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The Politics of Patriarchal Bargaining in a Chinese Village

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the changing status of women in a village community in the colonial and post-colonial New Territories of Hong Kong SAR, China. It argues that village women are active agents in reclaiming their personal autonomy and play a proactive role in influencing the socio-political order of rural society. In particular, this study demonstrates how village women individually and collectively engaged the patriarchal rule in dealing with the Chinese lineage organizations in the New Territories. It asserts that women's domestic existence is never a wholly domesticated one but instead it contains significant elements of self-articulation and self-empowerment. The continuity of patriarchal rule in the New Territories fails to constitute any moral and philosophical leadership (i.e., hegemony) with active consent from the people. Chinese village women often succeeded in claiming their own rights and defending their interests within the patriarchal system.

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“There is action, and history, and conservation or transformation of structures only because there are agents” (Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant)¹

Introduction

Chinese lineage organization is patriarchal in character. According to Deniz Kandiyoti, a “classic patriarchy” manifests patriliney, patrilocality and *patria potestas* in the most rigorous fashion.² The household patriarchs have specific powers and privileges in control of the local community such as paternal authority over the domestic sphere, patrilineal succession of family property, patrilocal post-marital residence, male-only membership of the communal corporation that owns and manages the ancestral estate, and the male-only rights to participate in communal affairs and decision on an agnatic basis. Senior women too enjoy similar paternal status and substantial kinship powers over the junior men and women in the local

community because of their seniority, their generational status, and their blood or marital relationship with the household patriarchs.³

The Chinese village communities in the colonial and post-colonial New Territories of Hong Kong SAR, China are inclined to run along these lines. For one reason, lineage organization is a widespread institution across China. But it is said to be particularly the case in southern China where many large-scale, well-propriety and historically predominant lineages are established and prevail. The lineage organizations in the New Territories are widely believed to be the most true-to-type in China.⁴ For another reason, during the colonial period from 1898 to 1997, the British colonizers were confronted with hostile resistance from the villagers when they proceeded to take over the New Territories in 1898. In order to secure local compliance, the British expediently relied on the predominant patriarchal lineage organizations to maintain their control under the pretense of respecting Chinese tradition through a policy of indirect rule.⁵ Since China resumed its sovereignty over Hong Kong in July 1997, the Communist regime has adopted the same ruling strategy but framed it as keeping Hong Kong's status quo "unchanged for 50 years" and "taking account of Hong Kong's history and realities" under the principle of "one country, two systems."⁶

As a result, the patriarchal lineage organizations in the New Territories persist until today. The patriarchal system legitimates itself by claiming it represents Chinese tradition values. It also served as a co-ruler

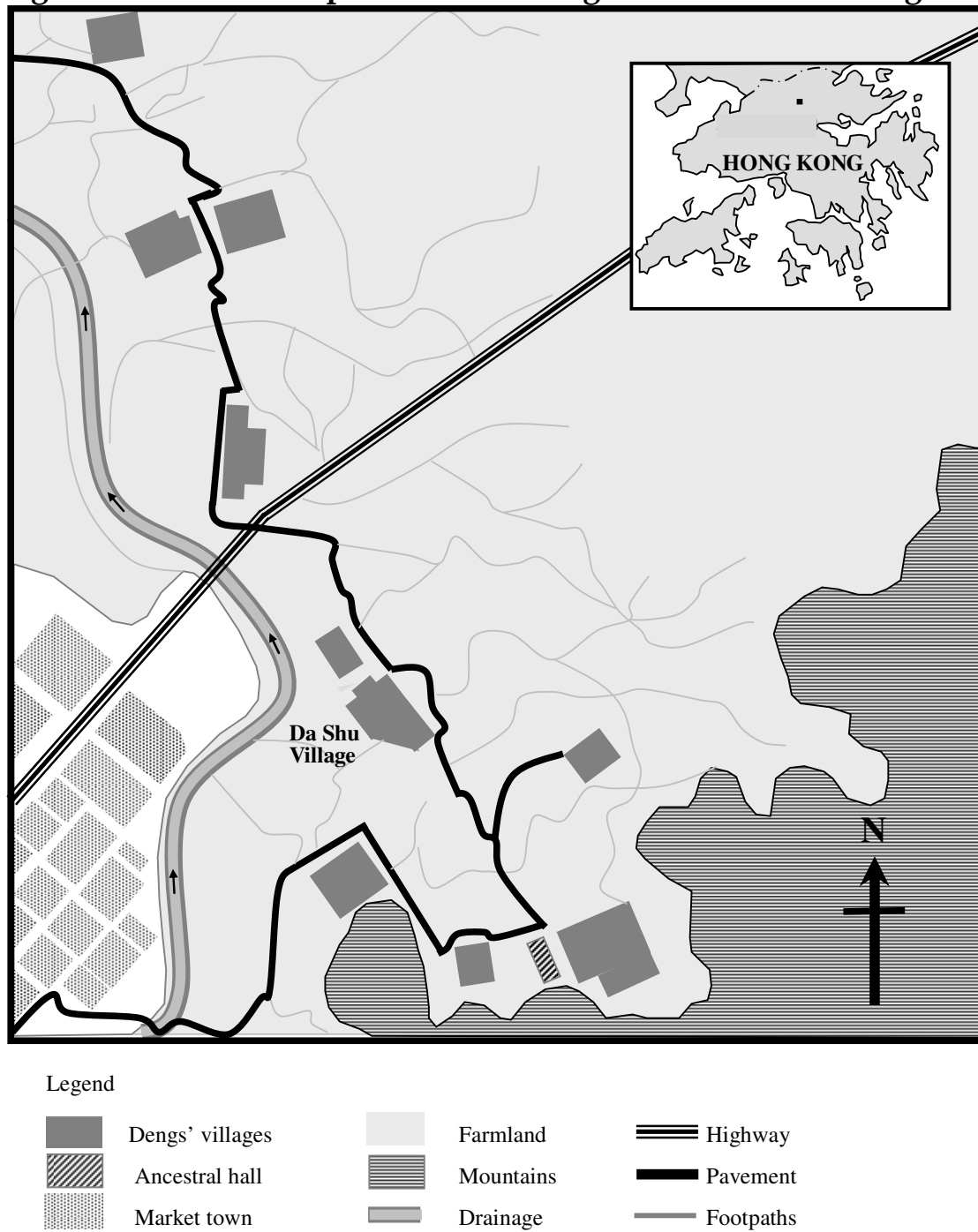
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with the British colonizers and now with the Communist regime in the power structure of Hong Kong. Against this background, the village women under such a patriarchal force are of special importance in the field of Chinese gender studies. Beginning with a critical review of the latest research on village women, this article explores the struggle of village women against patriarchy in Da Shu Village in Hong Kong's New Territories (See Figure 1). This study addresses the pressing issues of how village women confront the patriarchal force that is bureaucratically empowered both by the old and new regimes; what are the gender-specific actions and counter-actions in these women's lives; and how they individually and collectively shape and re-shape the order of things by their own rights.

Departure from the Existing Approaches

Of the existing Chinese gender studies, Selina Ching Chan offers a valuable insight into the status of village women in the New Territories. Based on an anthropological fieldwork in a Pang village in the New Territories, Selina Ching Chan found that there was a discrepancy between the continuity of patriarchal rule and the everyday practice of Chinese villagers. The Chinese villagers seldom strictly adhered to the official patriarchal model in their lineage organizations. While the communal ancestral trust in rule remained male-only on an agnatic basis, the village patriarchs were not actively parochial but instead were to such new principles as being "democratic" and "fair." The Pang lineage leaders thus made it a regular

Figure 1: A Sketch Map of Da Shu Village and Its Surroundings



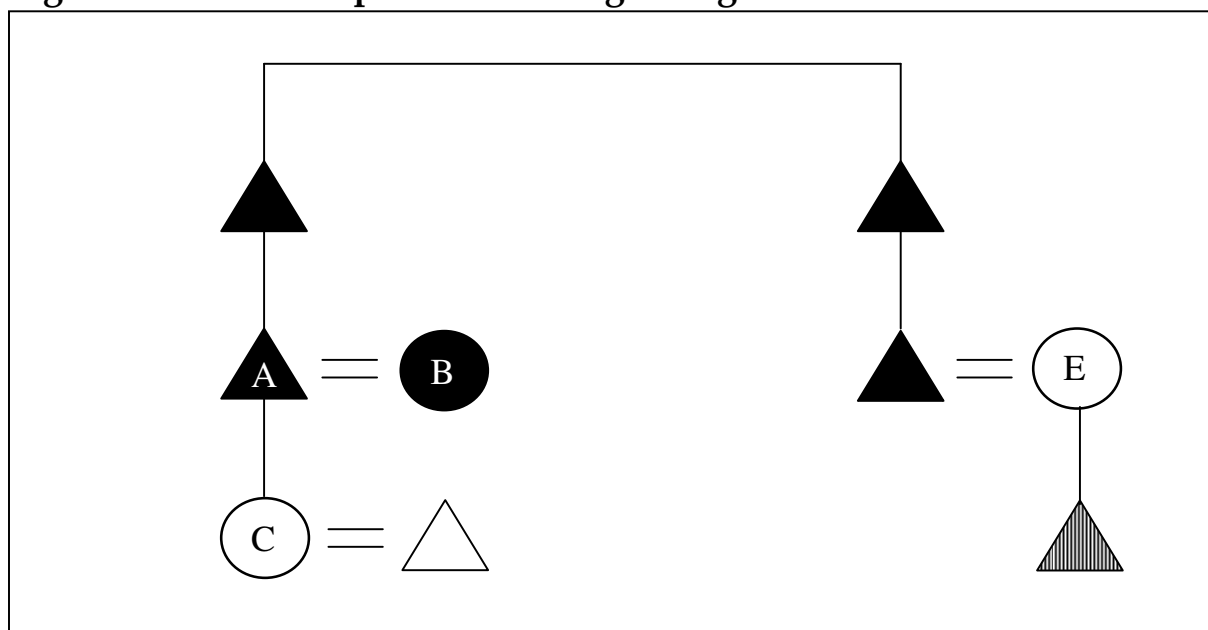
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communal practice to share their kinswomen with the cash income from their ancestral trust.⁷

At the domestic level, Selina Ching Chan shows that the succession of family land was still officially under the patrilineal inheritance rule. But the village patriarchs in practice would take *qin* (closeness) into consideration when they dealt with family inheritance. Some kinswomen who were closely linked by blood and sentiment with their household patriarchs could become the trustee of their family land and estate when there was no male heir. Although the kinswomen in question could not inherit the land as legal owners, this alternative arrangement enabled the kinswomen to obtain the cash income from their family land. In case of need, the village patriarchs even allowed the kinswomen to sell the family inheritance in their trusteeship. In this regard, Selina Ching Chan provides the following case study.⁸

The case study concerned a dispute over A's inheritance of land and a house. When A died without a male heir, he was survived by widow B (his wife) and daughter C (his only child). When widow B was still alive, A's inheritance was made a trust (*zu*) under her management in order to support the family. When widow B passed away few years later, there were some complications. On the one hand, daughter C was then living with her family in England. It was hard for her to manage the property from A's inheritance. Accordingly, the lineage leaders not only supported

Figure 2: A Land Dispute in the Pang Village



daughter C to become the trustee of her family land and estate, but also allowed her to sell the property. On the other hand, daughter C's aunt, widow E, opposed her claim to the family land and estate. Widow E's position appealed to the lineage rule of patrilineal membership. She stressed that daughter C was a "married out daughter" (*waijianũ*) who should be counted as a kinswoman of her husband's lineage according to the rule. As such she failed to be the closest person to A. On the contrary, widow E claimed herself to be a "woman married into the village" (*jiarucun*). She therefore was a kinswoman of the Pang and the closest relative of deceased A through her late husband as his agnate.⁹ (See Figure 2)

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Despite this patrilineal reasoning, the Pang lineage leaders declined widow E's appeal because she was considered not to be a male descendant in the lineage. Widow E had once compromised by asking the lineage leaders for the house only, not the land in A's inheritance. Still the lineage leaders declined widow E's request. Even when widow E proceeded to adopt a son few years later in order to reverse the case, the lineage leaders ignored her and closed the case. Daughter C at the end successfully became the trustee and inherited the family land and house from her deceased father. She sold the land but she gave the house to one of her relatives because of their close relationship.¹⁰

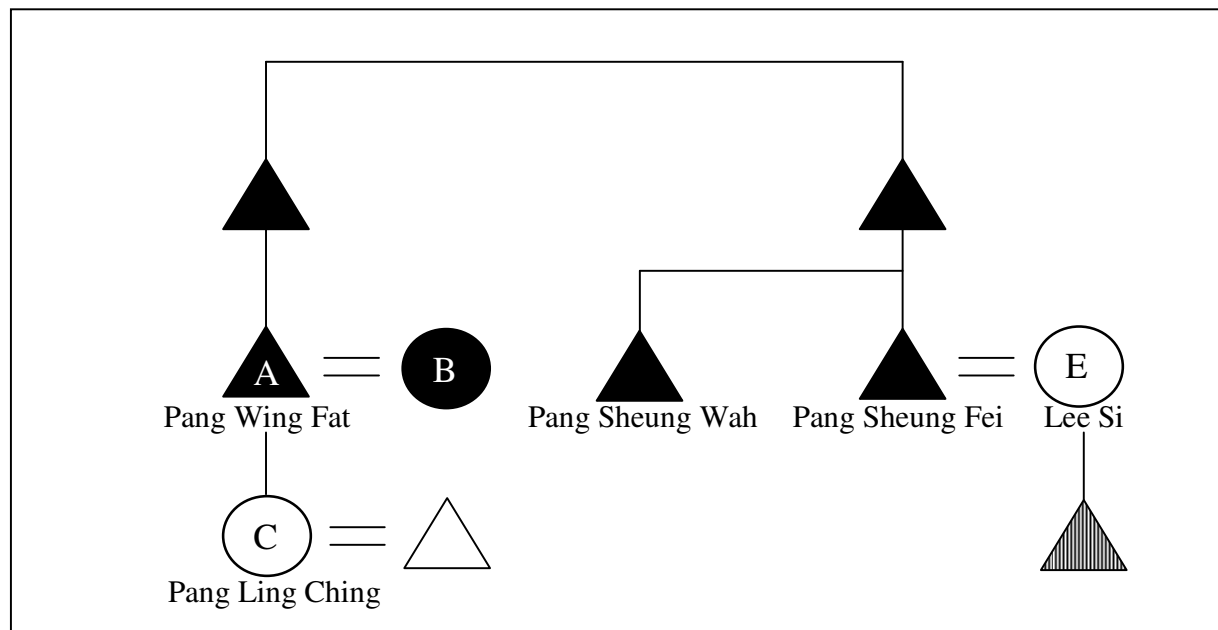
Through this case study, Selina Ching Chan asserts that village women in the New Territories in practice benefit from patriarchal benevolence even though this may violate the official patriarchal rule of the lineage. In such cases, women's rights are not narrowly confined to the control of their dowries as has been often asserted in the scholarly literature. The women actually gain substantial benefits and essential privileges from their lineage organizations including financial dividends from the communal corporation in charge of the ancestral estate, cash income from their shared family properties, and trusteeship that enables them to gain full control of the family inheritance.¹¹

I have no problem with such remarks about the existence of benevolence in practice and its good impact on village women in the New Territories. However, the logic of practice is what Pierre Bourdieu calls

“the site of the dialectic of the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi*.”¹² One fundamental feature in this dialectical relation has to do with irregularities, incoherencies and fluidities without any single rule and consistency.¹³ In this perspective, the existence of a benevolent patriarchy in practice cannot be guaranteed under all circumstances. Even when it exists on some occasions, it can remain egregiously varied and even contradictorily erratic. There is also much evidence against the idea that village patriarchs act benevolently towards women in the New Territories.

Another anthropologist, Kwok-Shing Chan revisited the same Pang village in the New Territories several years after Selina Ching Chan completed her fieldwork. He also looked at the same dispute and collected additional data which allowed for further discussion. Kwok-Shing Chan reveals the identities of all the disputed parties in this case. A was Pang Wing Fat, daughter C was Pang Ling Ching, and widow E was Lee Si. Pang Wing Fat’s two agnates, Pang Sheung Wah and Pang Sheung Fei, were involved as well. The landed inheritance under dispute had to do with the individual ownership of seven pieces of land (0.29 acres in total), the common ownership of two plots of land (0.42 acres in total), and two village houses. According to Kwok-Shing Chan, the nature of the land dispute was far more complicated than was originally portrayed by Selina Ching Chan and the outcome of the land dispute also differed. Figure 3 is a complete diagram of the kinship connections among all the disputed parties as shown in Kwok-Shing Chan’s in-depth study.¹⁴

Figure 3: A Land Dispute in the Pang Village from a Re-study



First, Pang Sheung Wah was a bachelor throughout his life. He died in 1936 without a male heir. Subsequently, Pang Sheung Fei who was Pang Sheung Wah's closet kinsman in the same descent group obtained his inheritance. In 1967, Pang Sheung Fei passed away without a male heir. His wife, Lee Si directly secured Pang Sheung Fei's inheritance and indirectly obtained Pang Sheung Wah's inheritance, which had been already given to Pang Sheung Fei since Pang Sheung Wah died. The Pang lineage leaders also considered Lee Si to be the rightful successor of two sets of inheritances. Moreover, Pang Wing Fat died in 1942. His inheritance, as mentioned before, was first passed to his wife; then to his daughter, Pang Ling Ching. But, in 1978, Pang Ling Ching eventually inherited not just the full ownership of seven pieces of land and two village houses from Pang Wing Fat's inheritance. She also inherited two plots of land under the

common ownership of Pang Wing Fat, Pang Sheung Wah and Pang Sheung Fei. By comparison, Pang Ling Ching held one-third of the share of these two plots of land, and Lee Si, as the final successor of Pang Sheung Wah and Pang Sheung Fei, held the remaining two-thirds of that share.¹⁵

Kwok-Shing Chan's analysis of the property dispute in the Pang village is more comprehensive than the account given by Selina Ching Chan. According to Kwok-Shing Chan, Pang Ling Ching in the end failed to win the case because the Pang lineage leaders agreed with Lee Si's interpretation of the patrilineal rule and accepted her appeal. Pang Ling Ching obtained only seven pieces of land and one-third of the share of the two plots of land, and Lee Si secured her ownership of the two village houses and kept her two-thirds of the share of the two plots of land. Kwok-Shing Chan further explains that Pang Ling Ching's decision to give the two village houses to her relative had little to do with any close relationship as Selina Ching Chan has suggested. Instead, the decision was a promise given by Pang Ling Ching for an exchange of interest with her relative before the final settlement of the dispute. In the exchange, Pang Ling Ching's calculation was that if her relative enabled her to inherit the family property, she would reward him with the two village houses. Because she lost to Lee Si in the dispute, her exchange with her relative was turned out to be incomplete. But Kwok-Shing Chan's study confirms one major finding in Selina Ching Chan's work which was that Lee Si adopted a son in order to secure her claim to Pang Win Fat's inheritance.¹⁶

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I do not intend to draw any final conclusion from the works of Selina Ching Chan and Kwok-Shing Chan about the nature of this land dispute. Even if I conducted fieldwork in the same Pang village to validate these two scholars' findings, my research outcome could well be similar to the "Rashomon effect" that there may be multiple versions of the same event rather than one true version. Re-study of the same event often creates dissimilar and discrepant interpretations because of using different sources, interviewing different informants, and spending different lengths of time in the field site to reach different conclusions.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the works of Selina Ching Chan and Kwok-Shing Chan throw light on several significant themes about gender politics in the New Territories.

First, their discussion of alternative modes of village politics implies the existence of a patriarchal orthodoxy in the social sphere. It occurs to me that the rise of alternative treatments for women from patriarchal benevolence in practice, however widely felt and longstanding they are, should not be taken as the end of the issue. One critical feature in question is that the patriarchal segment of the village communities in the New Territories can continue itself as the highest authority within the local. The few patriarchal elites could hold on to the formal status which controls the community life for all village members.

Second, reality in practice does not necessarily vary from the reality in rule. These two forms of reality can be identical to each other now and then. Equally true is the fact that the practice of the villagers in the New

Territories needs little benevolence towards women and adheres to the official patriarchal rule. This explains why Lee Si had to strengthen her claim by appropriating the patrilineal rule and adopting a son.

Third, the rise of patriarchal benevolence in practice is not without limits. As Kwok-Shing Chan comments, “in their succession to their natal or marital families’ properties and in how they dealt with estates (particularly village houses), women were not totally free from the challenge of male lineage members who thought that the transfer would infringe upon the collective interests of the Pang lineage.”¹⁸ Evidently, inherited property from ancestors, particularly village houses, remains exclusive for male descendants through patrilineal succession.¹⁹ The primary interest of the patriarchal force is to uphold their landed privileges in the long run. The practice of patriarchal benevolence is only a marginal element in the system. The allowance for patriarchal benevolence hardly overrides the patriarchal control of landed resources.

Fourth, the existence of patriarchal benevolence in practice is highly situational in the New Territories. But such practice is used to neutralize the extremely sexist environment created by the prevailing Chinese patriarchal rule. This is also used to justify their co-ruling with the old and new state powers at the expense of women interests. In the mid-1990s, a popular movement fighting for the village women’s equal inheritance rights gained extensive attention in Hong Kong and it successfully achieved its goal. Throughout this period of contentious campaigning, the

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patriarchs counter-argued that village women in the New Territories benefited from their benevolence.²⁰ Even though powerful patriarchs often acted as “good protectors” for the powerless female as Selina Ching Chan has suggested,²¹ it remains necessary to criticize such an asymmetrical power relationship between men and women.

Therefore it is important for us to adopt a feminist critique of patriarchal bargaining in order to challenge this notion of patriarchal benevolence and to critically examine the status of village women in the New Territories. In particular, it is necessary to explore how women adopted various strategies to engage with and even subvert patriarchal domination, and how they participated in bottom-up politics to act upon and make sense of themselves.²² This feminist notion can be found in the field of Chinese gender studies. Ellen Judd draws on her research on village women in north China and argues that these women had a clear sense of themselves as autonomous actors in their daily life even though they had no role in the gender blind official discourse.²³ Gail Hershatter’s study shows that Chinese women in the past had been frequently “talking back” to the male elites and speaking out for themselves.²⁴ Elisabeth Croll’s analysis indicates that women under the Communist rule often used their life experience and self-awareness to challenge the patriarchal cultural rhetoric and political correct language.²⁵ Their action can often display at different levels as well. Zhao Ma’s research highlights the fact that the lower class women in early twentieth-century Beijing succeeded in developing a far-reaching support network amongst them; they relied on

this network to escape from domestic bondage and to expand their life chances.²⁶ Margery Wolf's ethnographic observation of village women in Taiwan reveals that the prevailing paternal rule and exogamous partilocality kept women in a disadvantageous position within the domestic sphere. But the women eventually obtained their authority through motherhood to the extent of creating a 'uterine family' primarily based on emotional ties with their children. This happened within the patriarchal order but beyond the reach of the patriarchy.²⁷ Bobby Siu further demonstrates that contemporary Chinese women are not docile beings who cling to men and do nothing more than domestic tasks. They frequently exercise significant influence up to the making of history.²⁸ A similar pattern of female activism also can be seen in the latest studies of gender politics by Anouska Komlosy, Sharon R. Wesoky, and Yuki Terazawa. Their works point to the strength of Chinese women in mobilizing different resources and taking different actions for self-empowerment.²⁹

The next section draws on these conceptual insights to take Chinese women as a group of real, active and reflexive agents of their own existence, and to reflect on my study of village women in Da Shu Village, an indigenous Chinese settlement controlled by the Deng lineage organization in northern New Territories. My study does not perceive the Chinese patriarchal rule derived from the lineage organization as a hegemony.³⁰ I argue that the Chinese patriarchal rule is at the core of domination because it has failed to consolidate itself with active consent from people.

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Particularly, the village women have many covert and overt strategies of patriarchal bargaining which enable them to gain justice. This argument is based on my fieldwork research in Da Shu Village from 1998 to 2000.

Female Action Repertoires and Women's Community

One common feature among men in Da Shu Village was their absenteeism from domestic life. Men needed to work outside in the daily round of the village. Even when they were off from work, they liked to gather among themselves at an informal casino run by and for themselves inside the village. They usually left the domesticity to women. Most women in the village were preoccupied with domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, sweeping, washing, nursing their children, and looking after elderly family members. Although some women had to work outside as well, they were often doubled burdened, having their jobs outside the village while also handling the domestic duties at home. The domesticity left to the women even included the day-to-day ancestral worship at home, the customary ceremonies for ancestors with special sacrifices during large festivals, the regular collection of rents from tenants, and other miscellaneous work for the ancestral property (e.g., passing on information, delivering rent bills and receipts, handling family banking accounts). Women often oversaw and managed the ancestral business in their families.

Table 1: A Woman's Daily Domestic Schedule in Da Shu Village

Morning	1. Prepare breakfast for her three daughters and take them to have breakfast outside
	2. Take the two little daughters to the primary school*
	3. Visit the marketplace, buy daily provisions and other necessities
	4. Return home and undertake chores (e.g., sweeping, cleaning, ironing, tidying up the households, feeding a dog and two tanks of goldfish, cutting grass and gardening)
Noon	5. Pick up her daughters after school
	6. Take the daughters to lunch outside or make lunch for them at home
	7. See the daughters to do their homework
	8. Play with the daughters at home or bring them outside to play with other village children
	9. Burn incense and worship the ancestral altar
	10. Undertake the usual management of family property (e.g., meeting with tenants, collecting rents, and keeping the accounts and records)
Evening	11. Cook dinner and wash the utensils after dinner
	12. Clean the kitchen and clear the trash
	13. Wash clothes and hang out the washings on the roof
	14. Rest and watch television
	15. Make tea and refreshments for husband returning from work
	16. Finish her usual household duties and go to sleep

*Huang Jieying's eldest daughter was fifteen years old and studied at a lower secondary school. She usually started her day and went to school on her own.

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Huang Jieying, a woman of forty-five years old, told me that she was one of the few full-time mothers in the village. She lived in a well-to-do household in an elaborate, three-storied, Spanish-style house with a spacious and well-planted garden opposite the village entrance. Her husband ran a canteen in a newly developed town. He usually traveled to work early in the morning and returned home late at night. Therefore, Huang Jieying did all the housework and looked after the three daughters on her own. She also needed to see to the regular ancestral worship for her household. Table 1 lists all household tasks “in a day of her life.” The list is more or less typical of women’s daily existence being absorbed into domestic work.

Being preoccupied with the day-to-day household duties did not mean that women in Da Shu Village were confined to their household units. On the contrary, they had a very active network of relationships extending beyond the village. They established close interpersonal relationships with one another, held various private gatherings, and enjoyed a public community life. The most common practices were to have frequent meetings with other women while doing their domestic duties.

Village women often gather in twos or threes during the day to chat and gossip, go shopping and generally devote attention to any matter that concern them. During their leisure time and on holidays, they like to play mahjong at someone’s home, go bargain hunting in a department store, drink in a teahouse, and eat in a restaurant. They frequently engage in

mutual self-help such as buying one another drinks and food, helping one another to see their children to school and home, and giving one another their free labor to nurse the children and undertake other domestic duties.

One prominent feature of their collective activities was the regular meetings at the village gateway every afternoon. On such occasions, many young and old women casually approached each other, leisurely sat on the public benches, and indulged in chatting and joking over endless topics while happily sharing fruit, drinks and snacks. In these gatherings, they brought their children and let them play together. Sometimes, village men joined in for a while when they happened to walk by or when they felt bored at home, but they were rare participants. The women's daily activities and collective mothering usually lasted for the whole afternoon until they had to return home to prepare the evening meals in their smoky kitchens. These social activities constituted an important aspect of womanhood and childhood in the village, and created a common level of village communication which transcended age, generation, class and gender differences.

Culturally the day-to-day action repertoires of village women should be seen as the principal ways in which they raised themselves out of the monotonous routine of domestic work. Using Michel de Certeau's term, these village women possessed subtle, poetic, and artful "tactics" to poach time and space, to crosscut the dominant order superimposed upon them, and to gain small victories as well as joyful discoveries.³¹ Socially, these

action repertoires were essential practices for village women to maintain connections, social circles, interpersonal relations, and mutual exchanges for help. This also created an extensive women's community within but beyond the predominant patriarchal rule in the village world. Above and beyond these two levels, the day-to-day action repertoires of village women were the main source of their domestic political strength and bargaining power.

Female Agency and Domestic Disputes

Village women do not simply group together for company in doing their domestic duties and burn up any unoccupied time in the daily routine. They bring to such meetings domestic issues and collectively discussed them in their daily gatherings. Personal troubles in their households, childcare concerns, domestic tensions and quarrels with household members are discussed. Sometimes, they share their feelings with the peers and seek advice from the senior women. At other times, issues are explicitly aired as a means of extending their domestic disputes into the public sphere. On such occasions, they are seeking outside support and communal arbitration.

Conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are typical examples of domestic disputes that are well-documented in the field of Chinese gender studies. In Da Shu Village the vexing relationship between the old widow, Quan Daijin, and her daughter-in-law, Zheng Axue, is an

example. Specifically, both Quan Daijin and Zheng Axue often expressed their grievances and denounced each other in front of other villagers. When they occasionally ran into each other at the village gateway, they engaged in public confrontation, deliberately talked in loud voices, used some trivial issues against each other, and at other times kept their distance.

Among any other things Quan Daijin held a senior position in her family and the lineage as well. She also had wider and stronger personal networks in the village. She had more social capital and symbolic power than her daughter-in-law. This explained why Zheng Axue was criticized as a “bad wife” in the community. An elderly woman once commented on Zheng Axue:

She was an extremely bad wife. She seldom cooked for her children and frequently left all the work to her old mother-in-law. What she always did everyday was to play mahjong or cards. I once had tried to persuade her to spend more time at home and give more care to her children. But she swore against me and said, “Bitch! Shut up! That is none of your business!

An elderly man made the same criticism of Zheng Axue: “Her behavior was surely no good at all. Whenever I saw her in the village, she concentrated upon gambling and loved all the games just as the men did. How could a woman behave like this! Her three children were very pitiable indeed!”

Notwithstanding this, “the weak”, as James C. Scott suggests, have their “weapons” too.³² Zheng Axue fought back with many personal attacks against Quan Daijin. In the community, she portrayed Quan Daijin as a “bad widow” by spreading slander against her. Zheng Axue accused Quan Daijin as having had an affair with a male ex-tenant in the village for over thirty years because during his long tenancy at her house, she allowed this man to live there without paying rent. Zheng Axue sometimes even insinuated that she had a “half father-in-law” at home. This scandalous gossip against Quan Daijin spread throughout the village.

As their feud escalated, some village women attempted to mediate between Quan Daijin and Zheng Axue. On some occasions, when Quan Daijin and Zheng Axue lost their tempers and the quarrels broke out in public, other women acted as peacemakers to separate them and calm them down. In addition to direct intervention, their friends privately approached Deng Quiren and asked him to deal with the worsening dispute between his mother and wife. However, after the village women knew that Deng Quiren had once beat Zheng Axue for her constant neglect of the children, they turned to criticize Deng Quiren as a “bad man.”

This helps to show that Chinese village women had an intricate and complex relationship with their community. They were capable of making their voices heard, and shaping and influencing other people’s opinion. They even engaged in both overt and covert political actions against men and women throughout their daily lives. Importantly, the presence of this

female agency in the village was not just of relevance to domestic disputes. Village women were not simply concerned with household matters and private issues. They were also important agents that frequently affected public affairs, communal lineage issues, and decision-making processes which ostensibly were the exclusive preserve of men.

Female Agency and Communal Affairs

The Dengs in Da Shu Village had their own lineage institution to deal with internal issues. They held communal meetings in the ancestral hall, and made formal decisions through open voting. At first sight, their internal communal meetings, which housed within a systematic patrilineal and patriarchal system, maintained a typical paternal political and jurisdictional structure. However, an exclusively male constitution was seldom completely realized in practice.

The most powerful lineage group in Da Shu Village was called Mu De Tang. It consisted of twenty households. The attendees at their communal meeting should have been the twenty male household heads. According to their institutionalized patriarchal rule, membership in the Mu De Tang was not a static social group. Of the twenty households in Mu De Tang, ten had migrated abroad. Even though most of them maintained some connections with the home village, they often failed to return and attend the regular communal meetings.³³ In two of these ten households,

Table 2: The Constitution of Mu De Tang's Communal Meeting

	Normal Context	Practical Context
Household	20	Localized: 10 Aboard: 10
Attendants by Sex	20 Patriarchs	Localized : 8 Patriarchs 2 Matriarchs Aboard: 0 Patriarch 2 Matriarchs
Total Attendants	20	12

some elderly women still lived in the village and they acted on behalf of the male absentees in communal meetings and other public events. Among the ten localized households of Mu De Tang, all except two had males who regularly showed up in the meetings. In the two cases, the female household heads attended the meetings. In one case, the patriarch no longer lived in the village, while in another case the patriarch was Huang Jieying's husband, whose business often prevent him from attending the meetings.

Taking into account these variations, only twelve households frequently attended the communal meeting. They were the ten localized households and the two households represented by elderly women. The

proceedings of the communal meetings usually included four unofficial but direct female participants (i.e., the above two and the other two representing their husbands who were unable to attend the meetings) (See Table 2). In theory, the households should be represented by males under the official paternal rule, but in practice women could become representatives for the sake of expedience.

The communal meetings were not the only place for women to discuss village affairs. Informal and unstructured exchanges created a daily forum, and frequently substantial actions were taken prior to the official communal discussion such as collecting information, lobbying meeting members, making preliminary proposals, engaging in debates and even making advanced decisions. Between 1997 and 2000, the people of Mu De Tang in the village sold a considerable portion of their collectively owned land. This communal decision deserves further explanation. One manager (*sili*) of the communal ancestral trust in Mu De Tang at that time was their fellow kinsman Deng Quiyi. On his instigation, his lineage decided to sell a piece of communal land in their shared ancestral estate to a large private property developer. The size of this communal land was over 100,000 square feet, and the market price per square foot was HK\$400 (US\$51). The total earning for Mu De Tang was HK\$40,000,000 (US\$5,128,205).

The sale captured the attention of all members of Mu De Tang and became a topic of discussion. Excitement and great expectations were expressed. When Deng Quiyi in mid-1997 represented the lineage to

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finalize the formal agreement and accepted a deposit of HK\$4,000,000 (US\$512,820) from the property developer, a special communal meeting was called to discuss the proceeds from this sale. Consequently, they decided to save up to HK\$10,000,000 (one fourth of the proceeds; US\$1,282,051) for the future development of the lineage. They also proposed to build four houses with twelve rental units on the empty communal land next to their ancestral hall inside the village, thereby obtaining long-term income for the lineage.³⁴ Above all, they planned to share the remaining HK\$30,000,000 (three fourths of the proceeds; US\$3,846,153) among themselves by agnatic branch. The sale of collective land was an unprecedented event in the lineage; it would bring a considerable amount of HK\$1,000,000 to HK\$2,000,000 (US\$128,205 to US\$256,410) to most of the existing agnatic branches (See Figure 4).

Given that so much money was involved, the collective land sale was not a smooth process. It caused disagreement, animosity and a number of disputes amongst the people of Mu De Tang. In late 1997, the general property market of Hong Kong abruptly declined. The private developer suddenly attempted to cancel the deal and asked for the return of the deposit. This developer had a strong case for the breach of the agreement because he had discovered an official error in the Block Crown Lease—the earliest official land record of the New Territories, produced in 1905.³⁵ The Block Crown Lease contained two integral attachments to the general deed for clarifying the leasehold. The first one was a descriptive cadastral list

that recorded the lot number, the area, the usage, the lessee's name and address, the terms of lease in years, and the crown rent of the land. The second one was a geographical cadastral map that in scale delineated the physical location, area, shape, and topography of each piece of land as mentioned in this cadastral list. However, I was told during fieldwork that this earliest official land record produced inconsistent data for this particular case. The size of Mu De Tang's ancestral land about to be sold was smaller in the descriptive cadastral list than that recorded in the cadastral map, and the difference was much as 67,000 square feet.³⁶ This discrepancy in the official documents created ambiguity about Mu De Tang's claim to the collective ownership of their ancestral land.

In a private conversation, the developer told the lineage members that he could help them to fix the official problem if they agreed to reduce the price per square foot by 20 percent, from HK\$400 (US\$51) to HK\$320 (US\$41). The Mu De Tang angrily called for a special communal meeting in the ancestral hall to address the issue. Even though women held no official position in the village, they still kept their eyes on what was going on. They asked fellow male and female villagers for more news. They exchanged information and engaged in intense discussion about all the twists and turns of the case. Both men and women in the Mu De Tang, formally and informally, argued whether their lineage should accept the developer's proposal to lower the selling price or whether they should take legal action and press the developer to fulfill the original agreement.

Deng Quiyi quickly suggested accepting the developer's conditions in order to complete the deal as soon as possible. Immediately, a rumor spreads in the community that he was in league with the developer. His fellow villagers, women in particular, spread the rumor that Deng Quiyi had a private arrangement with the developer and that he had cheated the lineage. Deng Quiyi became aware of this rumor. He then started to appear in the women's daily gatherings at the village gateway and used these occasions to clarify his position and to persuade the women to take his side. The four existing special female representatives in the communal meeting were the key persons to whom he talked.

Though Deng Quiyi reacted swiftly, he failed to forestall the spread of numerous disagreements with him from both the male and female lineage members. They found it difficult to make an immediate decision over the sale of land. Even his elder brother, Deng Quiren, blamed him,

I really fail to know what the hell my stupid younger brother is doing for us! How come he introduced such a fucker (i.e., the developer) to us? Now we are really in their fucking play. To bring a suit against him, we may not win but huge amount of money must be used. And, we don't know what they will do next. They are so rich. Not to bring a suit against him, will mean we immediately lose eight million for sure. What do we do? I really don't know what to do.

At the same times, many women openly expressed similar views but urged the lineage to sue the developer because they felt that the developer

deliberately trapped them. As one woman remarked, “Absolutely, no reason to be otherwise! He (i.e., the developer) obviously cheated us. How come we are so easy to be cheated! Eight million is not a little amount. We must bring a suit, no matter what!” On other occasions, they had private dealings with the four special female representatives, calling them to challenge Deng Quiyi’s proposal to finalize the deal. They told one another that they would ask their men to vote in the communal meeting in favor of suing the developer.

There is no way to find out how these women attempted to persuade their men or how successful they were. But the people of Mu De Tang formally decided to sue the developer, and as their manager Deng Quiyi was appointed to work on the legal action. He hired a lawyer for professional advice and spent a great deal of time checking all information and documents in the case. The outcome must have disappointed him. In private, he complained that “the long hair” (i.e., women) created this problem and had caused him trouble.

It is hard to say who won or lost in this dispute. When I carried out a follow-up study in 2001 (two years after its commencement), the male and female lineage members changed their minds and accepted the developer’s proposal to cut the price through a private settlement. The most commonly cited reason was that the legal action was likely to be more costly than compromising with the developer.³⁷ Deng Quiyi expressed this view quite recently, “To begin with, I have already seen that it was fucking useless to

file a suit against him (i.e., the developer). Rather, we must depend on him for the money. There is no room for argument!" A woman in the lineage echoed this view,

He (i.e., developer) indeed wanted a lower price. What he said about that problem (i.e., the official mistake) was simply a pretext. We also had filed a suit against him for years. But the selling was totally held up. It made one very annoyed indeed! And, if we don't sell that ancestral land to him, we will fail to have another buyer.³⁸

The lesson from this dispute is that village women could not be totally excluded from any discussion and action in the public sphere. Village women had an invested interest in village affairs. What happened in public paralleled what went on domestically and privately.³⁹ Village women were capable of influencing both communal discussions and actions. The next section reveals how such female riposte went beyond their village community and extended to the governmental level.

Female Reflexivity and Official Policy

During my fieldwork at Da Shu Village, I found women to be actively applying reflexivity to articulate their interests. They were not a passive group of people. They regularly articulated gender-specific critiques of institutionalized sexism in their community. For example, Liang Sanjie, Bozhangliang, and three other village women discussed why they, as women, could not join the higher-ordered lineage assemblies in the general

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ancestral hall at the higher-ordered village level of Fu Mei Au Xiang, which was above Da Shu Village in the political hierarchy.

Bozhongliang was uncomfortable in expressing her emotions. This was so when she spoke in favor of the existing patriarchal norm on the ground of tradition: "It is a male place, after all. It won't seem good for us to appear there? It is against the customary practice. ... I do feel: it is not so appropriate somehow." But Liang Sanjie appealed to the principle of gender equality and equated the importance of men and women as being like "wind" and "rain" in nature. She further explained:

Oh! No! What is the age we are in now? People talk about gender equality. Women and men are the same. Indeed, this kind of old thing really should be changed. It is absolutely unreasonable. The world must have both "wind" and "rain" to make things grow and keep things growing. Without this, the world will be in trouble! In fact, one will also never see a village which only has men and no women.

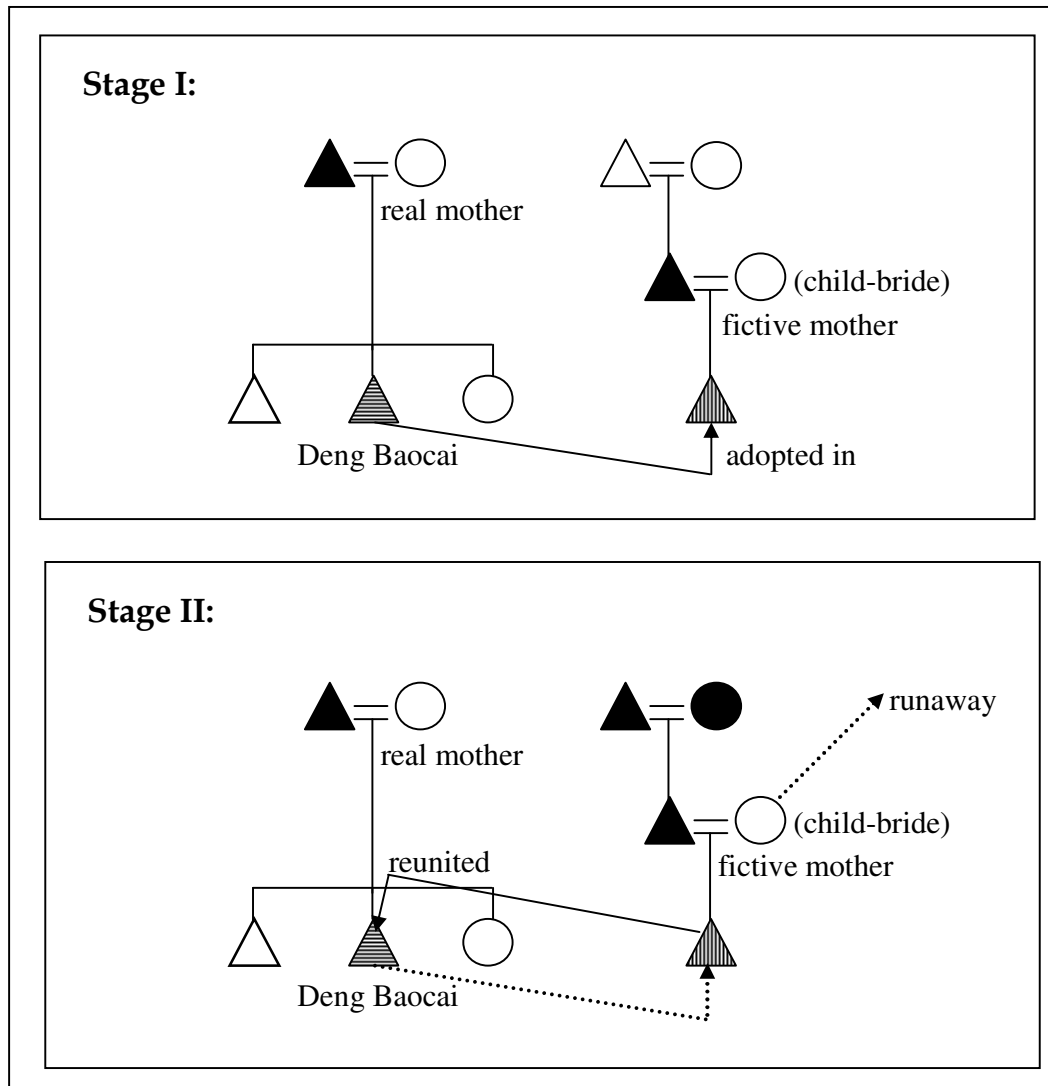
However, women in Da Shu Village never took the existing paternal and patrilineal domestic order for granted. For example, Deng Baocai was the wealthiest man in the village. His fellow villagers estimated him to have a household fortune of about HK\$30 to 40 million (US\$3.8 to 5.1 million) thanks to many profitable properties that he had inherited. Women challenged Deng Baocai's enrichment by questioning his peculiar beginnings in life, especially his double mothered background. In their

discussions, they recalled that Deng Baocai originally had a natural mother and a stepmother at the same time. His deceased natural mother had been a young widow because of her husband's early death during the Anti-Japanese War. When Deng Baocai was eight years old, his mother had to sustain the whole household, as well as look after two young children.

This finally proved to be too much to bear and the household fell apart. She was forced to sell young Deng Baocai to another Deng household because of extreme poverty. Because the other Deng household was the most well-to-do household in the village, he grew up in an affluent environment. But this wealthy household had an old couple and a husbandless child bride as the couple's daughter-in-law. The story was that this old couple's only son died at the age of ten before he could marry the child bride. However I was told during fieldwork that this child bride was still formally "married" with her deceased husband-to-be because she had had a "ghost marriage" in accordance with customary practice. Under her parents-in-law's arrangement, she went through a wedding ceremony with the soul of her deceased husband-to-be, which was represented by a cock. After the ceremony, she became his official wife, and as a rule had to keep widowhood for the rest of her life.

This child bride eventually committed adultery after both of her parents-in-law passed away. She ran away, which inevitably left Deng

Figure 5: The doubly mothered background of Deng Baocai



Baocai (the fictive son) alone when he was nineteen years old. Deng Baocai became the only remaining member in his step-household. He gradually came to address his natural mother as “mother” but remained living in the house of his step-household. (See Figure 5).

A closer view at the story shows that women in Da Shu Village considered Deng Baocai to be wealthy only because of his natural mother and stepmother's sacrifices. It was through them that he inherited the household estates and properties.⁴⁰ Even in the case of his stepmother (i.e., the escaped child bride), she never misused her household's wealth but instead fulfilled her duties. Both of them were more than good to him. But on his part, Deng Baocai simply took the double advantages given to him by his two mothers without giving anything in return. Women in the village disapproved of Deng Baocai's behavior. For instance, Liao Yindi remarked,

Yes, he is rich! And, what the hell, he is the richest. But, it was not that Yujiao (i.e., Deng Baocai's stepmother) never ran away with the things (i.e., family estate) but passed them to him. This allows him have his goodtime now.

Liang Sanjie added,

To be fair, though Yujiao ran away with a big belly, she still did something good. At least, she is not greedy. In fact, her deceased parents-in-law also should not blame her. She became a widow so early. Right! Do you know if Baocai keeps seeing her or not?

Liao Yindi and other women, Liao Jinzhi and Deng Amei, were unsure about Deng Baocai's relation with Yujiao. Deng Amei commented,

But, it is unfair to his real mother who labored so hard and always went to "clear the wild grass on farmland" (i.e., a marginally paid

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agricultural job in the past) held bring him up. See, what has his real mother got to live for in her lifetime? I really fail to know why she still would be so good giving all the property to him.

Deng Amei then pointed in the direction of the crude house in which Deng Baocai's real mother lived.

These self-reflexive conversations expressed the women's view on gendered meaning of a specific event in the village. In line with their sensitivity, women often took real actions for their own rights as well. The following case concerns the renewal project of a house in the village in 1999. It reveals how the concerns of one village woman, confronted with the collapse of the patriarchal domestic order, became a matter of communal concern and an object of reflection in the village. Not only her fellow female villagers, but also her fellow males, worked together to help her. Everyone found it imperative to play down the domestic patriarchal power structure in order to come to her aid. Generally speaking, her action entailed a silent war over a "cultural right in living" against "the cultural right in law." The event points to the process of how a woman got rid of the submissiveness in herself to patriarchal rule before she could at the end act for her real interest to help herself.

Liao Jinzhi was a married-in woman in Da Shu Village. When she was sixty-five years old, she was extremely weak and thin, with an unhealthy pallid face and could hardly open her eyes. Her countenance

was a sad consequence of an over-laborious life. In the community, her peculiar personality was an occasional topic of gossip. Although people appreciated her friendly character and her readiness to help others, they saw her as a “singularly stupid woman.” Her over-frugal behavior, especially reserving leftover food and consuming it for days and even weeks, made them feel that she was quite odd. In general, they viewed her as a typically conservative woman who unnecessarily disparaged herself while looking after her husband and son. One of her peers stated,

It is absolutely hard to know what she has on her mind! Her mind also seems to be from the Stone Age. What is the point for her to live so frugally? As I know, she once kept eating a leftover fish for two weeks. It was absolutely terrible! In fact, she is not lacking money. But, she only knows how to save and keeps the best for her husband and son. Most recently, I even learned that she would feel sick and throw up if she had a little more food. It is ridiculous!

Liao Jinzhi's husband was a recently deceased kinsman, Deng Demeng, and her son, Deng Changhu, was notorious for drug addiction and frequent criminal offenses. When her husband suddenly died, she found it too much of a shock. She sank into depression and often burst into tears. Worse, her son, Deng Changhu was in prison at that time and could not give her any emotional support. As a result, many villagers came to comfort her and assisted with her husband's funeral. Despite the generosity of her fellow villagers, Liao could not hold her emotions back. There were occasional sounds of her weeping coming from her house. She

faced a problem of dealing with her husband's inheritance following his sudden death. Her fellow villagers were aware of the matter and worried about what she would do. Her husband left three ancestral houses (*zuwu*) and about HK\$1.5 million (US\$192,307) in the bank. The three ancestral houses were the No. 8 house, No. 14 house, and No. 26 house in the village. Liao's household only lived in No. 14 house. The other two houses were rented out but the No. 8 house was currently vacant. Liao simply wanted to pass her husband's inheritance to her son and let him manage it.

Liao's close female and male friends immediately talked to her when they learned of her intention. They all stressed that she should immediately convert her husband's inheritance into her name. One woman warned her about the potential danger of giving everything to her son:

To pass everything to your son could be almost like throwing everything into the deep blue sea. If he misuses them (the ancestral estate) and finally sells them off, what would you do? I think you may even find yourself with nowhere to live! Similar cases do happen and are not uncommon in real life: the son will turn his back on the parents once he gets the family property.

Her friends tried to persuade her to change her mind. In a similar vein, another woman remarked,

If she is still so soft at this time, I really wonder how could she will get by in the days to come? Her husband has passed away, so her son will surely become uncontrollable. If he goes to beat her, how can she

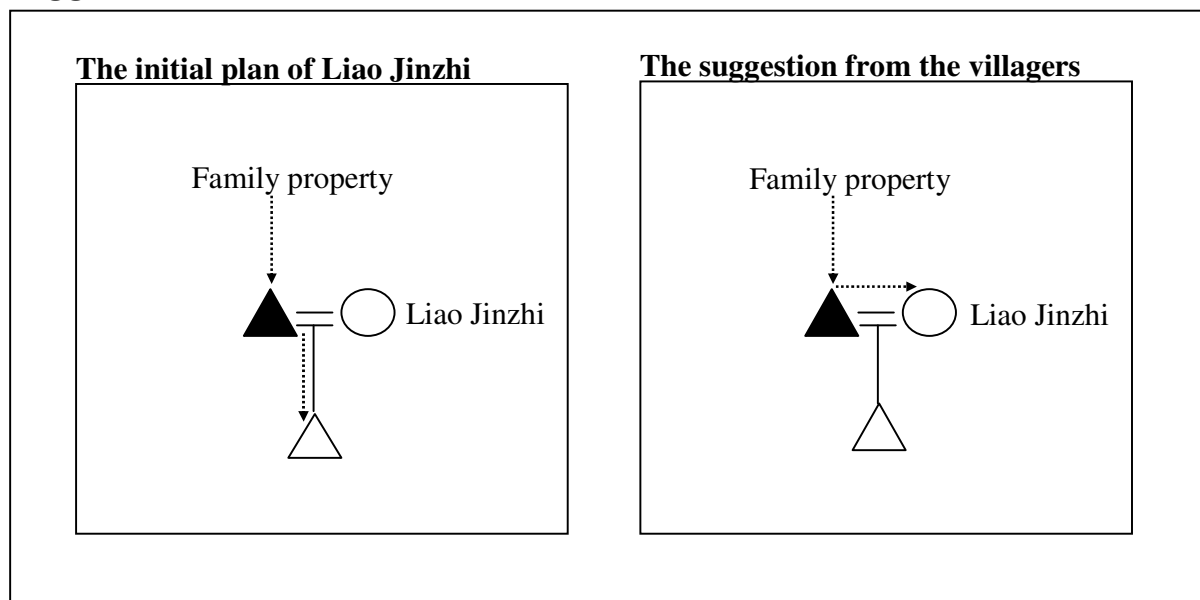
protect herself? You know, her son is a drug addict. When he needs money for drugs, he may really lose any common sense.

A man also sympathized with Liao and said,

Mengjin (i.e., the usual name for Liao in the village) was very miserable! She is now so old and retired for a long time; she should really think about herself. To rely on her son, that is to die hard. He is so fucking bad.

In order to help Liao Jinzhi, her fellow villagers eventually worked out a plan. They advised her to use the money (i.e., HK\$1.5 million; US\$192,307) left by her husband to rebuild the currently vacant No. 8 house. They urged her to carry out the renovation without applying for the government approval. They wanted her to finish it before her son returned from prison. The plan was a combination of a number of stratagems. First was to use most of the money for a long-term investment project for herself, thereby preventing her son from getting his hands on the estate. Second was to bypass the governmental rule by taking advantage of the notion of the inalienability of property. It was because the government would never approve renovating a village house that was built without a prior official permit. The lack of an official approval meant that the unit did not have a formal deed and could not be sold on the property market. In that case, her son would be unable to sell the No. 8 house when the household property was eventually passed on to him. Finally, Liao would at least have a house to live in and earn rental income for supporting herself. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6: A comparison of Liao Jinzhi's idea with the villagers' suggestion



This plan was deeply bewildering to Liao and made her feel extremely anxious. She sought reassurance from the villagers and would ask them, "Will my son like the renovation project?" "Should I first let my son know about this?" "What if he does not like the plan?" "Shouldn't I let my son make the decision because he is the only man in the family now?" No matter how many times the villagers pointed out the merits of this plan, Liao was ambivalent and remained concerned and indecisive. Some villagers increasingly felt that to talk to her was to "play a lute to a cow," while other villagers worried about her situation, which almost led to a major domestic crisis.

There were many other twists in this episode before Liao's sudden appearance in the forecourt of the No. 8 house one ordinary morning. Slowly but carefully, she silently worked with a heavy shovel and a heavy barrow to clear the fallen leaves. Every movement in this task seemed to be barely manageable for her. But, she continued to collect the mess of fallen leaves. Bit by bit, she grouped them into little stacks; one by one, she disposed them into an old bamboo basket. This work was one of her usual domestic tasks that her deceased husband had accorded her. However, the clearance this time was a preparation for a construction project. She had somehow come to terms with the decision that the No. 8 house had to be rebuilt.

Conclusion

My study of women in Da Shu Village reveals that the everyday practice of Chinese villagers did not totally adhere to the official patriarchal rules of their lineage organization. The study presents a rather intricate picture that was often varied, occasionally identical and, most often, incompatibly varied and identical at the same time. The pattern of development owed much to the agents' contingent actions and interactions in the contingent contexts. However, what Selina Ching Chan refers to as "patriarchal benevolence" had little to do with such an intricate reality.⁴¹ In Da Shu Village, whenever women engaged in the politics of patriarchal bargaining, their actions would take into account the vulnerability of patriarchal

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domination that was a result of male absenteeism and their general incompetence.

Even though the main scope for women's activities was largely confined to the domestic sphere, this fabric of the community life was interwoven with the agency of women. Women in Da Shu Village were involved in communal affairs as well as household issues. They were capable of initiating local political action to advance their interests. They also reveal their ability to transcend immediate domestic issues by creating social networks among themselves. The patriarchal exclusion of women from the communal corporation over ancestral trust was never complete. By serving as acting household heads in the name of their patriarchs, some women directly participated in the formal communal meetings and entered the decision-making process. Through their individual and collective contestations, subtle manipulations, and even fundamental subversions of the prevailing status quo, the women subdued the patriarchal order. The village realpolitik indicates that men, as the superior gender, held the formal authority in the lineage organization. At the same time, men had to confront female resistance in the domestic sphere. This observation applies even to the inheritance of ancestral property, which was a key to the material basis of patriarchal power.⁴²

On the other hand, the women in Da Shu Village constantly reflected upon the top-down patriarchal institutions authorized by the government, and developed with their own critiques against the dominant patriarchal

order. They drew on their personal experience and wisdom to question the gender bias in the existing hegemonic discourse. They frequently maintained the order of things in line with what they thought to be the “appropriate” (gender) meaning of the things. Although the cultural notion of “Chinese tradition” has long prevailed in the New Territories, the women continually challenged it. The example of Liao Jinzhi reveals that it was possible for women to subtly manipulate the official rule for their ends and to override the crucial interests of the patriarch in maintaining the ancestral houses and ensuring territorial unity in the village.

In this light, hegemony perhaps is the wrong word to characterize the continuity of Chinese patriarchal rule in the New Territories’ lineage organization. Among any other things, hegemony implies a type of moral and philosophical leadership involving the people’s active consent from within and the ruling elites’ capacity to generate viable leadership.⁴³ But, this is largely by default in the colonial and post-colonial New Territories. The Chinese patriarchal rule entailed no such a leadership but a sexist domination that often failed to do the right thing in reality. Even though they may justify their wrongdoings under the pretense of upholding “Chinese tradition,” in the end their patriarchal rule failed to tackle the pressing issues for many village women and even men. The Chinese patriarchal order had no capacity to generate strong leadership but instead provoked disagreements, disharmonies and resistance from the people.

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Thus, in the final analysis, the continuity of Chinese patriarchal rule in the New Territories does not represent any real hegemony. A common invisibility does not mean that Chinese women are order-receivers in critical alienation from their subject position and fail to experience self-awareness and self-empowerment. Their apparent inaudibility does not mean that they are voiceless and actionless, and that they lack an influence. It is in the area between the patriarchal domination on the top and the gender story at the bottom where many possible and actual struggles for gender equality with occasional successes take place.

Glossary

Da Shu Village	大树村
Deng Amei	邓阿妹
Deng Baocai	邓宝财
Deng Changhu	邓昌户
Deng Demeng	邓德明
Deng Quiren	邓贵仁
Deng Quiyi	邓贵义
Dengs	邓氏
Dozhonglinag	伯中娘
Huang Jieying	黄洁盈
Jiarucun	嫁入村
Liang Sanjie	梁三姐
Liao Jinzhi	廖金枝
Liao Yindi	廖引娣
Mengjin	明嫻
Mu De Tang	穆德堂
qin	亲
Quan Gajin	关带金
sili	司理
waijianu	外嫁女
Yujiao	玉娇
Zheng Axue	郑阿雪
zuwu	祖屋
zu	祖

Technical Notes on Kinship Diagram



Deceased male



Deceased female



Alive male



Alive female



Adopted in



Adopted out



Marriage



Bearing children

Notes

¹ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 19.

² Denzi Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," in *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, ed. Nalina Visvanathan, Lynn Duggan, Laurie Nisonoff, and Nan Wiegersma (London: Zed Press, 1997), 86-92.

³ Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy;" Margery Wolf, *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972); Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 7-26.

⁴ Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London: Athlone Press, 1958) and *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* (London: Athlone Press, 1966); Huge D. R. Baker, "The Five Great Clans of the New Territories," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1966): 25-47.

⁵ Peter Wesley-Smith, *Unequal Treaty 1898-1997: China, Britain and Hong Kong's New Territories* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1980); Allen Chun, *Unstructuring Chinese Society: The Fictions of Colonial Practices and the Changing Realities of "Land" in the New Territories of Hong Kong* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000).

⁶ "Preamble," in *The Basic Law of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China* (Hong Kong: Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education), 5.

⁷ Selina Ching Chan, "Negotiating Tradition: Customary Succession in the New Territories of Hong Kong," in *Hong Kong: The Anthropology of a Chinese Metropolis*, ed. Grant Evans, and Maria Tam (Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon, 1997), 151-173.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), 52.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ I thank Kwok-Shing Chan for sending me his work. Kwok-Shing Chan, "Maneuvering Women's Property Rights in a Chinese Lineage," in *Women of South China: Negotiating Traditions and Subjectivities*, ed., Maria Tam (forthcoming).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ It is nothing new in the history of anthropology to have different findings from the same research field through reevaluations by different anthropologists. A classic example is Oscar Lewis' reinvestigation of the Tepoztlán in Mexico in 1943, a village community that was first studied by Robert Redfield in 1926. Oscar Lewis' account of the village life in Tepoztlán differs from Robert Redfield's earlier study in terms of thematic discussion and empirical details. This presents a good example of the

epistemological and methodological discussion of research approaches. For details see Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Oscar Lewis, *Life in Mexican village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

¹⁸ Kwok- Shing Chan, "Maneuvering Women's Property Rights in a Chinese Lineage," 15.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Siu-Keung Cheung, *Gender and Community under British Colonialism: Emotion, Struggle, and Politics in a Chinese Village* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 123-142.

²¹ Selina Ching Chan, "Negotiating Tradition."

²² There are many studies on the notion of "patriarchal bargaining" for example, Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy;" Bina Agarwal, "'Bargaining' and Gender Relations: Within and beyond the Household," *Feminist Economics* 3, no. 1 (1997): 1-15; Naila Kaber, "Jumping to Conclusion?: Struggle over Meaning and Method in the Study of Household Economics," in *Feminist Vision of Development: Gender, Analysis and Policy*, ed. Cecile Jackson, and Ruth Pearson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 91-107; Denzi Kandiyoti, "Gender, Power and Contestation: 'Rethinking Bargaining with Patriarchy,'" in *Feminist Vision of Development: Gender, Analysis and Policy*, ed. Cecile Jackson, and Ruth Pearson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 135-152.

²³ Ellen R. Judd, *Gender and Power in Rural North China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

²⁴ Gail Hershatter, "The Subaltern Talks Back: Reflections on Subaltern Theory and Chinese History," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 1, no. 1 (1993): 103-130.

²⁵ Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience and Self-perception in Twentieth-Century China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1995).

²⁶ Zhao Ma, "Runaway Wives and their Matchmakers: Lower Class Women's Network in Beijing's Courtyard Tenements, 1928-1949," *Social and Cultural Research Occasional Paper*, no. 5 (September 2008).

²⁷ Wolf, *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan*.

²⁸ Bobby Siu, *Women of China: Imperialism and Women's Resistance 1900-1949* (London: Zed Press, 1982).

²⁹ Anouska Komlosy, "Feminization, Recognition, and the Cosmological in Xishuangbanna," in *Marginalization in China: Recasting Minority Politics*, ed. Siu-Keung Cheung, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, and Lida V. Nedilsky (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 123-143; Sharon R. Weosky, "Re-Presenting Women's Identities: Recognition and Representation of Rural Chinese Women," in *Marginalization in China*, 145-164; Yuki Terazawa, "The Transnational Redress Campaign for Chinese Survivors of Wartime Sexual Violence in Shanxi Province," in *Marginalization in China*, 67-93.

³⁰ Kwok-Shing Chan, "Maneuvering Women's Property Rights in a Chinese Lineage."

³¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

³² James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

³³ According to the village customary rule, their failures to attend the communal meeting meant losing the opportunities to speak and vote in the proceedings. They still had their right to share communal goods. They usually obtained their shares through the help of their closest kin in the lineage. This explains why most of them still kept some connections with their natal village through occasional phone calls, visiting, and meeting with their fellow villagers.

³⁴ The collective building project would not use all of HK\$10,000,000 (US\$1,282,051) in the communal savings gained from the land sale. My field research shows that the current cost for building an ordinary village house in 2000 was about HK\$ 1 million (US\$128,205). The communal expenditure for the building project therefore should be around HK\$4 to 5 million (US\$512,820 to 641,025). But, they have no other planned communal investment. They simply intended to bank with interest and use them as public funds.

³⁵ The Block Crown Lease was the very first official land record of the New Territories because the colonial period from 1898 to 1997 led to numerous disputes over the registration system. Many existing studies examine this issue in the New Territories. Howard G. H. Nelson, "British Administration in the New Territories of Hong Kong and Its Effects on Chinese Social Organization," paper presented at the London-Cornell Project for East and Southeast Studies Conference, Adele en haut, France,

August 24-30, 1969; Edgar Wickberg, "Another Look at Land and Lineage in the New Territories," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* 21 (1981): 24-42; Peter Wesley-Smith, *Unequal Treaty 1898-1997*. According to the Da Shu villagers, it was not the first time that they had a land dispute because of the bureaucratic problems arising from the Block Crown Lease, but the current one was the most controversial.

³⁶ To check the case, I closely studied the Block Crown Lease. I noted that the geographic cadastral map truthfully showed the same area as what people of Mu De Tang claimed, that is, about 100,000 square feet. However, the descriptive cadastral list showed the area of their ancestral land as about 33,000 square feet. Deng Quiyi told me that he had contacted the District office concerning this issue. The District Office also recognized the mistake. But, they needed time to check the pass documents and there were numerous bureaucratic procedures to go through in order to correct the official land record. Even as the District Office did eventually rectify the information for this lineage, they might still lose the deal with the developer. The formal agreement with the developer included a temporary term that the exchange should be entirely clear in one year's time. In other words, the deal with the developer could not be completed if he was unwilling to wait for the official rectification of the land record.

³⁷ The people of Mu De Tang in 2001 had already completed the sale of land for six month. The following research findings were taken from people's recollections after the event. As far as the original proposal for the proceeds gained from this sale, they set aside a sum of HK\$10,000,000

(US\$1,282,051) and planned to undertake a building project in the village. But, their real proceeds were about HK\$32,000,000 (US\$4,102,564). The distribution and division of the monies had to be reduced. The sum to be divided started from HK\$22,000,000 (US\$2,820,512). The actual share for the four main branches of the lineage became HK\$5,500,000 each (i.e., US\$705,128). Taking it all collectively, most of the smaller segments within these four main branches only obtained about HK\$900,000 to \$1,800,000 (US\$115,384 to US\$230,769).

³⁸ The people of Mu De Tang held no connection with other developers except this one. They also commonly recognized that it would be extremely hard to find another developer who would be interested in their ancestral land. This developer, however, remained the only buyer of their ancestral land in the market.

³⁹ For similar discussion, see Patricia Jeffery, Roger Jeffery, and Andre Lyon, *Labour Pains and Labour Powers: Women and Childbearing in India* (London: Zed, 1989); Myra Max Freerr, "Beyond Separate Spheres: Feminist and Family Research," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52 (1990): 866-884; Linda Thompson and Alexis Walker, "Gender in families: Women and Men in Marriage, Work and Parenthood," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51 (1989): 845-871.

⁴⁰ Their discussion of Deng Baocai suggests that both his natural and stepmother had been officially entitled to the family estates and properties for a long time. This was a widely recognized practice for a woman to inherit her husband's family estate and property if her husband passed

away. Her husband's family estates and property could be held for the rest of her life. On the contrary, it was uncommon for a son to inherit his deceased father's family estates and property if his mother was still alive.

⁴¹ Selina Ching Chan, "Negotiating Tradition."

⁴² Kwok- Shing Chan, "Maneuvering Women's Property Rights in a Chinese Lineage."

⁴³ Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds., *Selection of the Prison Notebook of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996); Robert Bocock, *Hegemony* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986); Tont Bennett, Graham Martin, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollacott, eds., "Section 4 Class, Culture and Hegemony," in *Culture, Ideology and Social Process: A Reader* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1981), 185-260.

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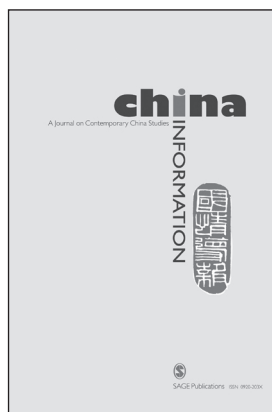
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