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# Beyond Greater Hong Kong: Is Shenzhen emerging as a global city with distinct cultural roots?

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**Pilot study prepared on behalf of the China Development Institute, Shenzhen**

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## **Executive summary**

After the obsolescence of the 'Greater Hong Kong' narrative dominant in the 1990s, today Shenzhen is recognized as an emergent global city of its own. Yet, at the same time important indicators of this status are still ambiguous, such as the role in international financial flows or the dynamics of its service sector, beyond its role as a global workbench. In A.T. Kearney's 'Global Cities Report', the performance of Shenzhen has been lacklustre since 2012, even retreating in the middle field in terms of 'outlook', comparing with a strong dynamism of other Chinese cities newly included in the ranking.

The pilot study concentrates on one specific question, namely whether Shenzhen evolves its own cultural characteristics and dynamism, combined with creating a sustainable and harmonious social structure that is embedded into this local culture. It is based on in-depth case studies, embedded in expert interviews and analysis of other sources, such as newspaper reports. Methodologically, it combines anthropology and economics, and mobilizes recent conceptual innovations in international China studies.

In common pictures of Shenzhen, the image of an 'instant city' prevails, driven by huge and historically unique inflows of migrants within a very short time. This short history of immigration has shaped its social structure, which is even reflected in the urban infrastructure and settlement patterns, with the 'urban villages' being the most conspicuous phenomenon. In the urban villages, where about 50 percent of the urban population live, migrant

populations have met with the local inhabitants of the rural areas where Shenzhen was implanted. Even though those local people now only form a tiny minority in the total population, they are becoming increasingly visible in the ongoing renewal of urban villages, with many expressions of traditional culture embodied in artefacts, buildings or public events.

The central role of urban villages in the future development of Shenzhen has been recognized in the newly released draft of the municipal government about general planning and regulation from 2018 and 2015 (深圳市城中村(旧村)总体规划(2018-2025)). This report is based on a pilot study that explores the question how far and in which way the indigenous culture and the immigrant culture may work together in creating a Shenzhen culture that might provide the fertile grounding of Shenzhen's emergence as a global city and concentrates on the native part. It is based on case studies of various urban villages and their original inhabitants, local clans with deep historical roots which play a very active role in the ongoing renewal of urban villages. The report explores the role of cultural traditions in various contexts, especially governance, business networking and cultural industries.

The relationship between local culture and the sustainability of social structure is complex, since the urban villages are places of stark, multi-faceted and sometimes fractioned social divisions. This is partly driven by the real estate sector and its effects on the distribution of wealth. As in other global cities, the economic dynamism carries the risk of increasing inequality, which might be embodied in emerging settlement patterns. Most migrants in urban villages are blue-collar workers: If Shenzhen further enhances its role as a global city, economic restructuring will trigger their relocation to the service sector. Typically, this drives the increasing separation of urban populations into the elite group of professionals, entrepreneurs or local leaders and low-income workers in precarious occupations (catering, cleaning etc.). Whereas in many global cities this combines with the disadvantaged economic position of foreign immigrants, the situation in Shenzhen is special because of the dominant role of domestic migrants. Other Shenzhen specific factors include the unequal distribution of human capital, with locals mostly with low endowments, but strong financial wealth resulting from real estate business, and parts of immigrants belonging to the new business and professional elites, and other parts being weak in both educational level and personal assets. This report argues that the resulting potential challenges for social stability and cultural harmony needs to be met by pro-active public policy: This is called 'cultural governance', which in the Chinese context corresponds to similar international practices in the domain of inclusiveness policies, diversity management or creative sector policy. The report presents the idea that all these and related policies could be combined in one coherent approach of 'cultural governance'.

The report argues that traditional culture in Shenzhen can become a productive and creative force of its own and may also play an important role in urban governance. A central notion is 'ritual': The report starts out from analysing 'ritual spaces' of traditional villages which are increasingly visible in the urban infrastructure and architecture of Shenzhen, mostly in the shape of ancestral halls and associated temples, and often including public spaces, such as 'cultural squares'. These artefacts reflect a resurgence of traditional kinship groups and

ancestor worship among the local population, but also including important immigrant groups, foremostly Chaoshan people, who make up an estimated 3 million of Shenzhen citizens.

One important case study in this report is the Wen clan with six branches in Shenzhen and one in Hong Kong, who trace themselves back to Wen Tianxiang, a famous national hero of Song dynasty times. We look at one branch at Fenghuang village in more detail. This case demonstrates the important institutional fusion between modern organizational forms and traditional lineage ritual in the construct of the shareholding cooperatives. In urban villages, shareholding cooperatives have emerged as a peculiar form of local governance that retains important elements of the social structure of the original village turned into an urban community *shequ*. This is reflected in many ritual activities, such holding traditional feasts on New Year holiday when dividends are distributed. The ritual space of the old village is spanned between the newly constructed public square with ancestral hall and the newly constructed temple complex on the site of the old village temple, and is enacted, for example, on festive occasions when a lion's dance starts out from the temple and ends at the ancestral hall where proper rites are held. Ritual spaces of different groups can also overlap, as in the case of Hubei village, belonging to the Zhang, a powerful clan before 1949, and the Chaoshan people who live in this urban village today.

The report argues that ritual spaces play a role in urban development via the competition between communities in attracting investment, shopping, tourism and leisure activities, thus evoking images of lineage competition in old China. A peculiar aspect in Shenzhen urban governance is the interaction between municipal authorities and local initiatives. The shareholding cooperatives are the nexus in which this is negotiated, especially via the construct that in their 'Collective Assets Management Committee' the local Party secretary is in the lead. Control of land and signalling status and wealth via prestige real estate projects is a driver of territorial competition in Shenzhen. This combination of territorial competition and centralized municipal planning is a form of dynamical hybrid governance. However, there are also risks that this territorial competition pushes further social differentiation and neglects the interests of the resident migrant population.

The report identifies cultural governance as an emerging force in Shenzhen society: By this, we refer to the phenomenon that traditional culture is increasingly supported by public authorities which take the lead in local identity politics. An example is the increasing public awareness of Hakka tradition in Shenzhen. However, this does not mean to highlight local cultural traditions, but clearly locates these in mainstream national culture in emphasizing the migration history of various local clans, which often trace themselves back to Song times and even earlier, and 'high ancestors' who were members of the Imperial elites. In general, this reflects the strong cultural conservatism in Guangdong in Late Imperial times. Today, cultural governance takes many forms, such as the public endorsement of 'family rules' or the introduction of 'national studies' at experimental schools. At the same time, this renaissance of tradition combines with citizen engagement in urban development and modernist initiatives in the arts and cultural industries, resulting in a complex public sphere that features four major poles: government, developers, native groups and the public, and often excludes migrants, especially in low-income strata. This public sphere is part of the hybrid governance

structure, formalized in recent administrative changes giving more autonomy to urban communities.

Traditional forms of social life also play a role in business, in the larger context of Chinese practices of 'networking' (*guanxi*). Conspicuous examples include surname associations and native place associations, such as the World Huang Association or the Chaoshan associations. Local Shenzhen Huang of Xiasha village are very active in this type of international networking, which partly takes place in the context of tourism, such as holding annual conventions of the Huang.

Cultural activities take different forms, of which the report selects three specific examples. The first is the (in)famous *shanzhai* phenomenon, which is rooted in the strong tradition of small-scale flexible entrepreneurship and is driven by the strong demand of consumers at lower end of the income ladder. *Shanzhai* is partly a cultural phenomenon in manipulating the culture of global brands and has become a breeding ground of new mainstream business developments, such as the drone industry or the creative hardware incubators. The second is the 'common pot' *pencai* feast, which originates in a lineage tradition that is also shared with the New Territories in Hong Kong and is a public expression of local people's community spirit. The third is the public emergence of Hakka culture and its activation in cultural industries, such as the music industry.

The report concludes in pulling the different strands of research together and presents policy recommendations that centre on the idea that cultural governance can be a framework in fertilizing the ground for a flourishing Shenzhen culture that may shape its status as a global city. This framework combines creative sector policies with diversity management and inclusiveness policies, following international experience, but adding a distinct Chinese approach.

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## 1. Introduction: The long march towards a 'global city'

The Chinese metropolis Shenzhen is often perceived as one of the most advanced urban places in China, not only in terms of technology, but also in terms of social structures and dynamics. This perception is grounded in the story of the 'fisher village' that was transformed into a Special Economic Zone within a few years, and then growing with breakneck speed via relentless construction of infrastructure, high rise buildings, shopping malls and modern transport systems. In terms of society and culture, Shenzhen is seen as being shaped by the inflow of millions of migrants from all over China, exploding from a native population of about 330.000 people to a mega-city with more than 20 million inhabitants, thus surpassing Hong Kong by far.

In the first two decades, Hong Kong played an important role in speeding up private business development in Shenzhen beyond the efforts of the government, but today Shenzhen has surpassed Hong Kong in many respects, certainly in technology, being home of several of the Chinese internet behemoths, and has emancipated itself from Hong Kong culture.<sup>1</sup> This compares with the earlier notion of the Pearl River delta as 'Greater Hong Kong' which was the leading analytical narrative in the 1990s. The 'Greater Hong Kong' narrative was mainly based on the relocation of manufacturing from Hong Kong to the Pearl River Delta, with the accompanying role of Hong Kong corporations and service providers in supplying the global networking capacities for Pearl River Delta business, and on the cultural forces emanating from the shared use of Cantonese language, which enabled the avid reception of Hong Kong popular culture across the border (Hong Kong TV, Canto-Pop etc.).

This pattern has changed dramatically, although Hong Kong has retained its leading role in specific respects: For example, today many Shenzhen businesspeople have also set up a company registered in Hong Kong in order to be able to activate the rich resources of Hong Kong in services, finance or global connectivity. Often the entire family holds a Hong Kong passport, thus enjoying the many advantages that come along with it, especially international travel. Further, in the 'One country, two systems' model Hong Kong continues to supply the scarce good of rule of law and all kinds of conflict resolution in business, which creates confidence on part of foreign business partners and thus leverages all kinds of cooperation with Shenzhen companies. However, in other respects the more recent narrative of 'Shen Kong' seems to fall apart: For example, the second generation Shenzhen inhabitants often cannot speak Cantonese fluently, eroding more intensive interaction with Hong Kong people, and increasingly identify with Shenzhen; on the other hand, more young Hong Kongers see

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<sup>1</sup> Ching (2008).



the inflow of Mainland Chinese with critical eyes, and the trend is growing to express an genuine Hong Kong identity, against the earlier idea of cultural integration in the Pearl River Delta.<sup>2</sup>

Shenzhen has weaned itself off from Hong Kong in many ways. This report argues that this is not only happening in the lead sectors of the economy, most salient the internet business and new trends of hardware development, such as the dominant position of Shenzhen in the global drone industry. This report deconstructs the story of Shenzhen in important respects and suggest a new interpretation of the Shenzhen experience, at least in the sense of unearthing parts of the story which have been not adequately told until most recently.<sup>3</sup> Shenzhen is often represented as a place without culture, in the sense that the millions of migrants do not share more than being workers in the economy and consumers in the marketplace, almost lingering in an anomic state.<sup>4</sup> This is a perception shared by many Shenzhen people, who wonder what it means to be a ‘Shenzhener’, like asking what is a ‘New Yorker’.<sup>5</sup> Shenzhen identity is what people are in search of but have not yet found. Certainly, this feeling is not groundless. But if we look at the societal microlevel, possible answers appear to be much more complicated than any kind of simple ‘melting pot’ story. Interestingly, on this microlevel it becomes immediately evident that Shenzhen identity is part and parcel of the larger historical and cultural identity of the Pearl River Delta, which, for this matter, also includes Hong Kong, especially the New Territories.

One reason for this complexity is immediately obvious when we compare Shenzhen with New York. Both cities are shaped by immigrants, but there is an important difference: Most immigrants in Shenzhen are domestic migrants, and initially most of foreign direct investment was Chinese. This difference is salient when considering a remark of one interview partner about Hubei village in Luohu district, the core area of the early history of Shenzhen: This village is inhabited by migrants from Chaoshan region in northern Guangdong, and our interviewee likened it with a ‘China town’ abroad. Why? In the midst of Luohu commercial district, the houses are decrepit and shoddy, with bad hygienic conditions, and makeshift infrastructure such as electricity, appearing like an urban slum. At the same time, it is deeply marked by Chaoshan culture, with altars marking entries to the maze of alleyways, and incense at every corner. Until most recently, the inhabitants were lukewarm about urban renewal, despite huge advertisements that promise a bright and ultramodern future of the place. This is a

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<sup>2</sup> On the complex issues of Shenzhen identity, see O’Donnell and Wan (2016).

<sup>3</sup> This new view has been forcefully developed in the contributions to the volume edited by O’Donnell et al. (2017). Mary Ann O’Donnell is also acting as a blogger and public intellectual who is highly visible in Shenzhen society today, see her blog: <https://shenzhennoted.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Lao (2018: 264) reports about the Vanke founder Wang Shi who used the term ‘contractual spirit’ (qiye jingshen) to describe the emerging business culture in Shenzhen; Lao thinks that this matches with the needs and challenges of a ‘society of strangers’ (mosheng ren shehui).

<sup>5</sup> These debates started early, see Florence (2017).

‘Chaoshan’ town with distinct social structures, and for that reason, a kind of ‘Chinatown in China’.

Yet, even if we discover phenomena like this, the description just scratches the surface. Different from ‘China towns’, Hubei village has become a topic in public discourses among Shenzhen urban elites who increasingly become aware of the social and cultural risks and opportunities of urban renewal mainly driven by economic and business motives, and who, in this particular case, also realize that the ramshackle buildings of Hubei have a history that may go back even to Ming times.<sup>6</sup> Hubei is a symbol of the historical roots of Shenzhen, beyond the veil of the fishing village myth, which has effectively denuded Shenzhen of its past. Therefore, I argue that there is a deep contradiction in understanding Shenzhen: On the one hand, its past has been neglected in its public images, but on the other hand, its past left a mark on its emergence as a global city.

However, this report is not about rewriting Shenzhen history, but about the question whether and how Shenzhen is emerging as a global city. For some observers, Shenzhen has already attained this status, being one of the economic central places of China. Yet, at the same time, the status is ambiguous: One of the reasons is that global cities build on their history, making each global city unique, and maintaining historically embedded specializations even in sectors such as finance.<sup>7</sup> With apparently a very short history, Shenzhen is lacking this anchor of its status. This is straightforward when one compares Shenzhen with Hong Kong, indisputably one of the leading global cities. Hong Kong emerged from a peculiar cultural mix between British colonial rule and Chinese immigrant culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular driving a specific socio-cultural pattern that on the one pole of the spectrum joined Western and Chinese business elites, and on the other pole allowed room for resilient patterns of popular culture, both traditional and modern, in the lower-income strata, supported by targeted public policies such as the public housing program or public transport, and none the least the accommodating cultural policy in the New Territories. This socio-cultural foundation allowed the flourishing of most advanced sectors such as finance, legal services, or coordinating services, in recent decades also in Mainland business.

In comparison, Shenzhen is still in the process of emerging from a mere workbench that mainly depends on external complementary services to succeed. A telling indicator of this fragile status is the list of city pairs in the world economy that are tightly connected via communication and service links, published by the ‘Globalization and World Cities Research Network’: Among the set of tightly interacting cities, Shenzhen only appears once, and the

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<sup>6</sup> This public discourse is well documented by the Tumu Urban Rural Institute: <http://www.retumu.org/wordpress/?p=660>, See also O’Donnell’s blog: <https://shenzhennoted.com/2016/08/03/hubei-recognizing-value/>; <https://shenzhennoted.com/2018/11/13/hubei-bearing-witness/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2018link.html>

partner is Beijing. In comparison, Hong Kong is one of the most connected cities in the world, linking up with all other major global cities. Surprisingly, though, Shenzhen is not included, which reflects the fact that these data are based on information of multinational corporations. However, on the other hand this hides the deeper integration between the two cities on the level of people and medium-scale business and leading Chinese companies without the status of multinationals. For this report, it is important to realize that many of these connectivities are embedded into cultural forms that are rooted in the history of the Pearl River Delta and the more recent history of emigration from Mainland China.

Methodologically, this report builds on anthropology, sociology, economics and cultural sciences to analyse several case studies that have been implemented in 2017 and 2018. We draw on recent conceptual developments in international China studies, such as concepts of 'ritual economy' and 'cultural governance' to improve our understanding of cultural and social dynamics of Shenzhen, and, different from most academic work in these fields, also mobilize such concepts for policy recommendations. The case studies have been accompanied by numerous expert interviews and analysis of other sources, such as newspaper reports.

## 2. What is a global city?

The still fragile status of Shenzhen as a global city is evident in the recent A.T. Kearney 'Global Cities Report' where Shenzhen is lingering in the middle field. The report distinguishes between two different indices, one is current performance and one is future outlook.<sup>8</sup>

In the first index, Shenzhen fell back from the position 65 in 2012 to 79 in 2018, and compares with cities such as Bangalore, Ho Chi Minh or Caracas. Hong Kong has been consistently on position 5, Shanghai is on position 19 and could improve 2 positions. This clearly reveals that Shenzhen development is stalled, in spite of huge efforts at urban renewal. The picture becomes even bleaker when we consider the second index on 'outlook': Shenzhen lost two positions (from 50 to 52) between 2016 and 2018. This compares with rapid progress of other cities: For example, Ho Chi Minh city advanced 14 positions or Nagoya 13 positions. The 2018 issue of the report focuses on China and the fact that six Chinese cities have been newly included in the index: Changsha, Foshan, Ningbo, Tangshan, Wuxi and Yantai. For example, Wuxi entered on position 130 of the performance index, but even on position 57 in the outlook index. Among Chinese cities already included in the index, Xi'an could improve 19 positions in the outlook index and is now on position 66. Obviously, there is a strong urban dynamic in China, but Shenzhen is losing steam in comparison with others.

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<sup>8</sup> A. T. Kearney (2018).

The A.T. Kearney index follows established wisdom about what determines the status of a global city.<sup>9</sup> A core determinant of performance is business activity, especially regarding services that create business connectivity, as we have already seen. This is mostly finance and producer services. The other major components are information networks, cultural activity and political engagement. In the outlook index, the components emphasize innovation and entrepreneurship, well-being, economic growth and governance.

The concept of a 'global city' suggests the idea that there is a limited number of urban places in the world that transcend the role of cities in a national context. Global cities are central nodes in the global economy, with specific characteristics, such as a high share of business services and finance in local GDP, or the presence of a global economic elite recruited internationally, which in turn generates the demand for high quality and often high end consumer culture, reaching from luxury goods and fashion to influential creative industries and cultural centres, such as world leading opera houses. This seems to point towards a certain uniformity in the appearance of global cities, and indeed, high-end shopping malls may feature just the same luxury goods companies across the globe. But research has also shown that global cities build on strong path-dependencies even in seemingly uniform sectors such as finance: History matters. Global cities often rely on distinct comparative advantages that are also related to their cultural roots.

Culture matters in shaping the experience of living in a global city and is also a major attraction for short-term visitors. However, culture also requires a certain level of liberal political environment and governance structures: For example, although Istanbul holds a strong position 26 in the A. T. Kearney performance index and could improve 11 positions since 2012, it suffered a blow in the outlook index, despite huge infrastructural efforts, and lost 16 positions, now on position 96. This clearly reflects the political climate and governance conditions in Turkey today.

In emphasizing the role of business elites, the picture of global cities in the public distorts another fact about global cities in recent years: Global cities also have a large share of low-income population, often belonging to the group of immigrants. They mostly work in the services sector, from cleaning over taxi driving to household services, often including a high share of women. This is a major factor in creating risks for social stability, as the gap between low- and high-income groups is often much larger in global cities than in the national average of the countries where they locate. Yet, at the same time the diversity of cultures contributes to the positive experiences of global cities in terms of openness, lifestyles and inspiration. In the past decades, therefore successful global cities have also developed pro-active approaches

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<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive treatment, see Sassen (2018).

to governing cultural diversity, often under the heading of ‘diversity management’ and inclusive social welfare policies.

In Shenzhen, these phenomena find concentrated expression in the unique settlement pattern of ‘urban villages’ which host the migrant workers who fuelled the economic boom of the past, about 50 percent of Shenzhen population. For a long time, urban villages were mostly seen as transitory and huge efforts were made in urban renewal. However, this has also created new tensions well-known from other city experiences, such as the risk of gentrification of upgraded settlements, and an growing social division between different strata in Shenzhen society.

This report starts out from the hypothesis that the ‘urban villages’ will be a crucial element in further efforts at launching Shenzhen to the top segment of global cities. This has been clearly recognized in the recently issued draft of Shenzhen municipal government of the general development plan for urban villages (深圳市城中村（旧村）总体规划（2018-2025）). The draft pays due attention to inclusive and participatory management and improving governance structures, while also slowing down the current speed of reconstruction. This report contributes to the debates that form the context of this document.

### 3. A few conceptual clarifications

In the subsequent sections, this report explores the cultural roots of Shenzhen as a global city. As we saw, Shenzhen is an emergent global city, not yet firmly established in the global network: That partly reflects its position as a ‘workbench’ in the past. But the ‘workbench’ image tends to downgrade the central significance of phenomena such as the ‘urban villages’ of Shenzhen, which became the home of those millions of migrant workers who personify the competitive advantage as a workbench. What were the cultural roots and the cultural impact of urban villages? Can urban villages become cultural vehicles and media in shaping the face of Shenzhen as an emerging global city? This the type of question that the report wants to ask and to answer, beyond the specific issue of urban villages.

For this work, the report refers to a range of theoretical and conceptual frames, which must be clarified at the beginning. I just present rough definitions that help to arrange the empirical material in systematic way and leave a deeper exploration for other more comprehensive work.

#### *Competition and cooperation:*

The first and most general frame is that of competition and cooperation. In many cultural images of Shenzhen, the market looms large, and this means ‘competition’. Many interview

partners emphasize this aspect of life in Shenzhen: migrant workers compete over jobs, entrepreneurs compete over opportunities, companies compete over market shares in the global context, and so on. However, this neglects that competition is always and everywhere also undergirded by cooperation.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, markets are a form of cooperation as they follow certain rules, practices and norms that have been established cooperatively. On the other hand, the more ruthless competition is, the stronger may be the incentives for certain groups to cooperate in some way to create competitive advantage vis à vis other groups. An important topic of this report is to investigate into these patterns of cooperation: Chinese culture is traditionally strong in enabling cooperation among groups, based on a most general pattern that the anthropologist Morton Fried has classically designated as ‘tongism’, using the Chinese term ‘tong’, i.e. ‘commonality’:<sup>11</sup> People may cooperate because they activate certain properties that they share with other people, such as being relatives, originating from the same hometown, or sharing the same surname. Traditional Chinese culture was shaped by a manifold of organizational forms that build on such commonalities. In this report, I study the resilience of these patterns and how they contribute to economic life in Shenzhen, and how they also impact on distinct cultural features of Shenzhen.

#### *Ritual:*

In this report I use the term ‘ritual’ in both a theoretical and a China-specific sense. Generally, rituals are forms of social behaviour that involve external artefacts and standardized forms of behaviour, mostly of collectives of individuals, by which they express and maintain their shared identity. For example, a religious ritual expresses the identity of the group of believers, or fans of a soccer club may conduct certain rituals such as wearing certain clothes. In China, ritual was traditionally thought as being the foundation of social order, beyond law and political power. Neoconfucianism established the idea that ritual, especially in the context of the family, but also the body politic (such as Imperial rites) has almost religious dimensions in ordering society, rooted in the local but reaching up to the Empire as a total order of civilization (‘tianxia’). Accordingly, a central empirical question of this report is where, when and how rituals have emerged as an important aspect of modern Chinese society in Shenzhen. I concentrate on traditional ritual, although one can certainly argue that many forms of modernist behaviour are also ritual in nature: For example, displaying luxury goods in expressing social status can be seen as ritual.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a classical treatment in the context of development, see Platteau (1994).

<sup>11</sup> Cited according to Cohen (1996). For an influential account of Chinese associational life that informs my discussion, see Sangren (1984).

<sup>12</sup> I develop this perspective in much detail in my book Herrmann-Pillath (2017). Recently, I build the generic meaning of ritual on the sociological approach developed by Collins (2005). The role of ritual in Chinese society has been classically outlined by Fei Xiaotong (1947).

### *Ritual economy:*

In the study of Late Imperial China, the concept of 'ritual economy' catches the phenomenon that many ritual institutions also served economic functions.<sup>13</sup> That begins with the nuclear family, which is interpreted not only as a phenomenon in kinship and emotional life, but also as an economic unit; continues with the analysis of extended kinship, in which rituals played an essential role (such as ancestor worship and related organizational forms such as lineage estates), and ends with the vast domain of associational life, such as chambers of commerce or surname associations. In all these phenomena, rituals were essential in establishing and maintaining these forms. In a most general way, this interpenetration of economy and ritual was theorized in G. William Skinner's (1962) model of traditional rural society as being 'market based' and not based on the village. This idea is guiding our research in the context of the 'urban villages' of Shenzhen. Informed by the notion of ritual economy, we also introduce more specific terms, for example, the notion of 'ritual entrepreneur': A ritual entrepreneur is a person who activates rituals as an aspect of her or his entrepreneurial activity, such as directly disseminating ritual knowledge and practices in the business community, or relying on rituals as a form of enabling business projects or management (for example, in a family business).

### *Networks and kinship:*

The aforementioned 'tongism' in Chinese tradition is most generally theorized in the context of the 'guanxi' phenomenon, i.e. social networks in the Chinese cultural setting. I cannot discuss the complex status of this concept in China studies<sup>14</sup> but want to draw a neat boundary between 'guanxi' and kinship, which some authors also include in the general notion of *guanxi*. *Guanxi* are often based on properties shared between people, if only based on a shared history of past interactions, including third intermediating parties, and that are maintained by ritualized activities such as mutual gift giving and regular meetings, such as dinners. Kinship more specifically refers to biological relatedness (so called 'xue yuan') and commonalities that are established via kinship-related rituals, such as ancestor worship. In the Chinese context, these boundaries become blurred, however, by the very activity of rituals: For example, surname associations may establish fictitious blood relations with a distant ancestor but are clearly institutional means to enable the formation of *guanxi*, without activating more specific kinship ties among people sharing the same surname. An important transitional form is the 'clan'. There are various uses of this term in the literature, both Chinese and Western. I fix meanings in the following way: I treat as a 'lineage' or 'jiazu' the kinship group which is living together at a certain place, and as a 'clan' or 'zongzu' the ritual kinship group which may be

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<sup>13</sup> The term has been used by scholars on both Imperial China and contemporary rural China, see Faure (2006) and Yang (2007).

<sup>14</sup> For recent surveys, see Chen et al. (2013) and Bian (2018)

identical with the lineage or may spread across different places, including several local lineages.<sup>15</sup> Typically, through time lineages identify with clans via genealogies ('jiapu') which establish descent. Therefore, the more general term is the 'descent group' (zu).

*Cultural governance:*

Finally, I use the term 'cultural governance' to refer to the active role of government in manifesting ritual activities with the aim to create and maintain social order. As such, this stays in the long tradition of 'culturalism' in the Chinese empire which was pursued actively as a means of governing Chinese society at least since the inception of Neoconfucianism as an ideology of the state. In modern China studies, the concept has attracted attention in analysing economic phenomena such as the role of tourism in establishing and expressing cultural identities of a region or a city. In Shenzhen, cultural governance is visible in the context of large projects of urban renewal, especially of urban villages, and plays a role in the emerging image of Shenzhen identity.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Ritual spaces of Shenzhen

In this chapter, I explore the notion of 'ritual space' in Shenzhen and its relationship with wider social patterns including Hong Kong and even the global society. By this term, we refer to the traditional Chinese village in the first place, extending to small towns in the sense of the elementary 'marketing community' of G. W. Skinner. In Shenzhen, the former is still designated as a 'cun', whereas the marketing community was only demarcated in pre-liberation times, as a 'xu' 墟. The modern territory of Shenzhen was historically a market system including Shenzhen xu, and with many villages that were dispersed in space and were economically integrated with the market towns. Historical Xin'an county is shown in map 1.

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<sup>15</sup> This is based on both Western and Chinese literature, although opinions still diverge. See, for example, Ebrey and Watson (1986) or Gui (2014)

<sup>16</sup> On the term 'cultural governance' see Perry (2013) and Oakes (2017).



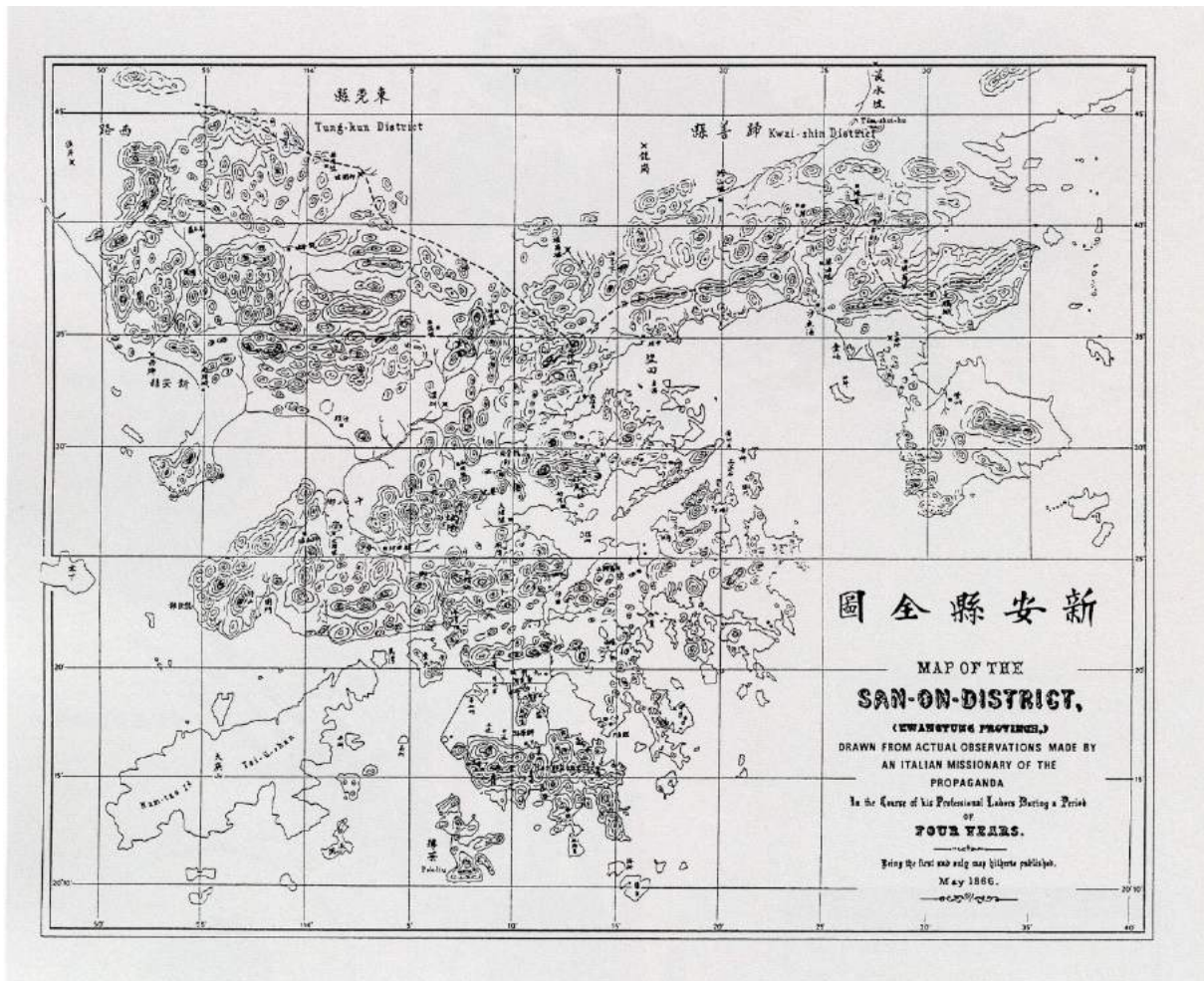


Figure 1: Historical map of Xin'an county

What is a ritual space?

The traditional Chinese village is a ritual space in four respects.<sup>17</sup>

- First, it was shaped by the settlement patterns of kinship groups, with the extreme form of one village being identical with the settlement of one kinship group, a lineage. This ritual space is centrally marked by an ancestral hall.
- Second, the village as a social unit is marked by shared religious rituals, mostly represented in a temple devoted to a locally or regionally respected deity, such as Tianhou in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta, and in addition by gods that were directly part of the Imperial cult, such as the Earth God (tudi gong).
- Thirdly, the settlement patterns of villages were shaped by fengshui practices by which the villagers explored the flow of spiritual forces that flow through the location.

<sup>17</sup> This follows Lagerwey (2010), combining with insights of Chun (2000) on villages in the New Territories.

- Fourthly, the ritual space of a village includes the cemetery. In modern urban society, and as result of explicit policies by the government, cemeteries have been mostly removed from the landscape in favour of cremation. Yet, in areas where rural landscapes have still been preserved, cemeteries remain an aspect to be considered.

Hence, it is essential to recognize that a traditional village was a religious body and community. This is tied to the centrality of native place in traditional Chinese social structure, which refers to various phenomena. One is that a village may typically trace its origins back to a migration event in the past, which includes a series of places of origin if chain migration is involved. This history is mostly established via the genealogies of local families. As single-lineage villages are frequent in the Pearl River Delta, this means that the entire village may relate to such places of origin. For example, many Hakka villages explicitly refer to original migration events in Song dynasty, with many implications, such as highlighting the former elite status as members of the Imperial administration, staying in stark contrast with their more recent identity as marginalized people (or even ‘non-Chinese’).

The other is the role of the village in the personal history of emigrants.<sup>18</sup> This connection remains important for Chinese communities abroad, such as in Southeast Asia, and broadens the notion of ritual space to global dimensions. The native place plays an important role in the identities of Overseas Chinese, who reassert this via many ritual activities that since 1978 also involve returning to the homeland (‘xun gen’). This often includes also the younger generation, although it is mostly an activity of the elders.

More specifically, native place as a ritual concern was salient in the first two decades of economic growth of Shenzhen, because many former emigrants and refugees in Hong Kong returned to their native place and supported the restoration of ancestral halls and other sacred artefacts. In these activities, the economic role of rituals is most visible, as returned emigrants often also exploit their native ties to launch business ventures.

Identifying and mapping ritual spaces in Shenzhen today

We can trace the ritual spaces in modern Shenzhen via the location of ancestral halls and partly also the location of temples. In a single lineage village, a typical phenomenon is the coexistence of ancestral hall and temple, thus reflecting the two dimensions of kinship group and village. This nature as a ritual space is often expressed in a modern urban architectural pattern, which is the ‘cultural square’ that was created during the renewal of urban villages. That means, villages that had set up cooperative shareholding companies would invest into a central square on which the ancestral hall and a temple would be located. A most visible example is Shuiwei village with neighbouring Huanggang village which are both inhabited by

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<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive analysis based on a detailed case study, see Kuah-Peirce (2011).

the native population of the Zhuang: The Zhuang share hall and temple in Huanggang, whereas the cultural square in Shuiwei mainly extolls reference to the alleged descent from the philosopher Zhuangzi and explicitly emphasizes the role of culture in renewing and governing the local community.



Figure 2: Public squares in Shuiwei and Huanggang, Zhuang clan



That means, we can identify the ritual spaces of Shenzhen simply by mapping the original villages and the related ancestral halls, which includes Hong Kong. In the latter case, we can sometimes directly identify the relationship between halls or temples in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. However, we need to distinguish between two cases. The first is diffuse and opaque, if ritual interactions are not embodied in visible artefacts in Hong Kong. This is the case when former emigrants live in dispersion across Hong Kong territory, but team up in ritual activities located in Shenzhen. The second is more specific and refers to ‘brother’ ritual spaces in the New Territories. In the New Territories, ritual spaces have always been protected by the Colonial administration in a bargain between colonial rulers and local population, such as respecting cemeteries and the location of graves and ancestral trusts in the land ownership system.

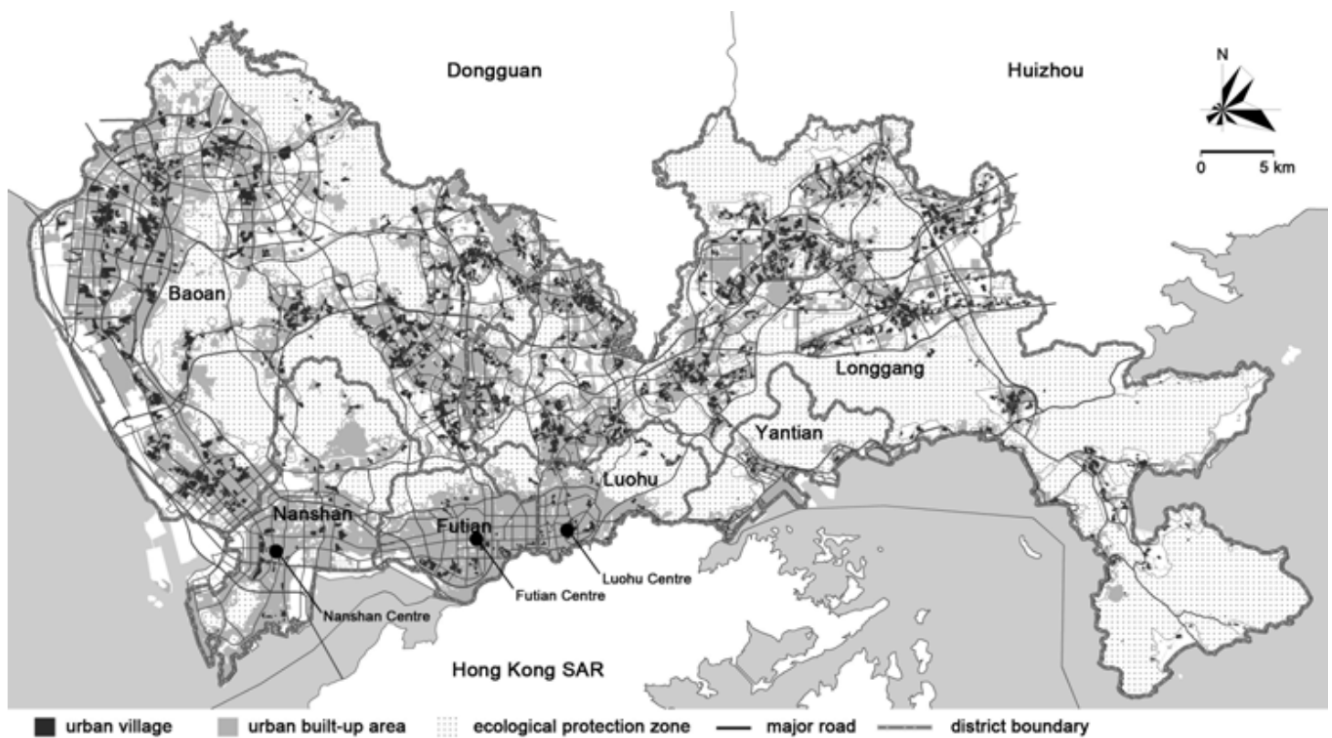


Figure 3: Distribution of urban villages in Shenzhen<sup>19</sup>

The significance of the ritual spaces becomes clear if we recognize that the native villages are also the origin of the distinct phenomenon of ‘urban village’ in Shenzhen. Although not all former villages morphed into urban villages, most of them did. After transforming the native

<sup>19</sup> Hao et al. (2013), based on data of Shenzhen urban planning bureau.

village in urban territory since 1994, in administrative terms the villages are ‘shequ’, but often the term ‘cun’ continues to be used. The village is not necessarily co-extensive with the urban village, if we understand a distinct part of urban infrastructure here: For example, the Gangxia urban village is a complex of tightly packed high-rise buildings of low quality and with low-end shops and services catering to the migrant worker residents; this area is only a part of Gangxia shequ.

That means, two maps are of interest here in tracking ritual spaces and their impact on Shenzhen. Figure 3 shows a map of the distribution of urban villages and figure 4 shows the distribution of major ancestral halls across Shenzhen territory (which therefore is not complete, to avoid cluttering).



Fig. 4: Major ancestral halls in Shenzhen (legend see appendix)

Taken together, the two maps show how ritual spaces permeate the entire territory of Shenzhen, and that the urban villages are their material embodiment.

The enactment and institutional foundations of ritual spaces

An important case study for improving our understanding of ritual spaces in Shenzhen is the Wen Clan, Cantonese ‘Man’. The Wen trace themselves back to Wen Tianxiang, a prime minister, general and poet of the Song dynasty who fought the Mongols and was eventually

executed by them. As we shall see in the next section, Wen Tianxiang increasingly comes to the fore in building an official identity of Shenzhen as belonging to the mainstream tradition of Han culture beyond its modern and even postmodern identities that seem to dominate its public image.

In modern China studies, the Wen occupy an important position because their Hong Kong branch was studied by the eminent scholar James Watson since the 1960s. Watson's analysis of landownership in historical times, of emigration and of popular religion of the Man left a deep mark on our current understanding of these phenomena.<sup>20</sup>

The Wen in Hong Kong mostly live in Xintian village, which was a poor and remote place in the 1950s, triggering a wave of emigration in the 1960s. Globally, Wen are concentrated in United Kingdom and the Netherlands, but also other places, where they maintain surname associations which organize regular ritual activities of 'searching for roots', which, however, mainly seem to relate to Wen Tianxiang's tomb and birthplace in Ji'an, Jiangxi province. In the region, the Hong Kong Wen became very active after 1978 in restoring ritual places, such as the Wen Tianxiang memorial in Songgang. The different Wen branches in Shenzhen are mostly not directly related to Wen Tianxiang, however, but to his brother, Wen Bi. This is important because the agnatic line of descent is therefore more extended territorially, and includes Hainan, where the tomb of Wen Bi is located. The Hong Kong and Shenzhen Wen have negotiated an agreement with local authorities in Hainan to operate the cemetery in Hainan, both to avoid conflicts with Shenzhen municipal government and to harness the business opportunities from land use. This leads to an interesting conclusion: The ritual space of Wen villages is transregional, not local. First, there is a Hong Kong – Shenzhen network of rituals, and second, funeral rituals involve Hainan and other places, specifically in the form of moving the caskets of the deceased from the Pearl River Delta to Hainan, and conducting pilgrimages to the burial sites, such as on Qingming holiday.

The different Wen branches relate with very different forms of urban villages, epitomized in the contrast between Gangxia in central business district and Fenghuang in Bao'an. In Gangxia, the ritual space is almost invisible, because the local Wen have moved out of the territory and mostly live in high-rise apartment buildings in the surroundings, with only a pensioners' club marking the existence of the lineage. This reflects the tight land constraints and the very high value of the land. The Gangxia Wen developed the pattern of urban village devoted to housing migrant workers, and which now transforms into new upgrade urban neighbourhoods. In contrast, the Fenghuang Wen exploited the land resources in the rural environment to attract foreign invested companies from Hong Kong and Taiwan, initially. In the renewal project of Fenghuang, the ritual space is highly visible (figs. 5 and 6): We have the typical case of a central square on the location of the old village, which is being renovated as a tourist site, and the

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<sup>20</sup> Watson (1975), 1985), (2004).

ancestral hall at the centre. In this case, the temple is not close to the hall, but located in a mountain resort nearby developed by the village, where a large temple complex was built on the site of the old village temple. The central temple is a Buddhist temple, properly approved as such, with a resident Buddhist monk, but there are also other temples, such as devoted to the Earth God. On festive occasions, the ritual space is demarcated by a lion's dance that starts at the mountain temple and ends at the public square and the ancestral hall, where proper rites are performed.



Fig. 5 Wen ancestral hall and mountain resort temple





Fig. 6: Ritual space of Fenghuang village

Ritual spaces in Shenzhen can also manifest different forms which relate to the recent history of migration. This reflects the subcultural diversity of Han Chinese. One important phenomenon is the role of rituals in expressing Chaoshan identity. After the establishment of the Shenzhen SEZ, many Chaoshan people from eastern Guangdong migrated to Shenzhen and mainly worked in the construction industry. Presumably the fact also played a role that the first Party Secretary of the SEZ was from Chaoshan region. Migration to Shenzhen produced snowball effects, so that today an estimated 3 million inhabitants of Shenzhen are Chaoshan. Chaoshan people identify themselves mainly via dialect and ritual. Regarding the latter, a distinct feature of Chaoshan popular religion is that mostly local gods are worshipped, with less attention directed at 'official' deities of Buddhism and Daoism. In comparison, local Hakka people mostly concentrate on ancestral cults and even neglect other forms of religion, often also converting to Christianity.





Fig. 7: Ritual artefacts and practices at Hubei village

The distinct Chaoshan culture is highly visible in aforementioned Hubei village (Fig. 7), which is one of the few places where Chaoshan people also form the dominant group in a spatially confined urban area. However, these are low-income strata of Chaoshan population. Yet, we recognize that two different ritual spaces are congruent here. One is the ritual space of the original village, which belonged to the influential Zhang Clan who controlled much of Hong Kong – Shenzhen trade before 1949. The Zhang have moved out of the area, often also emigrating, but keep an ancestral hall there, though in bad shape. This ritual space is now overlaid by the Chaoshan ritual space, with numerous small altars and other religious

paraphernalia everywhere, such as incense. This matters for the ongoing renewal of Hubei: The Zhang clan is a pivotal partner of the developer that took charge for the municipal government and is mostly interested in making profit from the land use rights and the buildings rented out to Chaoshan people. In contrast, the Chaoshan people are not recognized as a formal partner in the negotiations over the renewal: However, their informal rights of possession by living there sometimes already in second generation are bolstered by the ritual confirmation of community. Therefore, progress in renewal is protracted and complicated.

In contrast, many Chaoshan people have succeeded in moving from construction work into real estate. That resulted in a distinct pattern in the Shenzhen real estate sector, with large, sometimes also state-owned developers on the one hand, and on the other hand, a growing number of individually owned real estate firms, often also family businesses. Whereas the former are often partners of wholesale renewal projects, such as in Hubei, the latter mostly concentrate on a collection of dispersed real estate projects and properties, and factually operate like investment funds, which means that they also invest in other businesses. In all these cases, the impact of ritual spaces diminishes rapidly.

This leads to an important question, how is the ritual space institutionally undergirded in Shenzhen today? The core institution is the shareholding cooperative. This is of considerable importance, as we can interpret those companies partly along the lines of traditional lineage estates.<sup>21</sup> The background is that during collectivization of agriculture, most villages were directly transformed into production brigades. In our field-cases, the significance of this directly transpires in more recent history: For example, Xiasha village, almost exclusively dominated by the Huang lineage, has a museum that directly traces the history of the village via the production brigade in the 1960s and 1970s, including the list of brigade leaders in the line of village leaders who today, in the person of Huang Yingchao, merges with the role of lineage head (*zong zhang*). This compares with another village, Baishizhou, where a state farm was located before 1978. This had direct impact on institutions: Xiasha village established a shareholding cooperative, Baishizhou only much later, after realizing the pivotal role of the institution in protecting the interests of the villagers.<sup>22</sup>

The core similarity with lineage estates rests in the fact that the villagers transferred the management of land use rights to the shareholding cooperatives, thus separating land ownership rights from administrative organization. That was of crucial relevance when the villages were transformed into urban neighbourhoods *shequ* in 1994, because this implies nationalization of land, i.e. transformation of collectively held rural land into state owned

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<sup>21</sup> We develop this view in detail in Herrmann-Pillath and Guo Man (2017), extending on the discussion in Herrmann-Pillath (2017) where detailed references are provided, such as Potter and Potter (1990) for the period of collectivization. Related views are Trémon (2015) and Zhou (2014).

<sup>22</sup> On the Baishizhou case, see the detailed report by Wan Yan (2017).

urban land. However, the shareholding cooperatives kept the management rights and therefore could launch the exploitation of the land in the interests of the villagers. The ritual nature of their organization is salient in the ways how shares are defined, allocated and can be used. Shares are actually rights of the villagers qua lineage members, which, as a tribute to modernization, now also includes women. But, following lineage tradition, the rights of women are clearly circumscribed: If women marry out, they lose their rights, and the cannot inherit the rights along the matriline. Many of the cooperatives have effectively transformed the shares into collective rights, because their number has been frozen, and because there are also shares that are directly held by the cooperative as such. In many places, the ritual nature of the cooperatives is manifest in tying certain events in business with traditional rituals, such as paying out dividends on New Year, combined with a *pencai* feast (see below).

Summarizing this section, the urban space of Shenzhen seems deeply shaped by the original settlement patterns, beyond the direct impact of physical characteristics of the territory. The intermediate variables are the institutions that emerged in the growth of urban villages, and that connect the social structures of the native population with the modern economy. This must be analysed against the background of what on first sight appears to be an overwhelming inflow of capital and people from all over China and the global economy. One remarkable fact is the resilience and even the revival of traditional forms of social organization. The other remarkable fact is that this huge inflow did not result in a state of chaos, strong social tensions and conflicts, and the cancer of urban slums, with the concomitant social forms of violence and criminality. Both observations motivate us to take a closer look at governance in Shenzhen and its cultural aspects.

#### 4. Cultural governance and the transformation of urban villages

The role of shareholding cooperatives in the evolution of urban villages

If we concentrate our attention on the urban villages, the core institution is the shareholding cooperative. In contemporary urban villages, the shareholding cooperatives often play an important role in the governance structure, which is formally defined as a *shequ*. This is because they own substantial resources that can be invested in the village economy and public life.

In principle, the organizational distinction between *shequ*, *cun* and shareholding cooperative drives a wedge between different groups living in the same area. The *shequ* includes everybody who lives at the place, which is mostly technically defined as owning or renting a dwelling (for example, access to public schools of the *shequ* is based on this). On the other hand, membership of the shareholding cooperative is only for original villagers and their

children. The notion of 'village' straddles these two categories and is mostly historically based. Formally, there are no villages in Shenzhen; yet, the term is often used to designate the *shequ*, and sometimes the old terminology is used to identify the different parts of the village, which would map the original settlement patterns. For example, Xiasha village has a map that shows the original 'fang' as sections of the village. In this case, it also deserves noticing that originally, the *shequ* was not identical with the village. However, apparently often the borders of *shequ* were gradually adjusted to converge with the villages. This is possible because the old boundaries were often coinciding with larger streets today. Village borders are sometimes marked by separate tollgates equipped with cameras, which may even limit access to the village for cars, such as in Huaide village in Bao'an district, home of a very affluent lineage, the Pan. Another example is the border between Xiasha and Shangsha village, both inhabited by branches of the Huang clan.

Shareholding cooperatives are entities that often own considerable capital independent from their original land use rights, because over the years they accumulated profits that have not been distributed as dividends but invested in other assets, including real estate in other parts of Shenzhen. In fact, often villagers complain that dividend pay-out is too small. The revenue generated by the cooperatives is partly used for new business projects, partly used to supply local public goods, such as hospitals, urban amenities, libraries or public sports facilities. That means, the cooperatives assume functions and tasks of municipal government. Then, the key question arises who can benefit from those services, only the members, i.e. the villagers, or all resident citizens of the *shequ*?

In this respect, early stages of Shenzhen development certainly differed from the conditions today, as in that period the public services were often limited to villagers. But eventually a system of hybrid governance emerged in which the cooperatives cooperate with the municipal administration and are subject to formal urban planning. This differs fundamentally from the early stages even into the 2000s, when villages often acted in a subversive fashion. A case in point is the transformation of Baishizhou into one of the biggest urban villages in the early 2000s.<sup>23</sup> As mentioned previously, Baishizhou was a state farm, and hence the villagers could not go the same way as other villages in activating their land use rights as assets. But when they realized that this incurred great losses vis à vis other villages in Shenzhen, they started a frenzy building activity on what had remained land of their own, especially their own buildings. In other words, via constructing the buildings they informally reasserted control over their territory: The urban architecture of Baishizhou can be regarded as embodied resistance against urban authorities.

This observation is just one example of how urban villages were mostly approached in the early stage, namely as uncontrolled urban growth with low standards of building quality and

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<sup>23</sup>I already referred to the detailed case study by Wan Yan (2017).

public infrastructure, giving home to the flood of migrants from all over China: On one side, the 'blind flow', on the other, the irregular construction of buildings. But clearly, this interpretation is misleading in many respects, as urban authorities obviously strove a balance between different goals: The competitiveness of Shenzhen at that time dependent on the availability of cheap labour, and the workers need cheap housing, which was offered by the villagers. Therefore, we can say that already the urban villages of the first generation were in fact expressions of a hybrid governance, based on an implicit contract between villages and urban authorities in relegating the task of developing cheap urban housing to the villages.<sup>24</sup> The effects were astounding: Today, roughly half of Shenzhen factual population lives in urban villages. In other words, urban villages are not an exception, but a defining feature of Shenzhen urbanism and urban governance.

Already in the first stage, there were cases where the villages assumed a more active role in designing urban villages according to broader goals of public interest. One driver of this was and continues to be competition among urban villages, both economically and culturally. For example, the two Huang villages in central Futian district, Xiasha and Shangsha, embarked on very different developmental trajectories at the beginning: Shangsha invested in a science park and attracted more advanced business ventures, whereas Xiasha slipped into becoming a red-light district and 'second wife' home. The differences became visible relatively early, and therefore Xiasha, under the energetic leadership of Huang Yingchao, launched a huge and comprehensive project of renewal, which certainly had the support of municipal authorities, but in terms of ambition and scope clearly was a local initiative in the first place.

A famous case in point in the early stage was the Hakka village Nanling, which originally was at a competitive disadvantage in attracting foreign investment because of its distance from urban centres.<sup>25</sup> Nanling leaders adopted a so-called 'New population policy' which is factually an explicit strategy of high-quality immigration. That was achieved by scrapping almost all institutional differentiations between villagers and migrants in allowing access to village facilities such as schools and hospitals, and in inviting outsiders even to leadership positions in the village organisations if they had the necessary qualification. This policy was clearly designed to raise the human capital in the region, from which economic development might profit, and evidently did so. This compares with other cases which also became famous, or better 'infamous' in the first period, such as the 'second wife village' Huangbeiling where mostly Hong Kong people housed their mistresses, such as truck drivers who commute between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, and places notorious for prostitution and gambling.

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<sup>24</sup> This is an interpretation that is emerging in the literature, see O'Donnell (2017).

<sup>25</sup> See the detailed case study in Liu (2002).

## Territorial competition and ritual spaces

From the previous I conclude that an important aspect of urban governance in Shenzhen is territorial competition among urban districts. This concept has become prominent in analysing the Chinese transition in the late 1990s, combined with the notion of experimentalism.<sup>26</sup> Shenzhen is the interesting case of territorial competition on the local level, driving urban development. In other words, I argue that Shenzhen development was never guided top-down exclusively but was driven by competition mainly among the various original villages turned urban shequ. This competition is monitored and regulated by the municipal authorities, but there is much leeway for autonomous formation and implementation of local strategies for development and building socio-economic structures.

There is an important additional aspect: Territorial competition is partly embedded in the ritual economy of ritual spaces. This becomes clear if we consider the fact that traditionally Chinese lineages competed over control of land, and for that very reason were also relying on their size in terms of the availability males for agricultural work and the occasional violent struggles with other lineages. This pattern was especially pronounced in the Pearl River Delta. In modern Shenzhen, territorial competition is also shaped by the competition between lineages over relative status. In this context, the height and size of architecture, or the magnificence of squares, becomes an important status symbol, highly visible in the urban landscape. Hence, I argue that lineage competition is an important force in driving urban construction in Shenzhen. For example, Shangsha village is currently constructing a new 'cultural square', following the Xiasha example (Fig. 8). This shows that clans can also be divided internally along different branches, i.e. local lineages: The Wen in Fenghuang and the Wen in neighbouring Baishixia do not cooperate. Intra-clan lineage competition was also widespread in old China. At the same time, different lineages may form alliances to create countervailing power in territorial competition: For example, the Zhang at Luohu lost much of their former status, and now cooperate with other lineages in renewal projects covering larger territory.

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<sup>26</sup> For a theoretical analysis of general characteristics of the Chinese economic system, see Xu (2011). For the concept of 'territorial competition' with reference to the level of municipalities, see Herrmann-Pillath and Feng (2004).





Fig. 8: Cultural square and mall at Xiasha village

In addition, the ritual economy interferes in other ways with urban development, because on the side of the developers, sometimes ritual considerations are also influential. This mostly applies for smaller scale family businesses in real estate. Decisions about investing in urban projects can be influenced by considering later requirements of 'dividing the family' 'fenjia',

which means, that the sons should obtain more or less equal assets. In rural China, this resulted in the parcellation of land into numerous segments of various uses and size. In modern real estate, this means that the various parts destined for division should also include various types of building assets (office buildings, malls etc.). This concern for the long-term wealth of the family even after division may also result in a different orientation of business, especially in terms of time horizon. For example, family business in real estate may not be as sensitive to temporarily low occupancy rates, because the investment is primarily seen as long-term, and the assets are seen as embodying wealth, independent from profitability in the short-term.

#### Identity politics and cultural governance

Now, it is interesting to observe how in more recent approaches to urban renewal modern views about urbanity and economic development combine with traditional conceptions of culture. This finally establishes the pattern of 'cultural governance' that I discern in Shenzhen today. Regarding the modernist dimension, Shenzhen aspires to become a global city and business centre, which requires becoming a place where professionals wish to live, and where all kinds of high-end services both to business and to consumers are being provided. The question is whether this just means that a kind of global standard of urbanism is adopted, or whether Chinese cultural traditions may play an important role. If we consider the role of territorial competition in driving urban change in Shenzhen, these traditions came to the fore not only because there is a national policy towards reviving traditional ideas about Chinese values and social order, but because the main agents in the competition, the native villagers, launch this revival as an element in their identity politics.

Hence, the question of cultural governance is deeply intertwined with the issue of Shenzhen identity. One of the intriguing observations on Shenzhen cultural development recently is that increasingly historical roots are being recognized, and that this combines with a clear emphasis on Han national culture. In this respect, Hakka culture represents a clear case in point. Shenzhen region was initially populated by many Hakka lineages who had moved there in Qing dynasty when the Imperial administration allowed for the repopulation of coastal zones which were previously blocked for security reasons. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, this large-scale population movement eventually led to large-scale violent lineage feuds between Hakka and native population, which left hundreds of thousands of victims. These conflicts contributed to the consolidation of Hakka identity, which was vague and even non-existent in pre-Qing times. Hakka identity became so visible and manifest, that Western observers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century often even denied that Hakka were Chinese. That triggered a backlash by intellectuals, and hence 'Hakkaology' was borne, which reasserted the 'Chineseness' of Hakka, now even to the degree as approaching Hakka as purist representatives of classical Northern



Han culture. The background of this is genealogy: many Hakka families today trace their origin back to migration events in Song dynasty, when Northern elites fled the Mongols. These lines of descent serve to establish Hakka identity even for the earlier times, and via further extensions even to pre-imperial times. But the fact remains that the term 'Hakka' only emerged much later, and that Hakka used this term only as self-reference in the wake of the 19<sup>th</sup> century conflicts.<sup>27</sup>

This brief report about Hakka origins suggests an interesting observation: The strong statement of subethnic identity goes along with an equally strong emphasis on 'Chineseness' in terms of cultural standards of the nation, which include, most significantly, probably one of the purest expressions of Confucianism in popular culture, as Hakka put the ancestral cult into the centre of their religious beliefs, and marginalize other forms of popular religion, especially in contrast to Chaoshan people.

That being said, however, in general the Pearl River Delta can be counted as being one of the most conservative regions in China, independent from subethnic identity. Without being able to go into the historical details here, in late Imperial China the region was target of intensive civilizing efforts by the Imperial administration, which focused on the strengthening of ancestral worship and lineages.<sup>28</sup> That may look as a paradox, but reflects principles of culturalism as a system of rule: On the one hand, the extended kinship groups in South China, far away from the political centre, often proved to be sources of subversive activities or were engaged in violent feuds that threatened social order; on the other hand, if they adopted the values and standards of Confucianism, they would provide a bulwark against the emergence of more threatening social forces, such as millennialism of Buddhist sects, and other forms of social protest. In other words, the Imperial administration co-opted elite lineages and lineage elites for maintaining the political order of Empire, mediated by shared cultural conceptions of family and community.

Now, cultural governance in Shenzhen today clearly stays in this tradition. One may compare this with a similar continuity in the New Territories of Hong Kong, where the British authorities stroke a deal with powerful local lineages in maintaining social order, especially after the riots of 1967. The explicit recognition of lineage rights, especially with reference to land, served to stabilize a conservative social order in the New Territories. And interestingly, before returning the colony to China, the British authorities also launched initiatives in reconceptualizing Hong Kong history in terms of the local population, especially in the New Territories.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview about research on Hakka, see Constable (1996). Regarding the complex history of the term, see Liu (2002).

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed study, see Faure (2007).

<sup>29</sup> On this interpretation, see Cheung (2016).



Fig. 9: Wen Tianxiang memorial at Fenghuang

One of the salient examples of explicit cultural governance is Shuiwei village, which publicly (on a plaque) declares ‘culture’ to be a central driver of economic and social development. In this case, culture is symbolically embodied in the image of the philosopher Zhuangzi claimed to be the origin of the local lineage. In fact, today many local lineages try to trace their origins back to intellectual elites of the past, which is almost always feasible for the simple fact that the survival of lineages as distinct entities always depended on such genealogical reconstructions. Many local lineages do not have highly ranked officials in nearer generations, but nevertheless can activate almost fictitious genealogies which go back to some prestigious ancestor, with Wen Tianxiang being the most visible one (Fig. 9), but many others. Of interest, as we shall see in the next section in more detail, is Huang Qiaoshan, a late Tang official having 22 sons, and who is claimed to be ancestor of an estimated 10 million Huang in all parts of the world. Huang Qiaoshan is the pivotal figure in reinstating the social status of the Huang at

Xiasha village, which was transformed from a 'red light district' to an upscale urban neighbourhood centring on a cultural square that boasts the history of the lineage on a large mural.

The upshot of these observations is that although local history is partly a history of marginalized people, it is nevertheless defined in terms of mainstream national culture. In this regard, even the short history of Shenzhen SEZ is case in point: The origin is the Shekou initiative that was masterminded by a local Hakka and former military officer and spy of the CCP, Yuan Geng, who convinced Deng Xiaoping, himself a Sichuan Hakka, to go this way. The newly built Museum of Shenzhen reforms at Shekou is a eulogy of Yuan Geng and the spirit of efficiency and competitiveness that he imbued in the self-image of the city.

The revival and official endorsement of 'traditional values'

Cultural governance in practice has two sides. One is the official recognition of traditional Chinese values and the endorsement in the shape of various urban projects, the other is the activation of these values on the micro-level. Regarding the former, the visitor to China watches posters promulgating values such as 'filial piety' on countless construction sites all over the country, and the government explicitly endorses a reinstatement of Confucianism as a central element in Chinese conceptions of social order. This is reflected in the active support of many ritual expressions of ancestor worship and even popular religion, as we saw when mapping the ritual infrastructure of the city. The notion of 'tourism and leisure' certainly is a way to bridge these activities with conceptions of modernity which throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century were always seen as staying in opposition to tradition.

The other side is the promulgation of traditional values on society. One interesting example is the upsurge of the public role of 'jia xun' or 'jiafeng', traditionally the lineage rules by which society was mainly governed, less by law, a development that is even expressively supported by President Xi Jinping. Such rules appear to be mostly congruent across lineages, thus reflecting the long history of Neoconfucian influence on shaping them, and in this sense mainly represent 'Chinese values', and not idiosyncratic lineage values.

Another vehicle of cultural governance, also with deep historical roots, is the 'village covenant', which means a ritually confirmed consensus about the standards of proper behaviour in the community, which includes all kinds of aspects, reaching from harmony in the family to 'no littering'. Needless to say, many of the expressions of such rules may be just forms of demonstrating political correctness, but nevertheless they state values which often people are genuinely concerned about, especially in the context of high growth and potentially anomic Shenzhen. For example, at Huaide village, the village covenant is published on a plaque facing the central garden and lake, visible for everyone. And indeed, the Pan lineage has

installed a highly transparent culture of public responsibility and transparency in managing the local shareholding cooperative, thus imbuing the place with a spirit of moral commitment and shared destiny.



Fig. 10: Village covenant at Huaide village

One specific phenomenon in this pattern of cultural governance emerging from the interaction between national policies and grassroots level activities is the figure of the ‘ritual entrepreneur’. As a concrete illustration, take an entrepreneur and investor who has been active over many years in supporting a ‘Shenzhen merchant association’ which aspires to create a role model of ‘Shenzhen businesspeople’ akin to historical patterns such as the famous ‘Shanxi bankers’. One concern is the spiritual support of family business, in which intergenerational tensions over values and aspirations of modernity loom large. In these efforts, Confucian conceptions of family and life are themes of workshops and other activities conducted by a special outfit devoted to family and business. Needless to say, in networking with many family businesses the entrepreneur is also able to discover many business opportunities and will boost his own reputation as a reliable and trustworthy businessman, but we cannot just reduce his engagement with disseminating traditional values just as opportunism.

One frame that is currently emerging in the pattern of cultural governance is the ‘quadrangle’ in governing large-scale urban renewal projects. It includes four main types of agents: first, the municipal authorities; second, the villages and shareholding cooperatives; the developers; and the public. The role of developers has become much more prominent over the years as they redefine themselves increasingly as providing a whole range of services that combine

with real estate projects. In this business model, some functions of government are assumed by the developers. In fulfilling these functions, they negotiate with the villages over the specific contents of a renewal initiative. To give one example: In large housing projects, the municipal authorities oblige the developers to spare space for schools. Some developers move into the educational business and would build schools with very high quality (such as 'experimental schools'). This might be also done via endowments set up by the developer (for example, Vanke has an educational foundation). The schools may even have the status as public schools, but they are primarily funded by the developer. However, this can also include initiatives by the local shareholding cooperative.

The emerging voice of the public

This pattern boils down to a PPP approach emerging from the quadrangle. The public comes in when the project attracts attention mainly in two respects. The first is the preservation of traditional buildings, which might include even the ramshackle housing in places such as Hubei village. There is an increasing awareness of the historical role of urban villages, not only in the sense of pre-1949 roots, but also including the recent history. The second is the general concern that urban renewal may lead to gentrification, a typical phenomenon in global cities. Gentrification mainly affects the resident migrant population. The two concerns can stay in tension. For example, leading developers pursue renewal projects that would partly retain the organically grown structure of an urban village, but radically improve technical standards and both external and internal design. However, this might result in levels of rents which are not affordable for the average citizen. Therefore, increasingly NGOs and citizens' initiatives become involved in urban renewal. More specifically, this can include an engagement for culture and tradition, such as in the case of Hakka villages.

Obviously, the quadrangle of urban governance does not include the resident migrant population, if only as participating in the public initiatives. However, it happens often that the latter are mainly driven by outsiders, such as in the case of Hubei village, where the public appears to be mainly consisting of intellectuals and educated outsiders. There is no explicit representation of Chaoshan people in the process.

However, the challenges resulting from this complex situation have now motivated Shenzhen municipal government to stop current approaches to the renewal of urban villages and to include this in the general framework of an affordable housing program. As this is a new and substantial change in policies, we cannot assess what it will imply for the future.

To summarize, I argue that a pattern of cultural governance is emerging in Shenzhen which is a cultural frame of hybrid governance in territorial competition. Hybrid governance means that there are many channels of interaction between municipal authorities and grassroots

level actors, and that the latter play an important role as drivers of competition. The territorial structure is partly defined by the ritual spaces of Shenzhen, which are embodied in the phenomenon of urban villages. Cultural governance means that in many respects we observe a revival of cultural traditions being part and parcel of conceptions of urbanism of a global city.

## 5. Ritual as a medium of business networks

The example of ritual entrepreneur is useful to introduce the next theme in our analysis of culture and economy in Shenzhen. This is the role of business networks. We can only scratch the surface here, since this is a topic that is very difficult to research empirically, given the confidential nature of business interactions in all kinds of societies, East and West, especially if family business is involved. The ritual entrepreneur mentioned in the last section is not only doing altruistic actions in civil society but can activate all the contacts emerging in his efforts also for business purposes. In the notion of ritual economy, there is no juxtaposition of ritual and business, both are mutually supportive.

### *Guanxi*, associations and kinship networks

We have already seen that global Chinese business networks often piggyback on ritual activities of 'searching the roots'. We now need to broaden our perspective. For doing this, we refer to the most general notion of 'guanxi'. In modern conceptions of *guanxi*, *guanxi* are conceived as being social networks with the following specific features:

- *Guanxi* build on reciprocal exchange of benefits of any kind (gifts, information, mutual help etc.) which is long-term, that is, does not strive for on-the-spot reciprocity in the market logic, and therefore creates trust among actors;
- *Guanxi* activate shared properties of agents (of any kind, such as same native place, alumni status, birthday, shared experiences etc.) in order to create sustainable arenas for interactions;
- *Guanxi* merge instrumental interests and emotional engagements, which means that instrumental exchange is seen as fostering emotional commitments, and vice versa; typically, situations of emotional effervescence can create and cement *guanxi* (such as lavish dinners).

Taken together, ritual is essential for *guanxi*, because on the one hand, ritual commitments govern *guanxi*, such as rules of proper gift giving, and on the other hand, ritual activities are often the setting in which *guanxi* flourish, such as feasts held by shared surname associations.

Against this background, we can subsume a whole range of ritual activities in modern Shenzhen as being media of *guanxi* formation. This causes a specific empirical difficulty,

because we do not necessarily expect that the activity as such contributes in any direct way to realizing a particular business goal. That means, the ritual as such may have no explicit instrumental function, and this might even be true for the specific activity in the sense that it would be difficult or even meaningless asking which specific project might have been triggered by that activity. At the same time, clearly there are these cases, but they are not public, and people may not talk about it. This is especially true if interactions between businesspeople and officials are involved, which are often essential for successful business in China.

In simplest terms, I approach ritual as means to create arenas for the formation of *guanxi*. Traditionally, a vehicle for building *guanxi* is the rich associational life of the Chinese. A city like Shenzhen is replete with associations of any kind. In business, this refers to three basic different types:

- The first is the industry associations (mostly labelled 'xiehui'). Industry associations have been directly established by government beginning already in the early 1980 and are forms of corporatist governance, such as coordinating industry development or standardization. Xiehui are most closely associated with government, and often the origin was a government initiative.
- The second is business associations, such as Chambers of Commerce. Typically, these are privately launched and managed, although with approval of government, but keeping a much larger distance from government than xiehui. Typically, they are not organized along industry lines, but activate other criteria of 'sameness', with one salient being shared native place, of any kind, reaching from provincial associations to city associations.
- The third type is associations which apparently do not focus on business, which implies that membership is more diverse; this includes native place, again, but also surname associations, cultural study associations and other forms of activities.

Instrumental business concerns loom large in the first type of 'xiehui', whereas most of the other associations are of the ritual type, which means that they tend towards the emotional side of the instrumental/emotional duality of *guanxi*. At the same time, for this very reason they can contribute to mutual trust building among participants, information sharing, and eventually cooperation in business. Of special interest is the observation that the cross-industry nature of the second and third type of associations means that participants can gather information about many industries, which enables them to diversify their business interests and exploit synergies across industries. Since typically many larger family businesses operate like financial holdings, this prepares the ground for building networks of business ventures across industries. Diversification of risk is a traditional feature of Chinese family business in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, resulting in the nature of large-scale family business as 'conglomerates'. However, there is the important intermediate form prominent

in Taiwan, for example, which are the ‘related enterprises’ or ‘*guanxi qiye*’.<sup>30</sup> These are companies that are related via various forms of cooperation, especially mutual investments in specific projects, where their relationship is embedded in *guanxi* of various types.

One important form between extended kinship and *guanxi* is relatedness via affinal ties, i.e. wives’ relatives. This is an important correction of common opinions about Chinese patriarchy: In fact, until today affinal ties are often crucial for extending business networks, which activates traditional ritual for business directly via the marriage relationship, even in the sense of directly creating business alliances: In one of our interview cases, two Chaoshan families were connected via an initial romantic relation between the young people, discovering that they originate from neighbouring villages, and therefore developing a strategic alliance in the real estate business. The relationship is cemented via ritual commitments: For example, when one family will implement the ‘*fenjia*’ procedure in the future, the parent generation will submit a proposal that will be checked by the wife’s brother as a witness.

Surname associations: The case of the Huang

After these general observations, let us look at one example from our field research, the Huang at Xiasha village. Apart from the lineage organization, the Huang engage intensively in the international Huang surname association: Recently, the village leader Huang Yingchao was even elected as its President. This is a result of past engagements, in particular holding mega-events such as conventions of the World Huang Surname Association that attract tens of thousands of visitors – we report about the special event of ‘*da pencai*’ feasts in the next section (Fig. 11).

Surname associations are of considerable significance in global Chinese culture, and they play an important role in Singapore, where more than 200 surname associations exist.<sup>31</sup> As early as in the 1960s, the Singapore government explicitly endorsed surname associations because they overcome constraints of dialect that loom large in native place associations, which is the more natural form of self-organization in the history of emigration. Indeed, in Singapore surname associations committed themselves even officially to the use of standard Mandarin. On the other hand, surname associations link up with local lineage identities, as they evoke references to shared descent, hence ultimately even kin ties among members, even though purely fictitious. This connection to actual lineage rituals is practiced via mutual visits of kin groups, often related to distant ancestors, who might have different status and territorial ascription in history through chain migration. That means, a lineage may trace itself back to a distant ancestor via a chain of migration events, which at the different localities led to the

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<sup>30</sup> This topic was focus of important research in the 1980s but is somewhat neglected today. For important contributions, see Numazaki (1996), or the general overview by Lee and Hsiao (2014).

<sup>31</sup> See Chan (2004).



establishment of new lineages, almost like branches, sharing the same ancestor and becoming the source of further chain migration. In this case, a visit to an intermediate location reinstates the wider genealogical connections.



Fig. 11: Convention of World Huang Surname association at Xiasha

Thus, in case of the Huang, shared surname allows for a large variety of activities which have national and global reach.<sup>32</sup> This includes the creation of more business-related associations: There is a Huang international Chamber of Commerce, or there are even special internet retail outlets such as a Huang shopping mall. Clearly, this is feasible because the global number of Huang is about 30 million, equivalent to a medium sized country, with high average level of income. Huang activists continuously feed the Huang community with news about joint ritual activities, information about Huang culture such as Huang 'jia xun', or create Huang-related products, including items such as Huang red wine produced by a French wine grower. Huang often organize mutual visits that combine ritual activities with explicit business motives. This is especially important in the international context, since Huang surname groups are very active abroad, especially in Southeast Asia. But there are also Huang associations, for example, in the United States, who organize business-cum-'xun gen' delegations to China.

It is difficult to assert to which extent all these activities contribute to business projects in a more specific way. In Shenzhen, businesspeople with surname Huang show strong presence in real estate business, but they are mostly Chaoshan people, not native Huang, and

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<sup>32</sup> These activities can be tracked by numerous internet sources, such as Huang websites and more recently special Huang WeChat groups in the public domain.

apparently in this case the native place networks count more than the surname networks. Indeed, Shenzhen Huang belong to very different groups: There is also a strong Hakka Huang lineage at Longgang which apparently has no connections at all to the Chaoshan Huang in Shenzhen.

#### Native place and beyond

Chaoshan associations are very active in Shenzhen. Beyond the ritual provision of networking opportunities, the Chaoshan organizations can take a more active and determinate role in business and public life. For example, the Chaoshan qingnian hui has set up a venture capital fund. Another activity is philanthropy: For example, the poor Chaoshan people in Hubei village receive free medical care via a Chaoshan endowment for medical services. Although it is very difficult to trace single business projects to Chaoshan networking, the aggregate result is very salient: One important example is control over markets. This continues with a pattern that is well known from Chinese history: Powerful groups, often lineages, would set up marketplaces, often in specific industries, such as markets for bamboo, and would control physical access to those markets, i.e. give permission for opening stalls and make profits from the rents. This continues to be true for markets in modern Shenzhen, which are often also physical structures, such as a wholesale market for seafood or for agricultural products, but also electronic components. There are branches where Chaoshan people do not only directly own such markets, but also control the logistics and upstream supply chain. For example, a Huang family from Chaoshan is dominant in the Shenzhen seafood trade. This dominance of people from the same native region is further bolstered via multiple-level networking: a Chaoshan family might control markets in a particular product group, and the smaller retail traders, logistics firms etc. might also build chains of related businesses, for example, when a migrant to Shenzhen who has successfully established his own small business would attract other people from his native place to Shenzhen. As a result, markets in entire product groups become dominated by people from same native place.

Another pattern that was salient in the first decades of Shenzhen development is the branching out of business activities around a core business. For example, a single entrepreneur sets up a hotel, and others follow in establishing businesses in the neighbourhood, with complementary services, such as restaurants. In this case, even extended kinship might shape the pattern. This is especially true if the projects are controlled by a lineage right from the outset: For example, in our Fenghuang Wen clan case, the many small businesses on the temple complex are mostly by Wen lineage members, such as the women selling ice-cream. On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are aggregate patterns that emerge from decentralized and individual 'snowball' migration, resulting in the concentration of people from a certain region in a specific industry, without more formal

frames such as associations or kinship organizations. A famous example is the dominance of Hunan people in the Shenzhen taxi business. In this case, we also observe the concentration of the same native group in an urban village: That is, the physical proximity is the medium of networking within that branch of services.

In general, the effects of this type of networks need not necessarily constrain competition or are only exclusive. The simple means of this is diversification of risk, which often drives investors into new business where other competitors are also active. An example for inclusive networking is the recently established Hakka bank: On the one hand, the investors are only Hakka, but the bank lends to all sorts of people and is not limited to Hakka. Yet, the fact that all investors are Hakka creates mutual trust, and presumably also vis à vis the public.

This points to another important aspect of networking: Networking via associations is public and establishes a public image of the members of the network. A Hakka bank can build on certain stereotypes about Hakka. Interestingly, one group that most effectively harnesses this effect is Christian entrepreneurs in China, who enjoy the reputation to be less prone to cheating and reliable business partners. Being a member of a Christian association of businesspeople helps to build business ties with others. Tellingly, often Hakka people are also devout Christians.

In sum, we can certainly endorse the hypothesis that ritual is a crucial medium of networking of the Chinese type, i.e. *guanxi*, and is essential in generating a core resource for business, trust. One question is very difficult to answer, namely whether the networks are open or exclusive. The latter is often suggested by the stereotypical reference to 'unity' (*tuanjie*) of groups such as Chaoshan or Hakka. Yet, in interviews often the impression emerges that many businesspeople eventually act in an individualistic way and avoid becoming constrained by closure of networks. This is a result also of earlier research on *guanxi*: Businesspeople need *guanxi*, but they also would like to avoid the costs of *guanxi*, which are the obligations of reciprocity. Therefore, I suggest that it is the richness of criss-crossing associations and ritual media that turns networks into open and inclusive structures. Being a member in many associations in various dimensions creates the space for individual autonomy.

## 6. Identity politics and cultural industries: Mobilizing cultural governance for global competitiveness

The concept of cultural governance in China often focuses on the merger between culture, business and local governance in the context of tourism and leisure projects. As mentioned previously, in modern conceptions of urbanism the idea looms large that 'global cities' are

places which attract talented people also via the quality of their urban environment and living conditions. In this context, culture increasingly plays a role and is a theme in many initiatives worldwide, such as the ‘cultural capital of Europe’ program. Increasingly, cities aim at developing distinct cultural profiles which also boost their competitive advantage in the global economy. This is certainly also true for Shenzhen, in which the large number of urban renewal projects allows for much inventiveness and creativity.

*Shanzhai*: A Shenzhen counter-culture?

One important question in this respect is whether and how the cultural projects can also activate identity politics, in various meanings. One is the expression of ‘Shenzhen identity’ which is mostly defined as being a leader in the four decades of reform and opening up, and entrepreneurial spirit. However, this theme is not without internal tensions, as even entrepreneurial spirit is manifest in different forms, which partly relates to the variance between modernist conceptions of urbanity and local society. A case in point is the *shanzhai* phenomenon, which emerged in the 1990s and flourished in the 2000s, probably with roots in Hong Kong, where previously the term ‘shanzhai’ was used to the relocation of factories to the New Territories. Should we approach *shanzhai* as a specific cultural phenomenon of Shenzhen, and even expressively endorse it, for example, in giving a place in Shenzhen museum?

In considering this question, the difference between cultural governance and broader interpretations of cultural policies and creative industries is most salient. For many protagonists of *shanzhai*, it is both a subversive business practice and a cultural movement.<sup>33</sup> It is subversive because it openly defies international standards of intellectual property rights and copyright, and because the agents are small businesses, highly agile, flexible and creative, which exploit the potential of modern technologies in creating an explosion of creativity in varying shapes and functions of electronical devices and other consumer goods. In the arts, this phenomenon is sometimes approached as a genuinely Chinese form of creativity, as people do not simply copy or fake other products, but often invent new variants, sometimes adding a strong dose of irony, humour, and occasionally even resulting in political statements against monopoly power of international brands. However, if we approach the phenomenon in the cultural governance perspective, it cannot be endorsed as a part of ‘official’ Shenzhen culture, because government is obliged to regulate and even suppress the deviant activities, even though *shanzhai* can be seen as a huge laboratory and nursing ground for new companies. This is evident in the fact that in the ruthless competition among SME, a few of them may upgrade their capacities, become suppliers of companies in the formal economy, and may

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<sup>33</sup> There is an excellent overview and analysis of *shanzhai* and related debates on Baidu: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%B1%B1%E5%AF%A8/7401>

even grow into original manufacturing. Indeed, one can conceive of some of the lead companies in Shenzhen today, such as in the drone business, as partly being influenced by this specific *shanzhai* culture in the early period of their emergence.

An interesting case in point is the ongoing transformation of one of the most famous markets for *shanzhai* products, the Huaqiangbei market which was established in 1982 and gathers more than 700 retail companies in the electronics industry under one roof. Today, Huaqiangbei gradually changes its nature: One focus is becoming an incubator in the creative hardware business, thereby exploiting the fact that retailers are often directly tied to producers or are simply outlets of factories at other places. Creative hardware makers can rely on this rich source of agile and flexible manufacturing even of single units, such as prototypes. This has also attracted international activists in the creative hardware industry, as organized in the HAX Accelerator incubator, which has various locations in the US and Shenzhen and is a vast networking structure that is grounded in the decentralized network of local manufacturers in Shenzhen.

The *shanzhai* phenomenon is not linked to specific forms of local society in the first place, and thus does not relate to identity politics of a particular group. It represents the modernist and entrepreneurial spirit of Shenzhen, but is not yet integrated in the 'mainstream' account of modernist Shenzhen culture. This replicates a pattern that we already noticed: As we have seen in section 4, in many renewal projects expressions of culture are emphasized that are clearly 'mainstream', thus leaving out many aspects of local culture. However, there are also intermediate forms. As a case study, we look at the *pencai* 盆菜 custom.

*Pencai*: Mainstreaming subcultural diversity?

The *pencai* is a communal dining feast with special features that diverge from mainstream Chinese dining customs: There is a big pot at the centre of the table with many ingredients, and people can pick out whatever they want. There is no seating rule, and many tables are arranged often in public spaces, and invited visitors come and go freely. Traditionally, there were variants of *pencai*, such as *pencai* in family contexts (such as birth of a son), or village-wide events.<sup>34</sup>

Originally, the *pencai* is a lineage ritual that was tied to events with high ritual significance, such as Chongyang holiday, and various groups followed different rules, since also holidays were treated differently. Its specific form expressed lineage solidarity, being a form of universal sharing and active fusion of the group in common eating. Indeed, in old China the *pencai* was an important means of redistribution among rich and poor lineage members: Its

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<sup>34</sup> There is a small literature on *pencai*, beginning with Watson (1987, 2014), and continued with Chan (2010). We present a more detailed account of our own research in Guoa and Herrmann-Pillath (2018).

central ingredient was fat pork, which was an item that was rarely included in the regular diet of farmers. Pork is traditional also a symbol of prosperity.

In Hong Kong New Territories, the *pencai* has always been alive and played an important role in expressing the identities of local kinship groups. In the Pearl River delta, *pencai* was suppressed as a feudal custom, and it is said that it was officially revived in one village in 1992. Later, the practice revived vigorously everywhere.

Today, in Hong Kong the *pencai* has various meanings. On the one hand, it evolved into a consumer goods item. That means, people can buy *pencai* in many variants in restaurants or order online for consumption at home at family events. Pork is no longer the main ingredient, and expensive seafood dominates in high-end dishes. However, the original function is also preserved in different shape: Very large *pencai* festivals have emerged as public assertions of local identity in the New Territories, sometimes even in the context of political events that foster the causes of local people. In Shenzhen, this dimension of identity politics is also salient, as *pencai* feasts are often held in the context of the activities of shareholding cooperatives: For example, a *pencai* feast might celebrate the successful completion of a contract about a renewal project that boosts the dividends paid out to the local lineage.



Fig. 12: The 'da pencai' feast at Xiasha

An interesting case of *pencai* is the feasts organized by the Huang at Xiasha. They claim to have invented the 'da pencai' which are mega feasts sometimes with thousand tables and more. These large-scale feasts, as mentioned, have also emerged in Hong Kong previously, but the Shenzhen cases go beyond in size and reach. The Huang at Xiasha succeeded in positioning the *pencai* as a provincial level 'intangible cultural legacy', and it even is included in the Shenzhen museum where a copy of the life-sized bronze arrangements can be found as in the Xiasha museum, with groups of local people enjoying *pencai*. The Shenzhen museum exhibit even includes a video about an ancestral rite held on the occasion of an annual convention of World Huang surname association. This is a clear case of identity politics aiming as 'mainstreaming' local culture.

Indeed, in terms of cultural governance the *pencai* may be ambivalent as it expresses the interests and identity of a lineage against the rest of society. But already in the historical accounts of the origin of the custom, we recognize the forces on mainstreaming, as some stories refer to the central migration events in Song dynasty China: Locals are said to have offered the first 'big pot' to crowds of Song soldiers fleeing the Mongols and arriving exhausted and hungry at Shenzhen territory. In other words, even though the *pencai* is a deviant food practice, it is also seen as part and parcel of the traditions of Empire: Hence, its ambiguity reflects the same ambiguity in official endorsements of lineages as basic social units, even though lineages often were also subversive and engaging in local conflicts. In the case of the Xiasha Huang, the *pencai* clearly is a reassertion of its local identity and role in Shenzhen society today.

*Pencai* feasts are today a regular feature of life in urban villages. Often, large *pencai* feasts are held when villagers succeed in striking a good deal with the urban authorities about a renewal project. In such arrangements, individual and collective interests converge, as single owners would be without bargaining power without the collective which claims another kind of political legitimacy. Accordingly, in these arrangements there is always a strong component of collective interest, mediated via the shareholding cooperatives. The *pencai* is a ritual that manifests this publicly.

Hakka: Commercializing identity politics?

In recognizing the *pencai* as a local practice that even deserves a prominent place in Shenzhen museum, the municipal government actively creates a place for local culture in Shenzhen urban culture, thereby also endorsing the traditional values that undergird the practice. Another example of this form of cultural governance is the resurgence of Hakka identity, again, also by giving it a prominent place in Shenzhen museum. The Hakka issue is of interest, because after reforms started, Hakka identity remained somewhat muted, but is now very visible. We cannot go into details here, but the Hakka are arguably the Chinese subethnic

group that is best connected across the globe and shows very strong presence in many countries where Hakka migrated. In Taiwan, Hakka are politically influential, and Hakka culture has become part of popular culture, with separate broadcasting and artistic forms such as Hakka pop and rap. Hakkaology is also established as specific field in China studies.<sup>35</sup>

Basically, this global trend is also prominent in Shenzhen, where Hakka were the largest group in native settlement, though partly in more peripheral regions, with the expansion of transport infrastructure, the Hakka villages could join the fast track in economic development of the Pearl River Delta. In this context, the unique Hakka architecture, the walled village compounds, has become a rallying point of tourism. Again, via the medium of tourism, we observe the 'mainstreaming' of Hakka culture.

What seems very significant is that Hakka popular culture is most closely reflecting Confucian values, even if combined with Christianity, and appears to be more detached from those forms of traditional life which are mostly lambasted as 'superstition' or 'feudalism'. Therefore, Hakka culture may be most consistent with the current political ideas about the revival of tradition, as combined with modernist precepts.

However, as has been noticed by many students of tourism and leisure projects in China, this type of commercially oriented mainstreaming does not imply that the original, even deviant meaning is suppressed or withers away. This is salient in the domain of popular religion, which has always been a contested field since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the modernist battles against 'superstition' were speeding up. Tourism projects often neutralize superstitious practices' in terms of 'local customs'. However, this does not mean that there are no true believers among the visitors of a newly constructed temple. One example from our fieldwork is the temple complex in Fenghuang village mountain resort. One indicator for the persistence of deviant practices is the presence of professional fortune tellers on the premise, which is not allowed at other state-owned temple sites, for its very manifestation of 'superstition'. But for the Fenghuang temple, this is an important competitive advantage in attracting visitors.

These observations motivate a principled question, namely whether cultural governance harmonizes or stays in tension with cultural creativity. There is no general answer to this, as this is ultimately a question how cultural governance is designed and implemented. But the problem cannot be neutralized just by highlighting the tourism aspect of various cultural legacies and potentials.

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<sup>35</sup> For a survey of international research on Hakka, see Constable (1996).



## 7. Policy recommendations: Mobilizing culture in a global city – the approach of ‘cultural governance’

In this final section, I present a few thoughts on policies. The main task of this report was descriptive and analytical. We have gained insights into deeper level cultural processes and structures that shape the economic and social development of Shenzhen. The complexity of these structures forbids any kind of direct and simple intervention by urban planners and designers. However, as the example of urban renewal projects clearly shows, based on a better understanding of cultural factors one can design projects that would not only take account of culture, but also activate its creative potential in the economy.

This report suggests turning the analytical notion of cultural governance into a policy concept that merges related approaches in the experience of global cities into a concept that is adapted to the Chinese conditions. Globally, cities have increasingly turned to culture as a core concern of public life and municipal governance, mainly for two reasons.

First, culture is seen as a major determinant of the quality of life in a city and a driver of important business activities, especially in the creative sector. Culture is important for attracting and keeping talents in the city. In terms of governance, this establishes a focus on creative industries and urban planning with reference to cultural artefacts, amenities and public spaces and places devoted to culture.

Second, culture is also a potential for social divisions and even conflict, when the diversity of urban population increases and may find expression in segregated settlements or a widening income gap. In terms of governance, this is mostly covered by pro-active diversity management and inclusiveness policies, as well as urban planning with social welfare targets.

Subsequently, I list a few ideas.

*Inclusiveness:* In modern urban management, issues of inclusiveness and diversity loom large. Global cities such as London explicitly aim at activating the cultural diversity of its population for creative potential. Shenzhen can explore this experience and develop its own approach, which necessarily must be different, as diversity in Shenzhen is not yet driven by the inflow of international migrants, but mainly domestic migrants, with many of them living in Shenzhen for a long time, now even in the second generation. What does inclusiveness mean in this context? As is evident in the public debates over urban renewal projects, one important issue is giving more voice and visibility to the migrant population in urban villages. There are many channels how this can happen, reaching from telling the story of domestic migration in Shenzhen museums to including the voice of migrant citizens in participatory political processes on the local level. More specifically, enhancing the inclusiveness of Shenzhen hybrid governance structures is an important policy goal.

*Mainstreaming cultural diversity:* Connecting with the previous point, inclusiveness is also a means to activate cultural diversity for creative industries as a future strategic focus in Shenzhen economic development. The Hakka is a case in point: So far, mainstreaming is mainly happening in terms of reviving the memories of traditional Hakka culture. But Hakka culture can also be very productive in youth culture, as the Taiwan example demonstrates. Youth culture is often deviant and dissenting, but for that very reason also creative and productive. Hence, mainstreaming Hakka culture would include giving space to these modern transformations of tradition (such as turning *shange* into Rap music). This can happen via music festivals and other forms of support. I call this the 'restaurant' approach to cultural diversity in China: In the domain of culinary culture, the diversity of China is well embodied in the availability of all regional cuisines in Shenzhen, often within one building. This pattern can also apply in other domains of popular culture.

*Further formalizing associational life:* In recent years, traditional associations and kinship organizations have been increasingly recognized in a formal way, such as in registering at the civil affairs bureaus, and standardizing certain organizational forms. This is an important step towards further activating the cultural resources while at the same time containing certain possibly negative impacts, such as on corruption.

*Family business support systems:* Family business is the dominant form of Chinese business today, but it is facing distinct challenges familiar also from many other countries, such as the problem of family business succession. It is important to give support to these companies, which are often very strong in competitive spirit and endurance, but weak in sustainability and innovation. In this area, traditional values are ambivalent. On the one hand, they can foster the creation of new forms of business organization, such as in the form of family estates and trusts, that can undergird the sustainability of family business. On the other hand, those values may be the source of conflicts between the older and the younger generations. In this sense, business support must include a kind of 'cultural business engineering'. In this respect, high-level research is necessary to build a knowledge base that can be activated by practitioners.

There are many potential policies. In the framework of cultural governance, these policies must be framed in a coherent and systematic way: For example, inclusiveness policies can be combined with creative sector policies (such as organizing a festival for migrant workers' artists). One essential point is that cultural governance must be based on a participatory approach to policy design: For harnessing the potential of culture in emerging as a global city, Shenzhen can activate the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of its people.

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## Appendix

Legend for figure 4

村落	辖区	街道	祠堂
沙井古村	宝安区	步涌三路	江氏大祠堂
上合村	宝安区	新安街道	黄氏宗祠
流塘村	宝安区	新安街道	刘氏宗祠
乐群村	宝安区	西乡街道	郑氏宗祠
固戍村	宝安区	西乡街道	姜氏宗祠
铁岗村	宝安区	西乡街道	刘氏宗祠
黄田村	宝安区	西乡街道	林屋林氏宗祠
黄田村	宝安区	西乡街道	钟屋钟氏宗祠
岭下村(凤凰村)	宝安区	福永街道	文氏宗祠
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	松庄祖祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	庵岭二祖祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	协和公祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	槐廷祖祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	文顺祖祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	梁庆祖祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	梁任祖祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	捷卿祖家祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	宸宸祖家祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	四胜祖家祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	麟圃家祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	白石厦文氏宗祠
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	石琚公祠(文氏)
岭下村	宝安区	福永街道	汝道祖祠(文氏)
新田村	宝安区	福永街道	文氏宗祠
桥头村	宝安区	福永街道	陈氏宗祠
桥头村	宝安区	福永街道	林氏宗祠
怀德村	宝安区	福永街道	潘氏宗祠
怀德村	宝安区	福永街道	梅桃松三公祠(潘氏)
塘尾村	宝安区	福永街道	邓氏宗祠
福永墟	宝安区	福永街道	庄氏宗祠

福永墟	宝安区	福永街道	陈氏宗祠
福永墟	宝安区	福永街道	梁氏宗祠
浪心村	宝安区	石岩街道	杨氏宗祠
浪心村	宝安区	石岩街道	原氏宗祠
清湖村	宝安区	龙华街道	廖氏宗祠
清湖村	宝安区	龙华街道	元珠公祠（廖氏）
上芬村	宝安区	民治街道	詹氏宗祠
水贝村上村	宝安区	公明街道	陈氏宗祠
水贝村下村	宝安区	公明街道	泰宇陈公祠
水贝村下村	宝安区	公明街道	思梅公祠（陈氏
合水口村	宝安区	公明街道	麦氏大宗祠
李松朗村	宝安区	公明街道	梁氏宗祠
玉律村	宝安区	公明街道	德贵曾公祠
新桥村	宝安区	沙井街道	曾氏大宗祠
新桥村	宝安区	沙井街道	北蕃曾公祠
新二村	宝安区	沙井街道	谦宜二祖祠（曾氏）
东塘村	宝安区	沙井街道	曾氏大宗祠
东塘村	宝安区	沙井街道	荣业曾公祠
东塘村	宝安区	沙井街道	沙三村陈氏宗祠（义德堂
东塘村	宝安区	沙井街道	昂慎陈公祠
东塘村	宝安区	沙井街道	静乐陈公祠
东塘村	宝安区	沙井街道	昂积陈公祠
沙四村	宝安区	沙井街道	陈氏宗祠
壘岗村	宝安区	沙井街道	陈氏大宗祠
衙边村	宝安区	沙井街道	陈氏宗祠
衙边村	宝安区	沙井街道	德辉陈公祠
辛养村	宝安区	沙井街道	陈氏大宗祠
万丰村	宝安区	沙井街道	潘氏宗祠
万丰村	宝安区	沙井街道	理学钟冈祖祠
万丰村	宝安区	沙井街道	述冈祖祠
步涌村	宝安区	沙井街道	江氏大宗祠
步涌村	宝安区	沙井街道	静庵江公祠
沙一老村	宝安区	沙井街道	黎氏宗祠
沙头村	宝安区	沙井街道	宣玉钟公祠
黄埔村	宝安区	沙井街道	冼氏宗祠



竹村	宝安区	观澜街道	邓氏宗祠
竹村	宝安区	观澜街道	邓褪家祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	陈氏宗祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	素白公祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	泽培公祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	乡贤祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	匠耕陈公祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	月客陈公祠
燕川村	宝安区	松岗街道	醒庵祖厅
东方村	宝安区	松岗街道	文氏大宗祠
沙浦村	宝安区	松岗街道	富祖蔡公祠
沙浦村	宝安区	松岗街道	碧沙蔡公祠
沙浦村	宝安区	松岗街道	乐圃蔡公祠
沙一村	宝安区	松岗街道	贞祖蔡公祠
新围村	南山区	西丽街道	刘氏宗祠
大涌村	南山区	桃源街道	郑氏宗祠
平山村	南山区	桃源街道	方氏宗祠
平山村	南山区	桃源街道	广昱方公祠
平山村	南山区	桃源街道	广阳方公祠
平山村	南山区	桃源街道	西溪方公祠
光明村	南山区	桃源街道	郑氏宗祠
塘朗村	南山区	桃源街道	悦富郑公祠
塘朗村	南山区	桃源街道	郑氏宗祠
南头城	南山区	南头街道	信国公文氏祠
涌下村	南山区	南头街道	郑氏宗祠
向南村	南山区	南山街道	叶氏公祠
向南村	南山区	南山街道	郑氏宗祠
墩头村	南山区	南山街道	叶氏宗祠
北头村	南山区	南山街道	黄氏宗祠
南山村	南山区	南山街道	陈氏宗祠
南园村	南山区	南山街道	吴氏宗祠
南园村	南山区	西巷	双洲吴公祠
南园村	南山区	正巷 208 号	兰所陈公祠
南园村	南山区	正巷 230 号	陈氏宗祠
南园村	南山区	南山街道	解元祠

沙塘围	龙岗区	龙城街道	海旋公祠（陈氏）
格坑村	龙岗区	龙城街道	振孔公祠
黄阁坑村	龙岗区	龙城街道	南岳公祠（陈氏）
仙人岭村	龙岗区	龙岗街道	陈氏宗祠（楚彦陈公祠）
老香村	龙岗区	坑梓街道	香氏宗祠
水贝村	龙岗区	大鹏街道	欧阳氏宗祠
西湖塘老围	龙岗区	坪地街道	王氏宗祠
西湖塘新围	龙岗区	坪地街道	三座王氏分祠
径口村	光明新区		黄氏大宗祠
楼村	光明新区		陈氏宗祠
麦氏六村	光明新区		麦氏大宗祠
笋岗村	罗湖区	笋岗街道	何氏宗祠
坳下村	罗湖区	莲塘街道	邓氏宗祠
向西村	罗湖区	向西路 58 号	爱月张公祠
湖贝	罗湖区	东门街道	怀月张公祠
上沙	福田区	沙头街道	怀德黄公祠
下沙	福田区	沙头街道	黄思铭公世祠
新洲村	福田区	新洲二街	简氏宗祠
沙尾村	福田区	椰林大道	碧州莫公祠
皇岗村	福田区	福民路	庄氏宗祠
岗厦	福田区		文氏宗祠