to the government, not lineage members. As long as he paid the taxes, he almost could do whatever he wanted with the registered property. Many land sales were made by corrupt Si Li and endorsed by the District Office, with lineage members totally unaware of what was going on.

Lung Yeuk Tau paid dearly for the corruption of its first Si Li named Tang Yui-shan. A degree holder of gong-sheng, he came to the fore of leadership after the cream of the Tang lineage had fled to escape the colonial retaliation for their involvement in the
1899 armed resistance.¹ To this day, Tang Yui-shan is a hated name. There are the accusations that he sabotaged the resistance movement led by Tang Tung-tsuen, once his patron, and that he acted as an informant and advisor for the British. During the decades Tang Yui-shan dominated Lung Yeuk Tau, its tso and tong suffered tremendous losses of property. Through his sole monopoly of Sui Wan Tong, he sold off an extensive portion of the lineage trusts to line his own pockets. The theft enabled him to leave an ancestral estate in worship of himself even though he died sonless. A member of a weak fang, he was able to hold sway because all the lineage members lived in fear of his back-stabbing and powerful connections. It gave rise to his nickname “Leper,” comparing him to a man of venom. By and by, many could not tell whether he was actually a carrier of bane or disease. Anyway, it is claimed, people would avoid touching the dishes of food into which he had dipped his chopsticks. Tang Yui-shan had followers, so his name is the token of a whole period during which Si Li corruption posed a serious threat to the existence of tso and tong at Lung Yeuk Tau.

The Si Li system continues to draw suspicion today. In a way, such suspicion is healthy, for it presses for transparency in a system designed to be opaque. Legally, it is at the discretion of the Si Li to decide how openly a tso or tong is to be managed. In terms of succession and inheritance, tso and tong are treated like the family. No law bothers to make provision for regular auditing of their accounts. There have been cases in which the Si Li of an ancestral trust is able to keep its accounts under lock to forestall any efforts to

¹ J. H. Stewart Lockhart, the Colonial Secretary, demanded that the ringleaders of armed resistance must “beg for pardon” in person and that their property be confiscated (RNT 1899:32 & 45).
investigate his management. Neither the court nor the District Office is empowered to summon the accounts unless there is proof beyond reasonable doubt to warrant a formal charge. The resultant immunity to public probing is also braced by the support that a Si Li can rally, if he comes from a strong branch that has faith or vested interests in his way of management. Frustration at the opacity of Si Li management occasionally leads lineage members to take the law into their hands, and some Si Li were reportedly beaten. With solid evidence, however, the lineage can bring a corrupt Si Li to justice lawfully. The District Office has the authority to demote a corrupt Si Li if the charge is substantiated. It is not rare that a lineage has one of its Si Li stripped of office on the ground of corruption.

Because of what happened to Lung Yeuk Tau in the past, the Si Li of Sui Wan Tong try to be open and above board. To the extent that they succeed in doing so, it is appreciated and has a positive effect on group unity and cohesion. Of course, where the Si Li system is in place, there is always suspicion. In the worst scenario, it causes internal conflict. Lung Yeuk Tau is a far cry from those lineages torn by internal conflict. Some of the lands resumed from Lung Yeuk Tau had been co-owned by more than one tso or tong, and it was never a problem to determine the fair share of each party. Complications, however, are common where there is internal conflict. Since 1986, the tso which co-owned three quarters of the lands at Kai Chi Wai as discussed above have come to a deadlock. One of them stonewalls the division of compensations (HK$ 22.7 millions) according to the share holdings of co-ownership and demands an equal split instead. This claim is based on a collateral entry of "undivided share" in the 1950 official record of property registration. The Lands Department has no idea when or how the entry was
added. While it is willing to correct it upon unanimous consensus from the three parties involved, there are no signs that these *tso* will reach any agreement soon.

### 7.3 The Challenge of Modernization

Modernization has impacted the institution of ancestral estates in more than one way. Now that rice cultivation is phased out, most of the farmland in the New Territories has lost its productivity, lying waste and overrun with weeds. Only occasionally does a small flower or vegetable garden pop into sight when one travels across the Fanling Basin. Industrialization and urbanization have changed the economic life of indigenous people, and land is increasingly put to new uses. But land seems to be of little value in areas that lie out of the way of development projects. Mr. Lee, the Village Representative of a very closely-knit lineage in Sha Tau Kok Valley, told me that the *tso* and *tong* of his lineage were in a poor financial shape. He and his kinsmen would be willing to sell some ancestral land at a tenth of the price that was being offered elsewhere. But no one had ever approached them. With all its extensive landholdings, this lineage had to depend on donations from individual members to perform the rites of ancestor worship. Here lies the irony: traditional *tso* and *tong* need to engage modernization for survival in the long run.

I am informed by the North District Office that it is by no means rare for a lineage to seek the opportunity of having some of its collective landed property included in resumption for a development project. The compensations can be used to reinvigorate its *tso* or *tong*. But what may happen to the lineage if the government resumes all of its landed property? We do not have to look far for the answer. One of the “great clans” of the Fanling area has become landless this way and virtually disappeared.
Another predicament of tso and tong with modernization is the disregard of the legislature and administration of the government for their property rights. Such disregard is justified in the name of development. One example is the “Electric Networks Ordinance,” which allows the administration to authorize the placing of electric lines above or below ground across private land. By the rights conferred on it, an electric company can do whatever it deems necessary to the land, removing its soil, cutting any trees, shrubs, growing crops, and vegetation that may interfere with the operation. After the work is done, a ban will be imposed on the passing of persons, animals, and vehicles over or under the electric line and on the building of any structure on the land. In other words, the land is as good as gone. For this, the tso or tong receives only a token compensation from the company. After all, there is no change in land ownership. Naturally the tso will fight for official resumption of the affected part of its landed property. Invariably the Lands Department that authorizes the abridgment of its property rights will say no, as the land is reduced to being practically useless for any other development project.

Then there is the “Town Planning Ordinance,” enacted in 1939 and amended in January 1991. This ordinance operates at three levels: territorial, regional, and district. At the district level, it is designed to plan and control local development by designating areas for different uses to bring about a better living environment. What the government does is “zoning” or “statutory zoning,” whereby it ordains the type of use to which the lands of each zone can be put. Land located within an agricultural zone, for instance, is forbidden to be converted to any other use without official permission. This has a number of
ramifications, not the least of which was an inability of *tso* and *tong* to invest their lands in a profitable way when there were opportunities. In 1923, the initial administrative decision to restrict land use touched off a storm of protests which led the indigenous lineages to organize the precursor of the Heung Yee Kuk, N. T.¹ Since then, land issues have dominated their concern. According to *New Territories Heung Yee Kuk New Year Special Issues* (1983-85), almost 60% of the committee meetings, negotiations with government departments, and campaigns organized by the “Kuk” centered on land issues. Restrictions of land use, in particular, are a sore spot in the relationship between the indigenous population of the New Territories and the Government.

The “Town Planning Ordinance” also allows for the government to zone private land for public purpose gratis. There are cases in which *tso* or *tong* land is zoned as “Open Space,” “Green Belt,” “Site of Special Scientific Interest” or “Coastal Protection Area.” Once the land is so zoned, its owner loses the right to develop any other uses for it. The government, however, is legally exempt from the responsibility to resume the land or to compensate the owner for his loss of land development rights after the zoning. Neither the legislature nor the administration feels even remotely apologetic for expropriating private property and violating the fundamental principle of capitalist society this way.

In July 1991, an officially-appointed advisory group of lawyers, professors, scholars, and retired judges concluded that it was high time to put an end to such gross encroachment. A draft proposal was submitted to the Secretary for Planning,

¹ It was named “The General Assembly of Research on the Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce of the New Territories.”
Environment, and Lands for further revision of the “Town Planning Ordinance” in terms of compensation and betterment, but the government never bothered to respond to it. A member of this advisory group who has strong indigenous ties notes, “Private ownership is the cornerstone of capitalism, but unfortunately individual landed property is susceptible to government expropriation here.”

The ultimate conflict of tso and tong with modernization drew to a head on June 22, 1994, when the Legislative Council passed the “New Territories Land Exemption Ordinance” to extend the right of equal inheritance to the whole Hong Kong region, urban and rural. For the Democrats who had just won a majority of seats at the Legislative Council, the lineage organization is no more than “feudal remnants” that must be eradicated. The new legislation will drive home a fatal blow to the patrilineal inheritance of land in the New Territories. With this, Chinese liberal legislators did what the British Administration had never tried before. In response, over a hundred thousand indigenous people walked onto the streets of urban Hong Kong in protest of the new Ordinance. In a dramatic move, Lau Wong-fat, Chairman of the Heung Yee Kuk, N. T., brought the Hong Kong Government to court for its breach of Governor Sir Henry A. Blake’s 1899 proclamation and Article 40 of the Basic Law, both of which pledge to protect the traditional rights and interests of the indigenous inhabitants of the New Territories. The law-suit is still awaiting trial, and the Ordinance is yet to be implemented in the legal and

1 Betterment is defined as the enhancement of land or property values by government action that is subject to recoupment in the form of an increase in property tax, land premium, or rental rate (CRTPO 1991:73).
2 The Basic Law is supposed to be the foundation of legal apparatus for Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China after the takeover.
It has been hard for the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau to swallow the heavy losses of their ancestral property and the prolonged eclipse of their lineage in modern history. Now there is the challenge of modernization that needs some of their ancestral lands and devalues the others, in the meantime threatening to terminate the divine land ownership of their tso and tong. How are they coping with lessons from the past and pressure from the present? The best place to start is the stance of their leadership.

The Chinese lineage is a centralized polity, whose leadership in the New Territories has three layers: patriarchs, Si Li, and Village Representatives. Traditionally, the patriarchs ran both village and lineage affairs. It was even within their authority to punish a lineage member with the sentence of death. Today patriarchal leadership is mostly ritualistic and advisory. Its legal function was first turned over to the local tribunal of appointed elders called Tsz Yee and then to civil and criminal laws. As one lineage headman of Lung Yeuk Tau says, the ethical part of the lineage rules is still in effect, but on legal issues people are only aware of official rather than lineage rules.¹ A further change was initiated in 1944, when Village Representatives were selected by nomination to take over all the administrative functions. This system was finally institutionalized with the implementation of “Barrow’s Rules” in 1948.² In proportion to its population size, Lung Yeuk Tau has three Village Representatives. They are at the helms of leadership both internally and externally. While the patriarchs and elders are consulted on matters of importance to the

¹ “只有官理没有族理。”
² J. Barrow was the first District Commissioner of the New Territories. The rules for the generation and functions of Village Representatives are spelt out in ARDO (1948:2-3).
lineage, their leadership retains a significant role only in the observation of ancestor worship.

Mr. K. Tang is the first Village Representative of Lung Yeuk Tau to chair the Fanling Rural Committee as well as the Board of North District, which is the second largest in the New Territories. In the prime of his life, he has become the standard bearer for Lung Yeuk Tau. Aside from his successes in public service and private business, one amazing thing about Mr. Tang is his knowledge of Lung Yeuk Tau. There is general consent among his kinsmen that no one is more familiar with the heritage and history of their lineage than he is.

According to Mr. K. Tang, nothing is more important to a lineage than its ancestral property and divine land ownership, without which the lineage will go out of existence. He has three daughters whom he loves dearly, and each will get a fair share of inheritance in the form of dowry. But ancestral landholdings are not to be inherited by them, because they carry obligations (of ancestor worship) daughters can not fulfill. Such property is the ancestor’s “blood food” or heuk shek. The term allows for two interpretations. One is “food from blood descendants,” in which case the ancestor is on the receiving end. The descendants use proceeds from the property to provide for the needs of the ancestor in terms of food, wine, and veneration. Inheritance of the ancestral property immediately commits one to the ritual obligations of ancestor worship. Another interpretation is “food for blood descendants,” in which case the descendants are on the receiving end. Any surplus of the proceeds from the ancestral property is to be used in the benefit of the descendants. While the two interpretations supplement each other, the one that defines
rights is secondary to the one that defines obligations. No obligations, no rights.

Mr. Tang admits, it is almost impossible to keep ancestral lands intact in the face of ever-advancing modernization. Lung Yeuk Tau, however, has emerged strong from the challenge. Its tso and tong are better-off than before, despite a considerable reduction of landholdings. The key to its achievement lies in rebuilding the assets of ancestral property to accommodate the needs of society. The first attempt was made in 1980, when the Tang invested their HK$ 120,000 from land resumption in the erection of Sui Wan House, a two-story commercial building that stands at the entrance of Lung Yeuk Tau. Under the management of Sui Wan Tong, this building has yielded a growing rental income ever since, fetching more than HK$ 200,000 a year in 1995. An even bigger success came in 1983, when the lineage acquired five three-story houses. Four of the houses were built by the government in compensation for its demolition of the Temple of the Filial Son that belonged to Lung Yeuk Tau. The Tangs spent another HK$ 290,000 in adding a fifth house. Since August 1983, this unit of commercial and residential complex in Tai Po has brought a hefty rental income, exceeding HK$ 800,000 a year in 1995. Needless to say, the property value of these assets has soared as well.

The magnificent "Dragon Hill Temple" represents another ambitious attempt of Lung Yeuk Tau to rejuvenate its corporate property. Completed in November 1993, this 37-million project is a joint venture. At first, the authorities refused to give the go-ahead, and one of the reasons was the poor accessibility of the site. Undaunted, the Tangs spent millions of dollars building roads to make it accessible by bus from the Fanling Railway Station. The new seven-story building stands on the old site of Lung Kai Nunnery, erected
by the lineage in 1759 for its daughters who were determined to remain celibate. Dilapidated and run-down, the nunnery went out of use in the mid-1940s. For about two decades, the premise was rented to a pig-farmer for HK$ 7,000 a year. The new mansion accommodates a temple, a charitable foundation, a Buddhist academy, and auditoriums, producing an annual rental income of HK$ 240,000. The total investment of Lung Yeuk Tau will be retrieved in 50 years. Decorated with an exquisite fifteen-meter relief sculpture of Bodhisattva Guanyin on its outer wall and furnished with a marble complex of entrance stairways and terraces, the Dragon Hill Temple is a monument to the efforts of Lung Yeuk
Tau to upgrade their corporate property. One of the Village Representatives says, “We are trying to leave our descendants something to remember our ancestors for.” Of course, one day he will join in the “ancestors” himself.

The rebuilding of lineage corporate property observed in Lung Yeuk Tau, however, is not easy to get off the ground. There are always lineage members more interested in picking up cash. Without persuasive leadership, individual economic interests can easily prevail over any talk of collective good. More often than not, the compensations for resumption of tso land are just divided up among the descendants, and that is the end of the story. Between 1979 and 1996, a tso that I studied outside Lung Yeuk Tau lost over four million square feet of land to urbanization and industrialization. Hundreds of millions of dollars were received in compensation, and yet not a dime was used to create new corporate property except for a reserve fund at the bank. One of its Si Li is a retired judge. It is apparent to him that when the corporate property base is gone, so is the lineage itself. Although concern was written all over his face, he could not help shrugging his shoulders at the foreseeable difficulties of rebuilding corporate property. Such difficulties are very real.

In Lung Yeuk Tau, discussion had continued for over a year about what to do with the compensations from governmental resumption of a tract of its land. When I left in May 1996, the Tangs still could not come up with an agreement. This illustrates the throes of birth that each project has to go through.

As a rule, the impetus to rebuild corporate property has to come from leadership in the form of a feasible proposal. According to Mr. K. Tang, even after a course of action is carefully charted and presented, it still takes a lot of patience, reasoning, and persuasion to
introduce the project that seems to be in the best interest of the lineage. He remembers how
tough it was to bring his kinsmen to approve the project that eventually led to the building
of five houses in Tai Po. Negotiations with the District Office had twists and turns. At
every step of the way, there was doubt from his kinsmen that had to be addressed and
dispelled. “We are essentially peasants,” he says. The hardest part of his job was to
persuade the people to stay with him and go the full course in choosing long-term interests
over short-term ones. After the completion of the project, people were happy about its
success. For some, however, the feeling is a mixed one, with joy truncated by the suspicion
that somebody must have got more than a fair share of benefits in the process. This frame of
mind is familiar to the anthropologist. Summed up as the “Image of the Limited Good”
(Foster 1965, 1972; Piker 1966), it may, and often does, discourage the aspirations of
lineage leadership to rebuild corporate property.

Lest there is misunderstanding, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are atypical of the
peasants, out of whose side they have lived for decades, with a new lifestyle and a more or
less changed mind set. Their cautious attitude towards re-investment has a lot to do with the
risks involved in sailing the unfathomed waters. It has been a trend in the New Territories to
convert collective landed property into real estates. Imagine all the expertise that a lineage
needs in dealing with developers, architects, builders, various aspects of contract
negotiations, and real estate management. Years ago, a major lineage signed a deal with
private developers, in which a tong was to provide the land for an urban residential complex
in Yuen Long. In return, the tong would obtain full ownership of one of the apartment
buildings upon completion of the project. But the building it finally got is of substandard
quality and has the poorest location of all. Legally and technically no one is to blame for what happened, and the lineage is a victim of its own lack of expertise. To make matters worse, the tong has proved so incompetent in its management of the property that the urban apartment collects an average rent only comparable to that of a rural one. It effectively puts to rest any further suggestion of rebuilding corporate property in this lineage. There is good reason for the people of Lung Yeuk Tau to take a hard look at each innovative move submitted to their attention and make sure that their leadership is not venturing beyond its limits.

Rebuilding ancestral property is a game of market economics. Lung Yeuk Tau, which has played the game well, owes much of its success to the capitalist-style entrepreneurship of its leadership. But there is a sense of uncertainty lurking in everyone’s mind with regard to the tolerance of capitalism and landlordship after the takeover of Hong Kong by the Communists. The British land policy had antagonized the indigenous land owners of the New Territories, who tried to solicit support from the Communists when they clashed with the colonial government on land issues. Nevertheless, such a move did not necessarily grow out of trust in the Communists, under whose rule landlords had been persecuted ruthlessly, and lineages had vanished. Many people of the New Territories are concerned that the Communist promise “Hong Kong is to be ruled by the people of Hong Kong” will be reduced to mere lip service. Indeed, when this slogan of propaganda is said in Cantonese, it sounds the same as “谈为谈的说.”

1 These two homophonous expressions are “港人治港” and “講人只講.”
been used as a serious argument against rebuilding corporate property, too.

The lineages of the Fanling area need a role model in their efforts to adapt to a changing social milieu, and they have found one in the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau. It accounts for the dominant presence of the Tang lineage in local leadership. The relationship of these lineages with modernization is a symbiotic one. Neither can make do without the other, but there are also conflicts of interest. The Tangs would like to accept modernization at their own pace and, if possible, on their terms. Private companies, for instance, have approached them time and again, offering to “develop” Lung Yeuk Tau by jointly turning the community into a residential and industrial estate jointly. The answer is always an adamant “No.” The Tangs have a strong attachment to the land left by their ancestors. As they put it, “Without the land, and we are reduced to nothing.” By “nothing” they mean ethnocide, not genocide. What is really at stake is a way of life, a culture. Physically they will be there, but their culture will be gone.

Some people tend to accuse indigenous people of standing in the way of modernization and have little tolerance of their rights. In certain cases, modernization becomes a crusade to weed out “stupid” indigenous customs and traditions. But nothing can justify its ends, however noble it may be, if the move entails the destruction of indigenous culture. The maintenance of one’s own culture is a fundamental human right. Article 22 of the 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone is entitled to the realization of the “cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.” In a famous rebuttal of Arthur E. Hippler’s ethnocentric arguments against indigenous culture, Gerald Weiss (1988:126) points out:
The loss of one's cultural system is the most devastating event short of death that a human being can experience, and to be forced to relinquish the entire set of understandings and feelings within oneself derived from that lost culture is to lose an intrinsic part of oneself -- the cultural part. It is a partial death, perhaps the most meaningful part of complete death.

In its 1984 declaration, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, which is granted non-governmental organization status with the United Nations, defines self-determination as one of the principles of indigenous rights. There has been increasing support for the right of indigenous peoples to "freely pursue their economic, social, religious and cultural development" (Dasmann 1973; Watkins 1977; Patterson 1984; Nietschmann 1988; Maybury-Lewis 1985; Bodley 1982 & 1988).

It is futile to romanticize about indigenous culture or to try to keep it as a "human zoo." In arguing against the destruction of indigenous culture and the danger of "concentration-camp thinking" that suggests an expeditious means of providing a final solution to the so-called indigenous problem (Weiss 1988:130), anthropologists are not arguing against change within the culture. Change is certainly on the way as far as the right of inheritance in the New Territories is concerned. Traditionally, the property of a deceased male who dies sonless is to be inherited by his nearest male relative. But for quite some time, the lineage has stopped challenging the inheritance of land and housing by a jue-jia-nu (daughter who has no brothers) if the father has so willed legally. In some cases, lineage members try to buy back the land and housing from these daughters so that the property stays with them. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau also admit and feel apologetic that the lineage system is discriminated against females. The is perhaps the beginning of an even bigger change that is going to happen gradually. The people of the New Territories demand
time rather than "self-determination." Modern society owes it to them if it cannot afford to leave them and their resources alone.
CHAPTER 8
RITES AND RITUALS

The religious life of the Tang lineage is rich and colorful, which reveals the amazing vitality of popular religion that dominates Lung Yeuk Tau. Several distinctions set popular religion apart from the great tradition of Chinese religion, which consists of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The spirituality of Lung Yeuk Tau is a syncretistic blend of these “Three Great Teachings” that are exclusive of each other in the great tradition (Jochim 1986:6). The difference the Tangs see between the organized religious faiths is merely one of efficacy. For funeral services and nirvana, they turn to Buddhist monks; for the performance of purificatory rites and exorcism, they seek the help of Taoist priests. In the meantime, they practice the Confucian ethics. Among the Chinese folk, it is not the boundary of religious faiths but the moral and magical functions of the cults that dominate their consciousness (C. Yang 1961:25). Secondly, the other world is conceived to bear close resemblance to this world. Consequently, ancestors need to be provided for as are the living parents in old age. The similarity is extended to social structure. There is the “Lord of the Stove” (chiu kwon) watching over family members as a police agent of Heaven. Above him are the “Earth God” (pak kung) who is responsible for a local area like the Village Representative and the “City God” (sin wong) whose jurisdiction
corresponds to that of the Magistrate. Still higher up in the divine hierarchy are deities of national importance, and at the top is the Jade Emperor. In fact, not only are the divine and mundane worlds structured alike, but they operate on the same moral principles as well (Wolf 1974:137). Finally, the spiritual dimension of popular religion is diffused into social institutions so much so that the secular becomes sacred.

8.1 The Ancestral Cult and Rites

The diffusion of popular religion into the lineage organization was spearheaded by ancestor worship, an indigenous practice that bloomed fully at the dawn of history (the eighteenth century B.C.), predating the advent of Buddhism and the rise of religious Taoism by about two thousand years (Tung 1952:19). In the indigenous Chinese religion, ancestor worship was conducted in concert with the worship of Heaven. It is summarized by a classical statement in the Book of Rites: “All things stem from Heaven, and man owes his origins to his ancestors. Because the ancestors created life, they are worthy of veneration as is the Supreme God in Heaven.” Rather than praying to God directly, the early Chinese kings chose to seek blessings from their ancestors through oracle bone divination. The script on these divinatory bones not only constitutes China’s earliest written language but records the elaborate rites of the ancestral cult in times of antiquity as well.

In addition, folk songs from the Book of Odes, a classic of the ten century B.C., testify to the popularity of ancestor worship with the early Chinese peasants. Here is one

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1 《禮記·郊特牲篇》,"萬物本乎天，人本乎祖，此所以配上帝也."
ode that describes their sacrifices in the ancestral temple:¹

Our glutinous millet is flourishing,
Our panicled millet is abundant.
When the barns are filled,
With myriad stacks of grain,
We shall use it to make wines and viands,
For offerings to ancestor and ancestress.
In fulfillment of the sacrificial rituals,
There will be great blessings.

May sons and grandsons of your line,
Never fail to observe these divine rites.
(My translation)

Ancestor worship became a part of the state cult when the rulers of the Western Zhou (1050-770 BC) established one of their forebears as the deity of millet (Hou Ji) and put him on the pedestal with the deity of land as a symbol of the state. Known as She Ji (Gods of Land and Grain), this cult would last into the twentieth century.

The evolution of ancestor worship into an independent cult, however, received its formative impact from Confucius when he defined sacrifice in terms of li. The ideograph li (禮) is composed of two parts, one indicating communication with the supernatural and the other denoting a sacrificial vessel that contains wine made from grain. In its root meaning, the word is close to sacred “ritual” or “ceremony.” For Confucius, li is a medium within which to talk about the entire body of social traditions and conventions. He taught that the ability to act according to li and the will to submit to it are essential to the perfection of human nature (Fingarette 1972:6-7). People become truly human when their raw existence is shaped by li, and li is a civilized expression of human impulse. If all are

¹ In “Chu Ci”, 《楚茨》: “......我黍與與，我稷翼翼。我倉既盈，我庾維億。以爲酒食，以享以祀。以妥以侑，以介景福。......子子孫孫，勿替引之。”

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self-disciplined and re-commit themselves to *li*, social harmony will prevail. In order for *li* not to be empty conformity that is sterile, the individuals involved must do it with sincerity. So *li* is spiritual as much as ritual. In the case of sacrifice, it is a means of cultivating virtues, such as filial piety, honesty, and loyalty. From the Confucian perspective of *li*, ancestor worship and sacrifice have both social and moral functions.

The ancestral cult, which fuses ancestor worship with the rites of sacrifice, may mean different things to different people. Xun Zi (313-238 BC) put it most clearly, “Among the moral gentlemen, it is considered to be a human practice; among the common people it is considered to be a serving of the spirits” (Fung 1937:251). C. K. Yang (1961:254) also notices a dualistic character of the ancestral cult -- an agnostic skepticism on the part of certain intellectuals, and belief in spirits on the part of the common people. To philosophers like Confucius and Xun Zi, the significance of the ancestral cult was mainly sociological. But it did not keep many scholars from performing the cult for the same reason as did the common people. In a world of uncertainty, the hope of supernatural assistance and the fear of divine punishment tended to be the direct motivation of individual belief in the ancestral cult. In most cases, the awe that a son felt for his father and forebears became even greater when they were present spiritually rather than physically.

At Lung Yeuk Tau, the ancestral cult has all the primary qualities of religion diffused into secular social institutions. Interwoven into the fabric of kinship, this cult becomes a powerful structural factor in the organization and operations of the Tang lineage. Its head priest of ancestor worship is also its leader. The same principle is
followed in every segment, branch, and family. Therefore, each group of people that functions as a social unit is an exclusive unit of ancestor worship led by a patriarch. Interestingly, even new-born male babies are eligible to sponsor religious activities as chiu sun ("lead donor"), a capacity to be filled only by the patriarch. There are basically two types of patriarchs. Those who are departed are worshipped as ancestors, and those who are alive preside over the worship of their precursors. This brings us to the social existence of the lineage as a corporation and as a kin group. Created by the deceased patriarchs, the lineage is actually a religious corporation, designed to sustain ancestor worship in perpetuity. Composed of the living descendants, the lineage is essentially a congregation organized around a hierarchy of extant patriarchs to lead ancestor worship as head priests. In both cases, the ancestral cult provides the lineage with rules for its social operations. While this cult functions in society without the pretense of a separate religious institution, it imparts a sacred character to social institutions.

As has been shown, theologically the ancestral cult involves the need of ancestors for perpetual sacrifice by their descendants, the power of the deceased to influence the living morally and physically, the obligations of filial piety, and the rationalization of rites and rituals in terms of li. Much of this theology, in turn, is based on Chinese belief in the souls of the dead. The Chinese identify two parts in the soul: hun and po. Confucius theorized that upon death, one's hun would return to Heaven like air, whereas one's po would retire into the earth with his or her body. The eternal separation of hun and po marked the end of life. The Neo-Confucianists took it a step further to associate "hun"
with *yang* which was friendly to the living, and "*po*" with *yin* which was unpredictable and might turn hostile like mana. Therefore, *hun* is the "*yang* spirit," and *po* is the "*yin* spirit."^ The ancestral cult accords different rites to the veneration of an ancestral soul in terms of its *hun* and *po*, but sacrifice is the common denominator of these rites.

The spirit tablet is the abode of a forebear’s *hun* or *yang* spirit, which is enshrined in the altar of each household at Lung Yeuk Tau. However, except for those in the ancestral halls, the spirit “tablet” now assumes the form of a framed piece of red paper covered with glass. It is also a collective spirit “tablet” in the sense that the red paper is inscribed with, in proper order, all the ancestors and ancestresses of the ascending ten or so generations that a household worships. The order of prominence is from top to bottom and from center to side. The left side is superior to the right side. Consequently, an ancestress-wife always stands to the right of an ancestor-husband. The couple on the left side is more senior than the couple at the corresponding spot of the right side. Typically the family altar is a console wooden cabinet of two shelves. The upper one is devoted to the ancestral tablet flanked by a eulogistic couplet and the lower one, to the reverence of the Earth God, who may be joined by other popular deities. There are incense-burners and candle-sticks on both shelves. In front of the ancestral tablet, however, are offerings that consist of fruits, food, and tea, whereas the Earth God has none of such oblation save on religious holidays. The different treatment is attributable to the belief that ancestors are demigods who need provisions from the descendants on a daily basis.

Standing against a wall of the main room (usually the sitting room), the altar

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1 《淮南子·説山訓篇》，高誘《注》：“魄，人陰神也；魂，人陽神也。”

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occupies the most prominent spot around which family members spend a lot of their domestic time. The living rest, eat, do house chores, and meet with guests under the watchful eye of their ancestors. When there is an event of importance in the family, it will be announced to the spirits in the tablet. The continued existence of ancestors is quite tangible in the daily life of each household at Lung Yeuk Tau. The tablet of ancestral hun or yang spirits is worshipped with incense and prays every day. In contrast, the grave, which is the abode of ancestral po or yin spirit, is visited once or twice a year. The two occasions for sweeping ancestral graves are Qingming in the fourth month of the lunar year and Chongyang in the ninth month. The spring visit (Qingming) is for the graves of recent ancestors and ancestresses while the autumn visit (Chongyang) is for the graves of more remote ones. To sweep an ancestral grave is to perform a set of sacrificial rites and to clear the tomb of weeds and spray some lime around it. The autumn sacrifice to a high ancestor on the site is very elaborate and formalized with the Tangs. It takes over a week to finish sweeping all the graves of high ancestors. Instead, the spring sacrifice to higher ancestors is performed collectively and communally at the ancestral hall so that people have time to visit the tombs of more recent forebears. Both Qingming and Chongyang are official holidays in Hong Kong. For the city-bound, Chongyang is a day to climb the highest peak of the island and worship from afar their remote ancestors who are buried somewhere inland. But many urbanites who make the climb are for its fun and exercise, hardly conscious of its religious import.

The ancestral hall is the focal point of ancestor veneration and its cult. Based on a survey of 306 temples dedicated to various types of functional gods (e.g. social order,
agriculture, morals, health, welfare, etc.), C.K. Yang (1961:351) concludes that ancestral halls are better maintained than most of the other types of temples in China. This is certainly true of the New Territories where the ancestral hall as a religious institution is among the best endowed.

Named after the lineage founding father, Tang Tsung-ling Ancestral Hall is a fine example of a “three-by-two” structure, comprising three transverse halls, one behind another, and separated by two internal courtyards. The entrance hall accommodates a deep alcove and a corner room on either side. The corner rooms can serve as guest quarters or storage space, whereas the alcoves are where elders used to sit and discuss matters of interest. The central hall is the meeting place for the lineage as a whole. It is called Shui Wan Tong (“The Hall of Innocent Blue Clouds”), in the name of which the property of the
ancestor hall is managed, and decisions are made that are binding on lineage members. In
the back of the central hall stands a giant wooden screen, shielding the entrance to the rear
courtyard and the ancestral hall proper. Its double door is closed to visitors except on
important religious occasions. The rear hall is separated into three lateral compartments,
each with an ancestral altar.

The main altar of the end hall contains the tablets of lineage high ancestors down
to the eighth generation. Among them are Wong Ko and her husband. Because the Tangs
of Lung Yeuk Tau represent major descent from this royal couple of the second
generation, they keep its original spirit tablet, from which copies were made by their
lineage cousins in the New Territories. There are a piece of red silk and two golden
flowers atop every tablet, a symbol of relationship to royal blood. According to my
informants, the ancestors above Wong Ko were entitled to the honor as the princess had
kowtowed to them as a daughter-in-law. Each of the twelve spirit tablets stands for one
ancestral couple. It is inscribed with their names, titles, the imperial period during which
they were alive, and their generation distance from ancestor Tang Yuen-leung. The Tangs
measure generation distance in terms of sai if the individual has passed away and chuen if
he is still alive.1 Some of their high ancestors and ancestresses were actually subjects of the
Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), which is most hated at Lung Yeuk Tau. In those cases, the
forebears are presented as of the imperial period either preceding or following the Tartar
rule.

1 Both sai and chuen can be taken to mean “generation.” The 22nd sai refers to all the
deceased members of the 22nd generation, whereas the 22nd chuen is reserved for the
living members of this generation.
As one faces the rear hall, the left compartment holds about 135 spirit tablets of ordinary ancestors down to the 23rd generation. But it is possible for an elder to have his tablet enshrined on this altar when he is still hale and hearty. The privilege is available only to those families which can afford a donation of money to the lineage. Such tablets are distinguished from the others by the different wording employed in reference to generation. The use of *chuen* instead of *sai* in a tablet indicates that it is a “longevity” rather than “spirit” tablet. Some of the four or five recent tablets on this altar were commissioned by sons for their living parents as an act of filial piety. The idea is that it is a blessing of long life for a senior living soul to be worshipped side by side with his ancestors. But the golden flowers that decorate the tablets in this compartment are less elaborate than those in the main altar. The right compartment holds the spirit tablets of those who received imperial degrees or brought honor to the lineage. There are 42 of them, each with elaborate golden flowers and a cape of red silk. Upon scrutiny, some are dedicated to scholars who were descendants of Tang Yuen-leung but not native to Lung Yeuk Tau. Being in the line of major descent from Tang Yuen-leung, the Tang lineage of Lung Yeuk Tau seemed to take it upon itself to ensure that no remarkable achievement by any of their forebear’s progeny would fall into oblivion.

The ancestral hall is ornate, decorated with paintings and carvings on its beams, eaves, and walls that feature the motifs of unicorn, magpie, crane, pine tree, plum blossom, orchid, narcissus, vine leaf, cloud, god, legendary figure, and so forth. On its roof ridges, gable friezes, and end tiles, there is a plethora of exterior decorations that portray mythical animals, celestial bodies, human figures, plants, flowers, and symbolic patterns of secular or geomantic
significance. Destroyed during the “coastal evacuation” of 1662-69, this ancestral hall was rebuilt in the early 18th century. As a result, its old elaborate bracket system that characterized Ming architecture (1368-1644) was lost, but certain features were restored, including a royal layout that was off limits for commoners. Known as “four eaves draining water,” it exempted the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau from erecting roofed aisles in an internal courtyard. Therefore its open space is enclosed by four eaves, two of which are mounted directly on the side walls. The courtyard ground is nicely elevated, draining through holes shaped like traditional golden coins — another architectural layout for the privileged. Finally, in front of the ancestral hall is a very spacious courtyard, furnished with stone footings for tall flagpoles on either side of the entrance. Even up to the most recent times, an ancestral hall of this grandiose type implied a claim to the highest official status.

The rites of sacrifice are the ceremonial core of the ancestral cult. Conducted twice a year in the main ancestral hall at Lung Yeuk Tau, they are said to be “greatly simplified” due to the quickened pace of life, but there are still signs of sophistication in what I actually observed. The spring sacrifice is held on the day of the Vernal Equinox, and the autumn sacrifice is held on the day of the Autumnal Equinox. The offerings must be laid out on the long table in front of the main altar of the ancestral hall before noon (the mao hour). The variety and quantity of offerings are formalized, including tea (ten cups), wine (ten cups), steamed rice (ten bowls), soup (ten teacups), ten different dishes of vegetable food, salt and vinegar, a large plate of red meat, fish, and chicken, a complete fried pig,

\[1\] My interview with Miss Ho of Antiques and Monuments Office, Shatin made it clear to me that no old building in the New Territories comes even near the sophistication of Ming bracket system.
fruits (ten plates), cakes (ten plates) in addition to a flagon of wine, ceremonial-size and ordinary incense and candles, spirit money, and so on. While the candles and incense are being lit, the elders who are going to officiate at the sacrifice change into robes.

Chanting a standardized opening speech, the master of ceremony invites the elders to stand in a line. At his next direction, the lineage head steps forward and kneels down on a cushion to kowtow three times. An assistant comes to his side with a bundle of new incense sticks, which he lights and inserts into a burner, one third at a time as is required by the ritual. Then the lineage head pours a cup of wine to the ground in a semi-circle to thank the Earth God and ends his tribute with three more prostrations. The next thing to do is for him to present the food to ancestors. The assistant fetches one of the ten wine cups. Still on his knees and with both hands, the lineage head raises the cup above his brows, pauses for a while, and then hands it back to be placed on the long table again. One by one, various offerings of food are presented except for the pig, which is too heavy to move around. After the head priest is done and stands up, the other elders take turns to sacrifice wine if they choose to or simply do the prostrations. This is followed by collective worship in order of generation seniority, from the 22nd to the 25th generation. All that is required in collective worship is to bow, but time is allowed for individuals to kowtow of their own volition. Toward the end of the ritual, the lineage head starts the sacrifice of spirit money with three more prostrations. The last item on the agenda is to divide the fried pig among the male descendants who attend the rituals of worship and sacrifice. To use their own words, it is time to “eat sacrificial pork and be blessed.”

1 “進胙受福。”
With some variation, the same procedure is followed in sacrifices at gravesites. There is no rigid restriction on the time to start the ceremony since more than one gravesite visits are included in the agenda of each outing. The quantity of wine, tea, soup, rice, and vegetable offerings is cut down by half, and raw meat is used instead. Before the sacrifice begins, offerings are made on the side to the spirit of the soil (hau tu) with a standardized eulogy for its protection of the ancestral grave. In addition to “sweeping” the grave in the normal sense of the term, the elders walk around to check if the tomb is in good condition and whether there is change in the surrounding landscape. Their sense of solidarity having been renewed at the ancestral hall sacrifice, there is but one lingering concern in everyone’s mind: the comfort and peace that the ancestral yin spirit needs in its eternal abode. It is for the descendants to make sure that it does, which is part of the reason why they are here. At the end of the sacrificial ritual, fireworks are let off to frighten away evil “homeless” spirits and to bid good-bye to the ancestral soul.

There is difference in the ritual attitude with which the rites of sacrifice are performed at home, in the ancestral hall, and at the gravesite. The domestic sacrifice is mostly handled by women from day to day. Even when it is relatively formal, as on the anniversary of a parent’s death, ritual preparation and participation are not limited to menfolk. The distance between genders and between the living and the dead is toned down. On a traditional holiday, the Lung Yeuk Tau family simply adds one more seat and an additional pair of chopsticks on the table to invite its immediate ancestors and ancestresses to partake of the feast. The ritual attitude is characterized by familiar closeness. It is in tune with what is being sought after in domestic sacrifices: blessings of
harmony within the family, which actually includes the dear and near departed. In contrast, the ancestral hall sacrifice seeks to ensure solidarity above the family. To this end, it emphasizes the obligations to common ancestors who are remote and relatively unfamiliar. The ritual attitude is characterized by formal distance between two collective bodies: the ancestors and the descendants. The ceremonial expression of formal distance, however, ends on a reciprocal note, with the sharing of sacrificial pork among the male descendants. It serves to reconnect them with the remote common ancestors and renew their sense of solidarity. In the gravesite sacrifice, the ritual attitude is cautious. There is a greater awareness of the need to make the ancestral yin spirit or mana feel contented and protected.

So much for the rites of sacrifice per se. Let us take a look at the cult of fertility that is closely bound up with these rites. The Tin Hau Temple that stands next to the main ancestral hall of Lung Yeuk Tau is a good place to start. Literally “Queen of Heaven,” Tin Hau is a favorite deity in south China, for she is the guardian goddess of those who go out to sea, whether fishermen, traders, sailors, or frontier explorers. Moreover, her protection is believed to continue after their settlement in the new land. The Tin Hau Temple at Lung Yeuk Tau has two bells that were cast in 1695 and 1700 respectively, suggesting it was probably built back then. For some reason, the Tangs worship Tin Hau as a goddess of fertility, too. A couplet inside the temple says, “Her kindness reaching out to Heaven and across seas, she is as compassionate as the Goddess of Fertility....”¹ To reinforce the parallel, there is a group of miniature porcelain children frolicking right beside the seat of

¹ “水德配天海國慈航同普渡，母儀尊后鄉民瞟豆慶重光。”
Photo 7: The Tin Hau Temple

Tin Hau. An informant once referred to the temple as the temple of Amah ("Mother"). David Faure (1986:204) has reported a similar case from elsewhere. Both appear to be based on the legend that Tin Hau had nursed twelve babies before she was deified. It makes her a symbol of fertility.

The Tin Hau Temple has a place in the hearts of many believers. Managed by the Tang lineage, it stays open the year around, and its annual celebrations of Tin Hau's birthday on the twenty-third of the third lunar month are a religious holiday at Lung Yeuk Tau. To mark the occasion, the lineage offers fresh fruits, incense, and candles in recognition of her blessings for the community. Pious believers make a special pilgrimage to the temple with wishes and offerings. There is also Guanyin, the official Goddess of Fertility, at the Temple of the Dragon Hill. Both are so popular that they are among the
principal deities for communal worship in the local religious festival of Ta Chiu. At many a household, their statues are enshrined on the shelf of the ancestral tablet, receiving reverence every day. Nothing is more illustrative of the link between the fertility cult and the ancestral cult. The link is also found with those parts of the fertility cult that prescribe birdal visit to the ancestral hall, the lighting of a lantern for a male baby, and the distribution of birth gifts as discussed in Chapter 4.3.

Most of the religious occasions that entail ritualistic performance of ancestor worship are associated with the rites of sacrifice, but some arise from the observance of the funeral and mourning rites. The popularity of ancestor worship at Lung Yeuk Tau assures its aged that they will be revered posthumously and remain a part of the family. It is transformed into a healthy attitude of the aged toward death. Not infrequently an elderly person is preparing for his or her own hou shi ("post-life matters"), and the sons are mandated by filial piety and public pressure to provide the best for them that the family can afford. Such preparations mainly involve the clothing and coffin to be used for the dead in the funeral. Euphemistically they are called "longevity apparel" and "longevity casket." Lung Yeuk Tau has three officially approved burial grounds, where an elder is allowed to pick and choose his or her own gravesite.

But much of the traditional funeral rites described in the anthropological literature has been phased out at Lung Yeuk Tau. Gone are the days when the Tangs practiced the rites of elaborate xiao-lian ("dressing the corpse") as Thompson (1979:51) describes, ku-ling ("ceremonial death howl") as de Groot (1892) depicted, she-ling-wei ("establishing a temporary spirit tablet") as Watson and Rawski (1988:39) reconstruct from historical
records. Only the core is left. Upon the death of a parent, family members might keel down and lament their loss. After the ceremony of encoffining (da-lian), Buddhist monks are employed to chant sutras and release the departed soul from purgatory. The eldest son will don a sackcloth mourning dress, leading the funeral procession (chu-bin) when the coffin is carried to its burial site on the day picked by a yin-yang master or by consulting the almanac. Back from the gravesite, the living will step over a fire in front of the house so that the po of the deceased ancestor does not follow them home.

There is even greater change in the way that the five degrees of mourning are followed. In fact, for many people at Lung Yeuk Tau, the term wu-fu has lost its original meaning of “five mourning dresses” and come to stand for a way of reckoning relatives only. Close relatives attend the encoffining ritual to pay condolences and offer worship contributions (dian-yi). Yet they are not required to wear mourning dresses, which are replaced by black arm-bands for men and white flowers for women outside the immediate family. As for the prescribed mourning periods, modern life simply does not allow the eldest son to withdraw from society and abandon his daily duties for twenty-seven months. But the immediate family does observe a certain period of mourning. It primarily involves “doing the sevens,” that is, making formal offerings to the deceased every seventh day until the seventh seven. After this, gradually the deceased parent blends into the collective body of ancestors except on the anniversary of his or her death and on some traditional holidays.

8.2 Sacred Space: Feng-shui

The ancestral cult has sacred time and space. Its sacred time consists of the
occasions that entail formalized performance of ancestor worship. Unified by a thematic centality, they give rise to a series of rituals with a temporal order. Sacred time is actually an order that structures holy rituals. Similarly, sacred space is an order imposed on what are deemed holy structures in a religion. Ancestral altars, halls, and graves are the holy structures that constitute the sacred space of the ancestral cult. However, the ultimate boundary of this sacred space is defined by feng-shui, a system of divination rather than by the physical presence of holy structures per se.

The Chinese way of divination underwent a major change of depersonalization after its early marriage with ancestor worship. Instead of explaining events by reference to personalized natural powers such as gods and angry ancestors, it came to use a code of symbols to interpret the patterns of cosmic change. Feng-shui is such a code, which is so elaborate that it consists of several symbolic systems. Among them are yin-yang, wu-xing (the Five Elements), ba-gua (the Eight Trigrams), and tian-gan-di-zhi (the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches).

At the heart of feng-shui thinking is the yin-yang ideology. It provides a dialectical ontology in addition to what Marcel Granet (1973:57) calls an open classification system. Historically China developed a strong tradition of dialectical logic in contrast to positive logic (Chang 1939). Where positive logic sees the contrast of polarities, dialectical logic sees an interconnection. So instead of focusing on positive identity or positive exclusiveness (either something is the case, or it is not the case), the yin-yang ideology embraces the law of opposition that features three dialectical notions. One is the complementarity of opposites. What is good, beneficial, or invigorating acquires meaning
only in relation to what is evil, destructive, or debilitating. It follows that opposites are mutually causal (Jochim 1986:130). Because opposites exist side by side, everything is believed to have its yin aspects and its yang aspects (Cooper 1972:28). So contradiction is not taken to be absolute as in positive logic. It allows one to investigate both the absolute and relative aspects of contradiction. In fact, Chinese cosmology conceives harmony as a balance of contradiction, with yin and yang in their right proportions.¹ A second notion is that everything changes to produce its negation (Wilhelm 1960:18). To be more specific, the world is in constant flux, with all things changing to deny their old being, as in the progression of day into night, of life into death, and of summer into winter. The third notion is cyclic return, with which the production of negation is further negated. So everything comes back to where it started and is restored to its original being and state.

In accordance with this ontology, feng-shui divination seeks to place human buildings -- for the living or for the dead -- at sites where there is a tranquil balance of yin and yang. The production of negation, of course, is inevitable. All feng-shui divination can do is to mitigate the impact of such change for imbalance. Nevertheless, it is admitted that even if a site commands good feng-shui, its blessings wax and wane in a full circle of sixty years. Parallel to this is the popular Chinese saying, “For thirty years, the east bank is blessed, and for the next thirty years, the west bank is blessed.” It is a relatively unpolished folk statement that change takes the forms of “production of negation” and “negation of the negation.”

¹ The most desirable state is said to be one in which yin is harmonized with yang (“陰陽調和”).
To capture the changing transitional states, there are the famous Eight Trigrams. In each of these three-tiered symbols, a solid line stands for yang, and a broken line for yin. Combining them into all possible sets of three gives the following series:

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\end{align*}
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This series is used to assign symbolic meaning to cardinal points, natural phenomena, body parts, family members, animals, and a myriad of attributes. But a trigram primarily epitomizes a stage of yin-yang motion. Its symbolic meaning does not center so much on things in their state of being as on their tendencies in movement (Wilhelm 1950:1). When the eight trigrams are placed one atop another, a code of sixty-four hexagrams is further produced. The Book of Changes, a principal source of Chinese divination, devotes a whole passage to explicating the cosmic implications of each hexagram that usually run into the dozens. It enables feng-shui divination to evaluate the physical features of landscape in cosmic as well as dynamic terms. Furthermore, the eight trigrams have two different octagonal arrangements,\(^1\) which are exploited by feng-shui divination to investigate the metaphysical significance of both visible and invisible variables in the site (Feuchtwang 1974:75).

The emergence of the wu-xing ideology was a result of the attempt to interpret symbolic relationships globally. According to this ideology, all things in the universe fall under the five elements termed “wood,” “earth,” “water,” “fire,” and “metal.” Rather than stand for an actual substance, each of them represents a specific type of intrinsic quality

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\(^1\) Namely, the “Former Heaven Sequence” attributed to the legendary king Fu Xi and the “Later Heaven Sequence” attributed to King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty.
and external force that is at once productive and destructive (Fung 1953:22). Thus the five elements form two different sequences. One dictates a mutually destructive relationship. It works in the order of "wood," "earth," "water," "fire," and "metal," with each element overpowering the succeeding one and with the last element overpowering the first one to form a cycle. The second sequence presents a mutually productive relationship. It works in the order of "wood," "fire," "earth," "metal," and "water," with each element generating the succeeding one and with the last element generating the first one to complete the cycle. These two sequences, in turn, produce a global web of relationship as indicated below:

![Diagram of the Five Elements]

**Figure 5: Global Relationships of the "Five Elements"**

For the divination of *feng-shui*, the *wu-xing* ideology provides an important explanatory framework. Many symbols are no more than designators of space, time, and configuration until they are viewed within the global web of relationships defined by *wu-xing*. Indeed,
association with its “five elements” immediately gives a new dimension to their symbolic
significance and meaning. It is within the framework of the *wu-xing* ideology that all the
series of symbols become interrelated.

The last symbolic system involves the classification of time. When the ancient
Chinese felt the need to keep track of time, they constructed two cycles, one of twelve
divisions and the other of ten. Each of these divisions had a name, so that any point in time
could be named binomially by taking a character from each of the two cycles. This gave a
total of sixty different combinations. Because the two cycles showed correlation with the
recurrent change of certain natural phenomena, they were assigned *yin-yang* significance.
Known as the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches, they were readily
incorporated into *feng-shui* divination, in which time was an important variable of change.

Suffice it to say that *feng-shui* divination is both elaborate and esoteric. To master
it, one has to be well-versed in Chinese natural philosophy and classical texts. There is a
multitude of variables to reckon with. Armed with a geomantic compass which has a
magnetic needle and a dial inscribed with 16 to 38 rings of symbols, the *feng-shui* expert
takes numerous bearings on the static and dynamic features of a site. After the compass
assigns symbolic significance to each bearing, he ascertains its meaning by abstruse
calculations. In the process, what are in fact static forms become lines of motion related to
change, transformation, and growth of *qi* (Feuchtwang 1974:31 & 35). Indeed, *qi* is not
only the breath of life but also the nexus of *feng-shui* symbolism. One contemporary *feng-
shui* master says, “If a geomancer can recognize *qi*, that is all there is to his
accomplishment” (Rossbach 1983:21). A classical essay explains why: “Collected, the *qi*
of the universe forms a unity; divided, it splits into \textit{yin} and \textit{yang}; quartered, it constitutes the four seasons; sundered, it gives rise to the five elements of \textit{wu-xing}” (Fung 1953:21). Forces that disrupt the \textit{feng-shui} of a site are called “evil breath” (\textit{sak hei}).

\textit{Feng-shui} is what Freedman (1979:313) calls “mystic ecology.” But the mystery that surrounds it does not keep the folks of Lung Yeuk Tau from being fascinated with it.\footnote{Only one of the Tang lineages member is a \textit{feng-shui} expert, who runs an academy training apprentices from outside Lung Yeuk Tau.} Like any belief system, \textit{feng-shui} has precepts, concepts, and finally a code of language to form a logically consistent hierarchy (Goodenough 1963). Its first level is composed of perceptual beliefs, which are merely “the decision as to what is there” in sensory experience. The second level is composed of inferred or conceptual beliefs. At the top are “unifying beliefs,” which allow for unique classification of reality and is a vehicle for making statements about precepts and concepts (Blake 1973:512). For the average inhabitant of Lung Yeuk Tau, it is not difficult to appreciate \textit{feng-shui} at its perceptual and conceptual levels. In fact, the basic symbolism used by \textit{feng-shui} to categorize land configuration makes good sense to them, who have been close to nature. A luck-bringing site, they will tell you, sits against a mountain, facing a body of water and flanked by two hills. The hill to the east stands for \textit{yang} and must be taller than the one to the west which stands for \textit{yin}. Such a site is well protected from evil winds that are north-eastlies and blow away \textit{qi}. The escape of \textit{qi} stops where there is water. But the body of water in the front ought to be meandering rather than rushing with torrents so that the confinement of \textit{qi} is maximized. Within this environment life tends to be exuberant, indicating a harmony
of celestial and terrestrial elements. Lung Yeuk Tau is believed to be blessed with excellent feng-shui.

The Tangs take feng-shui very seriously. There is no doubt that their ancestors were accomplished feng-shui experts. A case in point is their main ancestral hall. Situated halfway between the two oldest villages (Lo Wai and Tsz Tong Tsuen), it has a full view of the five rolling peaks of the Dragon Hill or “five tulips” as the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau call them affectionately and poetically. In the same vein, they describe the main ancestral hall as a “lotus afloat rapids.” Implicit in this depiction is the belief that like the lotus-throne of the Buddha, it will never go under. Indeed, this site is immune from flooding no matter how hard it rains. Furthermore, the term “rapids” can be a pun on the current of water or qi, which prompted my informant to tell me a story. Legend has it that there used to be an old stone temple standing in the way between the ancestral hall and the Dragon Hill. In order for the ancestral hall to fully exploit the flow of life-invigorating qi from the Dragon Hill, the Tang forebears demolished the temple. Prior to this, it is claimed, relatively few sons had been born to the lineage. After the temple was torn down, the lineage had a drastic increase in its male progeny. The folklore collected from Lung Yeuk Tau offers a similar account and subjoins that a flying dragon was seen in the sky upon the demolition of the old temple (AMO 1978:99).

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1 The two operational principles of qi were first formulated by Guo Pu in the Zang Jing (Burial Class) of the 4th century: “Burial is to exploit life-invigorating qi. Such qi escapes with wind and is confined by water. The ancient Chinese knew the importance of having it accumulated without dispersal and moving within confinement, hence the term feng-shui (wind and water).” 郭璞，《葬經》:“葬者, 乘生氣也, 氣順風則散, 界水則止。古人葬之使不散, 行之使有至, 故謂之風水。”

2 Please also see my analysis in 3.1 that the alignment of the two oldest villages with the highest peak of the Dragon Hill reveals fertility as the major concern of the Tang lineage during its first stage of settlement at Lung Yeuk Tau.
As is obvious from above, the boundary of the main ancestral hall is geomantically defined. To disrupt its *feng-shui* is to violate its sacred space. In protection of its *feng-shui*, the Tangs did not hesitate to destroy the culprit even though it was a temple. The folk tale about a jubilant dragon appearing in the sky is actually meant to canonize the act of defining sacred space geomantically. It demonstrates how important *feng-shui* is to the Tangs. At contemporary Lung Yeuk Tau, similar geomantic importance is attached to the family altar. The spot that accommodates the family altar is called the “heart of the house” (*zhai-xin*). Ideally it is situated in the northwest room, which occupies the *qian* locale on the geomantic compass and abounds in the force of *yang* as is indicated by its trigram symbol ë. No tall furniture, screen, audio-video equipment is to be placed in the space across which the family altar overlooks frontally. Nor is the family altar to have a kitchen situated next to it or face a door directly or stand under an upstairs toilet. While his new house was under construction, one of my informants had to ask his architect to change the location of the kitchen so that his family altar would not look right into it. As in the case of the ancestral hall, the sacred space of the family altar is geomantically defined, extending beyond its physical precinct. Convinced that it mattered much more than money, my informant did not hesitate to have the kitchen relocated.

In the case of ancestral graves, emphasis is on the preservation of their landscape as sacred space. Sacred landscape refers to an ideal formation of *feng-shui*, in which a range of hill or hills forms an arc that embraces an expanse of open land skirted by a body of water and faces a scene of mountains or hills in the distance. Such landscape is held to
be potent with the presence of geomantically significant topographic features: the Azure Dragon (hill to the east), the White Tiger (hill to the west), the Black Tortoise (hill in the back), the Vermilion Bird (body of water in the front), the Brightness Hall (frontal open space), jin-an (exuberant vicinity), and yuan-zhao (a distant mountainous or hilly screen). This is exactly what a famous ancestral gravesite of the Tangs looked like.

Located at downtown Tsuen Wan, an urban center of the New Territories, the gravesite is atop a hill called Hau Ti ("King Crab Land"). Buried in the grave is Tang Yap-yut, the third-generation ancestor of the Tang clan whose members are widespread in the New Territories and south China. In this part of China, it is a long-established practice to bury the dead on hillsides and to inter the remains of an ancestor in an omega-shaped masonry tomb, the size of which may vary. The grave of Hau Tei is of grand size. Its tombstone is carved with a poem by Bai Yuchan, a famous Buddhist abbot and literary genius of the 12th century. It extols the beauty and blessings of this burial site as follows (my translation):

Stretching out its left arm, the site joins hands with Sing Hill,
Embracing a body of green waves as far as Tsing Yi island.
Like a pond, the waters mirror stars on a tranquil night,
The spacious bay allows ten thousands of ships to pass.
Should a lucky man be buried in an auspicious site ashore,
He will be ancestor to a scholar-official in thirteen years.
If people in the world are futile in their attempt to find it,
Just turn around to inquire where is the “Fishing Stone.”

1 What follows are technical terms employed in the geomantic jargon: 青龍, 白虎, 玄武, 朱雀, 明堂, 近案, 遠朝.
2 The Chinese term translated as “Fishing Stone” in the last line literally means “young fisherman.” But it actually refers to a landmark stone so named. Following is the poem:

長仲左手接星羅，走攬青衣濯碧波，深夜一潭星斗現，裏頭容得萬船過。
有人下得朝陽穴，十三年內即登科，若是世人尋不得，回頭轉問釣魚哥.
It is small wonder that the grave came to be known as “Half Moon Shining on Lake” thereafter. Because it is one of the symbols for clan common ancestry, the Tangs have gone to great length to preserve the integrity of its sacred landscape.

The first challenge came at the turn of the century, when someone purchased a Crown Block lease and planned to set up a village near the gravesite. At the petition of the Tangs, however, the colonial administration agreed to revoke the lease and refund the purchase. Then in 1926, a landlord obtained official permission to fill a pond that belonged to him with earth taken from his private hill. The only problem is that his hill branched out from Hau Tei. Worried that the leveling of the hill would damage the *feng-shui* or “dragon vein” of their ancestral tomb, the Tangs tried to buy him out but were dismayed at the high price he demanded. Frustrated, they besought interference from the government, which obliged and repealed its permission for the removal of earth. This incident prompted the Tang clan to take further action. Starting in 1924, a fund-raising campaign had been going on among the descendants of the “Five Great Fang,” with the intent to purchase the land around the gravesite. Now was the time to implement this plan. After negotiations, the Tangs were able to lease the land that stretched over 300,000 sq. ft. for some HK$ 990. The only catch was that the land, which was a long distance away from any of the Tang lineages in the New Territories, must be brought under cultivation within two years. Or else, the government would resume the land.

In the early 1950s, the Hong Kong government found itself locked in a legal battle over Hau Tei with the Tangs. It started with the official go-ahead of preparations for
transforming rural Tsuen Wan into a New Town. Hau Tei and its surrounding area were earmarked for resumption, but the Tangs said no, refusing to consider an offer that was astronomical back then (HK$ 100 millions). Neither side had room to back down. After repeated appeals by the Tangs, the lawsuit reached the Privy Council in London. Determined to salvage their ancestral grave, the Tang clan mobilized all its talent and financial resources. It was mandatory that each male clan member donated one dollar to a special fund, and there were over 100,000 of them, not to mention that the clan also had descendants who practiced law in Britain or were wealthy. After a prolonged, emotionally-draining fight, the Tangs won out. Hau Tei was off limits for government modernization plans. Even the Mass Transit Railway, which is a subway, was ordered to refrain from digging its tunnel underneath the hill as it had planned to.

Much of the sacred landscape depicted in the classical poem, however, is nowhere to be seen today. Hemmed in by tall buildings, the gravesite no longer has a view of the sea or the bay. Instead, it looks into a wall of concrete, with a huge industrial estate standing right in its face. The “Fishing Stone” — a landmark on the beach in front of the site — was long removed to make way for a promenade. To the left, Sing Hill or “Sing Lo” is blocked out of sight by residential-commercial estates. The Tang clan also had to give up the land outside the hill of Hau Tei. A section of Castle Peak Road at its foot, for instance, is built on what used to be the Tangs’ clan land. Little is left of the landscape that once constituted the excellent feng-shui of the gravesite, but the Tangs are very proud of the efforts they put up to keep it intact. Anyway, Hau Tei is for them to keep. On Sept. 19 every year, it is a place of rendezvous for the Tang lineages of the New Territories. As if in demonstration of solidarity, bus-loads of
Tangs descend here on the same day, swarming the sidewalk and climbing the walled hill that belongs to their clan. There is a pavilion halfway on the slope, where ritual port is divided after the sacrifice. The lower part of the hill is a flower-farm which rents the land from the Tang clan at a very low rate and is responsible for keeping the gravesite tidy. On normal days, Hau Tei is a public garden, and it is by all means the best-known gravesite in the Hong Kong region.

The Tangs also go to great lengths to preserve the tomb of their fourth-generation ancestor Tang Fo-hip, which lies on the northern slope of Nga Kai Shan, Wang Chau. This gravesite is accessible by a winding trail that cuts across small streams and wild bushes up the hill, sometimes very steeply. The hill consists of several concentric high-rise mounds, the innermost of which resembles the seat of a giant chair. The back of this “chair” begins a little above the gravesite, where the slope rises abruptly and ascends into a dome-shaped top hundreds of feet overhead. From its top, the mound ridge gradually loses height on both sides as its two wings swerve in like two arms holding an invisible barrel. Further in the north, beyond the opening of the two craggy wings, is a body of water. Geomantically this landscape is so auspicious that it has a national repute (Sung 1974: 116). The Tangs name the scene “A Fairy on the Grand Throne.” The gravesite is said to be located right at the “umbilicus” of the fairy. A commentary in The Atlas for the First Fong of the Tangs from Ancestor Yuen-Ching claims that by selecting this auspicious burial site for himself, Tang Fo-hip foresaw his descendants becoming related to the royal family.¹

The recent efforts to preserve the sacred landscape of this gravesite began in June 1976, when the government informed the Tangs of its decision to excavate soils from Nga Kai

¹ “自卜厥孫必將誕展於帝室云。”
Shan and fill the fish ponds and low-lying areas of Wang Chau for the construction of a 180-acre industrial estate. It immediately touched off strong protests from the Tang lineages. A group of Tang headmen met with the Commissioner of the Yuen Long District Office, remonstrating that the soil excavations would disrupt the *feng-shui* of two Tang ancestral gravesites that were of vital importance to the clan. On July 3, about five hundred Tangs from all over the New Territories attended a meeting, threatening to stop the excavations by force when necessary. The mass media also appeared to be on the side of the Tangs, reminding the authorities that the two Tang ancestral gravesites in Nga Kai Shan ranked among the best in Guangdong and that soil excavations from any of the five designated spots would have adverse impact on them geomantically (*The Overseas Chinese Daily* 1976:7/4 & 9/21). As a result, the government changed its mind and decided to obtain soil supplies from elsewhere. Moreover, according to my informants, an agreement was reached with the government that no factory building in the new industrial estate of Wang Chau was to exceed 25 ft. lest they obstructed the *feng-shui* of “a Fairy on the Grand Throne.”

The latest clash over this gravesite occurred in November 1994, when the government planned to expand the Wang Chau Fresh Water Reservoir by launching a Stage II project that would build an extension of the reservoir in Nga Kai Shan. In view of the touchy issue of *feng-shui*, the government engineers had seen to it that the extension reservoir would be invisible from either of the two Tang gravesites. But the project met with vehement objections from the Tangs just the same. In a meeting with government officials on March 21, 1995, the clan

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1 The other site that would be affected was the grave of Tang Hon-fat (the first-generation ancestor) with a landscape dubbed “Jade Girl Bowing to Seal the Nuptial Tie.”
reiterated its counter-proposals: either to move the project out of Nga Kai Shan or to replace the Stage II service reservoir with a series of local water-storage towers. The Tangs volunteered to seek technological assistance from Mainland China on behalf of the Water Supplies Department should it have difficulty implementing the second counter-proposal. Back in January 1995, a government memo had noted that with the Tangs of Mainland China joining in the opposition of their lineage cousins in the New Territories, the dispute was becoming politically sensitive. Now there were signs that the Tangs were getting agitated. In his letter to the Yuen Long District Office, a lineage head, for instance, swore the determination of his people to “defend our ancestral graves at the cost of our lives.” Under mounting pressure, the government finally gave in and relocated the project out of Nga Kai Shan.

By now it is apparent that the Chinese ancestral cult features an important concept of sacred space. But while the ultimate boundary of sacred space is defined by *feng-shui*, it does not mean that the use of *feng-shui* is all religious. When the living souls use the service of *feng-shui* to optimize the position and orientation of their residence, their intention is to seek the blessings of wealth, health, good luck, and so on in this world. Characteristically, such pursuit is secular. Even in placing a grave at an auspicious site, *feng-shui* also serves two purposes. One is to help the descendants fulfill their obligation of filial piety by making the ancestral *po* happy and comfortable in its eternal abode. The other is to ensure that blessings would flow to the living. So there are both religious and secular considerations in the performance of *feng-shui* as a funeral ritual. The secular concern is particularly obvious in the following legend about Wong Ko.
When Wong Ko grew advanced in age, Emperor Xiaozong sent Li Boshao, a famed feng-shui specialist, to find an auspicious burial site for his aunt. Li looked around Dongguan and selected “Lion Hill,” a mound that bore curious resemblance to the creature after which it was named. There were two propitious spots on the hill: the lion’s head and its tail. He asked Wang Ko where she would prefer to be buried. If her grave was on the head, her descendants would become very great men. If her grave was on the tail, they would be more humble and yet prosperous. Although some of the descendants might become officials of low degree, none would acquire high rank. Without any hesitation, Wong Ko chose the tail. She explained, “I do not want my descendants to become great. They could never rise as high as a princess, and yet I was once in danger of losing my life. I would like my descendants to enjoy a simple, agrarian way of life and be content with rice and herrings” (Sung 1974:123). Her wish was followed. After Li reported back to the emperor, he was thrown into jail for failing to provide the “best” service as ordered to. But Wong Ko had been buried the way she wanted. Sure enough, her descendants never attained high official titles.

This legend illustrates three points that are relevant to the secular application of feng-shui. That is, feng-shui is a means of achieving an end; there are priorities and options; and it can provide secondary rationalization of history. Maurice Freedman seems aware of these three points when he tries to theorize on the social impact of feng-shui. In his view (1966:124, 1967:88), since the Chinese lineage always invokes feng-shui to explain why one of its segments has prospered while another has declined, feng-shui is consciously employed to force the dead to

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1 Oral history uses two lines to sum up Wong Ko’s wish for her descendants: “Enjoy the life of a farmer with its red rice and shiny-scale fish” (紅米之飯錦鰭魚，田家風味甘有餘).
provide blessings for the living. It leads to bitter rivalry among the brothers as each endeavors to manipulate the geomantic orientation of an ancestral grave in order to maximize his own blessings (1966:130). To back up this argument, he quotes from de Groot (1897:1028) that blessings from the grave of a parent to the living descendants are bound to be differentiated unless the configuration of the surroundings is perfect on six sides. Since this is virtually an impossibility, the funeral use of *feng-shui* tends to trigger domestic discord, which is brought home by the competition of brothers. In conclusion, Freedman (1970:178, 1966:131) asserts that *feng-shui* is an amoral means of individualizing fate.

These assertions, however, do not quite square with the behavior of brothers at Lung Yeuk Tau. And there are good reasons. For one thing, the Tangs believe that the siblings are equally blessed by an ancestral grave, which is in accord with what has been discovered by several ethnographers (Potter 1970b; Ahern 1973; Li 1976; Weller 1987). In none of their studies or my field research does *feng-shui* appear to be an important weapon in fraternal competition. Secondly, the first and foremost concern in the funeral use of *feng-shui* is the satisfaction of the deceased. Efforts are made so that the dead forebear will be well disposed towards the living, with a feeling of gratitude which must bear fruits in the form of various blessings for the descendants. Contrary to what Freedman (1966:126) suggests: treating the dead as “passive agents, pawns in a kind of ritual game played by the descendants,” the Tangs chose to abide by Wong Ko’s wish rather than give in to an alternative that seemed to be more beneficial and favored by the emperor. Freedman (1966:129) also quotes this legend in detail, but he conveniently ignores its import that contradicts his theory. Finally, with regard to the factors responsible for shaping individual well-being, the Tangs believe in a Chinese popular
saying: “Destiny is the most decisive, fate comes second, and feng-shui third.”

Destiny is spelled out by the “eight characters” (ba-zi) that record the year, month, day, and hour of one’s birth in the binomial terms of the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches. Fate refers to the decennial periods of destiny derived from popular astrology (Smith 1991:43). For the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, it is mainly the individualization of “eight characters” that engenders differentiation of wealth, fame, and reproductivity among the lineage members who are basking in the same blessings from the feng-shui of their high ancestors. To put it in their own words, “Just as a giant tree has withered branches, a big lineage is bound to have paupers.” The roots of blessing are there except that people have varying access to them because of individualized destiny and fate. But so long as the majority of the lineage members feel blessed, the feng-shui of their ancestral graves is fine. Otherwise, geomantic relocation of the tombs may be considered. Legend has it that three hundred years after the burial of Wong Ko, the Tangs were having a period of bad luck and decided to alter the position of her grave. But the geomancer had anticipated it and left a brass tablet behind the gravestone warning that any alteration of the way the grave faced would plunge the Tang family into serious trouble. This was enough to abort the new attempt.

When feng-shui is employed by the individual as a mundane means to improve one’s station in life, it is typically amoral. The Chinese classics speaks of feng-shui as “earthly rules” (di-li) in contrast to the “heavenly rules” that govern morals (tian-li). This prompted the expansion of the popular saying into “Destiny is the most decisive, fate comes second, feng-
The so-called “moral behavior” is literally “behavior that will count as meritorious in the next world.” It is intended to remind people of the divine censure of their action if they go too far in using feng-shui immorally. Be that as it may, at Lung Yeuk Tau as well as elsewhere, preoccupation with short-term success may lead one to poach on a propitious gravesite that belongs to a fellow lineage family. Because such behavior is socially disruptive, the lineage rules condemn it with stern stipulations of punishment, including public reprehension and excommunication. But there is no denying that its occasional occurrence exacts a price at the expense of group cohesion and unity.

8.3 Disruptions and Disputes

It is a widespread belief in the New Territories that disruption of the local feng-shui is a matter of serious consequence for those who live there. An ideal village site is again one situated on high ground, facing water and protected by encircling hills. All village sites are not ideal, but each possesses good fortune insofar as its geomantic properties allow. Any disturbance of these properties is believed to result in an injured or disrupted feng-shui and, for that effect, put the well-being of inhabitants at risk. Should anyone or some domestic animals fall sick afterwards, it is taken to be signs that a baleful cosmic force is set in motion and will go from bad to worse unless a protective ritual called tan fo is performed to ward off its influence and forestall its deterioration. Tan fo is a Taoist ceremony to propitiate the gods and spirits who have been ruffled by the alteration of landscape that accompanies a major disturbance of the soils.

1 “陰功。”
2 In The Nam Yeung Tong Genealogy of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau, Appendix p.23: “鳴鼓而攻之”，“黜族不許人祭”.
The performance of *tan fo* at Lung Yeuk Tau in 1971 was triggered by the attempt of Shung Him Tong to build a new church on the hill to the west of Ma Wat Wai. The site was picked in order that the church would be “visible from far away and closer to non-Christian villages” (Constable 1994:124). But it so happened that a child of the Tang village died on the first day of construction. One informant of Lung Yeuk Tau remembers vividly how he and a group of fellow lineage members, mostly in their early twenties or younger, organized a roadblock and a picket line to the construction site. Following very inflamed tempers on their part and some scuffles with construction workers, the project was brought to a complete stop. The District Office had to step in, persuading the Christians to abandon the hill site and relocate the new church near the old one on lower land. In the aftermath, tension persisted between the two communities for quite some time, during which people from Shung Him Tong were afraid to walk through Lung Yeuk Tau at night. Furthermore, the hill was the seat of the “White Tiger,” a wing of geomantic protection for Lung Yeuk Tau. Now that it had been disturbed by partial removal of its soils and vegetation, the Tangs demanded that *tan fo* be performed. The government saw a legitimate concern in their request, and provisions were made for the expenditure.

Another occasion that entailed the performance of *tan fo* at Lung Yeuk Tau came in December 1989. It was a result of the government-commissioned engineering operations to carry the power line from Daya Bay of south China to urban Hong Kong across the Dragon Hill. The project necessitated the building of a series of 50m 400kv towers on the hill. In a letter to the North District Office, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau regretted the official decision to go ahead with the project as designed and demanded the
This project will negatively impact the incoming “dragon vein” of land, a source of beneficence for our lineage. It is our solemn declaration that the Hong Kong government be held responsible for all the consequences and potentially adverse effects of this decision. As for the service of tan fo, it will not salvage the damage inflicted on the feng-shui of our landscape. All it can do is to bring a transient peace that lasts one year. We earnestly request that the engineering work be done within one year. If not, we will have to follow up with a second tan fo performance. (My translation)

Enclosed in the letter is an estimated budget of over one million dollars for the performance of tan fo at thirty locations, which were divided into four groups in accordance with their importance to the well-being of the living. The first group consisted of the main ancestral hall, four temples and one shrine, each of which was to be appeased by nine charms (one in each of the eight cardinal directions and one in the center). The second group comprised the eleven villages, for each of which seven charms would be placed (the four cardinal directions, the center, the front and back of the village). Next on the list were the eleven Earth Gods, for each of whom three charms would be prepared. Finally there were the two branch ancestral halls, each to be appeased by five charms. To justify the extensive performance of tan fo, the Tangs called attention to the tremendous damage that the electrical cables would cause to the local feng-shui when they cut across the slope of the Dragon Hill and severed its vein of qi.

Despite its astonishment at the high estimate of costs submitted in the letter, the government could not but acknowledge “a prima facia link between the Tangs and good feng-shui in this area.” An official memo explained why:

Although the term feng-shui is frequently abused, ... there are still some limited genuine cases which crop out once in a while. This is one of those few cases. As you know, good feng-shui or good landscaping [sic] is
always reflected by its end result in the kind of prosperity and power brought to a house, a village or a clan. Prosperity, in an agricultural society of 1820, meant, of course, the amount of land held by a clan, and power was, in those days, measured by the number of clansmen passing the imperial examinations. The Hsin An [Xinan] County Gazetteer does record, with great detail, the landscape of Lung Yeuk Tau and the glorious history of its clansmen.

Approval was granted not only to Lung Yeuk Tau’s tan fo budget but also to its request to redevelop Lung Kai Nunnery into a sever-story temple. There had been pros and cons within the authorities towards the redevelopment of Lung Kai Nunnery. The main ground of opposition was that a high-rise temple on the old site of the nunnery would cause “visual pollution” to the Dragon Hill. But it was dismissed after the Regional Secretary wrote, “It is also questionable whether the visual pollution argument is valid in the context of a 400kv tower being placed near the top of the self-same hill and being far more offensive to the eye and disturbing of the scenery.” Sensitivity to the local respect of feng-shui prevailed once more.

For the Tangs, the building of the Dragon Hill Temple was a crucial step to rejuvenate the local feng-shui and overcome the damage it suffered from the trespassing of power lines. Some damage, however, appears to be beyond repair. A Tang lineage member residing abroad provided me with a copy of an old letter in which he recalls his frequent visits to ponds and streams in the Dragon Hill when he was a rural boy. The letter also describes the ecstasy with which his naive young eyes watched miniature waterfalls after a summer morning shower. The young people of contemporary Lung Yeuk Tau, however, no longer have this luxury. After the erection of electrical towers in 1990, the Dragon Hill has mysteriously lost its capacity of holding up water. According to one
lineage head, while the Tangs are sad over the change, they are thankful that the Dragon Hill is still lush and green. It bespeaks their ambivalence towards modernization, which has a history of being environmentally irresponsible and ecologically disruptive (Bodley 1982: 4, 5, 92). The performance of tan fo is better seen as a way by which the people of the New Territories try to accommodate and contain the encroachment of modernization upon their land.

During my fieldwork at Lung Yeuk Tau, I did not have the opportunity to observe the ritual of tan fo at first hand. Based on the recollections of my informants, it is possible to put together a general sketch. The religious specialist invited to officiate at the 1989 tan fo observances was named Lam To-yuen, to whom the Tangs refer as a nam mo lo. The open-fronted shed that accommodated the altar was erected in front of the main ancestral hall. On its table were laid out the offerings to gods and spirits, including tea, wine, rice, vegetarian food, pork, chicken, fish, fruits, and steamed bread. There were also a bowl of water and several pots of sand.

After incense and candles were lit, the priest took his stand before the table and started his incantation to invite the gods and spirits to partake of the food. This done, he burnt several pieces of joss-paper and placed the ashes as well as a long nail into the bowl of water. It was time to prepare the charms, which used split pieces of bamboo rather than paper. By consulting a book that he had brought along, Lam wrote certain inscription on each bamboo stick, passed it over the incense, the written face down, and tied a strip of red cloth as well as gilt leaves around it with red cotton string. With all bamboo charms prepared in this way and inserted into the pots of sand, he stood at the head of the table
incantation once more. Then he fetched the long nail from the bowl of water and pierced the comb of a cock handed to him by an acolyte. Out came blood, which was sprinkled over the bamboo charms to consecrate them. Fireworks were let off, and for the last time, Lam positioned himself in front of the table to say the concluding prayer. In the midst of another blast of fireworks, he led a procession of people to place the charms at the designated spots.

*Tan fo* incorporates ritual elements for both appeasement and exorcism. The use of blood, in particular, is a feature of Taoist rituals designed to subdue an evil influence at work. In *tan fo*, however, it is also a preventive measure to avert the train of harm that is going to be set in motion. James Hayes (1983:170) has reported the practice whereby a Tsuen Wan village hoisted a leafy bamboo pole with a single blood-smeared charm to protect its ancestral hall. In Taoist rituals, this has the same protective efficacy as placing a charm in the center of the premises. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau, however, were so cautious that each of their ancestral halls was safeguarded by at least five charms. Altogether 174 charms were used in their performance of *tan fo*, and each cost thousands of dollars. After the anxieties of Lung Yeuk Tau had eventually subsided, engineering work on the Dragon Hill went ahead and was completed without a hitch.

People who interpret modernization only in economic terms have little patience with *feng-shui* thinking, for it does delay or interrupt government planned development from time to time. For many inside and outside the government, *feng-shui* is just a means to financial ends. It is believed that at the bottom of any "*feng-shui* row" is the desire or greed for a better cash settlement. But nothing can be further from the truth in the
following two cases where money is of little concern to the Tangs of the New Territories. If it is possible, they just want their ancestral graves to be left alone.

Once more, the first case involves the hill of Hau Tei. Anyone who has traveled extensively in the New Territories knows the congested conditions that frequently cripple the normal flow of traffic at Tsuen Wan, where Castle Peak Road and Tuen Mun Road converge. During peak hours, motor vehicles often have to slow down to a standstill. To alleviate the congestion and provide an additional outlet for the junction that has long become a bottle-neck, an extension of Route 5 is proposed. This project will involve widening a section of Castle Peak Road in front of Hau Tei and building a two-lane flyover to connect with the highway of Shing Mun Tunnels (Route 5). To this end, it is necessary to move the northern curb of the existing road towards Hau Tei by some 20 meters and drill four holes within it to ascertain the geological structure of this area. Engineers also suggest building a concrete wall of 6 to 13 meters high to retain the hill and its gravesite in the early phase of the project.

On May 6, 1993, after having carefully examined the government proposal, the Tangs advanced an alternative alignment of the Route 5 Extension that would stay away from Hau Tei. But a study of this alternative alignment by the Department of Transport shows that despite its feasibility, the project capital investment would have to more than double while the annual costs of maintenance would increase considerably. There are also potential complications due to its conflict with one geological fault line and interference with two watercourses. It is obvious that the government-preferred alignment compares more favorably. In the meantime, the Department of Transport took the initiative to revise
its original blueprints so that the project will reduce its cutting into the foothills of Hau Tei. This would salvage the pavilion on its slope. The project was finally gazetted under the Roads (Works and Compensation) Ordinance in April 1994, and the government extended to the Tangs its official appreciation of their “co-operative attitude and patience in working together with government departments to solve the problem.”

Among the Tangs who participated in the consultation meetings were elders from Lung Yeuk Tau. Speaking of the cooperation of their side, one of them explained that the Tangs are also citizens of Hong Kong who stand under obligations. Although it is their sincere hope that the project will not proceed, they have to be considerate of its much-needed benefits for the public and prepare for the inevitable in case it does. There are still minute details yet to be worked out, including the height of the proposed retaining wall and its exact distance from the gravesite. The transcripts of the consultation meetings show that not even once did the Tangs raise the question of compensation. Each time when the dialogue was led into that direction by the officials, it only piqued the representatives of the Tangs. They were bent on minimizing the negative impact of this project on the sacred landscape of their ancestral tomb. To them, the sacrifice they were going to endure could never be measured in terms of money. How they wished that the government took its offers elsewhere!

The second case brings us to Ping Shan. In 1990, the Hong Kong Government authorized the building of a landfill site to take care of the waste disposal needs of Hong Kong for the next quarter of a century after 1995. To make way for this project, three ancestral graves of the Tangs at Ping Shan would have to be removed from their sites in
Nim Wan, Tuen Mun. But starting from January 1992, efforts to urge a voluntary removal of these affected graves met with a strong boycott from the Tangs, who were determined to keep one of their ancestral graves where it was. Known as “Swallow Perching on a Beam,” this twin grave is held to be a source of beneficence for two of the wealthiest tso and tong at Ping Shan. According to the Tangs, government officials had promised them in 1987 that their ancestral graves would be safe and sound if they okayed the project. But the government department changed its mind thereafter. The reason was not hard to seek: to keep its promise would greatly reduce the capacities of the landfill site. Long drawn-out negotiations ensued and came to a dead lock in early 1994, when the Tangs turned a cold shoulder to the warning: either to remove their ancestral graves and receive HK $849,000 as ex-gratia compensation or face a forced removal of these graves.

An official notice was served to the Tangs that their ancestral remains were to be relocated by June 8, 1994. Through the mediation of the Tangs’ lawyer, however, the government agreed not to enforce the deadline but continue to resolve the matter by dialogue. In the meantime, the offer of compensation was increased by leaps and bounds. It grew to 1.7 millions in December 1994. Early into 1995, the government decided to gazette the official notice that all graves were to be removed from the landfill site within one month. At a subsequent meeting, the Tangs of Ping Shan moved to demand an unused police station on the Ping Shan Hill in exchange for their ancestral gravesites. The building belonged to the Royal Hong Kong Police. The Tangs made it clear: what they wanted was a feng-shui site in return for the gravesites they would give up.
For a long time, this police building has been a thorn in the side of the Tangs. Geomantically the three hillocks of Ping Shan constitute an excellent formation of *feng-shui* known as "Crab." The lineage ancestors who first took up residence in this area admonished that none of their descendants was to build any structure on the hill of Ping Shan, which was the body of the "Crab." As such, it is most vulnerable to heavy burdens, which would crush the "Crab" and destroy the local *feng-shui*. Much to the anguish of the Tangs, the British must needs put one of their police stations on the hill the moment they came. Since then, it is believed that the good fortune of Ping Shan has gone down the drain. For some ninety years, the police station has perched on the "crab" like a killing stone, and the Tangs are burning with the desire to have it removed. Off it must go before the fortune of the Tangs could turn for the better. The problem is that as one of the earliest colonial police facilities in the New Territories, the building is a classified "cultural relic." In addition, the Royal Hong Kong Police announced its plan to set up a center of traffic control there.

Running out of patience, the Hong Kong Administration authorized in April 1995 the measures to be taken against the ancestral graves of the Tangs in Nim Wan. It was followed by the imposition of August 10, 1995 as the final deadline for removal. But in the notice, the Lands Department characterized the gravesites as a case of "Crown Land being unleased and occupied." Little had it stopped to think that the Tang ancestral graves were there long before the British leased the territory from imperial China. The Heung Yee Kuk, N. T. and the eight Rural Committees of Village Affairs of Tuen Mun joined in the protest, denouncing the official notice. It was pointed out that the colonial government
itself was a lessee rather than lessor of the New Territories. A new offer of 2.6 millions was made to the Tangs of Ping Shan but in vain. The Tangs of Ping Shan made it clear that they were not selling their ancestral graves for money. To rationalize their demand to demolish the police station, one lineage head said, "It is absolutely unthinkable to exhume the remains of our ancestors and rebury them in the hill of Ping Shan while it groans under the weight of a 'killing stone'."

The forced removal of the Tang ancestral graves by the government from Nim Wan proved to be a disaster of public relations. Again and again, the scene appeared on television with commentary, winning sympathy for the Tangs. To make matters worse, one of the antique "Golden Towers" was broken in the process of exhumation, and the excavation workers who removed the twin-grave were unable to recover its remains. The contractor had to cordon off the area until the government obtained further information from the Tangs about the twin-grave, and the mass media gave extensive coverage to these blunders of the operation. On top of this, the Tangs of Ping Shan engaged the government in a review of the historical promises it had made, and the Legislative Council held a special hearing on the issue. Now all the more eager to put an end to this feng-shui row, the authorities increased their offer of compensation by leaps and bounds, and as of March 1996, the figure stood at 7 millions. The Tangs remained adamant -- either to take

1 A "Golden Tower" is a big jar that holds the bones of an ancestor or ancestress exhumed and cleaned for a second burial.

2 The review centered on the Blake's Proclamation and a notice issued by Viceroy Tan Zhonglin of Guangdong and Guangxi on April 4, 1899. The notice was based on an agreement between China and Britain that assured, among others, the immunity of ancestral graves from forced removal. It was gazetted by the Hong Kong Government on Oct. 7, 1899.
over the police building on Ping Shan or no deal.

A British historian writes, "No one invited Chinese to come to Hong Kong." One can parody, "No Chinese invited the British to come to the New Territories or Hong Kong." But in fairness for the British rule of the New Territories, its District Office system had a history of being fairly sensitive to and respectful of village culture. From early on, what with their rich cultural heritage and their strong sense of pride and dignity, the indigenous people had won the respect of the British administration. My interviews with a high-ranking official of British origin provide a footnote to the attitude of the District Office towards its subjects. The District Office had a tradition of appreciating the Chinese concept of "parental magistrate." During the decades when the District Office was solely in charge of indigenous affairs, it placed itself in the position of a Chinese magistrate. To care for its native subjects was to understand their culture and be open-minded to their norms, values, and beliefs. Empathy was always a part of the training for functionaries in the District Office. It led to an understanding of the indigenous way of life that not only put the District Office in close touch with the pulse of the New Territories but also produced some of the best-accomplished scholars of Hong Kong Studies. Conceivably the approach of the District Office to feng-shui disputes tended to be culturally sensitive.

But there has been some change. After April 1977, various departments of the central administration (the Executive Council) started to increase their presence in the New Territories. In contrast to the District Officers whose main duty is to take care of local interests, the civil servants of central administrative departments tend to discharge their duties according to technical standards and with region-wide interests in mind. In the
process, local interests are likely to be de-emphasized or bypassed. The penetration of central administrative departments into the New Territories also occurred at the expense of the power of the New Territories Administration, which was merged with the Home Affairs Department to form the City & New Territories Administration in 1981. The following year saw the Lands Department established, taking over the land authority from the District Officer. In fact, the District Office has lost many of its executive functions to central administrative departments, and its role is reduced to advise on and co-ordinate the services of various central administrative departments in the New Territories.

In the *feng-shui* row with the Tangs of Ping Shan, several departments of the central administration are involved. There appears to have been a certain deficiency of cultural sensitivity in their approach to *feng-shui* issues. To be culturally sensitive is to take indigenous norms, values, and beliefs *seriously*, to minimize their sacrifice for modernization *honestly*, and to be *genuinely* apologetic when their sacrifice is inevitable. With a little bit more cultural sensitivity, the Nim Wan *feng-shui* row might not have got into an impasse as it has. It is reminiscent of a comment made to me by a veteran official who is appreciative of Chinese village culture despite his non-native upbringing. City-born and city-bred, people tend to have a sense of superiority, dismissing indigenous culture as “stupid and backward.” Such intolerance has little room for cultural sensitivity and represents a type of ignorance. There are some lessons to learn from the tradition of the District Office as well as the way that the case of Hau Tei has been handled.

To summarize the Nim Wan *feng-shui* row, the most controversial of the Hong Kong region in recent memory, let us quote from one of the informants at Ping Shan:
From day one, we have been considerate of the needs of modernization. The government had our consent for the development of a landfill site outside our ancestral graves in Nim Wan, even though the removal of soils and vegetation was bound to seriously disrupt the landscape and its feng-shui. We decided to put up with it as long as their promise stood, namely, no relocation of our ancestral graves. It turned out to be a trick. We’re trapped but still try to work things out with the authorities.

Then he went on, not without bitterness:

Our request is simple: “Let’s exchange feng-shui for feng-shui.” You want our feng-shui site, fine. Give us one back. The government won’t have to pay us a cent. Just build a new police station for a dozen of millions or more, and everyone will be happy. The long drawn-out delay of the project is costing lots of tax-payers’ money anyway. The Hill of Ping Shan belongs to the people of Ping Shan in the first place. Its return is vital to the survival of our lineage. But we are not self-centered as some people would like to portray us. The hill will be incorporated into the “Ping Shan Heritage Trail,” a tourist attraction that introduces people to our heritage. It is now closed in protest against the forced removal of our ancestral graves.¹

There is no doubt that the Tangs are very proud of their roots and heritage.

8.4 The Religious Festival: Ta Chiu

The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau are also a grateful people. Every ten years, they hold the celebrations of Ta Chiu to thank divinity and their ancestors, pray for the continuation of their blessings, and placate hungry ghosts for communal peace. The term chiu refers to Taoist rites, the performance of which is often accompanied by acrobatic feats of martial art, hence the verb ta or “to fight.” Ta Chiu may take on the epithet Shen Kung to mean “performing Taoist rites with magical feats of martial art.” So it is more like a verb or

¹ The “Heritage Trail” consists of visits to two ancestral halls (宗祠, 當彌公祠), a study hall (觀星堂), a geomantic pagoda (聚星樓), two temples (洪聖宮, 候王廟), a shrine of the Earth God (社壇), a walled village (上環圍), etc. In its letter of May 27, 1995, the Hong Kong Tourist Association speaks highly of the “Trail” for its promotion of tourism and its popularity with visitors from both home and abroad, urging the Tangs to reconsider their decision to close it temporarily.
gerundial phrase. When used as a noun, *Ta Chiu* is short for *Tai Ping Ching Chiu* or "Propitiatory Rites for Peace."

At Lung Yeuk Tau observances of *Ta Chiu* are always organized in the name of the community, which comprises eleven villages, but the costs are underwritten by the *tso* and *tong* of its lineage, which naturally has the final say on how to prepare and celebrate the festival. The 1993 *Ta Chiu* was a five-day event, lasting from the 17th to the 21st of the eleventh lunar month (Dec. 29, 1993 to Jan. 2, 1994). It had three components: a three-day formal Taoist service of propitiatory rites, a prelude and an epilogue.

Preparations for the 1993 *Ta Chiu* started early and were conducted under the leadership of a special committee that consisted of the lineage head, his two deputies, and the three Village Representatives. On the ninth of the first lunar month, a group of *yuen sao* (leaders of worship and sponsorship) were selected by casting the divination blocks in front of Tin Hau, the community goddess. There were fifteen *yuen sao*, all of whom were male Tang lineage members and ranked according to the number of successful casts of the blocks in succession. The chief *yuen sao* was a man in his early sixties, whereas the youngest one was barely three years old. For the date of the ritual, the Tangs consulted a *yin-yang* specialist who divined on the "eight characters" of the lineage head and concluded that it was appropriate for the Tangs to have the altars erected in their main ancestral hall. Further divination produced a series of auspicious dates for the major preparations that led to the onset of *Ta Chiu*. This timetable was followed to the letter, whether in the establishment of the altars or in the commencement of construction work on the matsheds.
As is shown in Figure 6, a spacious matshed theater was built to the east of the main ancestral hall. There were four smaller matsheds, three of which were devoted to the worship of divinity: one for the principal deities, one for the City God, and one for the King of Ghosts or Tai Shi Wong who ruled the nether world. The main altar was located in Siu Wang Tong of the ancestral hall, facing north and decorated with the scrolls of an Emperor of the Heavens (Xuantian Shangdi), the “Three Pure Ones” (Sanqing), and other high deities. Most propitiatory rituals, however, were to be performed at an altar that was set up in front of the main ancestral hall and faced south. On its table were an incense-pot, candle-sticks, two Taoist containers of rice, foods, and fruits.
Four major rituals were performed on the first day of the festival. They constituted a prelude to the formal propitiatory service starting the next day. Among these preparatory rituals was the “Drawing of Water” (qu-shiu), in which stream water was poured into a porcelain vase, ritually purified, sealed with two pieces of yellow joss-paper, and placed under the long table of the main altar. Ta Chiu venerates three types of spirits: the heavenly, the earthly, and the riverine. Another ritual involved the “Hoisting of Standards” to attract hungry ghosts and wandering spirits in order to appease them. There were three standards on the scene, corresponding to the number of days that the formal propitiatory service would last. Lung Yeuk Tau also erected a number of bamboo poles and lanterns to show ghosts the way to the standards. Each bamboo pole had its branches stripped off except for a green leafy top. A white-paper lantern was hung on its pliant twigs with a piece of wire that ran through the top of a straw hat. The whole thing looked like an faceless, capped head dangling in the air, but somehow it looked more aesthetic than horrifying.

The ritual “Inviting the Local Deities” (ying-shen) took almost half a day to complete. It began at the temple of Tin Hau, whose stature was escorted into the divine matshed with great fanfare. Then the procession, which consisted of five Taoists in red robes and all the yuen sao in gray gongs, left for the Dragon Hill Temple to convoy a miniature stature of Guanyin to Lung Yeuk Tau. On the way back, they stopped at the shrine of Kan Lung Wai to invite the God of Scholarship (Wenchang Jun) and the God of Righteousness (Guandi). In addition, a total of eighteen minor deities, including the local Earth Gods (Fude Zhengshen) were welcomed into the divine matshed. But eventually this
mashed only exhibited the statures of Tin Hau and Guanyin as well as a divine tablet. The tablet is inscribed with two groups of divine beings. The top one accords supreme prominence to Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy and Fertility, which is extraordinary but typical of the religious tradition of the Hakka. The lower group centers around the ancestors of the Tangs.

The most elaborate ritual of the day, however, was the “Third Presentation of the Memorial” (san shangbiao). To inform high deities of the forthcoming festival at Lung Yeuk Tau, the Tangs had had religious specialists make the first and second presentations back in March and July. Now was the last announcement, which consisted of more steps than the previous ones. The altar before the ancestral hall needed to be purified and inaugurated into use. One by one, the Taoists performed a criss-cross dance towards a basin of water, washed up, fixed the skull-cap, bowed to the east and the west, and returned to the table with quick steps and a great flinging of sleeves. Following the rite of exchanging wine cups with the chief yuen sao that indicated acceptance from the host, the head priest poured a libation on the ground. To sanctify the altar, he sprinkled purified water here and there from a mental bowl that contained a sprig of peach tree. Then standing at the head of the altar, the five Taoists started a prayer. When it was over, each knocked the end of his court tablet on the altar table in imitation of a kowtow. Next came the ceremony of laying out the treasures of Taoism: a sword, a magical wooden horse (gong-cáo ma), charms and so on. With this, the ritual of “Setting up the Altar” was completed.
It was time to present the Memorial contained in a yellow box. The head priest retrieved the Memorial, a large scroll of paper which needed two fellow priests to unroll and another two to roll up at the other end as the head priest read on. Written in the style of an imperial official addressing the emperor -- a divine one in this case -- the first part was a brief statement of where the Tangs resided\textsuperscript{1} and why they performed the purificatory rites. It was followed by a full list of the \textit{yuen sao}, male Tang descendants, and their households as well as family members. The last part combined glorification of divinity with a pious invitation to the festivity and a devout petition for continued blessings. Replaced in the yellow box, it was burnt with a yellow paper-figurine of a horse to expedite the message to the Heavens. The whole ritual lasted about three hours.

The daily Taoist service that began the next morning had a regular core: three pilgrimage outings made respectively in the morning, afternoon, and evening. In each outing, the Taoists and \textit{yuen sao} first headed for the three standards, where incantations were chanted, and food was offered to the hungry ghosts that had gathered around. Then the entourage went on to pay tribute at the divine matshed, the City God, the King of Ghosts, and the altar in front of the ancestral hall, leaving no spirits within the festival ground unvisited. Back at the main altar, the priests proceeded to perform a recital of the Canon of Repentance\textsuperscript{2} on behalf of the community. Accompanied by the music of hand gongs, cymbals, a drum, and a \textit{suo-na} horn that played a free melody around the basic tune sung by the Taoists, each recital was attended by the \textit{yuen sao}, who first lined up

\textsuperscript{1} The Tangs gave their geographical location as defined by imperial China, namely, the “Sixth District (Dou) of Baoan County, Guangzhou Prefecture, Guangdong Province.”

\textsuperscript{2} 《禮儀》.
behind the priests, then knelt down, and finally sat in attendance.

Apart from the regular core, there were some unique rituals each day, including "Division of the Lantern" or fen-deng on the first evening of the Taoist propitiatory service (second evening of the festival). Although "Three Pure Ones" are the highest emanations of the Tao, there are gods above them, such as the Nine Emperors, in whose honor a lantern was also lit. So what is divided in the ritual is not the lantern but its fire.\(^1\)

With regard to this ritual, Tanaka (1989:283) notes:

> Fire symbolizes Yang. It is believed that Yin and Yang are not balanced. As the element Yin becomes stronger there are more calamities. This ritual is performed in order to restore the balance, by bringing in an increase of the element Yang.

To make sure that these high gods would condescend to the invitation from earth, the Heavenly Soldiers and Generals were ritually summoned to chase away ghosts from the altar, which was subsequently purified and guarded against wandering spirits from all the five directions: East, West, South, West, and Center.

The second day of the Taoist propitiatory service had its unique rituals. One was "Welcoming the List of Blessed Sponsors" (ying-bang), a ritual that marked the climax of the whole festival. Presumably the Heavens had received the Memorial, and here came its acknowledgment and blessings. It involved a very elaborate ceremony, in which the Taoists exchanged greetings and drinks of wine with yuen sao. Wearing a red sash and a cap, the chief yuen sao held a yellow-colored paper pavilion in his hands. It symbolized

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\(^1\) The Chinese verb fen ("divide") can be so used that it means "to make a new copy of." Therefore, "to divide the ancestral tablet" is not to split it but to make a new copy of it.
that a divine envoy was being welcomed. Before handing over the blessed list which was written with the name of every Tang lineage member, the priests must endorse it on behalf of divinity. Solemnly Cheung Chen-ling, the head priest, signed his name, and one by one the other Taoists followed the suit. Together, they held the rolled list overhead and passed it into the hands of the yuen sao. Music went up, and firecrackers were set off. About fifty meters long, the list of sponsors was pasted on the walls of the ancestral hall, attracting a large crowd of lineage members eager to find their names. Male sponsors were compared to “dragons,” and female sponsors to “tigers,” hence the appellation “List of Dragons and Tigers.”

On the evening of the same day, a “Preliminary Feast for the Hungry Ghosts” (xiao-you) was carried out at a remote open space under the close watch of two effigy orderlies removed from the nearby City God matshed. A temporary table was set up with dishes of food, and incantations were enchanted to propitiate hungry ghosts. Now that they were busy eating, Lung Yeuk Tau was ready to “Celebrate the Descent of Deities” (ying-sheng) at the main altar, which had made room for two additional images: Tin Hau and Guanyin. A paper bridge was laid out in front of the offering table to connect the festival ground with the Heavens, and an invitation was read to the Jade Emperor, chief of the popular pantheon. The invitation was burnt with a paper horse. Flowers were scattered on the paper bridge, and one after another, the images of deities were carried across it, symbolizing their descent.

1 In imperial China, local officials were expected to meet with an imperial envoy where he stepped on the soils of their jurisdiction. The welcome ceremony was usually held at a nearby pavilion.
The propitiatory service started to wind down on the afternoon of the third day with the ritual “Carrying a Pardon from the Heavens” (zou she-shu). In the ritual, a paper horse tied with the “Document of Pardon” was placed before the image of the Heavenly Master. After the enchantment of an incantation, the horse was ordered to start on its journey. It was done by a villager carrying the paper figure on his shoulder to run one round of the villages. Upon his return, a priest took the “Document of Pardon” and read it aloud, exonerating every lineage member from his or her sins. The yuen sao sat listening to the long list of names; none of their lineage members was supposed to be left out from the pardon. After the reading, the document and the paper horse were ignited.

In response to the kindness of the Heavens, Lung Yeuk Tau performed two rituals: “Releasing Living Creatures” (fang-sheng) and “Major Feast for the Hungry Ghosts” (da-you). Both were intended to show an increased awareness of divine mercy for the less fortunate. In the first one, birds were freed from cages. In the second one, which was held late at night, food and clothing would be given to the hungry ghosts. But first, the King of Ghosts was carried to the open space where an altar had been set up. They were so positioned as to face each other, sitting behind two parallel rows of candles stuck in the earth. The ground in between was strewn with paper clothes, paper food, and spirit money folded into ingots. After the Taoists had finished reading the incantation, the candles were lit. Then the yuen sao started throwing buns and fruits into a crowd of people. Although these were meant for hungry ghosts, the living were welcomed to have a bite. At the conclusion of the ritual, the paper clothes, paper food, and spirit money were piled up around the King of Ghosts, and everything was set on fire. It was a farewell to all the
spirits from the nether world, and the three-day propitiatory service came to an end.

The last day of the festival with the Taoists paying their final visit to the matsheds to “Send off the Deities” (*song-shen*). It involved burning the City God effigy with formal ceremony and returning the images and statures of deities to their original places. This done, there was only one thing left on their agenda. The priests went from house to house in the afternoon: talismans were distributed, and each domestic altar was purified. Impurity was gathered into a piece of feather or a bean, which was collected in a boat made of paper. The burning of these paper boats marked the conclusion of the purificatory rites, which brought a sense of renewal and rebirth on the part of the community.

The festival mood of Lung Yeuk Tau, however, had not called it quits yet. There was still excitement to look forward to: the evening performance by the Min Chi Sheng Theatrical Troupes. Throughout the 1993 festival, nine theatrical performances were staged at Lung Yeuk Tau. Acted out by professionals, these operas formed a sequence of love stories that evolved along a complicated plot and, with its last episode, climaxed into a happy ending. For those who loved theater as did many of the Tangs, the climax of the day was yet to come. Moreover, before each performance the theatrical troupes would perform a ritual piece that highlighted the theme of *Ta Chiu*, such as “The Heavenly Fairy Grants Sons,” “Blessings from the Eight Immortals,” or “Congratulations on the Promotion of Office.” It may lead to some impromptu drama. Just imagine the surprise and amusement of the audience when an actor and an actress dressed in the costumes of

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1 The nine-episode opera was named *The Treachery and Truth of the Red Pear Flowers* (諜影紅梨記).
high official and imperial lady are walking off the stage with their "maid" to present a doll as an offering to the altar or the ancestral hall (Dean 1989:69).

According to Mr. Tang Chuk-nam, my principal informant, the purpose of Ta Chiu is twofold: to propitiate the forces of yin and to venerate the forces of yang. Accordingly, its rituals are organized along these two lines. There are two forces of yin that need to be dealt with, namely, the wandering souls of the dead and the sins of the living. The regular core of the three-day Taoist service, therefore, consists of enchantments at the three standards for the dead and then at the main altar for the living. While the dead are to be appeased, the living are to be pardoned. To exonerate the living from their sins is to purify them from the influence of yin and reconnect them with the power of yang. This gives rise to the most spectacular rituals of Ta Chiu, including "Welcoming the List of Blessed Sponsors" and "Carrying a Pardon from the Heavens." In veneration of yang, gratitude is extended to the divine in general, as in "Division of the Lantern" and "Celebrating the Descent of Deities." But upon a closer look, emphasis is on the worship of those deities that have an important bearing on the well-being of the lineage. It is not without reason that Tin Hau, the protector of migrants, and Guanyin, the goddess of fertility, are the principal gods when the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau celebrate Ta Chiu.

In his observations of the 1983 Ta Chiu at Lung Yeuk Tau, Tanaka (1985:218-19) noticed that in the divine tablet, the lineage high ancestors were not only included in a group of local deities but also occupied the position of central prominence. It is held to indicate an unorthodox confusion of "inside gods" with "outside gods." Presumably Ta

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1 "祭陰祭陽。"
Chiu is dedicated to the veneration and appeasement of outside spiritual beings so much so that “inside gods” like ancestors are out of place. This view may be sensible from the perspective of the great tradition of Chinese religion, which tends to be exclusive. But Ta Chiu is a festival of popular religion or the little tradition of Chinese religion, which tends to be syncretistic. In a case study of the 1986 religious festival held by a single-surname village in Zhangzhou, Fujian, mainland China, Kenneth Dean (1989:58 & 78) reports that the lineage ancestors were worshipped. During my fieldwork, I was invited to attend the 1995 Ta Chiu of Kam Tin, one of the highlights of which was the exhibition of the heirloom of the Tangs called Wong Ko Tik: an antique album of paintings by the princess’ royal parents. For the Chinese lineage, Ta Chiu appears to be the right occasion for venerating its roots and heritage as a success story of yang over yin.

The idea that Ta Chiu is meant to propitiate yin and worship yang cuts across the distinction between inside and outside gods. Such distinction is perhaps of phenomenal rather than substantial significance in the study of Ta Chiu. More often than not, Ta Chiu is held by a multi-surname community, which makes the veneration of lineage ancestors out of the question. It is not that the lineage does not want to but that it cannot. The Tangs of Ping Shan, for instance, choose to co-sponsor the Yuen Long Neighborhood Ta Chiu. In this case, the community celebrates the festival every ten years as a geographic group. To finance its 1993 neighborhood Ta Chiu, Yuen Long had to set up a committee of 237 members, who were mostly shop-owners but whose contributions covered one third of the total costs (3.4 millions). Naturally no homage was paid to the ancestors of any participant lineage, including the Tangs of Ping Shan. Integration of ancestor worship
into _Ta Chiu_ is possible only where the community that holds and finances the event is an exclusive kin group, as at Lung Yeuk Tau.

The exclusive sponsorship of _Ta Chiu_ is by no means cheap. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau consider their 2.2 millions of HK dollars well spent. Most of the expenses in the 1993 _Ta Chiu_ were incurred by the building of matsheads, the services of religious specialists, the free feasts of vegetarian foods, and the performances of the theatrical troupes. The lineage members had to pay only a token fee to enjoy the operas. They are certainly looking forward to 2003, and there is talk that the lineage will more than double its expenditure on the celebrations of _Ta Chiu_ then.
CHAPTER 9

CONTEMPORARY LUNG YEUK TAU

Everybody knows that kinship does not ‘drop dead’ in the face of modernization and urbanization... they [kin groups] may be expected to vary in importance as well as content. In some instances, however, I think they will be found to have an unexpected potential, functioning not as anachronistic survivals of an older kind of society but as a new and dynamic part of modern political apparatus that seek to get more for a carefully defined group of members, through various means (Fried 1966:299-300).

9.1 Affluence and Power

With the economic take-off of Hong Kong in the early seventies, Lung Yeuk Tau ceased to be a migrant community. Fanling-Sheung Shui became a new town in 1973. Statistics about its employment structure back then are not available, but we know from a 1976 By-Census that over 54% of the population around Tsuen Wan, another new town, was engaged in commerce and manufacturing (Sit 1982:75). This percentage might have been a little lower in the Fanling-Sheung Shui area because of its relatively late urbanization and industrialization, but it was enough to gradually bring the wave of migration down to a trickle. The return of migrant workers who had found overseas employment unsatisfactory or retired from work abroad in the mid-1970s also contributed to the turning of the tide. The new generation of able-bodied Tangs chose to seek local employment, a decision that has been rewarded by a triple increase in earnings over the last two decades. Actually in terms of per capita income, Hong Kong has exceeded the
United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia and is second only to Japan in Asia (Howlett 1996:48). During my fieldwork at Lung Yeuk Tau, the Tang lineage had two college graduates come back from England in search of job opportunities, and both decided to stay.

Contemporary Lung Yeuk Tau is a suburban residential community. Only one or two plots of its land are still rented to pig-farmers from the outside. The presence of these agricultural pursuits is surpassed by the presence of a dozen small industrial and commercial enterprises that operate on lineage land at the entrance of the community. Neither, however, changes the basic character of contemporary Lung Yeuk Tau as a community of consumption rather than production. What a far cry Lung Yeuk Tau is from what it was only decades ago!

As for the residents of Lung Yeuk Tau, few of those who are in their fifties are white-collar workers. It reflects back on the toll that economic hardships took on the education of the young people in the 1950s. During those years Lung Yeuk Tau recorded a relatively high rate of drop-outs from school. Only one of its young men passed the competitive examinations for college matriculation. This achievement qualified him to sit at the table of honor with the lineage heads when there was a communal feast. For a long time, he was the pride of the lineage. It contrasts sharply with the twenty-odd college graduates and students that the lineage has now. Some of them have obtained a Master’s degree, and one is working for her Ph.D. There is also a considerable increase in high school graduates. Given the population size of the lineage, however, it may take a while for this lineage to restore the glory it traditionally enjoyed in scholarship.
Lung Yeuk Tau is an affluent community. Symbolic of its affluence is the large number of Western-style three-story houses that have sprung up in each of its eleven villages, especially outside Lo Wai and Kan Lung Wai. They are called *ting uk*, literally “male-descendant houses.” There were constantly new *ting uk* under construction or breaking the ground during the ten-month period of my fieldwork. With a standard height of 27 feet and a roofed-over area of 700 square feet, such a three-story villa costs over HK$ 800,000 to build and is the envy of every urbanite in land-scarce Hong Kong. But it is not unusual that a Tang family has more than one *ting uk*.

The right to build *ting uk* is limited to an “indigenous villager,” who is defined as a male of at least 18 years of age and descended patrilineally from a resident of a village
officially recognized in 1898. Under the “New Territories Small House Policy” that the Executive Council signed into effect in December 1972, a living indigenous villager can apply for permission to erect for himself a *ting uk* in three ways, provided the site is situated in his own village or within a distance of 300 feet surrounding the village. He can either obtain a “Building License” for a private lot of land he owns or acquire a “Free Building License” for a lot previously granted to him through government-sponsored auction or exchange, or petition for a “Private Treaty Grant” on government land.

Note that there are restrictions as to where a *ting uk* can be erected. One of my informants, for instance, had private land within a distance of 50 feet of San Uk Tsuen, but his family was officially registered as inhabitants of Lo Wai, which is over 500 feet away from the land. For years, they could not get permission to convert their private land into building lots. By the time the authorities were persuaded to grant the approval on the ground that Lung Yeuk Tau could be viewed as a single community, the old man was dying, and he did not live to see his *ting uk* completed. Inherited jointly by two brothers who both have their own *ting uk* erected, this one is allowed to be put up for sale when it is five years old.

In quite a few cases, a Tang family has private land except that it does not withstand the official test of site contiguity to the village of residence.¹ There is the option to exchange the private land for a building lot from the government, but such a lot is not always available and may take years to get. It is even harder to obtain a “Private Treaty

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¹ The test relaxes only in the case of a “V” zone, where the development permission area is allowed to exceed 300 feet encircling a recognized village. But it does not apply to Lung Yeuk Tau, which is not situated in a “V” zone.
Grant on government land. The waiting list is so long that as of 1996, ten years had passed, and yet one of my informants saw little hope of obtaining a grant of government land in the near future. He was budgeting 1.2 millions to buy a small apartment (500 sq. ft.) for one of his daughters who was getting married. It is safe to say that the number of Tang families that can afford the building of ting uk exceeds the number of "male-descendant houses" that are actually observed at Lung Yeuk Tau.

The "Small House Policy" is officially designed to redress the housing shortage that was becoming progressively worse in the New Territories. Under Chinese customary law, the land owner was free to convert his agricultural land into a building lot without incurring an increase of land tax in most cases. In contrast, the British administration not only imposed an increase of the Crown Rent on any change of land use for a building purpose but also instituted the charging of a premium. Enacted by Section 12 of the "Crown Lands Resumption Amendment Ordinance 1922," the premium is intended for the government to secure "a proper share of any enhancement of the value of land" (C.O. 1925). This policy was initially watered down when the Administration of the New Territories decided to charge no premium for the conversion of private land into a housing lot if it was occupied by the indigenous owner himself, half premium for such conversion if the house was to let, and full premium if the owner was not indigenous.

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1 According to a 1906 official summary of complaints from the indigenous residents of New Kowloon, under Chinese rule the only tax they paid was levied on agricultural land, whereas the house tax was levied on shops and people who did not possess anything else directly taxable (CSO 1906:5).

2 As used here, "premium" is commonly referred to as po ka (補價) or "payment for the difference of land values."

3 See "The History of the Heung Yee Kuk, N. T." in The Special Issue for the 60th
legislation hurt the land rights of the indigenous people and provoked extensive protests from them.

In a 1925 petition to L. S. Amery, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a group of indigenous landholders of New Kowloon challenged the legal basis of such a policy, stating:

This Ordinance\(^1\) was a complete infringement of the Convention\(^2\) since it gave the landholders only a term of years (and that term subject to restrictive covenants and to forfeiture for breach of covenants as well as to resumption) in exchange for what was to all intents and purposes a freehold interest (PRO/REF/205 S-3).

Acting on their behalf, the lawyers of Hastings, Dennys & Bowley showed that the objective of the newly-added provisions in the Crown Lands Resumption Amendment Ordinance 1922 was merely to give the government power to further curtail the property rights of indigenous land owners. Quoting the speeches by Sir Henry Arthur Blake and Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1900, the petition concluded:

... the procedure of the Government to-day is therefore not only a breach of the Convention, but also of the verbal and written promises made to the inhabitants at the time, and ... there is a widespread feeling in the Colony that the acts of the Government amount to a breach of faith (ibid.).

In the face of such strong reactions, Governor Cecil Clementi had to put the implementation of premium on the hold for a while. But the issue of premium never went away.\(^3\) And it was reopened with a vengeance following the enactment of the "Town

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\(^1\) The Crown Land Resumptions Ordinance of 1900.

\(^2\) The Convention of 1898 for the lease of the New Territories.

\(^3\) See “Whence Comes the Heung Yee Kuk, N. T.? Where Is It Heading for?” in The
Planning Ordinance 1939,” which drew a sharp distinction between agricultural land and building land, interdicting any conversion of land use without official permission and payment of betterment. The result was a prolonged debate between the Heung Yee Kuk N. T. and the British Administration. Representing the vested interests of indigenous lineages and clans, the Heung Yee Kuk objected to any impingement upon indigenous land rights. The intensity of negotiations picked up after the Heung Yee Kuk was granted the statutory power of an official advisory body in 1959. It was apparent that the high amount of premiums charged by the government was causing a serious housing shortage as well as growing grievances in the New Territories. No breakthrough, however, was effected until the early 1970s, when a miraculous take-off put the economy of Hong Kong on a fast track, and the colonial administration found itself badly in need of the land resources controlled by the indigenous population. It was against this background that the “Small House Policy” was born.

The “Small House Policy” has introduced dramatic improvement into the housing conditions of the New Territories. What this policy does is to calculate the premium at a “concessionary rate” for eligible applicants. The premium is exempted only where “Free Building Licenses” are issued. For a private building lot, the premium varies but averages one tenth of its market price. A higher premium is charged for the site of a “Private Treaty Grant,” where the government has spent money on land resumption, ground leveling, or infrastructure improvement. Since the “Small House Policy” was in place, there have also been cases of profiteering, in which a “Private Treaty Grant” was sold for up to

*Special Issue for the 60th Anniversary of the Heung Yee Kuk, N.T. 1926-1986, p.133.*

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HK$ 250,000. To put a curb on this underhand practice, the government premium has increased to the extent that the profit is hardly worth the risks and cover-up efforts. Private developers have changed their tactics accordingly and are now willing to pay the building costs of a ting uk on condition that they own two of its three floors. Otherwise, an individual may try to finance the building of his ting uk by selling a third of its floor space before work on the house has started.

No laws or regulations prevent the owner of a ting uk from taking tenants. In these cases, the owner and his family usually occupy the ground floor of the ting uk. Each of its two other floors can yield a monthly rent averaging HK$ 5,500 in Fanling. The rent costs of Lung Yeuk Tau are comparable to those of Fanling. Because Lung Yeuk Tau does not lack tenants, none of its eleven villages is inhabited by Tangs exclusively nowadays. In fact, several villages may have more non-Tang tenants than Tang landlords. It contributes to the affluence of Lung Yeuk Tau, but some elders are also upset. At this, my thoughts turn to an isolated lineage village in the Sha Tau Kok area, where the elders still have the final say so that accommodation of tenants is not allowed. But I was only one of the few who had ever tried to request it. Once this isolated village, which has over one third of its living quarters unoccupied, is brought face to face with a flood of demands by advancing modernization, there is no telling whether the decision of elders will be able to override the economic interests of many lineage members.

The change of Lung Yeuk Tau goes beyond the transition to a suburban affluent residential community. By the late 1970s, it had walked out of the shadow of an eclipse that had lasted over half a century. The Tangs were ready to make their presence felt once
more. Instrumental in the political resurgence of this lineage were its three Village Representatives, who were not only ambitious and full of drive but also commanded great popularity within the lineage. The consultative system instituted by the British in the New Territories was elective. It consisted of village representatives, rural committees, and finally the Heung Yee Kuk N.T. at the apex. To the Village Representatives of Lung Yeuk Tau, electoral politics and campaign tactics were nothing new. Although only in their twenties and thirties, they had all been abroad. For them, who were also businessmen, capitalist-style competition was a cup of tea. Backed by the support of a lineage that was populous and had more than recovered from the aftermath of the agricultural crisis, one of the Village Representatives from Lung Yeuk Tau became a Vice-Chairman of the Fanling Rural Committee in 1979.

Photo 9: The North District Board

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The District Board Elections inaugurated in 1982 provided an opportunity for the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau to expand their political power. The District Board is designed to groom an intermediate leadership that bridges the gap between the government and the people. Prior to 1982, each of the eight District Boards in the New Territories was composed of appointed members, hand-picked by the government from predominantly indigenous notables. However, with the development of “new towns” to accommodate people from urban Hong Kong, the population of “new residents” in the New Territories skyrocketed. By 1981, they had outnumbered the indigenous population, estimated to be around 250,000, by more than five folds. It was time for the government to make sure that the newcomers were properly represented in the local political system. Therefore, the District Board Elections were purported to redistribute local political power at the expense of the rural leaders. On their part, the rural leaders were determined not only to hold their ground but to augment it if possible. This was true of what the leaders of Lung Yeuk Tau had in mind. Their efforts were amply rewarded.

Lung Yeuk Tau nominated Mr. K. Tang for the seat of Queen’s Hill constituency on the North District Board. He won a runaway victory over his rivals. For several reasons, Mr. K. Tang enjoyed an edge over those who represented “new residents.” It is true that Hong Kong has major political parties and a large number of civic groups, but their influence was largely confined to urban Hong Kong in the eighties. Not only were the “new residents” atomistic, but their candidates were devoid of organizational support that served to gather sympathizers behind their platform (if they had one), inspired confidence in their leadership, commanded loyalty to them, and canvassed votes on a large scale. On
the contrary, Mr. K. Tang had his lineage, an organized polity behind him. The fact that he was one of them was enough to mobilize his fellow lineage members to support and vote for him. The Tangs were so enthusiastic about his getting elected that they went all out to canvass voters for him among the lineages with which they had a friendly relationship. The turnout of registered voters from indigenous lineages was high. The overall turnout rate of the North District was reportedly 64% in 1982 (Lau & Kuan 1983:11), which struck my informants as too low. It is not that the statistics are inaccurate but that they are tallied after evening out the low voter turnout of the "new residents."

Mr. K. Tang's election into the District Board paved the way for his appointment as the First Vice-Chairman of the Fanling Rural Committee. It qualified him as an Executive Member of the Heung Yee Kuk N. T., the highest forum of indigenous voices. After he became the Chairman of the Fanling Rural Committee and an ex officio member of the North District Board in 1991, the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau sent a second Village Representative to fill the seat that was vacated. Since 1982 the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau have never failed to vote their District Board candidate into office each term, which averages three to three and a half years. The presence of Lung Yeuk Tau in local politics was further increased after the 1995 District Board elections. The Tangs now have three lineage members sitting on the Board, with Mr. K. Tang presiding over it as the chairman and the other two representing the Queen's Hill constituency and the local sect of professionals and educators.

There is also more than what meets the eye. In the early 1990s, certain political parties of Hong Kong that do not appear to be sympathetic with indigenous rights stepped
up their penetration into the Fanling-Sheung Shui area. The Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau beat them to it by helping establish a local chapter of the "Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong," a Pro-China political party to which the Tangs felt they could relate. But in view of the notorious records that the Communist had in handling kinship organizations in Mainland China, it was more like a marriage of convenience. To woo the support of the indigenous population for the 1997 takeover of Hong Kong, Communist China had made promises to the effect of pledging a complete break from its past policy. The Tangs might have decided to give it the benefit of doubt. But they definitely had an eye on the leverage that would come with the expansion of their niche from the statutory bodies of the consultative system into party politics. It was nothing short of a strategic move when the indigenous population increasingly became a minority in the New Territories.

The leverage of party politics has proved to be enormous. The core of the local Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong in the Fanling-Sheung Shui area is a group of young activists that cuts across the indigenous and new residents but rallies around Mr. K. Tang through a combination of party organization and mentor-disciple network. This party scored a major victory against its political opponents in the 1995 North District Board elections, grabbing five of its eleven open seats and greatly

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1 It is the only one of the three major political parties in Hong Kong that voices support of indigenous rights.

2 According to Lau and Kuan (1983:12), a traditional strategy of indigenous political leaders is to mobilize support by "patron-client networks." A disciple, however, is not necessarily a "client," like a tenant to the landlord or an illiterate villager to the literati. Although very personal as well, the bonds between a disciple and his mentor are above all ideological rather than economic and social.
enhancing the control of local politics by the Tangs.\textsuperscript{1} In the meantime, Lung Yeuk Tau flexed its political muscles to support the campaigning of an indigenous politician who is a nephew of Mr. K. Tang and whose lineage has traditionally intermarried with the Tangs. Sure enough this young politician successfully turned the tables over the nominees of the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party to become a member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong.

\textbf{9.2 A Summary of Meaning and Strategies}

Lung Yeuk Tau has come a long way in its efforts to adapt to a changing social milieu. In the course, this lineage became a role model for many lineages in the Fanling area. It has led to its discovery of an expanded niche in modern politics. In what follows, we will summarize the strategies that have brought Lung Yeuk Tau to where it is today. The development of these strategies will be reviewed in relation to the fundamental characteristics of the Chinese zong-zu: blood tie, divine ownership of corporate property, and ancestor worship.

With the Chinese zong-zu, blood tie has two dimensions, one being descent, and the other being brotherhood. Accordingly, the boundary of the zong-zu is at once vertical and horizontal. Descent defines inheritance and succession, whereas brotherhood delineates the collective holding of property. Demarcated socially, the brotherhood of Lung Yeuk Tau is only a subset of its biological boundary. More specifically, descent is only a necessary condition for lineage membership; a sufficient condition requires the

\textsuperscript{1} Of the 22 seats that form the North District Board, four are filled by the chairmen of the four rural committees of the district, seven are for appointed members, and eleven are for elected members.
fulfillment of obligations to the ancestors in addition. Failure to do so is a ground for stripping the rights that come with descent. Two strategies stand out when the Tangs try to maintain their lineage boundary in a changing social milieu that encourages social mobility. One is to tighten its rank and file in the name of ancestor worship, and the other is to impose stringent negative sanctions against indiscriminate adoption.

The need to tighten its rank and file is accentuated by the increasing fluidity of the lineage population, a tendency that has continued throughout the agricultural crisis of the late 1950s and 1960s, the waves of migration abroad, and the changes of employment structure since the 1970s. All this serves as a “push” factor, causing lineage members to leave Lung Yeuk Tau. In the meantime, however, there is also a “pull” factor, which draws a lot of returnees. Apart from a lingering attachment to the lineage and homeland, the “pull” factor has much to do with the soaring values of collective landed property and the indigenous privilege to build tin uk in or around the native village. These benefits are so attractive that there has been a growing demand for lineage membership by the descendants born abroad. But such demand is treated parsimoniously at Lung Yeuk Tau.

Descendants who are born abroad are called “banana kids” in the sense that they have yellow skin but a “white heart.”¹ Lung Yeuk Tau has doubt that they will ever come to appreciate their roots and commit themselves to the obligations as required of lineage members. This is why the lineage is not enthusiastic in granting permission to “light lanterns” for them in the ancestral hall, which is a rite of passage for lineage membership. Despite the fact that lanterns may be lit for some “banana kids,” their acceptance by the

¹ “香蕉仔。”

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lineage remains vulnerable to nullification. In view of what the lineage did to its descendants in Siu Hang San Tsuen, Lung Yeuk Tau seems to have little hesitation to slough off those members who fail to live up to their obligations of ancestor worship. By tightening its rank and file, the lineage rallies its members closely around its fundamental beliefs, permitting only the “worthy sons” to have access to its strategic resources.

Adoption is a remedy for individual woes associated with the lack of a male heir. The zong-zu invariably allows for adoptions so that unfortunate lineage members will not become hungry ghosts to harass the community. There are, however, rules that specify a discovery procedure for finding the candidates of adoption. Designed to forestall adulteration of the bloodline of the zong-zu, this procedure involves going through the “circles of discretion” that extend its search from the extended family, the lineage, the clan to the surname group. The circles of discretion are to be followed in that order, and only a lack of candidates justifies an expansion of search to the next circle or level. A major function of these circles of discretion is to sanction public prejudice against indiscriminate adoptions.

What is ideal is not always real. Since adoption is an individual choice, deviations from the “circles of discretion” are bound to occur, giving rise to indiscriminate adoptions. However, an excursion into the genealogies of Lung Yeuk Tau shows that adopted sons from outside the lineage were stigmatized as intruders. It is small wonder that they were not granted full membership. The discrimination was intensified by the fact that there was an incentive for individual lineage members to exclude any possible intruder from access to their corporate property. The adopted sons without full-fledged lineage membership and
their descendants were continuously subject to written and unwritten public discrimination until the community became too hot for them to stay. There is good reason to hold that where public prejudice is institutionalized and at work, the impact of indiscriminate adoptions is inconsequential on the integrity of the descent system of the zong-zu.

The divine ownership of lineage land is what makes the zong-zu unique. The lands of the zong-zu constitute what Henry Sumner Maine (1861:181) calls a “corporation aggregate.” The property is represented by a patriarch invested with the qualities of a legalis homo or “corporation sole.” Registered as tso and tong, it is to be inherited collectively and held in trust for future generations so that the “corporation” will never die. Therefore, lineage land is the epitome of collective inheritance, patriarchal management, and property inalienability. There is a parallel between this system and the system of the ancient Roman family. But in the case of the Chinese zong-zu, all is justified in the name of ancestor worship rather than the Patria Potestas (“patriarchal power”). Unlike the Patria Potestas which is worldly, ancestor worship prescribes divine obligations between the deceased ancestors and the living descendants. The inheritance of ancestral estates creates a debt that can only be paid in ritual and filial terms.

The divine ownership of lineage land is succinctly captured in the native expression “blood food” (sheuk shek) that emphasizes reciprocity. In the sense of “food from the blood descendants,” it refers to the use of proceeds from the tso land to provide for the ancestors through the performance of sacrifices. In the sense of “food for the blood descendants,” it refers to the benefits that descendants receive from the surplus of the tso land. The two functions of “blood food,” however, are not of equal weight. The one that
defines the obligations to ancestors has priority over the one that defines the rights for
descendants. No fulfillment of the obligations, no entitlement to the rights. It provides an
ideological justification for the Tangs to deny the inheritance and ownership of lineage
property to “unworthy sons.”

The establishment of corporate property centered on the accumulation of one
strategic resource -- land. There was a correlation between the power of a lineage and the
size of its landed property. As a result, the waxing and waning of lineage land took on a
political significance. The scramble for land resources that lasted centuries in the Fanling
area was at once a struggle for power and a “holy war” fought between the tso of different
lineages. At the stake of their competition were not only the econo-political interests of
the living descendants but also the divine obligations to ancestors.

The resistance against the British takeover of the New Territories at the turn of the
century was also a “holy war” waged to defend ancestral land. But the indigenous lineages
were fighting a losing battle. What with the Crown Block Lease and other ordinances, the
British Administration got rid of the traditional land-tenure system, reduced all indigenous
land owners to lessees, and inflicted heavy losses of landholdings on the tso and tong of
powerful Punti lineages. In the Fanling area, it resulted in a rise of nouveaux riches
represented by individual families that had intimate ties with the colonial administration.
The retention of extensive landholdings by these families, however, proved to be short-
lived. It allowed a resurgence of lineages, since they still possessed the land resources
needed by industrialization and urbanization. Out of a growing need for indigenous land
resources came the final delivery of the “Small House Policy.” It marked a concession of
the Hong Kong government to win the cooperation of the indigenous inhabitants in accommodating the needs of modernization.

Modernization has tested the zong-zu of the New Territories to its limits. First there came the crisis of rice cultivation, which put the traditional economy of many lineages at loose ends. Then the vegetable revolution drew to an end in the mid-1970s, leaving most lineage land lying in waste and incapable of producing proceeds. To refinance the performance of ancestor worship, which is at the core of the divine obligations of tso and tong, the lineage has to engage the needs of modernization, trying in the meantime to contain their encroachment upon its land resources.

A typical strategy to engage modernization is to give up a part of lineage land and invest the compensations in the building of new corporate property that yields high returns. The adoption of this strategy calls for a combination of leadership, capitalist-style entrepreneurship, and management expertise in addition to group consensus. There can be so many pitfalls that it is like sailing the uncharted waters. But Lung Yeuk Tau has an exceptionally successful record. What is more, it tries to hold on to as much land as it can. In the case of a government resumption, this lineage might ask for an exchange of land rather than accept the compensations.

The third characteristic of the zong-zu is its commitment to a set of norms, values, and beliefs known as ancestor worship. Diffused into the social institutions of the zong-zu, it makes the secular sacred. The theology of ancestor worship involves the power of ancestors to influence their descendants physically and morally, the reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead, the obligations of filial piety, and the rationalization of
rites and rituals in terms of propriety ("li"). Built around this theology is a ritual core, including the rites of sacrifice and fertility. These rituals function to perpetuate the continuity of the lineage and figure large in the spirituality of the Tangs at Lung Yeuk Tau. In most cases, the performance of these rituals is a domestic or individual affair. But on occasions when they are performed communally in the public eye, there is an extravagant lavishing of efforts and money, as in the annual sweeping of ancestral graves and the celebrations of Ta Chiu. This extravagance is not to be taken as a statement of hedonism but commitment to the traditional ideology.

Ancestor worship also has its sacred space, which translates into "sacred landscape" in the case of ancestral graves. Defined by the divination of feng-shui, such landscape is believed to possess good fortune to the extent that its geomantic properties allow. The popular belief goes on that any disturbance of these properties will put the well-being of the deceased and his descendants at risk. With the implementation of more and more development projects, disruption of the sacred landscape of ancestral graves has become a focal point of tension between the government and the lineages of the New Territories. The Tang higher-order lineage has more than a fair share of it.

As the graves of their high ancestors are mostly located in the New Territories, the Tangs often clash with government projects. There are times when a concession is possible. But if the Tangs have no room to back down, no kin group in the Hong Kong region is better known for their determination, tenacity, and wisdom to contain the encroachment of modernization. Instead of engaging the needs of modernization, they may engage the government legally, politicize the conflict, and mobilize maximal public
pressure on the authorities. The worst encounters that the Hong Kong government has had over ancestral graves are with the Tangs. At least some of them are likely to have been aggravated by a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of government officials who despise village culture or ignore the indigenous rights that are essential to the survival of this culture.

9.3 Conclusions

One way to analyze the strategies summarized above is to characterize each of them as a combination of two tactics: engagement and containment. In defining its symbolic and cultural boundaries, the Tang lineage tends to employ strategies that rely heavily on containment. To contain is to hold the ground and restrain, as in the tightening of brotherhood by the lineage, its interdiction against indiscriminate adoptions, and its determination to uphold ancestor worship and the system of patrilineal inheritance. With containment being emphasized, engagement is so parsimonious that it is transformed into discrimination against adopted sons from without, "banana kids," and daughters and into confrontation with the government legally and politically. We may well call it "engagement with an attitude."

In contrast, when Lung Yeuk Tau articulates with the modern economy, engagement is more in the sense of accommodation. But such accommodation may be aimed to bring about an economic recovery for the lineage, to build up lineage wealth as a whole, or to reinvigorate the material base and divine ownership of lineage property. In these cases, containment is hardly associated with the enforcement of restrictions but transformed into the reassertion of traditions by using the benefits that come from
engagement of the modern economy. The idea is to boost the lineage ideology and keep its rival at the bay. Consequently, the fanfare with which Lung Yeuk Tau spends hundreds of thousands of HK dollars sweeping its ancestral graves annually and millions more underwriting the sole sponsorship of Ta Chiu every ten years is not merely a show of wealth that seeks prestige. It is also a play of containment against the rival of the lineage ideology.

A second way to look at the strategies under study is in relation to the normative system, where each strategy has a number of alternative possibilities. The alternative possibilities of a specific strategy form the range of variation within which it deals with individual cases. Therefore, not every “banana kid” is discriminated against and excluded from the lineage. Nor is each first-generation emigrant sure to retain his full lineage membership. It is just statistically most significant for Lung Yeuk Tau to tighten its rank and file against “banana kids” rather than all of its descendants overseas. Things may change over time because of the differential functions of alternative possibilities. A different alternative may be chosen as a most viable strategy. But so long as it stays within the range of possibilities sanctioned by the same meaning system, such change by no means indicates a loss of validity in the values and beliefs that constitute the meaning system.

Although the primary function of the normative system is to cope with the problems of meaning, provide a meaningful social order and life, and to adapt (Schneider 1972:46), the possibilities and alternatives in the normative system may differentiate in terms of economic benefits for individuals. This is obvious in the extent to which a lineage
decides to tighten the rank and file of its brotherhood. The more exclusive a lineage becomes, the more its eligible members will benefit from the corporate property. What influences the decision-making of the Tang lineage the most? Is it the market mentality that prevails in Hong Kong society and shapes the economic behavior of its individual members? Not really.

Humans are more than economic animals whose only concern is self-interests. Otherwise, little sense could be made of the fact that the Tangs choose to reinvest the compensations of their ancestral lands for the future generations, turn down enormous offers of money from the government for appropriation of their ancestral gravesites, and spend millions of HK dollars sponsoring Ta Chiu. What appears "irrational" for economic animals can be "rational" for culture-bearers. The human existence of the Tangs is made meaningful by certain values and beliefs other than success in individual gains. Adherence to these values and beliefs has brought power and prestige to this lineage. Cultural rationality, therefore, has an internal logic that is spiritually and socially rewarding.

In conclusion, blood tie, divine land ownership, and ancestor worship are the making of the zong-zu. Since exposure to the drives of modernization put the continuity of the Lung Yeuk Tau lineage on line, it has had to develop strategies in response to a changed social milieu. Each of its strategies features a combination of "engagement" and "containment" tactically, and all of them are derived from the possibilities and alternatives at the normative level that are sanctioned by its fundamental values and beliefs. This study shows that, at a time of flux, the vitality of a Chinese lineage is correlated with the success of its efforts to explore the possibilities and alternatives available in its normative system,
and strategies born out of such efforts are characterized by adherence to the same values and beliefs that constitute the meaning system of the zong-zu.

For each of the strategies employed by Lung Yeuk Tau lineage, there is a range of variation within which it deals with individual cases. Synchronic variation is the basis of diachronic change. In the case of Lung Yeuk Tau, both the synchronic variation and diachronic change of its strategies have stayed within the boundary sanctioned by its fundamental values and beliefs. These values and beliefs constitute what we call cultural rationality, which operates by an internal logic that is socially and spiritually rewarding.

The lineage of Lung Yeuk Tau has become a dynamic part of modern society and strives to remain so. The strategies it has adopted revolve around the reinvigoration of corporate property, the maintenance of group cohesion, the reassertion of traditions, and the discovery of an expanded political niche. But will cultural rationality be able to go on overriding the temptation of economic rationality to the individual for a long time to come? What will happen if the tension between the strong and weak segments of the lineage grows worse? How will the new generation of lineage members view the tremendous costs incurred by the reassertion of traditions? Will involvement in party politics lead the Tangs to befriend “new residents” beside the indigenous lineages? What if the universalistic relationships that come with it backfire to undermine their kinship ties? In short, each of its strategies is faced with some uncertainty as Lung Yeuk Tau marches into the future. Complicated by the Communist takeover of Hong Kong in July 1997, such further research is of profound significance for the studies of the zong-zu. Knowing how
innovative the Tangs of Lung Yeuk Tau can be in their attempt to adapt, I am looking forward to researching these topics among them again.
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Voskamp, C. J.

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Wang Sung-Hsin

Wang Yaohua and Liu Qian

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Watson, James L. & Evelyn S. Rawski

Watson, Rubie S.

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Wu Feng, et al.

Wu Lun-ni

Wu Tingyu

Wu Xinli

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Yang Dianxun

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Yang, Martin C.

Yang, Mayfair

Yang Tinfu

Yang Yanjie

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## GLOSSARY

[Cantonese terms are romanized in normal font, and Mandarin, in italics.]

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<td>陳壽祺</td>
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<td>陳耀</td>
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<td>張鎮靈</td>
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chiu kwan
chiu sun
Chongyong
chu-bin
chuen
Chuk Yuen

[D]
da-lian
dan
Daya Bay
da-you
dian-ma
dian-yi
di-gu-quan
di-li
di-pi-quan
Dongguan
dou
Dou
Duan Yucai
Duanwu

[F]
fa pai
Fan Shu
Fan Zeda
Fan Zhongyan
fang
fang-sheng
Fanling
fen
fen-deng
feng-shui
fong
Fu Xi
Fude Zhengshen

花牌
范書
樊澤達
范仲淹
房
放生
粉嶺
分
分燈
風水
Cantonese pronunciation of fang
伏羲
福德正神
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| Ganzhou | 贛州 |
| Gao You | 高誨 |
| Gaozong | 高宗 |
| gong-cao ma | 功曹馬 |
| gong-zhu | 公主 |
| gong-sheng | 賀生 |
| gu | 姑 |
| Guandi | 關帝 |
| Guangdong | 廣東 |
| Guangxi | 廣西 |
| Guangzong | 光宗 |
| Guanyin | 觀音 |
| Guishan | 歸善 |
| Guo Pu | 郭璞 |

| Ha fu | 下户 |
| Ha Tsuen | 塵村 |
| Hakka | 客家 |
| Han | 漢 |
| Hang Mei | 坑尾 |
| han-lin | 翰林 |
| Hau (surname) | 候 |
| Hau Tei | 魚地 |
| Hau Tu | 后土 |
| Hao Yixing | 郝鴻行 |
| He Chongzu | 何崇祖 |
| Hebei | 河北 |
| heuk shek | 血食 |
| heung | 鄉 |
| Heung Yee Kuk, N. Y. | 新界鄉議局 |
| he-yue-zi | 合約字 |

344
Ho Chan
Ho Sheung Heung hok sheung Hokkien Hou Ji hou-shi hu Huaide hun hung kai Huo Wei

何真
河上鄉
學嘗
福建
后稷
後事
户
懷德
魂
紅契
霍暋

[J]

Ji Yun jia Jiangxi Jaing Renjie jia-zu jin-shi Jishui jiu jiu-fen-zi jue-jia-nu ju-ren

紀昀
家
江西
蔣人傑
家族
進士
吉水
舅
鸛分字
絕家女
舉人

[K]

Kai Chi Wai Kak Chun Market Kam Tin Kan (surname) Kan Lok Tso Kan Lung Wai Kan Yang Tso Kang, Prince Kangxi Keshuxia

展子園
隔圳墟
錦田
簡
耕樂祖
艱龍園
耕隱祖
康王
康熙
苛樹下
keung cho  |  腰醋
Ko Mat   |  高密
Kong Yingda |  孔德達
Kowloon |  九龍
ku wan |  孤魂
kuk |  局
ku-ling |  哭靈
Kwan Ma |  郎馬
Kwan Tei |  軍地
Kwang Fuk To |  廣福道

| Lam  |  林
Lam To-yuen |  林道源
Lam Tsuen |  林村
Lau Shui Heung |  流水響
Lau Wong-fat |  劉皇發
Lee Shui-luen |  李水聯
Li Boshao |  勵伯韶
Li Kaiqi |  李開奇
Li Jingde |  黎靖德
Li mun tau |  立門頭
Li Tao |  李熹
Li Wanrong |  李萬榮
Li Yanshou |  李延壽
li-gong |  例貢
Lik Ying Tsai |  力瀛齋
Lin Feng |  林鳳
Liu (surname) |  廖
Liu An |  劉安
Liu Cunye |  劉存業
Liu Wendian |  劉文典
Liu Xianglao |  劉鄉老
Lo Wai |  老圍
Loi Tung |  萊洞
Lok Sin Tong |  樂善堂
Luen Wo Market |  聯和墟
Luk Uk |  六屋
Lung Kai Nunnery |  龍溪庵
pai mun tau
pak kai
pak kam
pak kung
Pang (surname)
Pang Kwai
Pang Lok Sam
Pat Heung
Peking*
pin tai kong
Ping Shan
pinyin
po
Po Pen Tong
Po Sheung Tsuen
Po Tak Temple
pun choy
Punti

派門頭
白契
帛金
伯公
彭
彭桂
彭樂三
屏山
屏音
眺
報本堂
菁上村
報德祠
盤餐
本地

qi
qian
Qianlong
Qing
Qingming
qu-shui

氣
乾
乾隆
清
清明節
取水

sai
Sai Kung
sak hei
san shang-biao
San Tin
San Uk Tsuen
San Wai

世
西貢
煞氣
三上表
新田
新屋村
新圍
Sanqing
sat hei
Sha Tin
Sha Tau Kok
Sham Shui Po
Shan Chum
Shan Shan
She Ji
she-ling-wei
Shek Wu Market
Shen Kung
sheng-ming
sheng-yuan
Shenzhen
she-ren
Shek Tsin
Sheung Shui
Sheung Shui Wai
Sheung Ue Tung
Sheung Wo Hang
shi
shi-xi-biao
shi-xi-lu
shi-zi
shik pai
Shing Mun Tunnels
Shiqi
Shui Wan Tong
Shung Him Tong
Shunzhi
Si Li
Sin Sui Tong
Sin Wong
Siu Hang Tsuen
Siu Hang San Tsuen
siu ka
Song
Song Yan
suo-na
Sz Kim Tong
Sz Kong Tso
Sze Yeuk

三清
煞氣
沙田
沙頭角
深水埗
Obsolete Pronunciation of Shenzhen
神山
社稷
設靈位
石湖墟
神功
生命
生員
深圳
舍人
石井
上水
上水圍
雙魚洞
上禾坑
氏
世系表
世系錄
適子
失派
城門隧道
石岐
翠雲堂
崇詮堂
順治
司理
善述堂
城隍
小坑村
小坑新村
小家(庭)
宋
宋錫
嘐嘐
師儉堂
思岡祖
四約
Tang (surname continued)
Tsung-sun
Tsung-wo
Tsung-yan
Tung-tsuen
Wai
Yap-yut
Yue
Yuen-ching
Yuen-hei
Yuen-kit
Yuen-leung
Yuen-wai
Yuen-wo
Yuen-yam
Yui-shan
Tang Hill
tau chung
tian
tian-gan-di-zhi
tian-li
Tin Hau
tin tang
tin tseng
ting uk
Tingzhou
To Hing Tong
To Lo Harbor
tong
Tong Ko Tso
tsai sau
Tsap Ng Tso
Tsat Yeuk
Tsim Sha Tsui
tsin tue
tsing sheung
tso
tso sheung
tsuen
Tsuen Wan
Tsui (surname)
Tsun Tak Tong
Tsung Hom Tong
Tsz Tong Tsuen
Tsz Yee
tu-lou
Tue Kam Tong
Tuen Mun
tung
Tung Kok Wai
Tuo Tuo

松磡塘
祠堂村
咨議
土楼
兌金堂
屯門
洞
東閣圍
脱脱

wai
wai
wai qi
Wai San Tong
wai tau wa
wai-qin
wai-sheng
Wan
Wan Toi
Wang Anshi
Wang Bi
Wang Chau
Wang Chong
Wang Fu
Wang Lairen
Wang Lu
Wang Shiqiao
Wang Yude
wang-zu
Wanli
wei-wu
Wenchang Jun
Weng Bing
Wing Ling Tsuen
Wing Ling Wai
Wo Hang
wo-kou
Wong Ko

園
外
外戚
維新堂
園頭話
外親
外甥
溫
雲臺
王安石
王弼
橫州
王充
王符
王來任
王扈
王世喬
王玉德
望族
萬歷
園屋
文昌君
翁炳
永寧村
永寧園
禾坑
倭寇
皇姑

352
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yuen sao

Zeng Shen
Zengcheng
zhai-xin
Zhang Ruyu
Zhangzhou
Zheng Chenggong
Zheng Jian
Zheng Jiao
Zhongshan
Zhou
Zhou Youde
Zhu Gongqian
Zhu Xi
zhuang-yuan
zi-di
zong
zong-ci
zong-fa
zong-ji
zong-qin
zong-zhu
zong-zu
zou-she-shu
zu
zu-qin

Zhang Ruyu
Zhangzhou
Zheng Chenggong
Zheng Jian
Zheng Jiao
Zhongshan
Zhou
Zhou Youde
Zhu Gongqian
Zhu Xi
zhuang-yuan
zi-di
zong
zong-ci
zong-fa
zong-ji
zong-qin
zong-zhu
zong-zu
zou-she-shu
zu
zu-qin