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Lineage, Food and Ritual in a Chinese Metropolis

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Abstract, - Thirty years ago, the eminent sinologist James Watson published a paper in Anthropos on 'common pot' dining in the New Territories of Hong Kong, a banquet ritual that differs fundamentally from established social norms in Chinese society. We explore the recent career of the 'common pot' in neighbouring Shenzhen, where it has become an important symbol manifesting the strength and public role of local lineages in the rapidly growing mega-city. We present two cases, the Wen lineage and the Huang lineage. In case of the Wen, we show how the practice relates to their role as landholding groups, organized in a 'Shareholding Cooperative Companies' that is owned collectively by the lineage. In the Huang case, identity politics looms large in the context of globalization. In large-scale 'big common pot festivals' of the global Huang surname association, traditional conceptions of kinship merge with modernist conceptions of national identity. *[China, Shenzhen, common pot (pencai), Chinese lineages, kinship ritual, community egalitarianism, shareholding cooperative companies, tourism, identity politics]*

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1. Introduction[1]

One of the classical papers on the anthropology of food in China is James Watson's (1987) analysis of "common pot" (盆菜, Cantonese *pun choi* or *poon choi*, Mandarin *pencai*) dining in Hong Kong, the New Territories. This work has generated a few follow-up studies, such as Cheung (2006) and, most important, Chan (2010). However, our knowledge about the custom remains limited to Hong Kong, although Chan points out that it is a practice widespread in South China.[2] Our paper aims at closing this gap. Common pot dining was explicitly prohibited in Maoist times, according to our informants, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. The revival of the practice was a semi-formal act undertaken in 1993 by a village official, apparently in close synchronization with establishing the first Cooperative Shareholding Companies in Shenzhen villages. This politicization of a dining practice reveals its deeper cultural and social significance that we are going to explore in this paper. We look at the *pencai* and its role in contemporary Shenzhen and analyse transformations of

1 We want to thank Professor James Watson for drawing our attention to this topic and advice, and Selina Chan for inspiring discussions. Faults remain our own. Thanks also to our Wen family friends and informants who readily provided us with much insight. Our follow-up work in 2018 was supported financially by China Development Institute, Shenzhen.

2 There is even a Wikipedia entry (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poon_choi), which only treats the dish as a Hong Kong phenomenon, though informative otherwise.

the practice following rapid urban modernization.[3] We draw on two case studies on lineages in Shenzhen, the Wen and the Huang, in highlighting two different aspects of the *pencai*.[4]

The significance of the topic goes far beyond our curiosity about a food practice that contradicts established Chinese dining etiquette, as Watson recounted when he described his first encounter. Indeed, despite receiving some media attention, even today many Chinese do not know the practice, and express irritation when learning about it. At the same time, however, in Hong Kong it has morphed into a widely enjoyed dish, coming along in many varieties which only loosely connect with tradition. But a core phenomenon has remained intact, namely being an element of expressing distinct identities, both local and Chinese. As we will show, this is also true for Shenzhen, though with different emphases. This results in paradoxical meanings: As Chan (2010) reports, in Hong Kong, the *pencai* is increasingly used as expressing a distinct Hong Kong identity, being perceived as a peculiar tradition in the New Territories, now elevated to a shared custom of Hong Kong people (even though most of them are immigrants from other areas of China who never practiced it). At the same time, in many villages of the New Territories the conventional *pencai* tradition persists in the context of lunar holidays and lineage celebrations.[5] In Shenzhen, the *pencai* is a means to express the local identities of native Shenzhen inhabitants, in this sense reflecting the original meaning in Hong Kong, when Watson analysed the practice: *Pencai* is an important ritual in expressing the solidarity of a lineage, and also of the Punti (*bendi*) people ("natives") vis à vis the "newcomers," which included in historical times the Hakka, and later the melting pot of global Hong Kong - the similarity to Shenzhen springs to the eye, where the natives are referred to as *yuanzhumin*. Yet, at the same time the myths about the origin of *pencai* also emphasize loyalty to the Imperial state, and hence Han identity. This results in another paradox: a deviant food practice signals exactly the opposite, namely identification with the Chinese body politic. This reflects the ambivalent political role of Chinese lineages in South China, which was also visible under British colonial rule, and is re-emerging in Shenzhen today. These aspects come to the fore in our case of the Huang lineage.

Further, as we will show, the *pencai* is also a crystallization of the merger of ritual and economy in Chinese tradition, which has been identified as "ritual economy" with reference both to Imperial China (Faure 2006) and contemporary rural China (Yang 2007). This is the focus of our Wen clan case. In this view, traditional Chinese rituals assume important economic functions, such as lineage estates morphing into business companies or temple festivals being sites of traditional markets. We argue that this structural synthesis can be also found in Shenzhen today, following the systematic approach elaborated in Herrmann-Pillath (2017) where a generic conception of ritual is combined with the specific use of the term in the Chinese context. In the Chinese studies literature, this has been mostly discussed in the context of tourism: Traditional ritual can be activated as a business project, such as marketing "national heritage," but at the same time different involved groups interpret the rituals in different ways, thus creating a cultural space of co-existing, often conflicting interpretations which struggle over hegemony (for seminal approaches, see Siu 1995 or Oakes 1999; for a recent exemplary study Bruckermann 2016).

In our contribution we show that the *pencai* in Shenzhen manifests similar cultural and economic complexities. In *pencai* practices, certain relationships between village community and lineage, power relations within the lineage, and interactions between community and the larger body politic crystallize. Therefore, exploring its meanings gives us much insight about deeper-level social and cultural structures. Our paper proceeds as follows. In section 2 we summarize Watson's original contribution. The generic interpretation of the *pencai* unfolds in section 3, highlighting its role in the ritual economy. We explore this aspect in our first case, the Wen, reported in section 4. Section 5, building on the case of the Huang, discusses the aspects of identity politics, which are also prominent in Hong Kong today. Section 6 concludes.

3 Readers can find a lively report about a *pencai* banquet in Shenzhen with pictures here: <https://shenzhennoted.com/2017/01/19/changling-village-spring-festival-traditions/#more-15918> [5.05.2018]

4 Since 2015, we did fieldwork in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta on different aspects of informal self-organization and traditional social behaviour in the economic context. One focus emerged in the study of 'villages in the cities', see Man Guo and Herrmann-Pillath (2017). Man Guo is Shenzhen resident.

5 The evidence is mixed, though. For example, Jaya Gopan et al. (2012) argue that the local practice is being eroded by market forces.

2. The *Pencai* in Watson's Original Work

Traditionally, Chinese food practices reflected the complexity of a hierarchically ordered society in which interactions among unequal individuals are governed by ritual. There is a wide range of food items which are served separately, and some of these items or parts of it may be reserved for individuals having a special status. At banquets, detailed rules govern the position of guests at the table, and how food is distributed among them. Common pot dining flatly contradicts all these rules. The legend has a very old origin of the practice, but stories vary a lot, and, as Watson comments, even the story-tellers may not believe in their historical truth.

The original *pencai* is a large, round earthenware in which various ingredients are added layer by layer, with the most valuable items on top. Traditionally, the essential ingredient is pork, and the meal is fat with lard. In Hong Kong and Shenzhen today, *pencai* are also served regularly at restaurants, often as take-aways for consumption at home, mostly at certain festive occasions or holidays in the family (Chan 2010). In these commercial *pencai*, other delicacies than pork dominate, such as seafood. In this form, the *pencai* is now diffusing globally as a luxury Chinese 'New Year Dish'.[6] In almost all these variants, one core meaning is preserved, namely that eating the *pencai* together manifests shared feelings of belonging to a group, such as the three-generation family gathering at a holiday. However, in Hong Kong today, the *pencai* is even offered as a single dish, consumed individually, including as take-away to warm up in a microwave.

In contrast to these recent developments, the original *pencai* was not just a dish, but a banqueting ritual, including all steps, especially also preparing it. When James Watson studied the New Territories, he followed the track laid by other students of Chinese anthropology. Mainland China was closed to field research, and Taiwan was a special case because of the distinction between Mainlanders and native population. British colonial rule had guaranteed a policy of non-interference with traditional ways of life in the New Territories, and so a widespread assumption was that researchers could observe a kind of "original" state of kinship and community there, which was certainly supported by indigenous self-perceptions: The native people of the New Territories were (and still are) assertive of their traditional rights and ways of life, which centred on extended kinship and land, both understood in terms of ownership and the sacred native place of the community (Chun 2000). The British administration had given them leeway in practicing traditional rules of managing land in the context of lineages, such as lineage estates and inheritance rules that partly differed from Common Law applying in other parts of Hong Kong (Nissim 2016). Some of the lineages in the New Territories were so-called "elite lineages" with very old origin and considerable size, also manifest in their landholdings. One of them was studied by Watson in much detail over three decades, the Man (Cantonese) or Wen (Mandarin). This builds the bridge between his work and ours: the Wen lineages make up a clan with seven branches which traces itself back to a national hero, the Song scholar-general Wen Tianxiang, with six of them located in today's Shenzhen. Although actual genealogical relations are more complex, and different Wen branches trace themselves back to different close relatives of Wen Tianxiang, we can ignore this in the current discussion.

As an elite lineage, the Hong Kong Man explicitly endorsed lineage rules at the time when Watson began his research. Therefore, common pot dining seemed to be an awkward practice, at first sight, especially when recognizing that it played a central role in important festive events, such as New Year celebrations, weddings or the birth of a son. This fact would forbid any interpretation along the lines of carnivalesque exceptionalism. Common pot dining follows certain rules detailed in Watson's paper. Most importantly, after the pot is served, everybody is allowed snatching whatever piece she or he can get. The latter formulation is important, as social distinctions are completely ignored when eating, there is no fixed sequence, and no special respect needs to be paid to anybody. In large banquets, people just flock in, sit down somewhere, eat, chat and go, leaving the place for the next guest waiting in the line or passing by. This breakdown of social distinctions is embodied in mixing the layered ingredients of the pot while picking up pieces, fundamentally different from formal banquets in restaurants where the plates are served separately and sequentially, which also became the standard for eating at restaurants in general. However, for the ritual meaning of the common pot it is significant that the ingredients must

6 Recipes can be found on cooking websites, such as <http://www.noobcook.com/pen-cai/> [12.10.2017]. In Singapore, the *pencai* has become a favourite dish, even Nestlé includes it on their cooking website: http://www.nestle.com.sg/brands/recipes/prosperity_pen_cai [12. 102017]

be prepared separately and are only mixed just before serving. In other words, preparing the *pencai* would leave open the possibility to serve the different items separately, following "mainstream" practice. Differences are first created, and then annulled in mixing, and indulging in the feast. These rules still apply for common pot banquets until today and are also observed in our Shenzhen cases.

As Watson (2014) analyses, in pre-1949 China, the *pencai* had an important function in redistributing resources between rich and poor members of lineages because an essential element is that it must be paid by the family hosting the feast (such as when celebrating the birth of a son) or the lineage community, in case of communal feasts. In the latter case, banquets would be paid out of the proceeds of lineage estates jointly owned by all members as shareholders. That means, although poor members would not receive any share in regular profits, because these were ploughed back into communal activities such as maintaining the ancestral hall, they would enjoy redistribution at festive occasions, embodied in the abundance of pork in the *pencai*. At that time, most Chinese farmers would rarely eat meat, so that getting indiscriminate access to large quantities of pork during common pot dining was a substantial contribution to their annual food budget.[7] It is important to recognize that in South China, the consumption of pork was also an indicator of wealth and high social status, and lack of access to pork did not necessarily imply that poor farmers were starving, since, for example, there were rich supplies of fish. In this sense, redistribution did not only have a nutritional dimension, but a social one (for more details, see Watson 2014).

Another significant aspect of traditional *pencai* practice is that the preparation of the traditional common pot is a communal activity, with many members participating. Although there is a standard conception about the ingredients of the *pencai*, local communities emphasize their own recipes, enriched with local histories of the origins. The recipes are kept as a secret that is only transmitted via the male members of the lineage. According to our information about the conditions in Shenzhen, that often applies even today, with women only involved in handling the *pencai*, but not the cooking.

In sum, in his seminal contribution, Watson interprets the *pencai* as a ritual form of expressing the solidarity of the village and lineage community against the larger society shaped by elitist social hierarchies, and more specifically, in the context of the New Territories, as a ritual by which the native people express their separateness against new immigrants, such as the Hakka, who shun the *pencai* deliberately, the same as against urbanized elites, who look aghast at the mixture of saliva in the pot meddled by many people catching fine slices of pork and other delicacies, in a raucous and 'uncivilized' manner.

3. Exploring the Meaning of the "Common Pot"

Given the original redistributive function of the common pot, the interpretation is evident: The common pot mirrors the notion of lineage solidarity and reflects the principle of equality among all lineage members in tracing themselves back to the same ancestor. Therefore, the practice is highly significant for our understanding of Chinese lineages.

One systematic approach would be to distinguish between the descent group and the actual kinship group interacting in the present, mostly in the village community, and to suppose that the communities were aware of this distinction and expressed this in various rituals which might appear contradictory, if it is overlooked.[8] In Imperial China, the descent group received strong support by the Neoconfucian orthodoxy which almost exclusively emphasized its hierarchical aspects (Faure 2007). Therefore, public lineage rituals reflected this. But in the Pearl River Delta, lived lineages were mainly village communities in which cooperation was necessary in many ways, such as organizing irrigation or protection. Therefore, we can say that there was a vertical and a horizontal dimension in lineage practices.[9] Public rituals most-

7 It should be noted that common pot banquets may be held at different regular lunar holidays, depending on local customs, such as New Year, Qingming or Zhongyang. To this, family life cycle events may be added. This would sum up to regular access to pork for everybody, perhaps every two months.

8 This distinction between lineage and community has been emphasized by Chun (2000) with reference to the New Territories. Chun is a prominent critic of the 'single lineage' model of South China villages introduced by Maurice Freedman; for related critiques, see Stafford (2000).

9 This distinction follows Gui (2014: 74ff). A similar distinction was made by Cohen (1990) who distinguishes between an 'associational' and a 'genealogical' mode of lineage organization, with the former enhanced by additional associational structures created by lineages. The associational mode is more egalitarian and oriented towards cooperation. Cohen thinks that it is more prevalent in South-eastern China.

ly reflect the vertical dimension, that is, status differences, patriarchal authority relations, and gender inequality. As we have seen, the central meaning of the common pot is annulling these differences in one of the central life concerns of the Chinese, eating, and on equally important festive occasions, such as the Zhongyang holiday in autumn. This is clearly reflected in recorded opinions about the *pencai*.[10] Evidently, we can approach the "common pot" as expressing the horizontal nature of lived lineages. In this sense, there is no contradiction, but only an aspectual difference. However, the question remains whether this reflects the distinction between lineage and village community, or between different aspects of lineage organization, or between local lineage practice and officially promulgated ritual orthopraxy.

When understanding *pencai* practices in Shenzhen today, it is important noticing the metaphorical meaning of "pork" (*zhurou*), as also emphasized by Watson (2014). Until today the pig is a symbol of wealth, beyond the mere nutritional aspects. In pre-1949 China, peasants often formed "joint ventures" in raising a pig (Zhou 2014: 22). This counts in our context, as this reflects the horizontal cooperative dimension and even the functional flexibility of certain traditional forms of cooperation that were also prevalent in lineage trusts, but mainly in the rich array of associations in traditional villages (Tan 2010: 66ff.). That means, peasants formed a "shareholding venture" in which they jointly raised the pig and finally distribute the pork equally or according to the shares. This combines with another important notion in traditional conceptions, namely *yang* (养), meaning to create an asset via long-term effort and care, such as raising a pig (Stafford 2000). This notion applies across all kinds of relationships, such as nurturing a social relationship that might lend support in future times. We argue that different from public and strictly hierarchical lineage rituals, the *pencai* reflects the associational dimension in traditional Chinese village life, especially as far as the large banquets are concerned which require substantive logistic efforts and material investments of the entire community. This associational dimension vacillates between lineage and village if we look at the conditions of single-lineage villages in the Pearl River delta.[11]

The metaphorical meaning of "pork" as wealth and the egalitarianism of lineage cooperation is reflected in the standard expression "When the Ancestor divides the pork, everyone gets his share" (太公分猪肉，人人有份). Traditionally, this was used when dividends generated by lineage estates were distributed at the end of the year; in old China, this was also done via distributing shares of pork to all members on an equal basis. This leads us to one festive occasion at which *pencai* is served in our case of the Wen lineage at Fenghuang village: The New Year celebration. Until today, New Year is conceived as the propitious time at which accounts should be settled: Thus, dividends would be distributed. The meaning of the common pot banquet is immediately evident: Everyone gets her or his share (we come back on including "her" later) of dividends, and everyone gets her or his share of pork in the common pot, which is offered by the community, i.e. the lineage organisation. New Year banquets are held by the "Shareholding Cooperative Company" of Fenghuang village in front of the newly constructed, magnificent ancestral hall of the Wen lineage located there. This hall is part of the "old village" that is being reconstructed as a tourist site, with most houses gradually turned into shops. Obviously, the *pencai* needs to be seen in this context. Let us turn to more details of our first field case.

4. *Pencai* in the Ritual Economy of the Wen Lineage

Shareholding Cooperatives were created in many places across China during the 1990 s (for the general background, see Trappel 2011). In Guangdong, they play a central role in managing the collective land rights of farmers. When collectivization proceeded in the 1950 s and resulted in a decentralized system of production teams and brigades, the collective land rights were factually assigned to the original villages as residential communities. These villages did not experience

10 For example, Shenzhen people today are cited that the *pencai* shows "the 'you' is in the 'I', and the 'I' is in the 'you'" (你中有我、我中有你), reflecting the intimate closeness and group spirit of the lineage (族群宗亲理念). See <http://paper.oeeee.com/nis/201406/06/226791.html> [17.10. 2017]

11 The associational dimension is emphasized by Cohen (1990) who also shows that this results in the creation of many non-hierarchical activities of lineages, such as the establishment of Qingming associations. In his seminal contribution, Sangren (1984) went beyond this and established associational principles that are independent from kinship. These two aspects intermingle when we consider the duality of lineage and village community.

much change in their composition, because migration was severely restricted (apart from many people fleeing to Hong Kong in the Pearl River Delta, as many Wen who joined their Hong Kong brethren). Therefore, in many cases the property rights were factually held by lineages, because most villages were single-lineage villages. When field research became possible in Guangdong after 1978, anthropologists familiar with the Hong Kong situation therefore recognized the close resemblance between socialist institutions and lineage organization (Potter and Potter 1990: 261ff., 334).[12] In particular, and different from Hong Kong, the socialist institutions implied the distinction between subsoil and surface rights on land which had provided the institutional foundation of permanent tenancy in Imperial China: tenants could possess surface rights even across generations, and owners would control subsoil rights. In South China, this applied to large lineage estates which were held by the lineages and were rented out to tenants: This was the original power base of the Man lineage in Hong Kong studied by Watson.[13] Clearly, this construction came close to the socialist arrangements after introducing the household responsibility system in the early 1980 s: Farmers would obtain land use rights, but collectives remained owners.

The distinction between state-owned land and collective land has constitutional status in China and coincides with the distinction between urban and rural areas. In the rural areas, all land is owned collectively. However, the meaning of the term "collective" is fuzzy, against the background of the convoluted history of collectivization and de-collectivization (Ho 2001). For example, a "village" could be a "natural village" (*cun* 村) or an "administrative village" (*xian* 乡) which encompasses several natural villages. With rapid economic growth, administrative villages evolved into townships, without losing their rural status. This development became even more complex when the Pearl River Delta evolved into one huge metropolitan area, with modern urban structures gradually absorbing most villages in their surroundings. In Shenzhen, villages in the administrative terms do no longer exist and have been transformed into urban "communities" (*shequ* 社区). Yet, the notion of "village" still survives, both ideationally and materially, in the peculiar settlement pattern of "villages in the city" or "urban villages" (*cheng zhong cun* 城中村) which are no villages at all, in terms of settlement structures and socioeconomic basis, but distinct urban settlements mainly housing migrant workers and operating partly autonomous from formal municipal planning and management. Indeed, the former villagers still relate their identity to the "village," even though they have turned into urbanites living in high-rise apartments, often even at a distance to their original village.

As in many urban places across China, high-speed urbanization created very strong incentives to turn rural land into urban land for development. There were rules allowing for this (under constraints of maintaining a certain minimum of arable land), if farmers obtain compensation. Yet, this is rarely reflecting the value of land after transformation because the reference value is lost income from agriculture. Therefore, in most cases farmers lost out, compared with the immense profits generated from urban real estate development, which explains the fact that land disputes are by far the most important reason for agrarian unrest in China today (*World Bank* 2014: 206 f.).

The situation in Shenzhen looks very different.[14] The reason is the existence of the Shareholding Cooperatives. Many villages transferred their collective land rights to the legal construct of these companies. It needs noticing that these are peculiar to the rural areas, as the national Company Law does not know this corporate form, but regulated via special administrative rules issued

12 For more detail and sources, see Herrmann-Pillath (2017: 219ff). This historical background is reflected in collective lineage memories today. In our second case study of the Huang lineage, the local museum has a display showing the production team leaders of Maoist times in continuity with post-Mao village leaders.

13 In another influential contribution, Watson (2003) shows how the distinction between the two rights shaped the emergence of permanent tenancy in the territory controlled and owned by the Man. In Hong Kong, the British colonial authorities abolished the legal distinction and introduced Common Law land rights at the beginning of the 20th century, thus effectively redistributing land ownership rights. Yet, up into the 1970 s the social and political superiority of the Man found expression in habitus and practices, as Watson reports.

14 For related research with similar results as in our cases, see Chung and Unger (2013), Cheng (2014) or Trémon (2015 a). However, these developments are by no means representative and reflect the exceptional strength of the lineages in question, see Wong (2015). Zhang and Zhao (2014) show that in a national sample of villages, security of farmers' property right on land strongly depends on the existence of lineages. One of the most famous cases of successful collective resistance, the 'Wukang incident', where a village even resisted against a siege by military police, was also enabled by lineage solidarity, see He and Xie (2014).

on the provincial level. The companies are free-standing in the sense that they are no longer affiliated with the corresponding government organization, i.e. the village, although all villagers may be shareholders.[15] Yet, the village assembly is legally distinct from the shareholder assembly. Shares may be distributed equally, or partly reflect investments, including retained profits that might be transformed into own shares held by the company. The companies are cooperatives because the shares cannot be traded.

It is crucial to recognize the legal implications of this evolved construct: Formally, the transformation of *cun* into *shequ* implies the nationalization of land, as all urban land is state-owned. But since the land use rights (distinct from land ownership) had been transferred to the Cooperative Shareholding Companies, they were quasi-privatized, under the umbrella of collective ownership by the community. The community is not represented by the *shequ*, where the morphed village assembly would be located administratively, but by the company. The village community has become a business entity.[16]

There are variants in other places of China in which in the Shareholding Cooperatives may just end up as local real estate companies controlled by former village elites: Apparently, this happened also in our other case, the Huang. Yet, in the Pearl River Delta we often observe that the companies are factually owned by the lineages as collective entities. This is manifest in the fact that shares are managed in a peculiar way (comp. Zhou 2014). For example, even though women have a right to receive shares, they would lose them if they marry out, and are not allowed inheriting them in the maternal line, which violates relevant stipulations in the Chinese family law. Shares are distributed based on village residence up to a certain time, so that in fact ownership is limited to lineage members, since in earlier times there was almost no immigration. Voting rights in the shareholder assembly may be exercised by the male household heads. All these stipulations are familiar from similar regulations in traditional lineage estates. In other words, we claim that, in our case of the Wen, Shareholding Cooperatives are lineage estates in disguise.

When Shenzhen expanded into the rural areas, collectively held land became extremely valuable. The Shareholding Cooperatives were a means to protect these rights against encroachment by means of nationalization, i.e. reclaiming the land for urban development.[17] The lineages used the land use rights in a variety of ways. Taking all activities together, they provided the institutional foundation for urban villages (Chung and Unger 2013): individual Farmers constructed multi-storey buildings on the private house plots and farmland that need not observe the municipal building standards and zoning regulations, when the land was still collectively owned. They offered cheap housing for the masses of migrant workers, eventually with tacit compliance by urban authorities who were aware of the cost advantages for migrant housing. When eventually the collective land was transformed into urban land, literally overnight most lineage members turned into wealthy landlords. This was the case in one Wen branch, Gangxia village, which is located in Futian district, the central business district of Shenzhen.

Phoenix village, another Wen branch, located at the rural borders of larger Shenzhen municipality,[18] rented out its land to foreign investors and receives a steady flow of rents which mainly accrue collectively – that is at the level of the Shareholding Cooperative Company – which annually distributes dividends to all members. There are also other benefits to the lineage: for example, every factory must nominate a "factory director" apart from the manager which must be recruited from the Wen. But most importantly, the company has grown by investing in affiliate companies, such as in food processing and tourism. One of the biggest projects is a holiday park in the hills that belong to the village, and that centres on a huge temple complex created by the company. At this location, shops are mostly reserved for Wen lineage members. In total, there are more than 1200 companies in Phoenix village that belong to Wen.

15 Government control operates indirectly via the requirement that the Party Secretary would be the chairperson of the 'Collective assets management council' that complements the standard body of the shareholders' council.

16 We observe many similar cases across China; Hu (2007) speaks of the model of 'integrating village with company'. This does not necessarily involve lineages, however, but includes also cases such as 'company towns' dominated by one large private enterprise.

17 The municipal government accepted this as they would have had to fund a huge compensation fee for turning the land in to urban state-owned land; see Po (2008).

18 For a highly informative overview about the geographic and administrative features of Shenzhen, see O'Donnell (2017). Shenzhen was originally created as a 'special economic zone' and later expanded to Shenzhen municipality via merging with Bao'an county. This resulted into the distinction between the 'inner' and 'outer districts'. Gangxia is in the inner, Phoenix village in the outer district.

The structural and operational similarities between the Shareholding Cooperatives and a traditional lineage estate are baffling. One of the indicators supporting this interpretation is the fact that the village community expresses a preference for developmental projects undertaken by the company that also have a ritual meaning, such as going for temple building as a tourism project (at the location of the centuries old village temple), or reconstructing the old village as a tourism site, while building a new Ancestral Hall at its centre. This defines the ritual space of the traditional village (Lagerwey 2010; comp. Trémon 2015 b): on certain festive occasions, a Lion's Dance would start out from the temple complex and reach the old village and its ancestral hall, where proper rites are conducted, and are followed by *pencai* feast.

Summarizing, we argue that the specific institutional conditions in socialist China created the ground for the resurgence of the ritual economy similar to the conditions in Late Imperial China. Tellingly, there is an important parallel in the New Territories, as one could argue that land rights have also undergirded the resilience of traditional lineages there (Watson 2004). Thus, in an almost paradoxical fashion, the socialist property rights also create strong incentives to maintain and even strengthen lineage structures. But as the case of Fenghuang village also shows, once the economic foundation is created, the ritual economy expands beyond managing the land and ventures into other businesses.

We claim that this context allows for reinstating the interpretation of the *pencai* as an essential ritual means for expressing egalitarian values in the traditional kinship system. Today, this includes modernization of ritual: in the Shareholding Cooperatives women own shares (though cannot take carry them along when marrying out), and when the *pencai* is served in families, it symbolizes the equal status of all family members, especially males and females: this results in a cultural merger between lineage traditions and modern conceptions of gender equality, while women remain excluded from the geneaology (*jiapu*). The lavish communal banquets manifest the fact that the company is owned by all members, even though there are strict managerial hierarchies which are manifest in the fact that the CEO of the company is also the Party secretary of the village. Finally, and probably most importantly, the *pencai* shows the strength of the village community aka lineage vis à vis the modernizing agencies of the metropolitan power structure and vis à vis the overwhelming inflow of migrants from all parts of the country. This leads us to the issue of identity politics.

5. The *Pencai* and Identity Politics. The Case of the Huang

One of the highly visible examples of corporate activities related to lineages is the Huang lineage in Xiasha village, Futian district (like Gangxia, at the centre of Shenzhen, close to the seat of municipal government). As the Wen, the Huang divide into branches at other locations as well, including Hong Kong. Different from the Wen case, the Huang have launched a series of "mega events" of *pencai* similar to the Hong Kong practices today. Recently, the site for those mega-events is the newly designed 'Cultural Square' at the centre of Xiasha.[19] One of the public buildings is the Houwang temple, which was partly funded by the donations of leading real estate developers in Shenzhen, such as the CEO of the Galaxy Group. These are developers led by Huang as Chairmen or CEOs. The role of developers turns the relationship between village and municipality even more complex than in the Wen case.

The elite Huang in the real estate business mostly do not belong to the local Huang lineage, but are from Chaoshan region. One of the biggest developers, Lvjing group, listed in Hong Kong, was founded by a Huang immigrant from Maoming. He recently supported the renewal of the Huang Ancestral Hall in his native town.[20] This example shows that in the case of the Huang, the wider dimensions of traditional kinship become visible that reflect the historical process of migration and formation of branches through centuries, if not millennia: the Huang trace themselves back to tribes in Ancient Pre-Imperial China, and, after all, even to the "Yellow Emperor."[21]

This is reflected in the practices related to the *pencai*. As mentioned previously, Chan (2010) observes that in Hong Kong, beyond morphing into a luxury dish, common pot banquets have become public events, attracting much media attention,

19 The Shenzhen blogger and scholar Mary Ann Douglas has highly informative and lively reports about urban villages, including *pencai* related activities, enriched by many pictures, on her blog 'Shenzhen noted'. On the Xiasha plaza, see <https://shenzhennoted.com/2017/05/04/xiasha-k-k-one/> [2.05. 2018].

20 <http://www.mymm.cc/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=12244 > [12.04 2018]

21 For more detail, see our working paper Guo and Herrmann-Pillath (forthcoming).

and play a role in expressing political and social identities of native people in the New Territories: for example, big common pot feasts are held by the powerful Heung Yee Kuk, the Association of the native people in the New Territories. This phenomenon can also be observed in Shenzhen, leveraged to mega-events such as the "big common pot" (*da pencai*) feasts held by the Huang lineage on occasion of the meetings of the World Association of Huang (世界黄氏宗亲总会) that occasionally served up to 60,000 guests at more than 5000 tables.[22] In the local Huang museum, one room is devoted to two life-sized groups of bronze statues depicting locals enjoying *pencai*.

The real estate developers chaired by Huang are purely "capitalistic" business entities, yet they recognize their ritual dimensions in donating to temples and taking part in the "big common pot" feasts held regularly together with the World Surname Association of Huang. The Huang are an important player in Shenzhen urban development, and we cannot understand urban growth and modernization without considering the interaction between the informal networks enabled by kinship relations and formal administrative bodies of Shenzhen municipality.[23] In a fascinating resonance with Imperial China, one of the channels by which this is mediated runs via recruiting leaders to the Communist Party or government and even assigning leadership positions to them.[24] This is manifest in the figure of one local leader, Huang Yingchao, who masterminded the redevelopment of Xiasha and is most prominent on plaques in the Houwang temple at Xiasha plaza. After serving as a long-time village head, Huang was nominated as Vice-Chairman of the People's Political Consultative Conference of Futian district.

At the same time, most recently Huang Yingchao was also elected as the President of the World Surname Association of the Huang, explicitly identified as "lineage head" (*zongzhang*).[25] Hence, we recognize a multi-layered system of Huang groups with different scope, reaching from the local Huang lineage to the global Association, which theoretically might include all individuals with surname Huang, which is an estimated 30 million in China alone, but would also include, for example, about 2-3 million Huang in Vietnam. The Huang business elite in Shenzhen sits in between and Huang Yingchao literally bridges these different groups. This pattern clearly resembles the traditional role of higher-order lineages and alliances between lineages. Without being able to go into the details here, the Huang surname associations can be found in all parts of China and maintain a lot of interactions, such as mutual visits. The Shenzhen Huang surname association stands out in organizing activities such as maintaining a virtual "Huang Shopping City" in WeChat that is open to all Huang and claims to follow principles of a "sharing economy."[26]

The redevelopment of Xiasha village is highly significant in this respect. When Xiasha was integrated into Shenzhen municipality, initially it was part of a larger urban community *shequ*, but since 2015 it became a separate *shequ*, thus recognizing its identity as a village again. The original settlement is still a mix of old "urban village" structures and new real estate projects, especially the huge KKOne mall. At the centre of the village is the 'Cultural Square' which shows many and highly diverse religious artefacts, and most prominently has the Huang Ancestral Hall and the Houwang temple. This conjunction of hall and temple manifests the identity of the village as a ritual space, as in the Wen case.

It is of paramount importance to recognize the duality of lineage and village and to heed attention to the distinction between horizontal and vertical lineage dimensions. Whereas the lineage may be primarily conceived as descent group in terms of ritual, the village community is reflected in other forms of ritual that are egalitarian. Indeed, the traditional landscape of a Chinese village was fundamentally shaped by the duality of ancestral hall and temple, whatever the specific kind of the latter (such as Tianhou in Hong Kong) (Lagerwey 2010). The temple is the primordial manifestation of the village community. Accordingly, in Shenzhen we often find the duality of ancestral hall and a temple devoted to Guanyin, a Buddhist deity. Temples are typically funded as cooperative projects by the lineage members, and the donations are publicized on plaques in the temple.

22 <http://szsb.sznews.com/html/2016-11/12/content_3660224.htm > [5.05. 2018]

23 For a list of leading Huang related developers and their projects in Shenzhen, see <http://news.szhome.com/233392.html> [12.02 2018]

24 At the original field site of Watson's research, Xintian village in the New Territories, one of the renovated historical buildings is the mansion of a Wen Clan leader who received the title of an official from the Emperor for his contributions to local society, circumventing the examination system.

25 http://www.jxhzw.org/ggtb/1320.html; http://www.360doc.com/content/17/1128/19/13888283_708074141.shtml, [both 22.04.2018]

26 For more detail, see Guo and Herrmann-Pillath (2018).

Again, we observe a principle of redistribution, as wealthy members are expected to give much more, giving "face" to them. The Huang-related real estate developers donating to the Houwang temple are a case in point. The temple is as important for manifesting the Xiasha village identity as the lavishly reconstructed Ancestral Hall is for expressing the identity of the Huang as descent group.

Considering the *pencai* ritual, some important changes have occurred in the Huang case: as in Hong Kong, we observe different versions of *pencai* practices. On the one hand, there are traditional *pencai* banquets similar to those of the Wen: the Shareholding Cooperative pays for a community *pencai* at Zhongyang holiday. The "common pot" achieved national fame when it became a topic in the celebrated national CCTV series "A Bite of China" in 2014.[27] The Huang were very active in launching their "big common pot" as a cultural legacy. They succeeded: in 2007, the Guangdong provincial government declared the *pencai* to be a part of the intangible cultural heritage of the region. This was combined with recognizing the Huang ancestral rites as intangible heritage of Guangdong province. In 2011, the *pencai* was even elevated to a "third degree" National Heritage. In 2008, the Huang applied for registering the 'big common pot' as a national trademark. Building on this, the World Huang Surname Association Conventions are now also promoted as major tourism events, such as the most recent one in September 2016.[28] The Shenzhen flagship museum, Shenzhen museum (*Shenzhen bowuguan*) even boasts a separate instalment of the same bronze group as at the Xiasha museum and shows a long video of the ancestral rites led by Huang Yingchao.

This development has theoretical significance, since the *pencai* is transformed from a local practice into a national symbol of lineage tradition as part and parcel of Han Chinese identity. This can also be observed in our other field case, the Wen lineage. In both the Huang and the Wen cases, the lineages trace themselves back to migration events in late Song times, when Han settlers moved to the Pearl River Delta, fleeing the Mongol invasion. In the Wen case, the ancestor, Wen Tianxiang, has always been promoted as a national hero. This tradition is now also continued by the Communist Party: Wen Ancestral Halls are even declared as educational sites for CCP members. Hence, we observe a phenomenon that was pointed out by Faure (2007) in his analysis of Imperial regulation of lineage practices in South China: he speaks about incipient conceptions of 'national citizenship' in Ming China, in the sense of lineage practices being recognized as markers of Imperial citizens. In a similar vein, on occasion of their World Conventions, the Huang lineage presents itself as an important descent line in the universal descent group of the Han Chinese, even tracing their ancestry back to the "Yellow Emperor." In this context, the "big common pot" is no longer a ritual that reflects the identity of the local lineage, but the transregional and even transnational identity of the lineage as a member of the Chinese body politic.[29] This is reflected in the local history about the *pencai*: according to the Huang legends, the *pencai* was the first time served to the soldiers of the last Song Emperor who fled the Mongols, and it did not mainly contain pork, but apparently resembled the modern versions. Clearly, this imagined history of the *pencai* becomes part of the imagined community of the Chinese, or Han specifically, of which the Huang are deemed to be a prestigious branch.[30]

Accordingly, the "big common pot" events no longer reflect the identity of the local Huang lineage, but of the entire Huang community. In Shenzhen, this relates to the co-existence of different Huang groups, with many elite Huang not belonging to the local lineage. This can lead to serious tensions, as the ritual economy is also a moral economy, as manifest in the redistribution of "pork." Many local Huang complained about Huang Yingchao that the dividends of the Shareholding Cooperative are too small, and that the real estate business is involving corruption. Highly significantly, in 2016 they staged protests in front of the Ancestral Hall, thus stating their moral claims. However, despite a suit filed with the local

27 See <http://paper.oeeee.com/nis/201406/06/226791.html> [11.10 2017]

28 For journalistic reports about these developments, see <http://szsb.sznews.com/html/2016-11/12/content_3660224.htm> [12.10 2017] < http://news.szhome.com/233392.html > [12.10 2017]

29 Interestingly, this role of surname associations in stating Chinese identity (and not parochial 'clan' identity) has been also important in Singapore, see Chan (2003).

30 See <https://shenzhennoted.com/2012/04/01/xiasha-what-continues-and-what-fades-away/>. As Pieke et al. (2004) have shown, the phenomenon of merging particular and national identities also applies for native place associations of Chinese sojourning abroad: They see themselves as representatives of China, which is strongly supported by regular communication with the respective Chinese embassies.

court, the incident faded out recently and apparently left Huang Yingchao's position intact.

As we see, in case of the Huang the *pencai* is an essential ritual expression in identity politics, with many different facets, local, national and even global. As in the case of Hong Kong, the *pencai* as regional intangible cultural heritage becomes a marker of Shenzhen identity, beyond its original role of the ritual expression of lineage identity: the Huang rites are part of Shenzhen tourism business. The conceptual vacillation between village and lineage becomes relevant here, as the "villages in the cities" are settlements in which an estimated 50 percent of Shenzhen inhabitants live, almost all migrants from other places of China. Re-developing these villages is often accompanied by transforming the lineage culture into a component of Shenzhen citizenship that can be enjoyed by everybody: the duality of Ancestral hall and temple is significant here, since the temple is accessible to everybody, donated by the lineage, however, whereas the hall is closed to the public. In this context, tourism becomes a modern transformation of ritual, and turns into a defining element of Shenzhen local identity.

6. Conclusion

In Watson's original work, the *pencai* is a local culinary custom that starkly contradicted established dining rituals embodying basic structures of Chinese society. It was an expression of lineage solidarity and village egalitarianism against the outside, hostile world, thus revealing a neglected side of Chinese traditional kinship and village society that in the past decades has been discovered by many researchers on the historical and contemporary anthropology of China. As such, its revival in Shenzhen could be also interpreted along the lines of expressing the communal identity against municipal authorities encroaching on the land rights of the farmers. However, as we have seen, in the unique settlement pattern of the urban villages a social and political balance emerged which allowed both the municipal authorities and the villagers to mutually arrange their interests. Today, we observe a relationship between lineage and government that evokes patterns emerging in Late Imperial times, with lineage membership becoming a marker of "Chineseness" in the sense of citizenship.

At this point, another of Watson's seminal contributions to Chinese studies comes into play, the notion of "orthopraxy."[31] The original *pencai* custom was a deviant practice, but different from religious deviance might not have met much attention by the Imperial administration to trigger standardization measures. Today, however, we observer an orthopractic standardization of *pencai* in the context of modern consumer culture. Chinese consumer culture is a core element of contemporary notions of modernization and heightened civilizational standards in the Chinese nation.[32] The modern *pencai*, as in the social imaginary of the Huang Clan, becomes a marker of Chinese identity and high levels of culinary sophistication. This modernist transformation is part and parcel of fusing traditional ritual and modern economy in the shape of tourism projects devoted to urban reconstruction of Shenzhen, also becoming essential venues for leisure activities of Shenzhen people today, where lineages proudly present their local history and identity to the crowds roaming the place. But as has been observed in many studies of tourism in China, in this development different interpretations and views play together in creating a distinct form of Chinese modernity in which traditional kinship ritual survives in new forms, like the *pencai*.

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31 For an overview of the concept and its reception in Chinese studies, see Sutton (2007).

32 For the concept of the Chinese "consumer-citizen" see Hooper (2005) and Tian and Dong (2011).

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