Shenzhen's Urban Villages:

Surviving Three Decades of Economic Reform and Urban Expansion

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Master of Arts in History 2008

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Western Australia

2013

Abstract

The Chinese urban village, or *chengzhongcun*, is a unique urban communal entity that emerged since the economic reform in the early 1980s and the subsequent rapid urbanisation. The formerly agrarian villages were quickly absorbed by expanding cities, or emerging new cities as in the case of Shenzhen, and transformed into urban villages. In Shenzhen, the urban village is a zone of ambiguity because the urban villagers are warranted by the Chinese Land Administration Law to maintain their collective ownership of land, which is a special privilege not granted to the average urban citizen whose property ownership in fact takes the form of long-term leases of up to seventy years. The urban villagers were able to quickly adapt to the their urban surroundings and capitalise on their unique legal status to generate rental income through self-constructed dense rental apartment buildings, which have housed most of Shenzhen's migrant population for the last thirty years. In addition, the urban villagers' collective identity and organization, such as the village joint stock company, have made the villages semi-autonomous zones in the city. Due to the original villagers' attempts at self-government and the great difficulty in regulating the migrant population who largely resides in the urban villages, the urban villages are a favorite target for local government which regards the zone of the urban village as an eyesore. Hence, from the start, the urban village's very existence is at odds with the high modernist aspiration of the local government. They represent chaos in an otherwise well-zoned and centrally planned city where population and buildings are tightly controlled. In a high modernist city there is no room for random self-constructed apartment buildings and their migrant tenants who, according to the high modernist ideology of the authorities, only belong in massive barrack like dorms located on major transport routes.

This thesis will present the urban villages of Shenzhen as self-governing urban communities with flaws but are overall beneficial for their residents of original villagers and rural-to-urban migrants. It seeks to explore the various aspects of Shenzhen's urban villages, such as, the original villagers, their history, the settlement of rural-to-urban migrant population, and various topics crucial to the continuous existence of the villages. It will shed light on the original villagers' relations with the migrants, the local government and wider society. This thesis has a very limited scope focusing only on the urban villages within the Shenzhen central business districts. It has gathered interviews largely from original villagers and rural-to-urban migrants living in the urban villages. In addition, it includes interviews with businessmen and local officials with interests in the urban villages. The second hand sources of this thesis included government documents, local county annals and various forms of local paper and electronic media.

Acknowledgement

For this thesis, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Gary Sigley and Dr. Stephen Dobbs for their tireless efforts. I would like to thank Dr. Frank Palmos for his comments on my drafts. I would also like to thank the University of Western Australia for giving me the opportunity to embark on this thesis project. I would dedicate this thesis to my parents who have supported me both financially and in encouragement. Most definitely, I would dedicate this thesis to the urban villages' residents both the original villagers and the migrants who made my research possible. It is their warm welcoming voices that draw me time and time again back to the urban villages, supposedly the 'dangerous' parts of the town.'

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Photographs

Glossary and Abbreviations

Glossary of Chinese and Other Non-English Terms

Banzi 班子	Leadership circle
Bao Gong Tou 包工头	Construction team leader
Bei Piao 北漂	Floating north, commonly referred to young migrants seeking works in Beijing
Chai 拆	To demolish
Chaiqian 拆迁	Demolition and Relocation
Chaiqianhu 拆迁户	Homes to be demolished
Chengzhongcun 城中村	Urban Village
Chengbiancun 城边村	Villages on city borders
Chengguan 城管	City administrative units
Chengshibing 城市病	'Urban Disease' a metaphor in Mainland China describing problems in urban planning and zoning in China
Cheng Xiang Er Yuan Hua 城乡二元化	Urban Rural Dualization
Chuang da hai 闯大海	'Bravely explore the sea', a Cultural Revolution era slogan encouraging fishermen to increase production
Chuangyeban 创业板	A stock exchange for start-up technology companies in Shenzhen
Chun yun 春运	Mass migration of migrants back to their rural homes often by train
Chuantong Xiaonong Yishi 传统小农意识	'Small peasant mentality', an ideological stereotype of peasantry
Citang 祠堂	Ancestral hall
Cun 村	Village
Cungufengongsi 村股份公司	Village owned joint-stock companies
Cunluo danwei zhi 村落单位制	Village work unit system
Cunji 村籍	Village origin or identity

Cunwei Banzi 村委班子	Cadre governing body or leadership team
Cunweihui 村委会	The village committee
Cun Jiti 村集体	Village Collective
Daoban 盗版	A pirated copy
Dachengshilun 大城市论	Big City Theory
Da dao niugui sheshen 打倒牛鬼蛇神	'Defeat the ox and snake demons,' a popular political slogan during the Cultural Revolution
Dagongmei 打工妹	Working sister
Desakota	Indonesian term for Village-City
Dingzihu 钉子户	Nail Residents, tenants or property owner who refuse to evacuate during urban renewal process
Ernai 二奶	'Second wife' or concubine
Er Shi Zu 二世祖	Someone who is good for nothing and lives off family wealth
Fa Bu Ze Zhong 法不责众	'The law cannot punish people en masse', A common Chinese expression
Feidi 飞地	Exclave
Fen 分	One cent, one hundredth of one Chinese yuan. In addition, it is sometimes used as a measurement unit of land area as one tenth of one Chinese *Mu* (660 square metres)
Gao Suzhi 高素质	'High quality' as in personals
Gemeinschaft	German term for the tightly-knitted village-like community
Geng Lou 耕楼	Farming buildings
Gongfen 工分	Work point
Guan nian 观念	Views or way of thinking
Guanlichu 管理处	An office that keeps a record of people entering the residential building
Guomingdang 国民党	The ruling Nationalist Party of China (1911-1949)

Haigui 海归/海龟	'Sea turtles', a nick name for foreign educated returnee in China
Hexieshehui 和谐社会	Harmonious society, a nationwide political campaign advocating social harmony among different social strata
Huogen 祸根	The root of all problems
Huitouhua or Weitouhua 回头话/围头话	A local dialect in Shenzhen
Hukou 户口	Household Registration
Ji ding xian shi 既定现实	Recognized reality
Jiedao 街道	Streets
Jiedaoban 街道办	The street office, an administration unit in Chinese city
Juweihui 居委会	Residential committee
Jin 斤	Half a kilogram
Jiucheng gaizao 旧城改造	Restructuring of old urban sectors
Jiugaiban 旧改办	An abbreviation for 'old city restructure office'
Juweihui 居委会	Residential committee
Kampung	Village Town in Malaysia
Kejiaren/Hakka 客家人	A Han sub-ethnic group in southern China with large population in Shenzhen
Lao San Pian 老三篇	Three Old Essays: 'To Serve the People', 'Study Norman Bethune', and 'The Fool Moves Mountains'
Laoxiang 老乡	Hometown people
Laoxiangzhen 老乡镇	A community inhabited by migrants from the similar geographical origin
Liumin 流民	Roaming peasant
Luanjian 乱建	Rampant construction
Mazu 妈祖	Sometimes called Tianhou, is Chinese folk religion deity, thought to be the patron saint of sailors
Minan 闽南	Southern Fujian Province

Moshi 模式	Model
Mangliu 盲流	The blind roaming wave
Paifang 牌坊	Memorial arch
Pencai 盆菜	A large bowl of slow-cooked food, a form of traditional fest in Shenzhen
Qian 迁	To move
Qiangjian 抢建	Rush buildings, a form of informal construction by urban villagers to cheat further compensation
Qiaoxiang 侨乡	Hometown of large overseas Chinese communities
Qu 区	Urban district
Rouliqiu 柔力球	Taichi ball exercise
Renda 人大	The People's Congress
Rukun	Good Neighbourly Relation in Malaysian
Sanwurenyuan 三无人员	Chinese abbreviation for people without three form of urban registration
Shanzhai 山寨	Pirated versions
Shangshanxiaxiang 上山下乡	Youth movement during the Cultural Revolution
Shenzhenxu 深圳墟	The origin of the name Shenzhen, a deep ditch in Baoan County
Shi 市	City
Sijiu 四旧	The 'four olds': old Customs, Culture, Habits and Ideas, as in *Bo Sijiu*, destroying the four olds, a Cultural Revolution Era political campaign
Suzhi 素质	Human quality
Taojin 淘金	Gold prospecting
Taogangchao 逃港潮	'Fleeing Hong Kong wave', meaning large number of people fleeing Hong Kong from the mainland in certain period

Tequ Fazhan Gongsi 特区发展公司	Special Economic Zone Development Company
Tu 土	Earthiness, a generalized character of the Chinese countryside and rural peasantry
Tudi zhengbei ju 土地整备局	Land management bureau
Tuzhu 土著	Aborigines
Waitaofeng 外逃风	Fleeing phenomenon
Weijian 违建	Illegal construction
Yuancunmin 原村民	Original villagers
Xian xing fan ge ming 现行反革命	An active counter revolutionary
Xiao Chengzhenlun 小城镇论	Small Town Theory
Xi jiao shang tian 洗脚上田	'Washed feet and went above the field', a common saying referring to rural peasantry adopting to urbanisation or industrialisation
Xiangshen 乡镇	Gentry
Yang 洋	'Oceanic', an adjective describing things western and modern common reference to western styles
Yanda 严打	'Strike hard' public security campaign
Yi cun yi ce 一村一策	'One village, one strategy'
Yiwulaodong 义务劳动	Volunteer work
Yixiantian 一线天	'One line of sky', describing distance between urban village buildings
Yizu 蚁族	'Ant tribe', a term describing of recently graduated college students with unstable employment and often live together in urban villages
Yizucun 蚁族村	'Ant Tribe Village', urban village with large number of ant tribe students
Zading 砸钉	Crushing the nails
Zang, luan, cha 脏乱差	Dirty, chaotic, substandard
Zaofan 造反	To rebel

Zaofan zuzhi 造反组织	Rebellious organisations, radical political organization during Cultural Revolution
Zhaijidi 宅基地	Personal plot of land
Zhejiangcun 浙江村	Zhejiang Migrant Village
Zhengxie 政协	Chinese People's Political Consultative Council
Zhili 治理	Regulate
Zhiqing 知青	Send down urban youth to rural villages during the Cultural Revolution
Zhong 忠	Loyal
Zhongdiangong 终点工	Hourly paid nanny or home help by appointment
Zhongziwu 忠字舞	Loyalty dance
Zhongzige 忠字歌	Loyalty song
Zongzu 宗族	Chinese form of Lineage, which is patrilineal

Index of Abbreviation

CBD	Central Business District
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GETDD	Guangzhou Economic and Technological Development Districts
IPO	Initial Public Offering
KMT	English Abbreviation for Former Ruling Kuomingtang or Guomingdang Nationalist Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SIZ	Shekou Industrial Zone
TVE	Township Village Enterprise

Chapter One

Introduction

Until the final extinction of these last real public spaces — with their democratic intoxications, risks and unscented odors — the pacification of Los Angeles will remain incomplete.

City of Quartz (Davis 1990: p.260)

The urbanization of China over the last twenty years has been of a different character, with its heavy focus on infrastructural development, but it is even more important than that of the US. Its pace picked up enormously after a brief recession in 1997, to the extent that China has taken in nearly half the world's cement supplies since 2000. More than a hundred cities have passed the one-million population mark in this period, and previously small villages, such as Shenzhen, have become huge metropolises of 6 to 10 million people.

'The Right to the City' (Harvey 2008)

Some time ago, Mike Davis observed the fragmentation of urban space in Los Angeles, where cultural and ethnic enclaves have resisted the gift of 'progress'. The story of Shenzhen's urban villages is very much like those of the Latino neighborhoods in Los Angeles. They both face overwhelming changes to their political, economic, and even linguistic orders. In Los Angeles, there was the quite radical shift from things Mexican, *'ranchero'* and Spanish, to American, industrial, and English. In Shenzhen, there was the rapid transition from village, communized agriculture, and local dialects, to the city, commercialism, and Mandarin. In Los Angeles and Shenzhen, despite the tremendous socio-economic upheavals, the original communities have survived, and have clung to their collective identities. The story of Shenzhen's urban village is one of survival against overwhelming odds and external pressures.

Research into this thesis was initiated in late 2008, the thirtieth anniversary of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ). I chose to study the urban villages (*chengzhongcun*) of Shenzhen for reasons of familiarity and personal fascination. For a very long time I have lived in the comfortable confines of Shenzhen's main streets, in high-rise apartments, sometimes directly overlooking these urban villages. Despite hearing and reading the numerous negative descriptions of the urban villages, my ventures into urban villages were inevitable as a young adult, for the simple reason of

shopping convenience. The urban villages became a kind of exciting zone for me, as they had been characterized dangerous and chaotic. In those earlier days, the phrase 'urban villages' (*chengzhongcun*) had not yet entered my vocabulary. I simply referred to them by their location name, or as *cun*, the Chinese word for village. The notion that somehow there were villages next to urban main streets never seemed strange to me. When I explored the different villages with a mixture of fascination and excitement, I found them to be convenient and lively (*renao*) places. When the term 'urban villages' officially entered my vocabulary, I began to read more and more about them in the media. I discovered that some of my friends were urban villagers, and I began to develop a feeling of almost kinship-like familiarity with some of the villages. In the Chinese media and popular mindsets of the new urban middle class, the urban villages remained areas to be avoided, much like the dangerous ghettos of Western society. In government circles, the urban villages are routinely portrayed as a visual blight on modern Chinese cities. The sharp contradiction between how urban villages are widely portrayed and how I experienced them drew me into this research.

The urban villages of Shenzhen are historical self-governing entities that have survived the great changes associated with China's past political turmoil, economic reform and subsequent rapid urbanisation. However, their continuous survival is threatened by many powerful, modernist aspired interests via the government, media, and real estate developers that seek the complete elimination of the urban village and its crowded colorful migrant quarters, informal buildings and seemingly chaotic zoning. The aim of this research is purely academic. Knowing full well, the product of this research would not affect the governance of Shenzhen and her urban villages in any way. At its best, this thesis aim to help the outside world and Chinese readers better understand those "chaotic", "dirty", "slum-like" zones –the urban villages located often "dangerously" close to some of the affluent business centres. The villages and their population are the subjects of so much social and political prejudice. In this thesis, I shall explain the how the urban village survived and adapted to the rapid and overwhelming political and economic changes in the last three decades and attempt to argue for the continuous survival of Shenzhen's particular model of urban village due to its historical and present resilience. When well-managed, the urban villages should be able to 'unslum' and

improve their communities and preserve their village identity for generations to come.

Photo 1: This is an urban village area seen from author's home balcony. Photo by author 2008

Additionally, this thesis seeks to provide a social history of a few villages that in the last thirty years have undergone tremendous social and economic transformation. The focus of this thesis is limited to the urban villages within the Shenzhen City boundary, particularly within the three districts of the original SEZ zone: Futian, Luohu, and Nanshan. It will explore various themes of Shenzhen's urban villages, ranging from self-government to intra-population relations between original villagers and migrants, from village collective economic organization to urban renewal within urban villages.

The urban villages in Shenzhen—and later in most of China's first-, second- and even third-tier cities—are "grey spaces" (Yiftachel 2009) in China's rapid urbanisation. The urban villages' continuous existence is a result of loopholes in the Chinese Land Administration Law, which states:

Land in the urban areas of cities shall be owned by the State… and in rural and suburban areas shall be owned by peasant collectives, except for those portions which belong to the State as provided for by law; house sites and private plots of cropland and hilly land shall also be owned by peasant collectives.

In the cases of many rural communities rapidly absorbed by China's expanding cities—or in Shenzhen's case, having a whole new city built over and around them—this law has allowed the villages to retain their rural collective land ownership status as the expanding or new cities have enveloped them. As a legal and administrative grey zone, Shenzhen's urban villages are some of the earliest and best preserved of their kind in China, and are excellent access points for understanding the urban village phenomena in China's rapidly developing urban environment.

The story of the urban village reflects the great changes in economics, politics and culture in China that have been brought about by the economic reforms since 1978. While discussing China's economic reform policies with an American delegate from the Times Company in October 1985, Deng Xiaoping stated: 'We permit some people and some regions to become prosperous first, for the purpose of achieving common prosperity faster' (Wallace 1986). The original villagers of the urban villages of Shenzhen are clearly some of the people who became rich first. They have achieved financial prosperity quickly by their unique status as existing landholders in what became the epicenter of Deng's economic reforms—Shenzhen. With the founding of Shenzhen as the first SEZ in China, the urban villagers of Shenzhen were among the first to experience the impacts of the great economic changes of the last thirty years. With the astonishing growth of Shenzhen City and the rapidly expanding manufacturing sector, many urban villagers in Shenzhen had both the foresight and skill to take advantage of the great changes. They experimented with various entrepreneurial endeavors utilizing their ultimate advantage—land. As Shenzhen's population grew with the demand for labor and other services, the urban villagers began to build rental apartments for the migrants—in the process, becoming wealthy landlords—an undertaking which continues to define the wealth of urban villages to this day.

As a group of people, the urban villagers of Shenzhen have preserved their traditional village collectives (*cun jiti)* after the urbanisation process in the form of joint stock companies held by the original villagers. For the first time in China's history, the concept of the village, which for thousands of years has been associated with agriculture and peasantry, has not only evolved an urban but also a corporate dimension. To put it simply, the urban villages are now corporate villages, or a kind of Urban Village Inc. The village companies play an all-encompassing role in the village life; in fact, they are the financial glue that holds the urban village intact. The companies pay the villagers dividends earned by their shares. They also help maintain many of the village's communal bodies, such as ancestral halls, retirement homes, recreation clubs and even schools and kindergartens in some of the wealthier villages. Essentially, as other scholars have noted, the urban villages, through these companies, have formed exclusive welfare states for the original villager community (Unger 2009; Guldin 2001). To the original villagers, the continuing existence of the village collective is a positive phenomenon, as it provides welfare support, leadership, and protection for the village and the villagers. This is important in a society where social welfare, especially for 'villagers' is largely non-existent.

The topic of urban villages is a polarized one in China. The mere mention of urban villages in China conjures up for some the images of chaotic migrant sectors in the city. Many scholars have suggested that the urban villages in China have the special characteristic of migrant-concentrated residential areas. The rural-to-urban migrants now make up the absolute majority living in urban villages and they have come to define many of the urban village's exterior features, such as high-density housing, regional restaurants, and temporary employment in businesses supporting them. It is a separate world away from the main streets of modern Chinese cities represented by the centrally planned grids, monumental infrastructure projects, high technology research and development parks, multi-national industrial zones, towering skyscrapers and ultra-luxury shopping malls, a vision straight out the high modernist extremes commented by James C Scott. According to Scott, his term high modernism is defined as: "version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws. It

originated, of course, in the West, as a by-product of unprecedented progress in science and industry (Scott 1998, p. 4)." In a seemingly dialectic relationship, the urban village is the antithesis of the high modernist city whose values are unknowingly but widely shared by the majority of the Chinese urban public and those in position of power.

The urban villages in Shenzhen —or in any other Chinese city— are unwanted in the high modernist urban China. The high modernist Chinese city, like their ideological counterparts in the other parts of the world, such as Le Corbusier's Chandigarh or his ideological inspiration - the Costa planning of Brasilia - purposely exclude multi-use zoning, rural-to-urban migrants, and anything unaesthetic and resembling slums (Scott 1998, p. 119-131). The urban village certainly fits most of the unwanted characteristics according to the high modernist urban version. They are a constant annoyance for image-obsessive city government officials in most parts of China who, like those in Brazil, seem inspired by high modernism and all its promises of human advancement. During major sporting, economic, or political events such as the Olympics in Beijing, the World Expo in Shanghai, the Asia Games in Guangzhou, or even the recently held *the Universiade* in Shenzhen, the urban villages proved an irresistible target for local-city-level government to enforce their long-wanted changes. It is an open secret that many city planners and scholars still view the phenomenon of urban villages as a kind of urban disease, or *chengshibing* in Chinese.

This thesis will look at both the existing problems and potential beneficial functions of the urban villages in Shenzhen. These villages certainly play varying roles in the city as an aboriginal community, a migrant neighborhood, and even as a community-based economic collective (that is, the urban village companies). Their different roles carry with them different meanings and symbols to different people and groups in the city. Some may also serve as models for other urban-villages in different parts of China.

Methodology

Methodologically, this study is largely based on fieldwork spanning from 2009-2012 conducted in three of the main urban villages of Shenzhen. The research utilises a

qualitative approach with data collection primarily using participant observation. This included in-depth and on-the-spot interviews with original villagers, migrants, real estate developers and local government officials. The study has also involved participation in various aspects of urban village life and a close reading of media and academic studies of this urban phenomenon.

On observation, for a number of years I lived next to multiple urban villages of the three central urban districts of Shenzhen SEZ. Field work observation within urban villages mainly focuses on two elements: building structures and residents. After entering an urban village, I began by paying close attention to the zoning, the streets, the residential blocks, and ultimately the original villagers' buildings, their density, height, and architectural style which varies from village to village. I then visit the restaurants, markets, and other essential trade venues in the villages to gain a general of impression of the residents' lifestyle. Lastly I would visit the public venues run and maintained by the original villagers' collective organizations, such as public squares, parks, libraries, *citang* (lineage halls), and temples. These are symbolic sites of the original villagers who often devote significant funds and effort to manage the sites. Many take them as the "face" of the village.

Then there is the observation of the human elements in the villages. On any given day, the urban village is full of people, most of them migrants. Most of them live in the villages and some also work in the villages. From a distance, one can observe their employment and lifestyle in the village. The migrants are not only employees but increasingly small business owners within the village as well. Then there are the original villagers, the landlords behind the scenes in the villages. They are rarely seen, but they sometimes make themselves visible as the chief organizers during important social and religious events such as Chinese New Year, Mid-autumn Festival, and other major lineage celebrations. During my field work, I have in fact attended two Chinese New Year *pencai* feasts hosted by the original villagers. Lastly, there are many scenarios where interviews were not possible and observation was the only way to conduct research. For example, in

some of the less well run villages, interviews attracted unwanted attention especially from the village security team who would mistake me for a journalist reporting on illegal affairs. Certainly, some of the criminal elements in the villages, such as gangs, could only be observed from a distance.

Then there are the interviews of my field work which largely targeted two groups of people in the urban village: the original villagers and the migrants. Most of my 35 interviews were recorded. In writing, most of the interviewees were not noted by their name but code letters and general career description in the case of migrants. These measures were designed to maintain their anonymity. The interviewees were given notice that their voices were being recorded. And the interviews were purposefully set up to exclude the interviewees' names from being recorded. My in-depth interviews always began with a fixed set of questions targeting the interviewees familial background, personal history, career, lifestyle, living environment, and views on various subjects of the village that they lived in, ranging from safety to overall convenience. In my interviews, I attempted to ask as few questions as possible and let the interviewees freely express themselves.

The urban villages in Shenzhen are notoriously difficult to gain access to because of their strong community discipline. It is very hard for any outsider to penetrate these urban spaces. To conduct my interviews with the original villagers in Shenzhen, I did have the added advantage of existing connections whether through friendships or familial association with some of the villages. Some of my personal acquaintances are either original villagers or decedents of early migrants in Shenzhen who settled in the villages. Most of them continue to live in the villages and some of them are village company employees which helped me gain contacts and access. In Huanggang, Xiasha, and Buxin villages I have access to the village companies and original villagers. In these three villages, the original villager interviews were pre-arranged with the village company and conducted in the village company premises by appointment. Of course, the pre-arranged interviews do raise issues about the selection process. Some of the villagers were pre-

selected by the village companies. Many of them were former village cadres. Hence these are people who had their villages' and their village companies' interests at heart. They refrained from discussing sensitive issues at odds with the companies interests such as leadership quality and corruption.

Essentially, all my interviews and qualitative research methods are in the realm of oral history. This research shares many similar interests and concerns with other oral history projects. For example, Alessandro Portelli's (1998) "What makes oral history different?" answers many research concerns of mine over objectivities and subjectivities. According to Portelli, "Subjectivity is as much the business of history as are the more visible 'facts'. What informants believe is indeed a historical fact (that is, the fact that they believe it), as much as what really happened" (Portelli 1998, p. 67). Portelli argues it is pointless to quarrel over the objectivities and factual purity of the interviewees. "Oral sources are credible but with a different credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no 'false' oral sources" (Portelli 1998, p.68). In the context of my research, I have attempted to not simply see interviews as a collection of facts and textual data but also as a reflection of emotions, desire and symbolism. In my case, my original villager interviewees also displayed a great range of emotion. For some there was excitement about the Culture Revolution, the sense of pride as farmers, the shame over Taogang (fleeing Hong Kong), and the shame of being called landlords. Similarly, among the migrants, there was easily detected low self-esteem at being a migrant, the sense of anger over social injustice and often a sense of scorn toward the original villagers as a rentier class.

Indian Scholar Gyanendra Pandey (1991) once had a very interesting discussion of historical "fragments" in his article In Defence of the *Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today* which has since had a strong influence to the field of oral history. Pandey defines his fragment as:

The 'fragments' of Indian society-the smaller religious and caste communities, tribal sections, industrial workers, activist women's groups, all of which might be said to represent 'minority' cultures and prac-tices-have been expected to fall in line with the 'mainstream' (Brahmanical Hindu, con-sumerist) national culture. This 'main-stream', which represents in fact a very small section of the society, has indeed been flaunted as the national Culture.' Unity in Diversity' is no longer the rallying cry of Indian nationalism. On the contrary, all that belongs to any minority other than the ruling class, all that is challenging, singular, local-not to say, all difference-appears threatening, intrusive, even 'foreign' to this nationalism. (Penday 1991, p. 559)

These are the often overlooked, supressed view of minorities hidden away purposefully from the nationalist myth of unity and progress, the singular version of history. Penday collected his fragments concerning the Hindu-Muslim violence of 1989 in poems written by a "college teacher in Bhagalpur, 43 residents of a mixed Hindu and Muslim, predominantly lower-middleclass locality which was not the scene of any of the 'great' killings in 1989, but was nevertheless repeatedly attacked, traumatised and scarred forever." (Penday 1991, p.571) Penday contrasted these fragments with the mainstream perspectives often straight out of dominant media and standardized historiographical procedure rooted in the dominant narrative of the state. Much like the mix Hindu-Muslim neighbourhood of Bhagalpur, the research of urban village certainly incorporates various aspects of the fragments. Both of the oral accounts of my two major interviewee populations of the migrants and the original villagers are fragments in Penday's terminology. The rural-to-urban migrants are some of the most exploited people in China today both by the economic and political systems. They were the "cheap" labours that fill the factory floors and they at the same time suffered tremendous amount of *hukou* (household residential registration) related prejudice that makes them effectively an underclass in the city. Then there are the original villagers who are much richer than migrants, however, they are also fragments casted away from the dominant narrative. They also suffered strong prejudice from the mainstream media's reporting and government policies. They were blamed for everything that is wrong of the villages. However, rarely were their stories being heard on any official channels.

Ultimately, the research methods of this thesis are designed to both gather and effectively analysis the data from the field. The observations and collected interviews have added richness and realism to this thesis. They also help test my main hypothesis that is whether the Shenzhen urban village model is a sustainable and efficient self-governing community. The interviews forced me to question some of my assumptions and aspects of my. The villages will likely survive but they face immense challenges from the outside and from within, particularly in relation to their internal communal fabric – that is, the relations between the original villagers and the migrants and relations among the original villagers themselves.

Thesis Chapter Overview

As there are very few English-language studies directly addressing the subject of urban villages in Shenzhen. Chapter Two provides a literature review of the subject, offering an overview of literature on a variety of subjects and overarching themes that are related to the topic of urban villages in China, such as urbanisation and rural-urban migration. This chapter also provides a global perspective on the urban village-like phenomena. It situates the research of urban villages within the broader global framework of urban research. This chapter also aims to bring readers up-to-date with the many opposing views on urban villages in Shenzhen and in China generally.

Chapter Three, 'Villages on the Border', reviews the history of the Shenzhen region prior to the economic-reform era which covers the period from the first historical record of government administration at the county level, to the end of the Cultural Revolution. This pre-reform background chapter provides an overview of Shenzhen's historical and geopolitical significance and key political events occurring in Shenzhen and nearby regions. Interviews with some of the older original villagers are included in this chapter. Their stories on the various political campaigns, the Cultural Revolution, and the Hong Kong 'exodus' are crucial for understanding the great changes wrought in the villages.

The fourth chapter, 'Shenzhen City and the Emergence of Urban Villages', provides an overview of the development of Shenzhen City and the formation process of urban villages from the post-reform era until now. Here I touch on various themes of the original villagers' struggles adapting to their new urban lives. The villagers' troublesome relations with the city government will also be a focus of this section. This chapter includes interviews with original villagers, both young and old, to illustrate the great economic and social changes that have occurred over the past several decades of economic reform and urban village growth.

Chapter Five, 'Migrant City and Migrant Villages', examines the formation process of the urban villages from the perspectives of migrant populations. It offers an overview of the migrant lifestyle, employment, and culture in urban villages. I discuss some of the communal problems of the urban villages due to the large numbers of migrants, and sheds light on the rarely discussed topic of migrant–original villager relations. This chapter illustrates the segregations based on social-economic status and provincial allegiances among differing urban village groups.

Chapter Six, 'Urban Village Inc.', discusses the rarely studied topic of the urban village company. I was given access to several village companies and interviewed original-villager staff and personnel who provided unique insights into the organization and daily operation of these companies. This chapter suggests that the urban village joint stock corporation model is a potentially beneficial collective economic model that could help better preserve rural communities during and after rapid urbanisation and economic transformation, such as is occurring in China.

Chapter Seven, 'Urban Renewal and The Rise of Shenzhen's Real Estate Developers', explores the contested issue of demolition and relocation (*chaiqian*) in Shenzhen's urban villages. This chapter examines Shenzhen's real-estate development scene and the real-estate sector's involvement in urban villages, in particular during the *chaiqian* process. It explores the relationship between the urban villagers and real-estate companies, as they act from time to time both cooperatively and as competitors. This chapter uses interviews

with some prominent real-estate developers in Shenzhen to highlight their views on urban villages.

Chapter Eight, 'Urban Villages in China: a Regional Comparison', explores some of the regional urban village variants in different regions of China. This chapter is designed to broaden the readers' perspective on the urban village phenomenon in China. This chapter shows some of the common themes among urban villages, such as cultural development, self-government, migrant lifestyles, and relations with local governments. By presenting these regional examples, the study also demonstrates some of the uniqueness of Shenzhen's urban villages.

The ninth chapter, 'Villages as Imagined Communities', explores some of the extreme perceptions and stereotypes that have been assigned to the urban villages by people of various walks of life in Shenzhen. This chapter will also examine the media's role in propagating negative images of urban villages. The later part of the chapter shall provide rebuttal to the negative stereotypes, with examples from successful urban villages.

The tenth chapter is the conclusion to this thesis. It revisits the original hypothesis and provides a brief summary of the key findings. In addition, I seek to discuss the future and possible development trajectories of the urban village in Shenzhen specifically, and in China generally.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Global Perspectives

Although it is fashionable these days to romanticize the slum, this has not been my purpose here. The West End was not a charming neighborhood of "noble peasants" living in an exotic fashion, resisting the mass-produced homogeneity of American Culture and overflowing with a cohesive sense of community. It was a run-down area of people struggling with the problems of low income, poor education, and related difficulties. Even so, it was by large a good place to live.

The Urban Villagers (Gans 1962)

The houses are occupied from cellar to garret, filthy within and without, and their appearance is such that no human being could possibly wish to live in them. But all this is nothing in comparison with the dwellings in the narrow courts and alleys between the streets, entered by covered passages between the houses, in which the filth and tottering ruin surpass all description. Scarcely a whole window-pane can be found, the walls are crumbling, door-posts and window-frames loose and broken, doors of old boards nailed together, or altogether wanting in this thieves' quarter, where no doors are needed, there being nothing to steal.

Frederick Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845)

Introduction

By the start of the twenty-first century, close to seven billion people had entered the great urban age. For the less populated but more developed regions of Europe, North America, and Australia, high urbanisation rates have long been a reality, the process starting during the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. In the twenty-first century, the urban sphere is expanding in every region of the world regardless of population size, industrialization level, or income per capita. In many developing countries such as China, the cities are their symbol of modernity. There is no doubt that high modernist beliefs run deep, not just among the local governments, but also within the urban mainstreams. By having beautiful, orderly, and well-planned cities without traces of informal shabby housing, they could finally declare that they are catching up to the West, in modernity. Cities now account for more than 80% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in many Asian countries. The Asia Pacific regions are also home to half of the world's slum-dwelling population (Asia Development Bank 2012). The topic of global urbanisation is a polarizing one in academia, particularly pertaining to its effect on the human population

and environment. Nonetheless, transcending all national borders, urban life seems likely to ultimately dominate human society in the twenty-first century. The urban villages of Shenzhen provide some of the most interesting examples of how recent urbanisation and social-economic transformation have affected once-rural communities in one of the fastest urbanising countries in the world—China.

Technically, the term 'urban village' in Chinese is *chengzhongcun* or simply 'village in the city' or 'village amidst the city'. Chung Him, a Hong Kong scholar, correctly observes there are major deficiencies in literature across China and the West when it comes to defining urban villages or the village-in-the-city. According to Chung, 'urban village' is a borrowed term. Chung stresses the difficulty with using this borrowed term is that the Chinese 'urban village' or village-in-the-city is quite different from the urban villages of Britain where the term originated. Hence Chung insists on using the term 'chengzhongcun' or its direct English translation 'village-in-the-city' to describe the urban village phenomenon in China (Chung 2010). Chung argues that the concept of urban village in China deserves a distinct category of its own. As noted by Chung, the urban village as a modern urban concept first emerged in England in the 1990s as a part of the revival of traditional urbanism (Chung 2010). Nonetheless, in many other scholarly works, the villages-in-the-city terminology persists, and they are referred to as urban villages (Wang, Wang, & Wu 2009; Wu, Zhang, & Webster 2012: Bach 2010: Song, Zenou, & Ding 2008). While acknowledging their differences, for this thesis I will continue to use the term 'urban village' for its grammatical simplicity rather than the more laborious Chinese word *chengzhongcun,* or village-in-the-city.

From the beginning, the study of the urban villages was a study of cities, rural communities in transition, urbanisation, migration, and modern urban communal identities. The topic of the urban village in Shenzhen will inevitably touch on wider discourses on cities, urbanisation, population migrations, low-income urban settlements, slums, and so forth. There is abundant literature on these topics. However, until now, specific literature on the urban villages in Shenzhen is lacking. The urban village is different things to different people, thus in this chapter I provide a review of the existing literature related to the urban village phenomenon with subjects encompassing:

urbanisation, urban planning theories, rural-to-urban migration, informal housing and slums. I will situate the subject of Shenzhen's urban villages in the arena of debates of those subjects mentioned above.

The Urban–Rural Divide and Suitable Paths of Urbanisation for China

In China, the urban and rural areas are essentially two different worlds with entirely different levels of material development. It has been this way throughout history and continues to be this way in the contemporary period. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there has been an ever-increasing gap of material development between urban and rural regions. As a trend, this development of inequality has only accelerated since the economic reforms of 1978. Economist Arthur Lewis' "Dual Track Model" (1954) was cited frequently by Chinese scholars to illustrate uneven urban-rural economic and development relationships. Lewis' model is called *cheng xiang er yuan hua* (urban rural dual track model) in Chinese. As a case in point, the latest 'Fourth Annual Report on Urban Development in China: Focusing on Civilian Life', carried out by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, declared China to be one of the most extreme examples in the world in terms of the material development gap between rural and urban areas (Pan & Wei 2011). On the material gap between Chinese cities and villages, the urban village of China represents an interesting mutation between these two worlds. If the evolution of rural-urban development is a constant process, then the urban villages are a kind of 'missing link', except that they are not really missing, but hidden in plain sight behind the façade of modern development. They are called urban villages because they were once agrarian villages, but are now absorbed by expanding urban areas. The scholarship related to urban villages essentially touches on the themes of urbanisation, population migration, and migrant residential communities in urban China. Outside China, it is related to the discourse of informal construction in developing countries.

Relating to the topic of uneven rural–urban development and the dual track model of the Chinese economy, the Chinese academic community has for a long time been polarized over the issue of urbanisation. Fei Xiaotong, one of China's most eminent sociologists

and a student of Bronislaw Malinowski, advocated in the mid-1980s a new mode of urbanisation in China with the creation of a system of small towns. While undertaking fieldwork in the counties of southern Jiangsu Province, Fei observed some of the earliest self-urbanisation practices among the local villages in the immediate aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. The villages were urbanising themselves through village-owned enterprises often called Township Village Enterprises (TVE) that were employing much of the local unemployed rural population and acting as the resource base for urbanisation in local areas. Many urbanised villages also began to form networks of small towns that cooperated in resource sharing and labour pooling. Fei stressed that the small-town system was a way to avoid the 'urban disease' of massive western cities: overcrowding, high crime rates, lack of social support, pollution, and so forth. The original aim of Fei's 'small town theory' was to tackle rural unemployment and keep cities orderly on a manageable scale. As a senior official of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Fei's word carried considerable weight among China's political elites and academia. His many writings, particularly 'Small Towns, Great Significance', were significantly influential in propagating what today is referred to as the 'small town school' for the better part of the last three decades (Fei 1986).

In the Economic Reform era, there also emerged the 'big city theory' (*dachengshilun*) among China's academic and city planning elite, with policy suggestions counter to Fei's 'small town theory'. Scholars advocating the 'big city school' see the creation and expansion of large cities as the best means to achieve economies of scale by concentrating resources in key cities. Instead of developing small towns, the 'big city school' advocates using the economic power of big cities to radiate out into the rural regions, as the engine of economic growth and urbanisation (Gao 1991). Since the mid-1980s, with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and domestic capital concentrated in the large cities, the villages close to the major urban centers were mostly absorbed into the urban landscape with little chance of developing into independent small towns. As a result, the reality on the ground for Chinese cities is moving closer to the big city school's vision of China, a country of metropolises. Already, different Chinese metropolises are competing to develop regional super-metropolitan areas around key geographical regions, good examples being the Bohai Rim around Beijing, the Lower Yangtze Delta around Shanghai, and Pearl River

Delta encompassing Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Some of the first urban villages in Shenzhen developed as a consequence of this momentous shift in urban development patterns.

My study of the urban village is situated between the debate over the 'small town theory' and the 'big city school'. On one hand, the urban village in Shenzhen is essentially a product of the big city school's vision. The villages have lost their opportunity of urbanising independently, as supposed in the 'small town theory'. However, the very existence of the urban village in a big city such as Shenzhen also presents some obvious problems for the big city school's vision of urban China: overcrowding, high-density settlement, loss of control over migration, and class-based segregation. The urban village shows clearly some of the ills of rapid urbanisation by big cities, with which the original rural community had tremendous difficulty coping. What they eventually develop into are the urban villages that become points of contention for decades to come. Hence, in this thesis, I shall analyse whether or not urban villages can continue to function efficiently in Chinese cities, using the earliest ones in Shenzhen as case studies.

The *Hukou* System and Migrants

The current great urbanisation boom in China was powered by the migration of domestic or internal migrants. Today, it is difficult to identify a single Chinese city without migrants. Migrants have literally become the builders of the cities. Millions of them form work-teams that frequent the great construction sites of Chinese cities. They are also the workers in factories making China 'the factory of the world'. However, for a long time, migrants were not allowed to travel freely to the cities because they were restrained by the household registration (*hukou*) system, which was introduced in the mid-1950s in order to control the flow of population between villages and cities. Dorothy Solinger (1999) has documented the effect of *hukou* on migrant lives in great detail. She argues that the household registration system was a form of institutionalized discrimination against a large proportion of the rural Chinese population, who were denied their full citizen status in the cities.

With the relaxation of the *hukou* system in the early 1980s, there thus emerged the phenomenon of the migrant labor population, sojourning between the rural and urban worlds, which developed as one of the most important formation mechanisms of urban villages. The migrants were called the 'floating population', which carried the negative connotation of being potentially criminal. Xiang Biao, a scholar formerly affiliated with Peking University, produced a groundbreaking work on the Zhejiang migrant villages (*Zhejiangcun*) in the suburbs of Beijing. For a long time, Xiang's study of Beijing's *Zhejiangcun, Transcending Boundaries, Zhejiangcun: The Story of a Migrant Village in Beijing* (translated in 2005, first published in 2000), was the standard authoritative text on migrant communities in China. Xiang provided insights into the migrants' communal organization in economic activities and adaptive maneuvering strategies against local village landlords and government. Xiang's Zhejiang village has always been mistaken or generalized as a kind of urban village. Not all Zhejiang villages are urban villages; some were simply urban communal districts with large numbers of Zhejiang migrants. Following in Xiang's footsteps, Li Zhang published her work, *Stranger in the City: Reconfiguration of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population* (2001), which is another major work on the migrant village of Zhejiangcun in Beijing. My research finds that migrants are a fundamental building block of the current form of urban villages. They are a controversial topic in academia. Predominantly, views towards migrants by academia are positive and sympathetic (Zhang 2001; Solinger 1999; Xiang 2000). However, scholars researching migrants often ignore the real-world difficulty and pressures that the migrants have created for Chinese cities and their urban administration, which are unprepared, or simply overwhelmed, by population flows that have exceeded all expectations. It is certainly a big shift from the original population control mechanism of *hukou* (household registration) plus *danwei* (work unit) that for so long discouraged rural migration toward cities. The movement and settlement of migrants in the city and, more specifically, in the urban village represented a form of freedom. Hence, the true importance of urban villages is revealed in their capacity to host migrants that alleviate so much pressure for the rest of the city. The migrants living and working in the urban village represent social mobility of a form that did not exist before the economic reforms began.

From Rural Villages to Urban Villages

The external appearance of the urban villages now looks drastically different from the traditional image of a Chinese village with fields of grains, domestic poultry, fish ponds, rivers, and irrigation systems. However, there are elements that remain unchanged from its rural past. Xiao Tangbiao (2010) and his work on the lineage system of the southern Chinese village was decidedly beneficial to my understanding of lineage-culture resurgence and the formation of powerful village-collective identities such as the urban village joint stock companies in post-reform China.

With China's economic reforms initiated in the country's south, rural communities across the southeastern coast were rapidly developed, drawing strength from the manufacturing sector. *Chen Village* (2009) by Jonathan Unger, Richard Madsen, and Anita Chan traces the rise of one southern village north of Shenzhen, from the days of the Cultural Revolution to the aftermath of Deng's economic reforms. Unger, Madsen, and Chan touch on various concepts related to urban villages. *Chen Village*'s latest, expanded edition added more information on the social and economic transformation of villagers who are now living a semi-urban lifestyle and making a living very similar to many urban villagers in Shenzhen.

From a different perspective, Gregory Guldin's *What's a Peasant to Do? Village Becoming Town in Southern China* (2001) provides an excellent overview of various townized villages across the southeastern coast of China, particularly among the various SEZs. More specifically, Guldin has much material on the 'townized villages' in the Shekou district of Shenzhen. These villages are essentially urban villages. Guldin was more focused on the phenomenon of 'townization', the transformation of villages to a small town, and was one of the few scholars who applied McGee's (1989, 1991) *desakota* (Indonesian: *town-village, urban village)* theory to the urban villages in the Shenzhen region. McGee's *desakota* theory suggests that there is a unique metropolitan formation process in Southeast Asia where the urban and rural areas become interwoven into large metropolitan regions. On urban villages of southern China, Guldin provides the essential overview of the social and political changes within the villages through anthropological

perspectives.

In more recent years, there have also been numerous articles focusing on urban village-related phenomena. Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang, and Jiangsheng Wu's article 'Urbanisation and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen' (2009) provides a crucial historical overview on village-city government relations with regards to informal housing construction on village land. Yan Song, Yves Zenou, and Chengri Ding's article 'Let's not Throw the Baby out with the Bath Water: The Role of Urban Village in Housing Rural Migrants in China' (2008), provides a solid foundation for understanding the migrant housing of choice in the cities, particularly among young, less-educated and self-employed migrants in the urban villages. There are also a few other Chinese scholarly works on the urban villages which focus on a range of issues, from land markets to the housing of rural migrants (Tian 2008; Zhang, Zhao, and Tian, 2003).

Small Urban Village, Big Problem

Within China, many domestic scholars and government-affiliated researchers have undertaken extensive studies in Chinese on urban villages in the Pearl River Delta region coordinating with the government's move to 'regulate' (*zhili*) the villages. In one of the latest publications on urban villages in general, Liu Mengqin, of the Guangdong Social Science Academy, presents in her book *Cunzhuang Zhongjie: Chengzhongcun Jiqi Gaizao Yanjiu* (2010) (*The End of the Village: A Study of the Urban Village and Its Reform*) the urban village as a major problem and obstacle to successful urbanisation in China, but she also acknowledges the potential beneficial functions of the urban villages in accommodating migrants.

Some Mainland Chinese scholars have begun to reexamine the existence of urban villages. In 2004, Li Peilin published his book, *The End of the Village: The Story of Yang Cheng Village* on the urban village of Guangzhou, the provincial capital of Guangdong, 150 kilometers north of Shenzhen. Li presents the urban village very much as a zone of potential conflict where several differing interest groups interact. On the identity of the village, there is the interesting phenomenon of urban identity resistance. Li Peilin was one

of the first to point out this type of urban identity resistance in China, particularly in the Pearl River Delta region. In his discussion of *cunji* (village origin or identity), Li observes that the villagers in Guangzhou's urban village often resist fully adopting an urban identity, starting with *hukou*. Instead, they prefer to live as villagers as long as possible. By holding on to the villager identity and being a part of urban village economic collectives yields real benefits both economically and politically. Zhang Li *et al.* in their article 'Self-Help Housing and the Urban Villages' (2003) suggest that the urban villages serve as places for low-income and migrant residences, which, in many ways, help avoid the kind of invasive squatter and uncontrolled outgrowth of slums witnessed in other developing countries. From the city of Shenzhen, Li Jinkui, a local scholar specializing in urban planning, published *Jia Su Cheng Shi Hua De Kao Yan* (*The Challenge from Rapid Urbanisation*) (2007). In this work Li includes a lengthy discussion on urban villages in Shenzhen. He presents the urban village as organically a part of Shenzhen and a natural product of the area's rapid urbanisation process. In his view, the urban village provides an essential function of housing migrants and alleviating high residential rental prices in Shenzhen.

Shenzhen's Urban Village from a Global Perspective

The term 'urban village' was commonly used in Western discourses around urbanisation long before it was applied to the Chinese urban villages. Herbert Gans published *The Urban Villagers* in 1962, about the urban villages of Boston. The American urban villages in the West End of Boston are urban neighbourhoods crammed with varying ethnic immigrants with a village-like atmosphere (Gans 1962). Similarly, there are urban villages in Britain, which are described by Chung Him (2010) as a new movement in urbanism that gained popularity in the 1990s. It is commonplace in the West, particularly in the United States, to use the term 'urban village' to describe a type of ideal urban community which has preserved the kind of tightly-knit, village-like community feel of the past. For example, historically, in the US, urban villages were often the heavily ethnic immigrant neighbourhoods of a particular European nationality. The German, Jewish, Polish and the Italian neighbourhoods in various North American cities were often referred to as urban villages (Wolf 1980; Gans 1982). These types of historical urban

villages in the West were 'migrant' neighbourhoods, which are very similar to the urban migrant neighbourhoods in China, such as the "Zhejiang village" in Beijing. Because of the large migrant population concentration, some of the urban villages in Shenzhen were nicknamed after a province, such as Henan Village or Anhui Village, when significant numbers of migrants from a particular province congregate in one particular place.

However, there are still key distinctions between the historical urban villages in the West and China's urban villages. Only a few historical Western urban villages have undergone rural-to-urban transformation. In more recent times, there is added another layer of meaning to the modern Western concept of the urban village, which is particularly popular among new urbanism planners and theorists. According to them, the urban village is a planned community that is walkable, convenient, and environmentally sustainable (Grant 2005, p. 125). It is a community that distinguishes itself from the type of rigid business atmosphere of downtown urban areas or the kind of highly fractured suburbias where people rely on cars to conduct their daily commute. This kind of "urban village" may already be on the blueprints of some Chinese urban planners, but at present the use of "urban village" in this thesis is exclusively for the ones of rural to urban transformation.

In the Asia Pacific region, many slums and urban settlements have proved to be remarkably similar to the urban villages in China. The one form that is particular interesting is the *Kampung* of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. *Kampung* literally means 'small village or town' in the Malay language. In its original form, the *Kampungs* are largely rural. With rapid urbanisation in Southeast Asian regions, the *Kampungs* in and near city, either historical or recently formed squatter migrant communities were for a long time treated as slums. In its modern usage, the *Kampungs* are in fact small-scale self-constructed neighbourhoods by historical, often ethnically diverse migrants over generations within the city limits (Evers and Korff 2000). The residents of the *Kampung*, much like the slum residents, often have no legal papers for their properties. They are often victims of urban renewal and real-estate development projects, as they have no legal claim on the land. Many scholars have pointed out that the *Kampung* often bears the association of being a village (Evers and Korff 2000, p. 229). They are in fact seen as a

sort of urban village. However, they are not constituted by an original or historical village community. Instead, due to the largely rural origins of the migrants, they form a kind of *gemeinschaft*-like community in their self-constructed neighbourhood. The sense of social harmony and good neighborly relations, or *Rukun* in Indonesian, is strongly stressed in the *Kampung* (Sullivan, cited in Evers and Korff 2000, p. 229). In fact, the residents of Kampung are able to form a very strong sense of collective identities and belonging within their neighbourhood. One scholar comments: 'in the Kampungs ties of residential proximity seemed to be of greater importance than ties of kin' (Jellinek, cited in Evers & Korff 2000, p. 230). There is a strong sense of neighbourhood despite the often sub-standard constructions. In this sense, it is very much like the urban village in that they have blended in smoothly with the rest of the city and provided convenience to their low-income populations. In the urban history of Southeast Asia, the Kampung was an unequivocal hindrance to the advancement of high modernist state planning. One Singaporean scholar has suggested it was from the great Kampung fires that the Singaporean government '[has] managed to obtain the public imagination in the making of modern Singapore (Oh 2009, p.4).' Similar high modernist mentality is also apparent in the relation between the city government and the urban villages in Shenzhen.

Many scholars have linked the urban villages of China with the slums of the developing world. Mike Davis and China expert Dorothy Solinger are just two of the better-known contemporary scholars who indirectly link urban villages with slums and shanty towns. Davis sees the return of capitalism in China since the economic reforms of the 1980s as being the main cause for the dramatic increase in the number of slums and shanty towns in China (Davis 2006, p. 60). Davis cites the 2003 UN-HABITAT statistics that suggest roughly 37.8% of China's urban population is slum dwellers, which amounts to a population of 193.8 million people (Davis 2006, p. 24). Dorothy Solinger once described the shanty towns in China and Shenzhen and the people in them as being "squeezed into shacks in Beijing, where one toilet served more than six thousand people; of a shantytown in Shenzhen housing fifty shelters, in which hundreds subsisted without running water" (Solinger 1999, p. 121). Although there are many visual similarities, slum is not exactly the right word to describe the urban village for the simple reason that although the urban

villages are sites of a large numbers of informal and semi-illegal housing the land deeds are held by the urban villagers individually or as collectives. There are no invasive squatters. Most migrants have to pay rent to stay. Water and electricity are standard as the rest of the city. However, frequently, the urban villages are described as slum like because their shabby appearance compared in relative terms with the newer apartment buildings. In high modernist school of thinking on urban villages, slums are the ultimate enemy of any city. Le Corbusier once described the slums and their residents in Paris as: 'a dead weight on the city an obstacle, a black clot of misery, of failure, of human garbage (Le Corbusier cited in Scott 1998, p.116).' High modernist or not, being called slum is still a kind of death sentence for the urban village. It provides the popular support to carry out local government directed urban renewal on the villages where a clean slate can be created for whatever high modernist project that is founded on the ruins of the urban villages.

In many other rapidly changing cities, whether it is Lagos in Nigeria or Calcutta in India, the landless migrants in the city often become squatters. Manuel Castells presented a wide array of informal migrant settlements in his *The City and Its Grassroots* (1983). To Castells, the landless rural migrants and squatters were the grassroots of the city. They are the ultimate creator of the city, be it in Caracas, Mexico City, or Rio de Janeiro. In fact, one of the forming mechanisms of slums was the uncontrolled informal settlement by landless rural migrants in the cities. By contrast, according to Mobrand (2006), the phenomenon of the squatters' land invasion and settlement are hard to find in China's urban villages. In more recent urban research by Mobrand (2006), there is an in-depth comparison of urban migrant settlements in Latin America and China. Mobrand makes it clear that China's migrant areas have the strong distinction of having a minimum percentage of invasive squatter population or self-constructed informal buildings by squatter. Mobrand offers a very insightful description of urban villages of China as: 'although these ''villages-in-the-city'' (*chengzhongcun*) resemble Latin American shantytowns in population composition, they imply a different kind of politics. Migrants provide the urban villagers with a source of income to replace agriculture and these landlords in return give cheap housing' (Mobrand 2006, p. 265). Mobrand also provides an insightful analysis of the migrants' relations with the landlords as a form of mutually

beneficial cooperation where the landlords receive an income whilst providing protection for the migrants who might be harassed or punished for not having the appropriate papers. However, this kind of cooperation was, in Mobrand's view, contributing to the persistent high-crime environment in the villages due to the lack of enforcement of tenant identity registration within the village.

High Modernism and Shenzhen's Urban Village

James C. Scott's *Weapon of the Weak* (1985), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) and *Seeing Like a State* (1998) introduced many themes of resistance and struggles against power that are relevant to the urban villages of Shenzhen. Scott's theory of passive resistance could be applied to the urban villagers' struggling against urban renewal projects and its potential violence in the form of *chaiqian[1]*. Scott's public and 'hidden transcripts'[2] are useful in deciphering the language of conflict between the city government and the urban villages. In particular, Scott's concept of hidden transcript is essential in understanding the language of rural-to-urban migrants during interviews. More importantly, Scott introduced the concept of high modernism in urban planning through the works by the Swiss Urban planner and theorist Le Corbusier (1964) whose beautifully illustrated book *the Radiant City* is still the corner stone of the high modernist movement. To be fair, Le Corbusier's work could be considered visionary when it was originally published in 1933. However, with hindsight, his centralized planning, obsession with technology inspired efficiency and overly ordered aesthetic is plainly inhumane in the present time. His work is strongly criticized by Jane Jacobs, Scott, and numerous later scholars. Scott is one of the first to outline in great detail the flaws of high modernism in urban planning. His critique of 'high modernism ideology' is a powerful tool in understanding the endless conflicts between the urban villages and other powerful forces with vest interest over land and development.

Frequently cited by Scott, Jane Jacobs was one of the greatest critics of high modernism's

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[1] Chinese abbreviation for demolition and relocation
[2] A term in James C. Scott's *Domination and the Art of Resistance* which refers to gossiping and hidden communication between the oppressed and dominated population often targeting the dominating groups

urban visions. Seeing from her book, *the Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs (2011) is a strong advocate of multi-use zoning and complex street life. She decried the high modernist planners and their urban renewal attempts in many of old neighbourhoods such as Manhattan's Greenwich Village and Boston's North-end. Importantly, Jacobs introduced the concept of "unsluming" where slum dwellers and their businesses can work together to improve their community, instead of surrendering to full-scale urban renewal.

Hence, in the field of urban planning, there is debate between the centrally planned and the unplanned. Shenzhen and its urban villages also reflect these two issues. One must admit that Shenzhen is also a high modernist city. In fact, most of urban China is striving toward the goals of high modernism; as Le Corbusier puts it: as an 'organized, serene, forceful, airy, orderly entity' (cited in Scott 1998, p. 107). However, it is in the urban village where the planned urban entity ended and where the unplanned began, much like the unplanned Brasilia cited by Scott (1998, p. 130). In this thesis, we shall expand on the endless struggle between these two mentalities. The very high modernist mentality as reflected in the minds of local officials, medias, and some scholars is contrasted and countered by the urban villagers, the migrant residents and scholars who would prefer to let the urban village be.

Chapter Conclusion

Literature on urban villages in Shenzhen or in China is not abundant. However, the phenomenon of the urban village touches on many contested topics and discourses of our time, such as urbanisation, rural-to-urban population migration, urban sprawl, slums, informal buildings, and low-income neighbourhoods. China has been in the process of rapid urbanisation over the last two decades. It is a process with global economic and political consequences. David Harvey described China's urbanisation as 'the primary stabilizer' in the capitalist world system today, gobbling up raw materials globally, from iron ore to cement, to fuel its urban expansion (Harvey 2008). Within China, the debate between 'small town theory' and the 'big city school' is still ongoing. The urban village could be interpreted both ways for the 'big city school': as either a triumph or a failure.

With migration, the urban village is a concentrated case study of rural migrant existence in the city. Again, the subject of the 'urban village' is polarizing, depicting migrants as either an urban administrative nightmare or as hardworking upwardly mobile people. The urban village appears to be a very different thing to different people, who interpret it as either a slum or a community of freely assembled self-help housing.

The remainder of this thesis attempts to showcase the real conditions of the urban village and analyze its existence objectively. The urban villages are criticized and stigmatized for various negative qualities actual or exaggerated. Ultimately, it is facing the onslaught of high modernism beliefs that is entrenched in the thought of not just local governments, but also of real estate developers and the mainstream public who all wanted the urban villages changed or eventually removed. The urban village is not a stand-alone phenomenon found just in Shenzhen. Its past, formation process, continuous struggle, and evolution carry great significance for all China, which in the coming decades will create numerous super-metropolitan regions and subsequently countless urban villages. An understanding of the urban village phenomenon shall prove crucial to the great socio-economic transition going on in China, as it will for the first time in its history have more of its population living in cities than in villages. The urban villages are in many ways a unique aspect of China's modernization and urbanisation. Whether they shall continue to exist or are merely a passing phase in China's urban development is yet to be determined. Whatever the case, their study is crucial in gaining a better understanding of the great social, economic, and political transformations occurring in China, and how these are impacting on the physical environment and societal relations.

Chapter Three

Villages on the Border:

An Historical Overview of the Villages before Economic Reform and Urbanisation

Shenzhen has only three treasures,
Mosquitos, Flies, and Shajin Oysters,
Nine out of ten rooms are empty and people flee,
The village is only left with elders and youth.

"Shenzhen has only three treasures," a local ballad from the 1970s

Its pace picked up enormously after a brief recession in 1997, to the extent that China has taken in nearly half the world's cement supplies since 2000. More than a hundred cities have passed the one million population mark in this period and previously small villages, such as Shenzhen, have become huge metropolises of 6 to 10 million people.

David Harvey, 'The Right to the City' (2008)

Introduction

Today, Shenzhen is an important commercial, financial, and technological hub of China; it is one of the few metropolises with a population surpassing the ten million mark. It is home to one of China's two stock exchanges, and recently opened *Chuangyeban*, the Chinese equivalent of a NASDAQ-style exchange for newly-founded technology firms. However, for all its importance in reform-era China, Shenzhen is still a little-known Chinese city in the West. Shenzhen was once the "Chinese dream", the wild west of China, the place for "gold prospecting" (*taojin*) to strike it rich. Jiang An, a professor at Shenzhen University, summarized the Shenzhen Dream as 'a complex mixture of high risk, adrenalin, and desire'. However, the aspect of *taojin* is always there (Southern Metropolis Daily 2010). Shenzhen is seen by many as a city of the future. There is a

popular government slogan defining the Shenzhen SEZ: 'time is money and efficiency is life.' However, the history of the land and the people who lived there before the bright lights and glamour of skyscrapers and other monuments to urban wealth, is often forgotten. Very few people seem to care about the villages that once stood on this land or how they fared before the economic reforms. A number of these villages are now urban villages, while others have disappeared entirely during the rapid urbanisation process. For this dissertation, the villager's individual and collective memories shall be my access points in understanding the economic and urban changes happened in Shenzhen over the last thirty years.

This chapter will provide an overview of the history of the region that later included both the new city of Shenzhen and the urban villages. It will outline some of the key events that happened in the local area prior to the founding of Shenzhen. These events such as the ancient population migration, the founding of the People's Republic, the Cultural Revolution, and the great exodus of *taogang* (fleeing to Hong Kong) have had left their marks on Shenzhen and its villages. While providing the historical overview, a strong emphasis is placed on the villagers' perspective and how they viewed their own history and the transformations that have occurred.

Photo 2: An aerial view of Shenzhen from the 100th floor of Kingkey100 skyscraper, the city's tallest building. Photo by author 2012

Photo 3: Shenzhen River, the natural border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. The Mountain Ranges and Rice Paddies are on Hong Kong side of the river. Photo by author 2012

The Historical Shenzhen Region

Despite often being considered the youngest city in China, the area that is now Shenzhen has a long history. According to the Shenzhen Museum, there was human settlement in the area as early as 4000 BCE. This area used to belong to the ancient Yue or Viet people prior to their systematic absorption into the Han Chinese from around 214 CE under the expansionist Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE), which established the county of Panyu which included all the current area of Shenzhen. Since then, the Shenzhen area has been firmly brought into the Han Chinese cultural sphere. In 331 CE, the local region was renamed Baoan during the Jin Dynasty and for the first time recognized as a county. It had become a minor regional trade centre and salt production site from around 600 CE during the Tang Dynasty (618–907CE) (ed. Guo 2001, pp. 8-14). Shenzhen also entered the international trading network of the Maritime Silk Road during the Tang Dynasty. Large amounts of trading goods such as Song and Yuan dynasty porcelains were found in the local region. The Shenzhen Museum interprets the location of Shenzhen as an important 'gate' for maritime trade that originated from the provincial capital Guangzhou (Shenzhen Museum 2008, p.15). The Shenzhen region changed its administrative name numerous times over the last thousand years. It was renamed Xin'an County in 1573 CE during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644CE). Since the Ming period, Shenzhen has had a detailed county annals called *Xin'an Xianzhi* which recorded for the first time in 1573 CE a population figure of 7,608 families and 33,971people (Baoan County Annals Editorial Committee 1997, p. 14). The local region kept the name of Xin'an for 342 years and was renamed Baoan during the Republic-of-China period in 1914 because it shared the same name as a county in Henan Province. The county was renamed one more time as Shenzhen in 1981. For a short period, the Baoan County coexisted with the Shenzhen SEZ until 1979 when it became a suburban district of the newly formed Shenzhen City in 1981, following the Chinese State Council's 'Guangdong, Fujian Provinces and SEZ Conference Memo' (*Guangdong Fujian Liangsheng He Jingji Tequ Gongzuo Huiyi Jiyao*).

In the mid-thirteenth century, an important historical event occurred around Shenzhen. By several accounts, this area was the last battle site between the fleeing, young Emperor of the Song Dynasty (960–1127CE), who was protected by his loyal followers in a battle against soldiers from the Mongol army who were ordered to hunt him down. The last prime minister of the Song Dynasty, Wen Tianxiang, a heroic figure and symbol of patriotism in Chinese history, was captured in the region surrounding Shenzhen. Wen was later imprisoned nearby, and there wrote the acclaimed poem on patriotism 'Passing the Ling Ding Sea' (*Guo Lingding Yang*). Lingding Yang is a nearby waterway (ed. Guo 2001, p. 18). Till this day, the Wen clan of Gangxia's urban village claim to be descendants of Wen Tianxiang.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, there was no distinction between the Shenzhen and what are now Hong Kong and its surrounding areas. They belonged to the same County of Xin'an. The current Shenzhen City covers much of the land area of Xin'an County, excluding Hong Kong. During the Ming Dynasty, there was the first appearance of the name Shenzhen as *Shenzhenxu*, a local trading area between two villages. This trading area is precisely located around what is now the famous Dongmen Commercial District, by far the most popular shopping area in Shenzhen. *Xu* is an ancient Chinese term used to describe a trading area, and Shenzhen was the name of local ditches with the special characteristic of being deep (*shen*). Also, during the Ming period, a fortified town named Pengcheng was founded in the northeastern part of Xin'an County. Another fortified town called Nantou was founded in the northwestern part of the County. Both of these two fort-like towns were originally built to defend against 'Japanese pirates' who in reality were generally struggling fisherman from China's southeastern coast with a few Japanese pirates among them. The fight against piracy was a major political undertaking during the Ming dynasty. In Pengcheng, the residents once withstood a 40-day siege of the town by pirates (ed. Guo 2001, p. 20). The considerable ongoing maritime trade may have been a lure for the piracy documented along the coast, for in the period before the British colonization Hong Kong Island was notorious as a pirates den. The legendary pirate figure Zhang Baozai was very active, and his surrender in 1810 was an important event in the Baoan Annals (Baoan Annals Editorial Committee 1997, p. 16).

Photo 4: Fortified Town in Nantou. Photo by author 2009

Following the Opium Wars of 1839–1842, under the Treaty of Nanjing, Xin'an County ceded the Hong Kong region to the British, then in 1860, and under the Treaty of Beijing, Xin'an ceded Kowloon to British control. In Beijing in 1898, the 'The Convention Between Great Britain and China Respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory' (*Zhan Tuo Xiang Gang Jie Zhi Zhuan Tiao*) was signed, finally settling the border demarcations between the British Colony of Hong Kong and what remained of Xin'an County.

Shenzhen is famous in China's modern history for the rebellious activities of its inhabitants. In the late Qing Dynasty, the founder of the Republic of China, Sun Yatsen, used this area as a base to launch his political opposition to the old dynastic order. Shenzhen's Sanzhoutian region was the site of an uprising on 6 October 1900. Many local Shenzhen villagers joined the uprising (ed. Guo 2001, p. 25). During the rebellion, Shenzhen was in a state of self-government, administered by local business and gentry elites.

Thirty years later, in 1939, the Japanese invaded China and occupied Shenzhen. For a while, Shenzhen held a special significance within the Japanese High Command as it prepared to attack Hong Kong. Just two hours after the assault on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese attacked Hong Kong from Shenzhen, aided by amphibious assaults from the sea (Tseng 2007). Resistance by Hong Kong lasted seventeen days. With the Japanese firmly controlling both Hong Kong and Shenzhen, the only resistance in the area was a small Communist guerrilla force based northeast of Shenzhen called *Dong Jiang Zong Dui* (East River Column), which operated in the Baoan Mountains. The East River Column also holds special significance for the post-war city of Shenzhen, as some of the early city officials were from the Column. Today, on the most crowded streets of Dongmen in Shenzhen, outside the city's Dongmen Subway Station, one can see the old Cantonese/colonial-styled building that was the former Command centre for the famous East River Column.

Photo 5: The former East River Column headquarters, located in Dongmen Commercial strip. Photo by author 2009

With the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the ensuing Cold War, Shenzhen witnessed the most intense militarization in its history. With Hong Kong being a British colonial enclave and operational base for the anti-communist organisation of various affiliations, Shenzhen became a frontline in the Cold War. Most of Shenzhen's population of rural villagers were organised into military-styled brigades, intended to serve both as agrarian production units and to perform military duty. This rarely studied semi-military organisation had a significant effect on the group identity of the original villagers. The later success and organisational capacity of Shenzhen's original villagers may be traced to their militarized past. The Yumin Village in Shenzhen, next to the Wenjindu Border Terminal connecting Hong Kong, still today displays a bronze mural depicting the village's history. It is abundantly clear that the villagers were identified as both agrarian and military. Thirty years ago, this tiny village was comprised predominately of fishermen (hence, the name *Yumin* in Chinese), who were armed to carry out border patrol duties while working their fields. In some of the rural areas bordering Hong Kong, Shenzhen villagers carried rifles as they went about their farming.

Photo 6: Bronze Mural of Yumin Village. Photo by author 2009

The Agrarian Past of the Shenzhen Region and the Rural Villagers

Shenzhen's population has always been migratory in nature. The ancient Yue people who inhabited the land in ancient times were largely absorbed over time by the conquering Han Chinese. Because of the tropical weather, early Chinese settlement in the area was very limited. However, in the last thousand years, with foreign wars and civil wars in Northern China, waves of people migrated from China proper to the more peripheral regions. The chaos and nomadic invasion at the end of the Jin Dynasty (265–420 CE) and Song Dynasty (960–1127 CE) were major drivers for migration of Chinese settlers seeking refuge in the south. Most of the original villages of Shenzhen are able to trace their roots to various locations on the central China plain. Their ancestors came by way of Fujian and Jiangxi Provinces, escaping wars in northern China. For example, the village of Huanggang in central Futian can trace the migration of its clan to Hangzhou during the Song Dynasty.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911CE), major changes occurred in Shenzhen's demographic composition, due largely to the constant coastal raids by Ming loyalists from Taiwan. The newly established Qing Dynasty banned all sea-going activities in 1664 CE to deny these loyalists support from the coastal population and ordered all coastal communities to move thirty *li* inland, approximately fifteen kilometres. All coastal lands in Southeast China, including the historical Shenzhen area, were in that manner evacuated. In the local county annals, it is recorded that there were only 2,172 people left in the County at the start of this policy (Baoan County Annals Editorial Committee 1997, p. 15). The coastal evacuation and sea ban policy lasted for more than twenty years, and was revoked only after the final conquest of Taiwan. Large numbers of Hakka (*kejiaren*) then moved into Shenzhen and into the evacuated lands (ed. Guo 2001, p. 71). The Hakka were a Han ethnic linguistic minority in Guangdong Province who were often treated as an ethnic minority. The Hakka people since the Qing Dynasty have become the major demographic in Shenzhen, building fortified communal neighbourhoods and compounds scattered across north and northeastern Shenzhen. The highly defensive nature of these

Hakka settlements was to counter to local prejudice, and frequent raids by bandits and pirates.

In terms of language, Shenzhen's villages proved to be markedly diverse. Cantonese had long been the standard communication language in the Shenzhen area prior to the recent arrival of the large Mandarin-speaking migrant population. In Shenzhen's north, there remain large numbers of Hakka-speakers in villages that, like those in Hong Kong, had long segregated themselves from other Cantonese villages and thus maintained their language. In Huanggang and some nearby villages, the people speak a local dialect called *Huitouhua* or *Weitouhua,* which is found only in the Shenzhen and Hong Kong regions. Some linguistic experts class it as an entirely different dialect to Cantonese, while others consider it a sub-dialect of Cantonese. Many villagers settling in Hong Kong's New Territories also spoke this dialect, which is thought to have originated from the Dongguan-Baoan region, as well as Shenzhen. Some linguistic experts consider Weitouhua the most original dialect of Hong Kong, dating to a period long before the arrival of Cantonese-speaking settlers from Guangzhou City. Other than the Hakka- and Weitouhua-speaking population, there are pockets of Minnan (southern Fujian Province) dialect, spoken in Shenzhen's west (So, D 1998, p. 155).

The traditional social structures of Shenzhen's villages in non-*Hakka* areas are very similar. In contrast to the defensive and fortified Hakka Village with their walled compounds in Shenzhen's north, most other Shenzhen villages are open, with clustered houses and personal lots. Most villages were built around a few dominant surname lineages (*zongzu*) that often make up the majority of the population in the villages. For most of China's history, the surname-based lineages have been the most powerful force of administration at the local—especially village—level in the form of gentry (*xiangshen*) or lineage elder (*zuzhang*). In a way, this was the traditional way of self-government in China –rule by lineage networks (Xiao 2010, p. 51). The most dominant surname lineages have ancestral temples in the village centres. Next to the ancestral temple, there are other religious temples hosting Buddhist or Taoist deities. Unique to this region, there is also

Mazu worship, which is a form of Chinese folk religion. Mazu is the patron saint of sailors and sea-going merchants. It is also popular Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam.[3] Mazu worship was a common and popular form of belief in Fujian and Taiwan, but not in Guangdong province, which Shenzhen belongs. It is likely the region's popular fishing industries learned the religious practice from their neighbours in nearby provinces. The local people in Shenzhen called Mazu *Tianhou* or Heavenly Queen. The *Tianhougong* (the palace of Mazu) remains one of the largest historical religious sites in Shenzhen, and there is another *Tianhougong* is in Hong Kong which once again demonstrates the cultural ties between these two areas (Irwin 1990, pp. 53-68).

Photo 7: The Citang/Temple Complex in Huanggang Village. The Temples on the side of this *citang* worship Taoist deities such as 'Lingwang', King of Spirits, which are unique to the region. Photo by author 2010

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[3] The legend of Mazu was popular along the Fujian coast. It told the story of a peasant girl named Lin Miaoniang who had the mythical power of foretelling weather and sailing conditions. According to folklores, she helped many sailors with her abilities. She was later declared a saint by local authorities. Today, the worship of Mazu is widespread among coastal communities of Chinese in China and Southeast Asia.

Photo 8: An elderly villager giving incense to a Taoist deity in Huanggang Village. Photo by author 2010

Photo 9: The Citang of Jian Clan at Xinzhou Village next to modern high rise apartment. Photo by author 2010

Shenzhen Villages since the Foundation of the People's Republic

During the 1950s and 1960s, villagers of Shenzhen were whipped into a political frenzy, much like the rest of China, when ordered to communize agricultural production. Many older urban villagers are very frank about sharing their experiences in the pre-economic reform era. LWH[4], now in his mid-80s, was the village chief of the less-developed village of Buxin from 1975 to 1987. He was also the head of the local production brigade, which once included many local villages, such as Shuiwei, Dawang, and others. He provided a very detailed account of agricultural production during the village's past, prior to the founding of Shenzhen City. His village produced two main crops: sugar cane and peanuts. The village operated a sugar factory that processed its own sugar cane. The quality of sugar was such that it was sent to the provincial capital, Guangzhou, as a local exemplary product. To be chosen to supply the provincial capital gave the local villagers and LWH great pride in their work. Nonetheless, there are mixed feelings in the memories of the past. LWH described the village's food production in the 1960s and 1970s in the following way:

> The production of the main crops didn't earn the village much profit, because the food prices were so low. One *jin* [half a kilogram] of peanut oil was sold for just three or four *fen* [one hundredth of a Chinese *yuan*]. A single *gongfen* [work point] which the villager's wage was based on was about three to four *fen*. An average villager could earn ten work points a day. At the time, the whole brigade was divided into four smaller production teams. Still, I feel a sense of nostalgia of once being able to grow crops and grow our own food. Nowadays, the youth, no matter how well educated, will never know how to grow crops as our farmers did. (Interview with LWH 29/6/2010)

In addition to the already overburdened workload, the villagers were affected by the politically motivated production campaigns of the time. In 1969, the 'Study Da Zhai

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[4] All my original villager interviewees were conducted by appointment. Interviewees are identified only by their initials in capital letters, to protect their anonymity.

Commune' political campaign had a negative effect on the local villagers' food production. Villages were encouraged to recklessly increase food production as much as possible, but many of the methods were counterproductive and impractical. The villagers of Yumin were encouraged to push the limits of their fishery production. They were encouraged to '*chuang da hai*' (bravely explore the sea) (Shenzhen Archive 2005, p. 2655). The fishermen of the local villages were encouraged to achieve the maximum possible tonnage of catch with little regards of distance, weather conditions and personal safety.

Photo 10: A pictorial display in the Huanggang Village museum, depicting the commune days. On the right, the Chinese characters indicate the brigade unit name of the villages of the era. Photo by author 2010

Political Fervour in the Villages

The Cultural Revolution and other political chaos of the Maoist period greatly affected the Shenzhen region. Shenzhen, then still called Baoan, was a small agrarian county thousands of kilometres away from Beijing, and hundreds of kilometres from other major

Chinese urban political centres, where the political frenzies were generated, but was not immune from the political chaos. Because of its location bordering with Hong Kong, the political fervour was purposefully exacerbated. In the 1966 Baoan County annals there is the following entry describing the Cultural Revolution that swept over the whole county in June:

> Every middle school formed a 'Red Guard' organisation. They were followed by the formation of rebellious organisations [*zaofan zuzhi*] that struck at every level. They put up posters to propagate [the concepts of] 'rebellion' [*zaofan*] and in opposition to the 'four olds'[5] [*sijiu*]. They went on to struggle against so called capitalist roaders: teachers and people in administrative positions. The party and governing organization ceased to function, due to [these] attacks. (Source: Baoan County Annals Editorial Committee 1997, p. 33)

Many older villagers, who were children or teenagers during the Cultural Revolution, have vivid memories of the political frenzies during the Red Guard period. ZJN is an original villager of Huanggang Village. He is in his late-50s and a local-history enthusiast. He once participated in Red Guard activities when he was a middle-school student. To him, those were exciting times in the early 1970s. The local middle school, then the highest education institution in the region, was in shambles, and the village youth were free to roam and join political organisations such as the Red Guards. They participated in grassroots politics just as they wished. One of ZJN's most memorable events was the 'grand struggle meetings' of Baoan County, in what is now Caiwuwei Village's public square. About ten thousand people attended the 'grand meeting' periodically, which operated as a platform for local Red Guards or other radical leaders to whip up political frenzy among the population. At the meeting, the Red Guards would call upon youngsters to name counter-revolutionaries in the local area. They would yell: 'who are the ox devils and snake demons?[6] Where are they? Drag them out now!' The Red Guards would then go after their predetermined target and drag them onto the stage for a 'struggle session'

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[5] The *sijiu* (four olds) are old Customs, Culture, Habits and Ideas.
[6] The Ox and Snake demons were political symbols of remaining capitalist and feudal reactionary elements in Chinese society. '*Da dao niugui sheshen*' ('Defeat the ox and snake demons') was a common political slogan during the Cultural Revolution.

(ZJN 12/6/2010). At these meetings, the Red Guards would always try to fabricate evidence against someone, claiming them as a counter-revolutionary. Many times the Red Guards would search for potential targets among the people who attended the meetings. Once they 'found' their targets, they would drag them out and place a large board around their neck, which read: '*xian xing fan ge ming*' ('an active counter revolutionary'). They would then place a large cone-shape hat on their victims and march them across the main street of Baoan County.

In ZJN's estimation, the Cultural Revolution in Shenzhen was more about political frenzy and fervour than actual brutality. People were simply fanatical. They danced the *zhongziwu* (loyalty dance) and sang the *zhongzige* (loyalty song) very much with the same fervour as the rest of China. There was the 'Study Mao's Thought Campaign'. There were nights when sudden telegraphs were rushed to the village and every villager was instructed to study Chairman Mao's latest thoughts and commands. Sometimes villagers had to study Mao's new commands overnight. People would gather together in public areas or just with their family to study his thoughts. People would read them out aloud and recite them time and time again. In those days, citizens wore Chairman Mao badges and carried his little red book. Every day, before work began, all villagers had to recite the three famous essays of Chairman Mao. These were commonly called 'Lao San Pian' ('Three Old Essays') (ZJN 12/6/2010). They were 'To Serve the People', 'Study Norman Bethune', and 'The Fool Moves Mountains'. The villagers had to memorize them by heart. At the end of the work day, villagers would sing the song 'Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman'. When the families met for dinner, they would dance the 'Loyalty Dance'. The Baoan County annals records for June 1968:

> The whole county was mobilized for the 'three loyal campaigns'. Every building has to have the character "loyal" (*zhong*) and has a slogan related to "loyal." Every village ought to have a "loyal" memorial arch (*paifang*). And every family house door ought to have a loyal poster. Everyone must have a Chairman Mao badge and carry the book *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* and dance the loyalty dance. (Baoan County Annals Editorial Committee 1997 p.34)

ZJN recounts three changes of village leadership in Huanggang Village during the Cultural Revolution decade. Most of the old village chiefs from the time of the Cultural Revolution survived except for one, the headmaster of ZJN's middle school, and the foremost educational institution in the area. He later committed suicide after several public struggle sessions. The humiliation was simply too much for him. ZJN witnessed these proceedings first hand when he attended the struggle session against the old village chief at the school that both of them once attended. ZJN remembered his former headmaster as very talkative and friendly to outsiders, 'even' Hong Kong people on the border. He was later labelled a spy and marched through the village. As ZJN notes, the political situation was very tense:

> In those days, people watched their words and actions very closely. Any wrong word and wrong action could earn someone the label 'Counter-Revolutionary'. Because of Hong Kong's closeness to Shenzhen, the Shenzhen locals could receive Hong Kong radio signals. On Shenzhen's side, people were careful not to get caught listening to Hong Kong stations. Once caught, one is labelled as a backward thinker with loose morals. (Interview with ZJN 12/6/2010)

The Hong Kong Exodus

The lives of villagers in the Shenzhen area were not notably different to villagers elsewhere in China, until the late 1970s. They grew crops, raised poultry, and farmed fish. However, the villagers were always more enlightened than the rest of China in terms of their knowledge of the outside world. Shenzhen is not famous in Guangdong as a *qiaoxiang* (home town of overseas Chinese diaspora). Nonetheless, the villages of Shenzhen have always possessed broad knowledge of their neighbour to the south, Hong Kong. The historical connections discussed above meant many Shenzhen villagers remained culturally and emotionally connected with villagers in the New Territories in Hong Kong. They were keenly aware of the developmental gap between China and the

world, and they needed to look no further than Hong Kong to see this. In the 1950s, the villagers had very difficult work quotas. Initially, there was sincere enthusiasm and fervour to work for the collective version of 'earthly paradise' among the villagers. However, the socialist paradise was a dream far in the future; meanwhile, the capitalist paradise was just next door in Hong Kong. As a consequence of the tremendous material developmental gap and political instabilities, *taogang* (fleeing to Hong Kong) occurred in the villages. *Taogang* was not just a Shenzhen phenomenon. The forces that brought it about had a regional effect on several southern Chinese provinces. Taogang was a result of China's pre-economic reform era's political turmoil, repression, and lack of economic opportunity, compared to what lay across the border (Chen 2011).

When border movement between Shenzhen and Hong Kong was restricted in 1952, people moving across the border began to be caught by the border guards on both sides. Populations from many southern provinces were involved in the Taogang waves. Some of the Taogang people were fleeing political persecutions because of their backgrounds with the former *Guomingdang* (KMT) loyalists or because they were 'rightist' liberal intellectuals. Increasingly, large numbers of Shenzhen villagers joined the Taogang wave. However, their reasons were mostly related to earning better incomes during the initial economic take-off of Hong Kong in the late 1960s and early 70s. Compared to those working in the fields, people on construction sites in Hong Kong were earning hundreds of times as much. Some village populations were reduced by half, due to the *taogang* movement to Hong Kong, and others were emptied entirely (Chen 2011). The flee-to-Hong-Kong phenomenon was so widespread in and around Shenzhen that it was rare for any village to not have a significant population loss due to *taogang*. At a political level, the *taogang* event acted as a filter, and all those who stayed behind were solidly incorporated as village cadres who would wield power in the following decades. Former chief of Huanggang Village, ZSF, remembers how this outflow of people changed the village and also the opportunities it opened up:

> I and what was left of the village male population had to carry out the task
> of fulfilling the production quotas that was difficult even when the village

was fully populated. The work was really hard. Many villages had almost become ghost villages or villages of widows because all the young males were gone. During this difficult period, I honed my skill as a village cadre. When I was thirty years old, I became the brigade team leader and the head of the village. Till this day, many of the original Huanggang villagers still live in Hong Kong. (Interview with ZSF 24/6/2010)

The *taogangchao* (Fleeing Hong Kong Wave) after the 1950s brought disruption and chaos to the Shenzhen region and its villages. It was very easy for the local villagers to flee because most of them already had relatives in Hong Kong. As explained earlier, many villages on the border regions between Shenzhen and Hong Kong had shared lineages. With a large number of mostly males fleeing to Hong Kong, the remaining workers in Shenzhen villages faced manpower shortages and failed to meet production quotas; even worse for the remaining villagers, they had to endure accusations of failing to keep watch over those who had fled the village. The local County Annals notes in 1957 note that 'there was severe fleeing phenomenon (*waitaofeng*), from January to September 4,316 locals fled in total' (Baoan County Annals 1997, p. 28). These figures were just from the Shenzhen area and it was likely to be a very conservative estimate. A later entry recorded:

> From April to early July, 100,000 people swarmed Shenzhen and started *waitaofeng*. 51,395 people from 12 provinces and 62 counties and cities were detained. From the local region, 12,411 people fled Hong Kong. Since 1957, 23,579 people fled from the whole county. (Baoan County Annals Editorial Committee 1997, p. 31)

In 1977, 1,137 people fled from Baoan County to Hong Kong. In the next 3 years, there was a tenfold increase to 15,298 people (Shenzhen Archive 2005, p. 2451). The Baoan County Committee estimated that the total local population who had fled to Hong Kong prior to the founding of Shenzhen City numbered around 50,000, approximately one in seven people or 14 percent of the local population (Shenzhen Archive 2005, p. 2499).

Many border guards were original villagers who faced the difficult choice of stopping relatives and friends from fleeing, or being punished. In a speech to the Huiyang County in 1979, the then-governor of Guangdong Province, Xi Zhongxun, once commented on the characteristics of the *taogang* population as highly organised and many of the participants had a local cadre background. Many were children of cadres. A large number of youth, militia members, and fishermen had fled, some in stolen boats (Shenzhen Archive 2005, p. 2507). Years later, in modern-day Shenzhen, one article on the village history of Luofang recorded these exchanges between the then-village-chief and the current village company chairperson, Chen Tianle, and his fellow villagers. Chen's Luofang Village is located right on the border. The village held ownership of some land in Hong Kong. In addition, there was another Luofang Village on the Hong Kong side, which shared the same lineage with the one in Shenzhen. This is one of the clearest examples of a village literally cut in half by the border. Due to the Shenzhen village's ownership of land on the Hong Kong side, the villagers had special personnel quotas to go over to the Hong Kong side to farm on day trips. During those trips, the villagers discovered for themselves the great gap in development between their village and life in Hong Kong. According to them, the Hong Kong villagers could earn up to 13,000 *yuan* a year, almost one hundred times the earning of an average Shenzhen villager in those years. From 1950 to 1969, 645 people left and stayed in Hong Kong, which is twice the current original villager population of Luofang. Hence, more than three quarters of the village's population had fled to Hong Kong (Peng 2009). Many Luofang villagers referred to Hong Kong as 'heaven'. When the village chief of Luofang Village, Chen Tianle, tried to persuade local villagers not to flee to Hong Kong, a female militia member at the local village militia grand meeting told him: "Brother Le, I don't agree with you. We people are like birds. We will go and settle wherever we want. I personally think Hong Kong is a good place. There is good money over there and a lot of food to eat. I think Hong Kong is heaven (Peng 2009)!"

In 2011, a former journalist from Shenzhen, Chen Binan, published a book, *Dataogang*, on the *Taogang* phenomenon. The book was published and printed in Hong Kong and later in Shenzhen. In a story-telling format, Chen presented the *taogang* event through

many real life stories. Chen's basic point in his book is that the *taogang* event was a key historical turning-point for both Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The estimated 1.5 million people who fled to Hong Kong to a large extent contributed to the economic take-off of the British colony by providing much-needed labour in all sectors of the economy. The *taogang* event is also a crucial moment for Shenzhen, for without it there probably would not be any special economic zones whose function, according to Chen, was to curb the human waves fleeing to Hong Kong. Many of Chen's stories, such as the rumour of the border being open for three days, were later confirmed during my interviews with original villagers in Huanggang and Buxin. A former female cadre from Huanggang Village, ZMF, who is now in her mid-60s, had this description of *taogang* in the late 1960s:

> Most of the men had fled to Hong Kong. Roughly at least one third of the village's male population had gone. During those times, the border was deliberately opened, because of the food shortage that started in the early 1960s. The government had indirectly encouraged people to leave. The border was open for three days. There were a lot of people talking about it. Of course, working in Hong Kong could earn one much better wages. I remained in the village during those times. Because of the lack of males, I had to work extra to fill the village's food production quotas.

ZMF further commented on the tough life in the village for the people who remained:

> I worked at a chicken farm. The work was hard and the pay was little. My plot of land was of poor quality. Much of the land of the village was on the mountain. During the 1960s and early 1970s, many sent down youths[7] came to the village to work. The work brigade pays 2 to 3 cents per work point. The female labourers were heavily tanned. They worked till their nails were broken and their fingers bleeding. Usually, they did not have enough to eat. My mother, who is illiterate and knew a few written words, worked in the team with enthusiasm. She was ready to work the men's job such as driving the water buffalo. Personally, I did not like women working men's jobs. (Interview with ZMF 12/6/2010)

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[7] This is a term referring to the whole generation of educated urban youth were sent to the rural areas and frontiers by Chairman Mao to work and learn from the peasants.

The old chief of Buxin, LWH, also told me about the effect of *taogang* on his village's morale in the 60s and 70s:

> Among the work teams, the majority were women. I was one of the remaining males in the village when so many males had gone to Hong Kong. In 1977, I brought seventy five young men to Guangzhou on a political pilgrimage. In 1978, out of the seventy five males only seven or eight could be found in the village. All of the rest had gone to Hong Kong. When those people left for Hong Kong, the work quota remained the same for those who stayed behind. There was a greater work burden for the people left behind. During those years, there was no vacation except the Chinese New Year. Two of my sons had fled to Hong Kong in the 1980s. (LWH 29/6/2010)

Taogang had a significant impact on the villagers' agrarian production. For 1962, the Baoan County Annual recorded a significant drop in productivity in the local region. The export of live poultry, such as the famous local Longgang chicken, dropped from 1.72 million units to 70,000 units, a fall of more than 95 percent. Similar drops also occurred with other local farm products. Eggs, fruit, and seafood production also fell, by 92 percent. (Baoan County Annals Editorial Committee 1997, p. 31)

The phenomenon of *taogang* is now not frequently discussed in the villages, for many avoid the topic. Some consciously see it as a shameful chapter in their personal history, and some want to hide their *taogang* status, now that they have returned to the village to enjoy post-economic-reform collective wealth. The *taogang* status of people also shapes the political hierarchy of the villages today. Those people who did not participate in *taogang* are for the most part now cadres or managers in the village-governing structure and companies.

Chapter Conclusion

As this chapter has illustrated, Shenzhen has a long and rather tumultuous history. It is the southernmost frontier of Chinese civilization. The last Song Prime Minister Wen Tianxiang was chased down and captured in the area in 1278 CE. He failed to protect the last Song emperor who died soon after a naval defeat in the region. Many local Shenzhen urban villagers still claim to be descendants from the "heroic" Prime Minister Wen. From the Tang Dynasty (618-907CE), Shenzhen was a part of a vast Maritime Silk Road trading network. The trade attracted pirates, and there are two fortified towns in the local region specifically dedicated to anti-piracy activities. Shenzhen was literally a gate keeper in the vast maritime trading network that linked the Chinese coastal cities to the wider world. In modern times, Shenzhen's geographical proximity to Hong Kong has guaranteed both political and economic importance. The two regions are often linked in their fate, influencing each other even as they became separate political entities, one being a British Colony and the other a border region of China. They are sisters, partners, and rivals. However, the people— particularly the villagers—of the two regions are fundamentally the same. Prior to the founding of Shenzhen City, the local region was largely a land of agrarian villages, inhabited by around 300,000 villagers. In the 1960s and 70s, life was difficult for the villagers, not just because of the hard labour but especially because of the destructive political frenzy unleashed at the national level. While Shenzhen was in chaos, Hong Kong entered into a financial boom period. The contrast in material development between Hong Kong and the villages in Shenzhen was simply too strong an attractive draw for them. The great *taogang* wave was a refugee emergency for the British colonial administration in Hong Kong, but a huge loss of face for the Chinese Government, as the citizens swarmed the borders seeking a better life. The pre-reform history of Shenzhen region paints a strong contrast with its later development. Hence it is important to understand Shenzhen's origins, and how its original inhabitants fared in the years before the post-Mao economic reform and the urbanisation began. It helps, also, to understand their responses to the reform, and how they faced the onslaught of rapid urbanisation and various high modernist-inspired ideals.

Chapter Four

Shenzhen City and the Emergence of Urban Villages

Introduction

In 1979, fresh from his political victory over Hua Guofeng (Mao's chosen successor) at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in late 1978, Deng Xiaoping—once China's biggest 'rightist'[8]—came to power, supported by many reform-minded politicians. China's economy after the death of Mao and the Cultural Revolution was in a state of collapse. There were monetary shortages at every turn. The frenzied political campaigns were gone but the poverty still remained. Now, looking across Shenzhen Bay on a sunny day, the skyscrapers of capitalist 'heaven' stand in clear view of Shenzhen's villagers. Villagers of Shenzhen—then known as Baoan County—continued to smuggle themselves across the Hong Kong border. Deng understood that China must change economically to survive.

Shenzhen is definitely the symbol of the Chinese economic reform, and over the last three decades, the economic activity of the region has helped lift millions of people out of poverty. Roughly thirty years ago, Shenzhen was a region of dire poverty and political chaos, from which people frequently fled to Hong Kong in search of a better life. Since 1979, it has grown from a cluster of fishing and farming villages to a city of more than ten million people, and in terms of economic power, ranks number four in China, with the highest export trade volume and income per capita. In three decades, this region of predominantly rural villages has become an important economic centre of China, and the rural villages have in turn become urban villages. With this shining new city on the border, people have now stopped fleeing to Hong Kong. With new found wealth, there come new inspirations for urban planning and zoning which are officially and commercially dominated by high modernism's transforming visions. Concrete

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[8] Deng was accused of being a capitalist roader on several occasions and was exiled from the centres of power.

skyscrapers, new business centres, research centres, western styled luxury shopping malls and ultra-modern sport facilities have filled every inch of land leading up to the Shenzhen River, mirroring the material development across the border in Hong Kong.

In the early 1980s, the original villages of Shenzhen experienced the shock of sudden policy-led economic changes and rapid urbanisation, when rural villages found themselves suddenly designated as urban areas. A whole new city and economic experiment was planned around the original villages, whose age-old farming and fishing lifestyles were about to be completely turned upside down. The villagers were suddenly 'urbanites', and adjusting to this concept or label was difficult for many villagers. Unable to continue their traditional livelihoods, and without any proper industrial work-related training, most of the villagers made a living by becoming landlords of self-built informal apartment buildings and factories on their personal plot of land (*zhaijidi*). Over the years, many have become prosperous by collecting rent from their self-built properties. Together, the multitude of self-built properties—often multi-floor rental apartments on the site of the original village—have come to dominate the once-rural landscape. The urban village in the Chinese context is therefore a specific spatial formation in a city in sharp contrast to the masterly-planned city on the outside. They are similar to 'the unplanned Brasilia' in Scott's terminology (1998, pp. 127-129), informal peripheries to the high modernist urban cores. To be clear, the urban villages of Shenzhen as communities definitely have better organization, unity, and self-government skills than the *favela* of Brazil. However, there are similar attitudes of resistance toward urban authority by these two types of community. They both attempt to free themselves from the absolute dominance of the urban authority and retain some kind of self-government. For the original villagers, the formation of the urban villages has been a very difficult and emotional process. It is very much about survival. Much of the villages' land was acquired by the Shenzhen Municipal Government at low prices, and the villagers have experienced the trauma of adapting to a new social/economic environment and urban identity (Li 2007, pp. 42–43). The remaining land is their last refuge and enclave to retain the village identity in a powerful new city.

In his book, *The City and Its Grassroots* (1983), Manuel Castells once described the squatters and the builders of informal buildings as the creators of the city, and the state as their ultimate counterforce, who seek to control and limit them. Hence, the "slums" and other self-built informal buildings have been a form of collective resistance by the grassroots. Certainly, the urban villagers are not squatters and land invaders, *invasores* as in the Latin American context of Castells. The urban villagers are the legitimate owners of their land by pre-PRC historical claim and the Land Administration Law of the PRC. By contrast, as Janice Perlman (1976) observed in Rio: "no one in *favela* or any official agency know for sure who owned the land." The original villagers are the owners of their collective land. However, they are also in a sense similar to the grassroots builders of Castells because much of their self-built buildings are illegal and violate various local government policies and zonings en masse. The self-built buildings of the villagers house most of the city migrant influx. In fact, as I shall discuss in later chapters, the urban village essentially houses about half of Shenzhen's population of twelve million with most of them being migrants. Hence, in numerous ways, the urban village represented informality and their property is somewhat illegal, what many kindly described as "grey property". The Shenzhen City Government, as a representative of state power, is obviously a counter-position to the natural outgrowth of grassroots buildings. Ever since the formation of Shenzhen City thirty years ago, the urban villagers and a very high modernist minded city government bureaucracy have been on opposing sides when it comes to visions of appropriate urban development. There has been no clear winner in the game over land and regulation in the urban villages. As Chinese scholar Duan Jin points out, informal building construction within the urban village is a form of resistance by 'landless peasants', in this case the urban villagers whose land holdings were greatly reduced by government acquisition (Duan 2009). To the city government, the villagers have acted defiantly. They are perceived as an obstacle to the city's progress. Jin Xinyi, a newspaper editor from Shenzhen, once commented that in the game for land and land usage, the government 'has lost even its underpants' hence total defeat (Jin 2010, p. 221).

This chapter will provide an overview of the founding of Shenzhen SEZ and the formation of the urban villages. It will also explore the great changes that have occurred for the people of the villages. The original villagers' historical memories, their adaptation

to the new urban lifestyle, and their struggle for survival shall be themes of this chapter. This chapter will also discuss the often-troublesome relationship between the city government and the urban villages in the post-economic-reform era. As we shall see, what unfolded in 1979 were two competitive versions of urban China, between high modernism on one extreme and urban village on the other. Together they are the thesis and anti-thesis in the symbolic dialectic of Chinese urbanisation between order and chaos, between planned and unplanned. This conflicting dialectic is clearly evident in Shenzhen, a clean-slate high modernist dream city, much like Brasilia or Chandigarh. The urban village is the symbolic quarter of resistance to the high modernist urban vision.

The Birth of Shenzhen SEZ

In the late 1970s, China was still reeling from the shock of the Cultural Revolution and its economy was grinding to a halt. Deng chose Shenzhen to test his economic-reform agenda in China. Deng's choice of Shenzhen as the economic experiment was a very rational one. Shenzhen's geographical proximity with Hong Kong meant that it could attract Hong Kong capital, and later, other foreign capital investment. In the late 1960s, Hong Kong began to take off economically as a regional financial centre. However, it lacked resources, land, and labour to further expand its industrial productivity. Deng's decision to open Shenzhen for Hong Kong entrepreneurs to set up factories and other business operations was welcome news for the Hong Kong business community. Although many Hong Kong business people were still afraid of the communists on the mainland, there were also plenty of opportunistic entrepreneurs who were eager to invest. Hence, the simple arrangement was made that Shenzhen offered land and labour in return for Hong Kong capital. Later, this arrangement would be expanded to all corporations. As a result, Shenzhen evolved completely from a defensive border area to a land of opportunity and open for all investments. It became the centrepiece of Deng Xiaoping's economic-reform policy.

In March 1979, the City of Shenzhen was founded in the Baoan County area with the approval of the Chinese State Council. In May 1980, it was officially declared the first Special Economic Zone of China. In 1981, the entire former County of Baoan was

absorbed into the urban administration of Shenzhen. Immediately after the creation of the Shenzhen SEZ, Shekou, a port in the Baoan region, was selected as the first experiment site for attracting Hong Kong business. The Shekou Industrial Zone (SIZ) was headed by Yuan Geng, a former guerrilla leader of the East River Column and a native son of Shenzhen (Tu 2008). The establishment of the SEZ and SIZ were simultaneous processes. In many ways, the Shekou experiment was leading the way for the SEZ. The Shekou port, located on the western edge of Shenzhen, has a direct shipping route to Hong Kong. Its deep-water port is capable of supporting large container ships. Yuan's Shekou port/industrial zone was governed by the state-run Shekou Merchant Company, a branch of the famous China Merchant Company. The Company also governs at the local level, namely, the port district. In his later years, Yuan remembered the difficult situation facing him and his Company. Deng and other senior Chinese leaders promised him nothing but a central-government political guarantee that his operation was politically sound and legal (ed. Huang 2008). With Hong Kong investment money, Yuan built a world-class port and an industrial zone filled with Hong Kong-owned factories with minimum central government budgetary support. The Shekou port is now one of the largest container ports in Asia. Shekou's development model, in attracting foreign investment to establish partially or fully own light industries, was replicated in the Shenzhen SEZ (Gong 1998).

From very early on, the area of Shenzhen—then still called Baoan—commanded relatively high administrative independence in attracting foreign company and capital. After 1984, foreign joint-stock companies and joint ventures were approved at the local level by the Baoan County Government up to the amount of US$1.5 million. In 1988, this was raised to US$5 million (Baoan County Annual Editorial Committee 1996, p. 402). With encouragement, Hong Kong entrepreneurs started opening factories in the form of joint-stock companies or joint ventures in the Luohu District, the closest and best-connected area with Hong Kong. Gradually, Japanese companies came to Shenzhen to set up small- and medium-sized factories. Later, American and Taiwanese enterprises were established and brought the first high-tech manufacturing companies to Shenzhen, such as Motorola, DuPont and Foxconn.

As an experimental field, Shenzhen became the land of many firsts in China's new partial embrace of capitalism. The Baoan United Investment Company issued the PRC's first stock in 1983. Shenzhen opened China's first stock exchange in 1988, two years ahead of Shanghai's sister exchange. With the stock market, Shenzhen was the first place in China that individuals could invest freely with personal wealth. It was the first place to hire and fire based on individual performance rather than lifetime employment in the 'iron rice bowl' system of the rest of China. In 1987, Shenzhen was also the first place to hold a land auction in China. In 1991, China's first McDonalds opened in Shenzhen.

A New City on Top of the Villages

When Shenzhen was designated to be the first SEZ in communist China, it was still largely an area of rural farmland. Historically, the Shenzhen region was categorized as a county town, or several county towns depending on the historical period. Other than the two fort-like towns in the north and the commercial district of Dongmen, near Hong Kong, Shenzhen was in reality mostly a collection of rural villages. Prior to 1979, the land that was soon to be known as 'Shenzhen' was an administration region of Baoan County. In 1979, in a rapid reversal of fortune, Shenzhen was made a city by the Central Government and Baoan became the name of a district of Shenzhen. Shenzhen's new-found status enabled it to develop rapidly, much faster than the overall 3 percent urbanisation rate for the rest of China (Gugler 1995). In the early 1980s, Shenzhen's rice fields started to disappear, and concrete buildings and construction cranes dominated the urban skyline. Although there is no detailed measurement of Shenzhen's urbanising speed, it was certainly one of the fastest in human history, with most of the city built within a decade.

Photo 11: 'Building Shenzhen', an exhibit at Shenzhen Museum. Photo by author 2009

Photo 12: An historic photo of Huanggang Village in the 1980s, courtesy of Huanggang Village Company 2010

One of the main reasons behind the explosive growth of Shenzhen City was the surge in the migrant population. With the loosening of the *hukou* household registration system during the 1980s, a huge labour supply was unchained in rural China and millions of migrants suddenly had the choice to move to SEZs where they could find employment in the growing industrial sector and earn an income many times greater than was possible in their home towns. Shenzhen was a direct beneficiary of this change. Shenzhen grew from

approximately 310,000 people in 1979 to three to five million in 1997, and then to around seven million in 2000 (Jin 2010, p. 252). By comparison, the total Hong Kong population was roughly five million in 1979, and seven million in 1999, and has remained at this level. Shenzhen has caught up to the population of Hong Kong in two decades. In 2006, Shenzhen had, for the first time, a clearer picture of its population, which was an estimated migrant population of 10.62 million and 1.65 million with Shenzhen *hukou* registration (Jin 2010, p. 250). The numbers are especially astounding in that this is not just ten million urban residents, but ten million migrants accounting for roughly 10 percent of China's total migrant population. Shenzhen had a population growth of one million every year between 1998 and 2005. At present urban villages are home to half of the entire city's residents at six million, with or without *hukou* (Mi and Han 2005). The rapid growth of Shenzhen's population and economic power created unexpected problems for the very high modernist minded local government. As with Brasilia, Shenzhen has outpaced and outgrown both original plans and projections. Hence from the very start, the high modernist pretension of Shenzhen was flawed.

Transition toward Urban Villages

The economic reforms were welcome news for Shenzhen's original villagers. They were instantly caught up in a frenzy of economic reform and speculation. For a time, the villagers provided the initial and essential support in building the new City of Shenzhen. They provided important support to the early construction effort. The city government bought large areas of land from various villages to build the new city. Everything was newly constructed: hospitals, schools, banks, and apartment blocks. Initially, most villagers were very happy about the price that the government paid for their land, not realising that the value of the land would dramatically rise in the next two decades.

Photo 13: A group of statues depicting rural village scenes on the road leading to the entrance of Xiasha Village. Photo by author 2012

The Shenzhen area was not barren and uninhabited, and the city was built essentially on locations and lands of the original villages of this region. The formation of the city brought fundamental changes to the local region, which had long suffered as a result of the political turmoil in the decade of the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1978). First of all, villagers were forced to abandon their identity as villagers and become urbanites, as the fundamental divide of urban and rural society collided right in front of their eyes. Facing and adapting to these great changes was at first a matter of survival. The urban village is an ambivalent place in the Chinese city, where a loophole in the Land Administration Law of People's Republic of China allows their continuous existence. According to Article 8, 'Land in the urban areas of cities shall be owned by the State' (Land Administration Law cited in Lawinfochina.com, 2013). So-called 'property ownership' in a Chinese city is essentially long-term leases of up to seventy years. However, the same law also states: 'land in rural and suburban areas shall be owned by farmer collectives, except for those portions which belong to the State as provided for by law; house sites and private plots of cropland and hilly land shall also be owned by farmer collectives.' In the case of Shenzhen, the villages have retained their rural collective-land ownership status in an urban setting.

Shenzhen's urban villages were the first to possess dual identities of both urban and rural. The Chinese have traditionally had a keen sense of how a city should be distinguished from a village. The Chinese urban zone (*shiqu*) is a formation completely devoid of

agrarian activities. Many large Chinese cities such as Beijing, Xi'an, Guangzhou, even Shanghai, consist of rural suburbs or townships. However, their city centres are pure urban zones with no agrarian activities. The newly founded city of Shenzhen and SEZ has for some time coexisted with much larger rural districts of Baoan and Longgang. In Shenzhen until 2011, there was still an artificial border that separated the less developed *guanwai* (outside the gate) from the pure urban zone of the Shenzhen SEZ. In order for Shenzhen to become a city with a fully functioning and proper urban zone, many of the original agricultural activities of the villages would have to be stopped. This is in line with the local government's high modernist ideal, to build a pure city of industry and industrial workers. The symbol of rustic rural life and their existing environment needed be expunged, to clean the slate for high modernist urban planners. The farms of the villages were gradually reduced in size and moved to increasingly distant locations. No livestock could be raised within the city limits. Eventually, no traditional farming activities were to be carried out within the villages. The urban villager has experienced the very clichéd but precise Chinese description of '*xi jiao shang tian*' ('washed feet above the field'), a colloquial expression of Shenzhen's urban villagers who have left their traditional fields, with "clean feet".

The rapid urbanisation of Shenzhen City certainly had a strong impact on the village residents, both physically and psychologically. Urban villager LZ remembers the great urbanising changes:

> In the 1990s, things started to change rapidly. Most basic infrastructures were built. Crucially, the road system has connected the districts of Shenzhen. During my childhood, I rarely ventured outside of the Dongmen areas south of the village. In the 1990s, I can go to various areas in Shenzhen. The villagers' income had also greatly increased. (LZ 4/6/2010)

Many original features of the villages started to disappear. In some cases, villages disappeared entirely. For example, the Caiwuwei Village, located right in the centre of Shenzhen CBD, has now become completely urbanised. No original village architecture remains. No shrine, temple, or park in the original village was spared. On top of Caiwuwei Village, there now stands the tallest building in Shenzhen, the Kingkey 100, with one hundred floors of residential apartments and shopping malls. The entire village has been transformed into hotels, office buildings, and expensive apartments. The name

Caiwuwei still occasionally appears on newly-constructed buildings (such as the Caiwuwei Hotel) as reminders of the former village. The fate of Caiwuwei Village gives us a glimpse of the possible high modernist urban future for urban villages not just in Shenzhen, but all over China.

Photo 14: The modern Caiwuwei Village, or what remains of it. Photo by author 2011

The political structures of the villages were also irrevocably changed. Since their land was formally recognized as urban, the villages needed to form new political structures. The original main village government, *cunweihui* (village committee), was first changed to *juweihui* (residential committee) in the 1980s, and then to *jiedaoban* (Street Office) in the late 1990s. In semantics and in reality, the actual controlled area and the power of the original village councils were both reduced. In Shenzhen, the government ranks go from city (*shi*) to district (*qu*) and then to streets (*jiedao*). Most villages' administration is divided into one or multiple *jiedao* or street offices.

As for village administration personnel, their political transition was very gradual. For a while, the villagers continued to participate in local administration in the 1980s—even after the urbanisation process. A clear milestone was reached in 1992, when the villagers were persuaded by the city government to establish village joint-stock companies. From this point on, most of the former village chiefs became the new chairpersons of the village companies. Political administration became the monopoly of the city government.

However, the impression gained through fieldwork was that the villagers continue to wield tremendous political influence in the village's *jiedao* office, which is partially staffed by local villagers. Many of the old village heads have also taken on token political-representative roles in the local city government, be it the Shenzhen arm of the legislative body of the People's Congress (*renda*) or the political consulting organ of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Council (CPPCC */zhengxie*). Hence, in the course of the 1990s, the village leaders and former administrators of the village have transformed their former political administration roles to purely economic and symbolic ones.

Farmers of Informal Buildings

The former village head of Buxin Village once summarized the rural/urban transformation of the villages that had taken place as '*geng lou*', or 'farm buildings' (LWH 29/6/2010). Here 'farm(ing) buildings' meant the construction of self-built informal buildings on private lots. Chinese land laws, at least in the early 1980s, did not contain references intended to regulate the existence of a village within a city. The villages operated with an almost free hand when it came to building codes and by-laws. The buildings were by then occupied by migrants paying rent to the owners. Although crude, this term perfectly summarizes the urban villagers' transformation from rural farmers to urban landlords.

By the mid-1980s, all agrarian-related activities in Shenzhen ceased to exist. A new mode of life and production became the norm for the now urban villagers. To the Marxist school of thought in economics and sociology, they were called a kind of new urban rentier, or landlord, which referred to people living on rent and interest, an element always in evidence in Western urban development. Marx mentioned them in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*: 'that finally the distinction between capitalist and land-rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and factory-worker, disappears and that the whole of society must fall apart into two classes –the property owners and the property-less workers' (cited in Tucker 1978, p.70). In China, with such a short history of modern capitalist forms of urban development, the rentier class is quite a new element in the economic system. In the PRC, the urban village was the first place

where a rentier class and related activities emerged *en masse*. By virtue of the laws which allowed them to retain control over land, the urban villagers in Shenzhen have performed this role. A local media commentator in Shenzhen, Jin Xinyi, has this blunt description of the villagers and their rentier traits:

> After the end of agriculture, they [villagers] did not involve themselves in modern industries. This is partially the government's fault. Shenzhen's industrialization never really considered them [villagers] as worthy to be used. Hence there is no particular measure to support those native villagers to have any industrial experience. Hence the villagers were forced to adopt the path of semi-professional property management and cheap rental property construction. We should not call them unproductive after they have fulfilled this role. (Jin 2010, p. 237)

Jin has a high modernist overtone in his talk that somehow suggests Shenzhen has to involve the local villagers in modern industries reminiscent of Le Corbusier's (1967) terminology of cities as machines. However, Jin means to describe the difficult condition that the villagers were in as they were stranded between the rural and urban world, practically abandoned by the urban authorities during the rapid urbanisation process.

The original villagers' response and adaptation to their difficult situation was the "farming of buildings", self-built informal apartment buildings used to generate rental income from migrant tenants. The process of 'farming buildings' and leasing them is an individual act. Innocently enough, the primary reason why the villagers began to construct apartments were to help out the early migrants to the city. In the early days, the apartments were two to four stories tall. Hence, it is easy enough for the villagers to construct by themselves. Then there came more and more migrants. According to Shenzhen local economist and real estate expert Song Ding (interviewed by Phoenix TV, Dazhengshangdao 2013), the demand for extra migrant residences in the early days of the SEZ not only outstripped the dormitories supplied by the factories and government but also the urban village apartments. Hence, the villagers began to construct taller and denser apartments with more units leasing out to the constantly increasing migrant populations. In this process, the jobs of construction were quickly handed over to the migrants. The villagers would hire migrant construction teams to complete their often six

to eight floor apartment buildings. Many of Shenzhen's domestic real estate developers, such as Chen Hua, began their careers as the migrant constructors in the urban villages. The migrant construction teams in Shenzhen, headed by a team leader often called *Baogongtou* (literally means contractor head), would build the apartments based on the villagers' own designs. Most of these are very simple constructions. There is no heavy machinery involved. The buildings were made of concrete and bricks. The migrant builders would simply build floors upon floors, supported by bamboo frames. Sometimes, they used makeshift material elevators made of ropes and wooden boards. During urban renewal projects in the late 2000s, I witnessed firsthand how the migrant labour teams created new urban village buildings at rapid pace to cheat compensation.

There was no uniform construction standard or norm even at the village level. They can vary greatly in quality, size, and design. There are indeed now building codes for Shenzhen City, which include the urban village areas. However, in the 1980s, most of the urban village buildings were built to ever-increasing heights. The villagers followed the building code loosely and clearly violated the height restriction *en masse*. Although most urban village buildings are self-constructed, they are not shacks of tin roofs and plastic sheets. Almost all of the dwellings are constructed from concrete or brick. Some of them have a courtyard at the ground level; others are simply vertical structures with only a large steel gate at the ground floor. The countless, seemingly random apartment buildings form the appearance of urban villages today: colourful, crammed, chaotic, and highly individualistic. The urban village is a complex scene of mixed use zoning, to borrow a view from Jane Jacobs (2011). The urban village's complex street life consists of restaurants, markets, shops, clinics, clubs and small public squares. In summary, either in form and in nature, the urban village represents the polar opposite to the high modernist principle of urban planning, spacious, grandiose, orderly, and single use zoning, complete separation of work space and residential space (Scott 1998, p. 134).

After the formation of Shenzhen City, the land was essentially collectively owned by the villages. More specifically, the land was divided into the villages' collectively-owned land and individual lots called *zhaijidi*. In the traditional Chinese village, the *zhaijidi* is

the land that is reserved for farmers' residential lots. The size of *zhaijidi* in Shenzhen and in the rest of China is largely dependent on the size of the village, its population and allocation by the village collective. In Shenzhen, the size of the lot varies, but it tends to be a small fraction of the standard *mu,* which is 660 square metres. ZJN, for example, only received a few *fen* of land. '*Fen*' is a rough measurement of one tenth of the Chinese standard land unit of *mu*. According to ZJN, since there was already a collective tradition and centralized planning within the village, the average villagers did not in reality own much land individually. Whatever unused land was left from the village was divided among the villagers. A family could have as little as two to three *fen* of land. Even with such a small area of land, since the 1990s the private construction and rental activities on individual residential lots has greatly increased the wealth of the villagers. ZJN highlights how much the fortunes of local villagers had turned around, noting that thirty years earlier, locals had been fleeing to Hong Kong for the economic opportunities there, but 'Twenty years later, they returned trying to cash in on the opportunity" (ZJN 12/6/2010). ZJN claims that the average rental income in his village to be around 240,000 yuan (about AUD$40,000) a year, which, after consulting with many other urban villagers in Huanggang and elsewhere, seems likely to be an underestimation (ZJN 12/6/2010). The income from rent allowed the urban villagers to enjoy an upper-middle-class lifestyle. After the economic reform, the housing market has become a crucial concern for the average urban citizen in China who struggles tremendously to accumulate enough money to buy a place to live. To not only have a place to live but to be able to rent out extra living spaces in multiple units of apartments is beyond the reach of most urban Chinese citizens. This is one of the reasons why very few Chinese urbanites sympathize with the urban villagers out of jealousy or downright resentment for their fortunate positions.

With such attractive options for making money, Shenzhen's original villagers have engaged in a very interesting political game with the city government by deliberately expanding their self-built housing while disregarding the zoning rules of the city. The opportunity to build freely on personal lots and lease for profit has put the villages at odds with the city government. When the urban village building boom began, the appropriate laws were not in place to force the villages to conform to local government laws. Hence, the urban village began to take their existing form, a crowded zone of informal apartment

buildings housing migrants. This should be viewed as the beginning of what has become a long series of struggles between urban villagers and the high modernism inspired officials in positions of power. The urban villages of Shenzhen have effectively become the equivalent of the 'unplanned Brasilia' (Scott 1998, pp. 127-129) that have rendered the high modernist dream of Shenzhen incomplete from the beginning, just as in Brasilia.

Contestation over Land and Regulation

Essentially, the relationship between the newly-formed urban villages and the city government has two major conflicts of interest: land and regulation. In the earlier cases of the mid-1980s, the city government purchased the land very cheaply from the villagers in a series of coercive land acquisitions. One may fathom the massive difference in land value compared to current real estate prices by noting that the land sold to the city government in the 1980s was eight yuan per square metre and the current real estate value is over 5,000 yuan per square metre. According to the land acquisition memo from the Shenzhen government in the period from 1980 to 1983, the total land acquired from the villages amounted to 124,297.11 square metres with a price tag of 1,085,770.43 yuan, an average of 8.74 yuan per square metre. The villagers—under political pressure or simple ignorance—agreed to the terms of the city government. Many villagers look back on this period with bitterness and regret. A retired official in the Shenzhen municipal government who, interestingly, was an original villager himself, described the villagers' reaction back then as:

> The villagers were initially happy about the land acquisition, mainly
> because they had never seen so much money paid for their land before. Of
> course, looking at the prices from the present-day perspective, they feel
> they have been taken advantage of. (LXX 9/1/2012)

Some of the most notable examples of land acquisition occurred in Huanggang Village. The city government used a large section of this village to build the Huanggang Border Terminal in the late 1980s, which is now the main border terminal between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. In the mid-1990s, another piece of land was acquired from Huanggang Village to build the Futian District Government Complex. In 2000, the city government

again acquired a large northern section of Huanggang Village to build the Shenzhen Exhibition Centre, a very high modernist building in style and function. In the more inland village of Buxin, a similar process took place in the 1980s and 90s. The city government bought land cheaply from villagers to build the Jingwei Beer factory (Shenzhen's most popular local brand of beer). A retired village chief estimates that Buxin lost over two-thirds of its original village land during the initial acquisition stages in the 1980s and 1990s (LWH 29/6/2010).

Photo 15: The Shenzhen Exhibition Centre was built by the city government on land acquired from Huanggang Village. It is one of the many high modernist public building built by the city government in Shenzhen. Photo by author 2008

Although the government was successful in acquiring land from the villages, the villagers had their own means of not cooperating with the city government. The villagers started a massive building boom in the villages in the late 1980s. It was a direct challenge to the planning and zoning of the city government. In some villages, the land was entirely zoned to achieve maximum profit for the villagers. In Futian Village, the government's zoning of 17,400 square meters for industrial land and public usage was totally ignored. Instead, 297,100 square metres of land was divided among the villagers for private usage. The privately constructed buildings did not follow regulations in terms of size and standards. In addition, the villagers' private construction spread into bordering land. These were mostly hilly and barren tracts of land that formerly held no value to the villagers. This

phenomenon of unregulated expansion of urban villages was widespread in the late 1980s, which is reminiscent of land invasion by the urban poor in other developing countries. Peter Ho in his *Contesting Rural Spaces* (Ho 2000, p. 106) also notes the increased activities by rural collectives to claim "disputed" and unused land in the post-reform era. In 1989, the city government introduced the 'red line policy' to restrict the size of the villages, which stated that the villagers could only construct buildings within the red line drawn by the government (Shenzhen Municipal Government 1989). Hence, in 1986, the city government formally introduced policies to limit the size and height of privately constructed housing in the villages. It limited the size of each building site to 80 square metres.

Photo 16: Three generations of urban village housing. The two-storey houses in the foreground are some of the remaining original village buildings, before urbanisation. In the middle distance, are the medium-height village rental apartments, built by villagers during the housing boom in the 1990s. At the rear are the modern high-rise apartments, constructed by local real estate developers, on village land. Photo by author 2010

Since the red line policy of the late 1980s and the limitation on height of village buildings, the city government has achieved little success in regulating construction. None of the decrees have been seriously followed by the villagers. Almost all villages have violated the government's regulations on construction size and height to different degrees. The villagers have constructed blocks of buildings that are at least 6 floors high. The phenomenon of rampant construction (*luanjian*) is everywhere. Attempts to construct buildings beyond the government's red line also continued but at a more reserved rate. According to Wang Yaping (2009), the government's decree in the late 1980s created precisely the opposite effect. The villages sped up their *luanjian* building efforts.

Contrary to popular perceptions of the authoritarian style of governing in China, in the case of Shenzhen, its municipal government has been for a long time reluctant to forcefully deal with local villagers. The government itself has admitted on numerous occasions that they cannot keep up with the violations of zoning and construction codes in the urban villages. One mayoral memo (*Guanyu Shenzhen Tequ Nongcun Sheyuan Jianfang Yongdi de Zanxing Guiding*) states:

> There is difficulty in enforcing the regulations. Large numbers of villager buildings have exceeded the regulation and some have expanded limitlessly in size. Some private buildings and factory buildings were leased out at ridiculously high prices. Some have ignored the city government's zoning rules entirely. They have greatly violated the national policy, law, and the city government's zoning rules. (Shenzhen Government Document 1986)

The city government has devised the following measures to deal with the increasing construction and zoning violations of the villagers: 'planning, prevention, forbiddance (prohibition), and communication (Shenzhen Government Document 1986).'

Because of the massive profit margins from renting self-built property on their own land, the villagers have in many cases fought against the city government regulations. In 1990, seeing the sprawl of self-constructed apartments springing up all over Shenzhen's villages, the city government passed a decree that no building inside the urban village area should exceed four floors. The villagers of Shenzhen had an almost united response in not obeying the regulation. They continued to build on their own land with buildings well above the four-floor limit. The average urban village building is around seven floors and some are as high as twelve floors with no elevator. The decree did have an intimidatory effect, however. The villagers did not build as rapidly as they had previously. Then something surprising happened: Deng Xiaoping visited Shenzhen in 1992 in his famous Southern Tour to examine the 'fruit of the economic reform'. This tour greatly emboldened the urban villagers, who interpreted it as a 'green light' for unregulated economic activities (Li 2004). The urban villager's self-constructed informal apartment buildings sprouted in all directions in open defiance of the city government's regulations and construction codes.

One possible explanation for the city government's inaction was that because of Shenzhen's symbolic importance as an experimental SEZ, the local government was for a long time very cautious in using any forceful measures against large collective entities such as the urban villages. Or perhaps more simply, they did not find the villages to be of any serious concern. Much of their energy and resources were devoted to building the main streets of Shenzhen City according to the plan. In addition, with a city growing at such a fast rate, it was impossible for the local government to keep up with all the regulations regarding the villages. LXX, a retired city government official who was himself a villager from Shenzhen's north, suggests that the city government was inexperienced in dealing with collective identities such as the urban villages. According to his evaluation, the local authority engaged in a losing battle with the villages. They wanted to employ tough measures, such as the forced demolition of illegal buildings without compensation to the villagers in the early 1990s and 2000s. However, they eventually caved in to popular pressure. As a result, many of the illegal buildings have become '*ji ding xian shi*', 'recognized realities' (LXX 9/1/2012). Hence, much like the case of high modernist Brasilia, no matter how many planning and prevention efforts are used, the "unplanned Brasilia" still emerged.

The urban villages are special spaces in the Shenzhen SEZ. They are special because of their distinct legal statues, population make-up, and spatial structure that contrast so sharply with the rest of the city. Yiftachel, in his study of grey space, once defined it as 'neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today's urban regions, which exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans' (Yiftachel 2009, p.90). The series of contests between the urban villagers and the city government has had many unanticipated consequences, with one of them being so-called 'grey property', a common nickname given to the semi-legal properties of urban villages. Due to the local authority's inability to enforce its zoning and planning laws, and the urban villagers' active resistance, the semi-illegal self-constructed buildings not only stood their ground but were expanded. The villagers had the basic right to construct buildings on their personal lot, yet they have not followed government regulations. For long period of time, the government failed to enforce their own regulations, hence 'grey

property' is an historic problem of Shenzhen's urban villages, and more broadly China's urban villages. Based on government decrees in 1992, very few urban village buildings are legal. Local media commentator Jin Xinyi had this summary about the contest between the government and villagers that helped create the "grey buildings":

> Because of the grey property's long period of existence with no clear legality, there inevitably was the game that lasted 20 years between the urban villagers and the city government. One result was that the government insisted on not recognising the legality of the villages' grey zones. And the villagers believe that the law cannot apply to them *en masse*. This is no longer a legal problem but a political problem. (Jin 2010, p. 239)

It is interesting to note that in the Chinese version of this passage, Jin uses the term '*fa bu ze zhong*', a common Chinese expression that says the law cannot punish people *en masse*. This notion of '*fa bu ze zhong*' in the formation of urban village illegal building is also pointed out by many mainland scholars, such as Xie Zhigui (2005). In the urban villagers' view, this is very much like creating '*ji ding xian shi*' or 'recognized reality', mentioned by LXX. It reflects the kind of attitude that is commonly held by the urban villagers: if they collaboratively violate the law, the city government is powerless to stop them or punish them. Hence, in current-day Shenzhen, the existence of the urban villages and their blocks of self-constructed buildings over dozens of square kilometres are essentially 'grey properties', semi-legal but continuing to exist. In the mind of the local authority, it is a continuous menace, a form of open defiance, and a difficult problem for them to tackle. If this is a zero-sum game between the city government and the urban villagers, then the villagers are winning for now. Their buildings still stand today (2013).

Chapter Conclusion

David Harvey has explained the nature of his 'right to the city' urban transformation: 'It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanisation' (Harvey 2008, p.23). Here the collective struggle and resistance of the urban villagers are reminiscent of that right –the right to form urban building space based

on individual or collective will from the ground up. The urban village in its informal external forms is the creation of original villagers as individuals and as groups. The emergence of Shenzhen City and the creation of the urban village created conflicts between powerful collective identities of the newly formed city government and the village over land and its subsequent spatial manipulations. There has been a tit-for-tat game between the two sides over the domination of space in the urban villages, which up to the present has not produced a clear winner. The government was frustrated by its inability to fully tame the urban villages' mass construction of self-built buildings and it continues to hold a biased view towards the urban villages based on its high modernist ideals. The creation of the urban village comes from a fierce dualistic struggle. The urban village represents a counter movement, an antithesis to the otherwise well planned high modernist city of Shenzhen. Ever since the creation of both the Shenzhen city and the urban villages, both sides have been constantly expanding and clashing with each other. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it would appear that the urban villages have held their ground through fierce collective efforts. The original villagers of Shenzhen have formed their very own "unplanned Brasilia" in the urban villages, fortresses in a landscape of high modernism.

Chapter Five

Migrant City and Migrant Villages

Spectres and nightmares owe their force to the confusion caused when migrants entered the cities along with the markets.

Dorothy Solinger (*Contesting Citizenship in Urban China*, p. 289)

Introduction

For more than three decades, the Chinese economic 'miracle' has been fuelled by the blood and sweat of rural-to-urban migrants. Yet, the migrants, whether in Shenzhen or in the rest of China, face the greatest prejudice, are feared and even hated. This is similar to the description of marginalization of *favela* residents in Brazil by Janice Perlman (1976, p.92) who defines the particular Latin American context marginalization as: "*Um Marginal* or *um elemento marginal* means a shiftless, dangerous, ne'er-do-well, usually associated with the underworld of crime, violence, drugs, and prostitution." Quite coincidentally, Shenzhen's largely migrant inhabited urban village also raises "concerns" for the local government on the issues of "*huang, du, du*" the Chinese abbreviation for immoral activities mostly prostitution, gambling, and drugs. Hence there are very similar attitudes or outright prejudices toward urban village migrant residents as those in Brazil. The Shenzhen city government essentially views them as a nuisance and a potential threat to stability much in the same way Le Corbusier viewed the migrant slum dwellers of Paris (Scott 1998, p. 116). The *hukou* system and other urban regimes, such as the city administrative units (*chengguan*), have made the lives of migrants in Shenzhen and other Chinese cities uneasy, if not miserable. Facing institutionalized and popularized prejudices, urban villages were the migrants' last and only refuge. When rural migrants come to Shenzhen, urban villages are ready homes for them, provided that they pay their rent and do not mind the somewhat substandard environment compared to the rest of the

city. In reality, as Tian Li has noted, the migrants do not have the luxury of choice. Market forces, such as rising house prices, make the urban villages the only affordable rental space for migrants in Shenzhen and other Chinese cities (Tian 2008). They are living spaces where migrants can thrive openly and comfortably as 'normal' urban residents. As seen in Shenzhen or Brasilia, the migrants and their quarters have always been the key factors that disrupt the overall plans of high modernist cities. The migrant populated urban villages are like bastions of chaos in the largely planned high modernist landscape where the labour population are supposed to live in concentrated housing along major transport routes to their industry of employment much like those famous Foxconn dorms that sit at the major high way intersections of Baoan districts in Shenzhen. The urban villages are not barracks or factory dorms. They are lively neighbourhoods of work and residence for rural-to-urban migrants much like Jane Jacobs' (2011) Greenwich Village for the poor European immigrants in the 19th and early 20th century.

This chapter shall examine the migrants' culture and living conditions in Shenzhen's urban villages. Here I outline the historical, economic, and social backgrounds of the migrants living in the urban villages. I also provide samples of the migrants' own views on their lives to help readers understand the complex social and economic relations within the urban villages. The migrants are an important population and cultural component that make up the urban village phenomenon in Shenzhen. They have contributed greatly to the diversity of the urban villages, both in terms of culture and function. Their stories and voices provide crucial insights into the daily socio-economic inner workings of the urban villages. However, many of the urban villages' apparent problems also stem from the large migrant population, which raise concerns over crime and safety. Furthermore, the different socio-economic status between the original villagers and the migrants makes tensions inevitable between the two populations. The hidden transcripts against the original villager landlords by the migrants are hard to miss in some of the interviews (Scott 1990). In summary, the migrants are now one of the defining characteristics of the urban village in Shenzhen and in China in general. The large migrant populations of the urban villages are precisely the thing that the makes the general mainstream city so nervous. To the high modernist planner and urban middle class populace alike, the large

migrant population living in the urban village is a great source of fear and scorn. Their action of settling in the urban village has brought fear of chaos to the city over crime, crowding, economic competition or petty prejudice on hygiene and class. On the other hand, the rural-to-urban migrants' aspirations are simply to survive and thrive in the city they reside in with the urban villages granting them some sense normalcy of family life and casual relaxation.

Populating Shenzhen with Migrants

Jin Xinyi, the editor of *21st Century Economic Tribune*, a popular business newspaper in southern China, once wrote this description of his adopted city Shenzhen:

> A twelve million migrant population, five hundred square kilometres of urban area, more than four thousand skyscrapers, the first city in China to exterminate 'villages' … more than five hundred public libraries, a yearly increase of ten million square metres of residential building space … 1.5 million cars, and twenty thousand police officers desperately trying to protect the public of twelve million people. (Jin 2010, p. 214)

These features are extraordinarily large for a city only thirty years old. Jin is now a resident of Shenzhen. However, he is also one of the millions of migrants who now make this city his home. Since the 1990s, there has been a significant demographic shift in the composition of urban villages in Shenzhen. In 2007, the official count of the urban village population was that of 6.37 million people, roughly half of the city's entire population. Among them, only 0.42 million have Shenzhen *hukou* (Zhang 2007). The rural–urban migrant residents have become the absolute majority who now outnumber the original villager residents fifty-to-one in some of the urban villages I visited. Nationwide, the migrants generally account for an average of more than 70 percent of the residential population in urban village areas (Liu 2010, p. 102). The urban villages' current appearance is a direct consequence of the social, cultural, and economic diversity of the

migrants. The original villagers created a whole new urban landscape of crammed apartment buildings with the maximum possible number of units to accommodate as many migrants as possible. The urban village continues to provide the cheapest apartment units for rent, and the number of units is almost countless.

The population of Shenzhen consists of twelve million people, including a large migrant majority of temporary resident permit and other non-Shenzhen *hukou* holders. More specifically, the population of Shenzhen is divided into three types of *hukou*: temporary, blue print, and permanent. The blueprint *hukou* status holder has the right to apply for permanent *hukou* in the city. These are usually technologically-skilled workers from elsewhere in China. It is very difficult for a temporary *hukou* holder to become a permanent *hukou* holder in Shenzhen. There is again the question of *suzhi,* which means quality, a generalizing semi-eugenic judgement of a person or a group of people in terms of education, wealth, culture, and class. Often it is used casually as a kind of broad stroke prejudicial statement to suggest that a certain population from a certain area is low *suzhi*. Certainly, in this thesis, *suzhi* was also used on city as *Chengshi suzhi*, quality of a city, which is constant focus for Shenzhen municipal government. As a city, Shenzhen tries to attract so-called high *suzhi* migrants. In 1999, it passed 'Rules on Further Supporting High Technology Industrial Development' (Shenzhen Municipal Government 1999). The decree made it easy for people with a higher education to obtain Shenzhen *hukou*. The clauses state that people with two years experience in a high-tech industry and with a minimum of a Bachelor education in science and technology will be given priority passage for Shenzhen *hukou* applications by the department dealing with labour and human resources. Although the *hukou* system has been loosened, there is still the requirement that the Public Security Bureau register temporary residents in the city, their employment status, their home town origin, and their address in the city. With migrants coming and going between places, it is much harder for the police to keep track of everyone, especially in a severely understaffed city such as Shenzhen. Another reason that Shenzhen is keen to control its population is that it wants to selectively maintain a large pool of technical workers.

From 1997 to 2002, Shenzhen's total population grew at a rate of one million residents per year. Over the past thirty years, it has grown from three hundred thousand to the one-time zenith of fourteen million people. Out of the tens of millions of people, only two million have legal Shenzhen permanent *hukou* and the rest are all migrants with various *hukou* registration statuses. The great majority of Shenzhen's population, with or without urban *hukou*, were migrants from the villages and county towns of China. Most of the early migrant workers came from nearby regions in Guangdong Province. Then there were large waves of migrant workers from the poorer provinces surrounding Guangdong. They became the first generation of salary workers for private companies in Shenzhen. The majority of first-generation migrant workers in China were women. Many young unmarried girls came to Shenzhen to work in the add-on manufacturing factories. These were essentially the 'factory girls' presented in Leslie Chang's 2009 book by this name. However, in China, they are better known by the name '*dagongmei*' or 'working sister', who have come to symbolize a whole generation of migrant factory workers who were predominantly female at first. Gradually, large numbers of male migrants also came to work in construction and other sections of the manufacturing industry. In 2000, Shenzhen conducted its fifth population census. In the migrant category, there are 100 females to 44.75 males among the 16-23 age categories. Eighty per cent of the *dagongmei* were between 19-25 years old (Hu 2011, p. 6). The *dagongmei* were only the beginning of the migrant waves arriving in Shenzhen. They were highly trained early migrant labourers who were young and had stable employment in Shenzhen. The bulk of the migrant population—trained or untrained, male or female, employed or unemployed—arrived later. Unlike the *dagongmei*, they no longer settled in the factory dormitories, but began to move into the urban villages.

Photo 17: A photo exhibit honouring *dagongmei* female workers at the Shenzhen Museum. Photo by author 2009

To Live and Work in the Urban Villages: Stories of Migrants

Other than the factory dorms, the urban villages have the largest concentration of migrants in the city. The migrants were drawn to the urban villages for two reasons. First, the urban village provided some of the cheapest places to rent in Shenzhen. Second, the urban villages have a loosely enforced residential registration system with less stringent checking of identity papers of migrant tenants. Mobrand described this kind unique arrangement as follows:

> … Landlords and hostel-owners need to ensure that migrants stay. This has led to other forms of cooperation. Landlords do not want their tenants caught without the necessary papers, so they commonly help migrants evade police during raids. Landlords act as a buffer between migrants and local government bureaus. (Mobrand 2006, p. 265)

Hence, the urban village has formed a kind of unique residential system for the population of migrants. The housing blocks and self-constructed apartments in the urban

villages, although substandard and crammed, were sanctuaries for the migrants where they could live as 'normal citizens', free from *hukou*-based harassment and other entrenched regional and class prejudices of the city.

There is nothing fancy about the migrant living arrangements. In most cases, they live in small apartments with one bed room and one sitting room. These kinds of single flat units typically accommodate a family of three to five people. Across Shenzhen, this type of one bed room, one sitting room apartment does not vary much in size but more so in price. In the somewhat less developed Baishizhou village in the district of Nanshan, a one bed room one sitting room apartment varies from 40 to 50 square metres and can be leased from 1000 Yuan to 1400 Yuan per month. Migrants can also rent a single room that ranges from 8 to 20 square metres with leasing prices varying greatly (Soufun, 2013). Baishizhou village has some of the lowest prices in the Shenzhen SEZ area excluding the northern districts outside the traditional SEZ zone.

The urban village is not just a place where the migrants live; it is also the place where migrants begin their job search and gradually adapt to urban life. It is often the first place where the migrants secure their initial employment in Shenzhen. Because of ever-increasing numbers of migrant labourers, their employment at some of the large foreign joint-ventures or foreign-contracted factories is no longer guaranteed. This is in strong contrast to the early years of Shenzhen, where the *dagongmei* working sisters were highly regulated with ready employment and residency in the factories. Increasingly, migrants have had to survive on unstable employment. Without stable employment in the factories, the migrants' existence in Shenzhen became semi-legal because their temporary residential registration carried the condition of being employed. Although the general *hukou* system has been greatly loosened, *hukou*-based prejudice persists. Harvard sociology pprofessor, Martin King Whyte, summarizes the changes in China's *hukou* system: 'there is now a three-caste system in China, rather than the a two-caste system, with one's opportunities and treatment differing sharply for rural residents, rural-urban migrants, and urban *hukou* holders (Whyte 2010, p. 15).' Throughout the 1990s,

sanwurenyuan (the Chinese abbreviation for people without three forms of urban registration) were often detained and then expelled. In a way, migrants' temporary residential registration is like possessing a working visa for visitors in developed nations. In 2003, there was the famous Sun Zhigang incident when a young rural migrant Sun was detained by local police in Guangzhou after failure to present the appropriate urban registration papers. Sun in fact had the proper registration but forgot to bring them with him on a trip to a net café. Sun later was beaten to death by guards at a detention centre in Guangzhou causing a popular uproar over the treatment of rural-to-urban migrants and the *hukou* based prejudicial treatment they received (Yuan 2003). The Sun Zhigang incident is not just an extreme example. For many migrants, there was the constant fear of being caught without proper residential registration throughout the 1990s. When detained, their friend or relatives would sometimes resort to bribing the officials to get them released. Once again, one cannot emphasize enough that migrants regard urban villages as safe zones. With uncertain job prospects in factories and on the main streets, there are times when the only employment available to migrants is in the urban villages.

Escaping the factory floor and the dormitories, which came with strictly regulated lives and work schedules, the migrants found the urban villages comfortable places to live and work. In the somewhat less-developed Baishizhou Village, I interviewed a female migrant working at a news-stand. She was in her early 40s and came from Anhui Province. She had worked as a sub-contractor for China Post for two years. Her husband took her to Shenzhen, and they both lived in the urban village of Baishizhou. She colloquially called Baishizhou Village '*laoxiangzhen*' (home province town'), referring to the large number of Anhui migrants who live in this area and form a kind of community of the same provincial background. She stated that her rent is expensive, at roughly 800 yuan per month. With water and electricity bills, the total cost of living in the urban village is around 1,000 yuan. She expected the rent would be raised again in late 2010. Although her husband lived with her, their children stayed behind with her husband's parents in her hometown. Her landlord is an original villager. She commented that there are also 'second-hand landlords', meaning people who are not original villagers but managed to buy apartments from the original villagers for leasing operations. She

remarked that the original villagers were more pleasant and charged less. The rent is paid monthly and personally collected by the original villager landlord (Female Migrant Newsstand Lady 16/1/2010). Also in Baishizhou Village, I encountered a female migrant cleaner in her late 30s. She had been working in Shenzhen for three years as an hourly-paid house cleaner. She is from Wuhan City in the Province of Hubei. She lives in Baishizhou Village and works nearby. She is only renting a bed in a room shared with others. It costs approximately 200 yuan monthly, which includes all water and electricity costs shared among tenants. Most of her family stayed in Hubei. She stated that she does not want to stay at home and do nothing; hence, she came to Shenzhen to earn money to help support her family back home. She likes Shenzhen very much because it is a relatively easy place in which to survive (Female Migrant Cleaner 16/1/2010). Both of the migrant women of Baishizhou Village are at the very low end of migrant employment in and around urban villages. The stories of the two female migrants show that the migrants fare very differently in Shenzhen. The first woman was helping out at a news-stand franchised by her family. The second is a cleaner by appointment, what the Chinese calls '*zhongdiangong*'. Her employment is also highly unstable, unlike the traditional nanny-work of migrants. The first woman had a better support network through her family and what she called 'laoxiangzhen' hometown migrant network. The second is relatively rootless with most of her family back home in regional China. She works to send money back home. In both cases, the two migrant women are in Shenzhen and in its urban villages working for the betterment of their families.

Photo 18: Migrant life in Nantou Village. Photo by author 2009

Photo19: A Nantou Village scene. Photo by author 2009

The urban village is not just a place to hide from administrative harassment and to live affordably. It is also where migrants may earn their living. Sometimes, they become small entrepreneurs and make a life for themselves in the urban villages. In the far northern corners of Huanggang Village, there is a group of migrants making crafts and signs for businesses in the urban village. They are all in their early 30s. The shop is small, with only one room of about 80 square metres. With all the tools and parts lying around, there was hardly any room for an extra person to stand. One of the migrant workers in the shop claimed that they make most of the neon signs in the village (at least the ones they are capable of constructing). He said the business is going very well. One of the migrants is a Hakka from Meizhou County just northeast of Shenzhen. Still, he is Cantonese and more local than many other out-of-province migrants. The owner of the shop, who was not uttering a word, is also a migrant. When asked where he came from and whether they are original villagers, all the migrants in the shop laughed and asked, 'Why would a local work for a living like us?' By laughing at my ignorance of whether a shop could be owned and manageable by an original villager, the migrants were suggesting the old mainstream stereotype of the 'idle' rich original villagers who are good for nothing and live off rent. It is certainly an act of type casting by the migrants, a form of hidden transcript against the original villagers. The hidden transcript here symbolizes a kind of disconnection between migrants and the original villagers that appears again and again in the language of migrants. The owner of the shop was sitting inside the store and reading news on the computer, but suddenly joined the conversation. He was eager to sell his service of installing surveillance equipment. Unlike his fellow migrant employees, he claimed that business is bad and there is very little opportunity. According to him, the monthly rent for his shop is about 2,000 yuan which has been steadily increasing over the year. Interestingly, his landlord is not an original villager, but someone who has purchased properties in the village. All of them live in the village. Their typical rent is about 1,000 yuan per month, which provided them with a bedroom and a sitting room. Normally, they never see the landlord. They are not really concerned about safety and crime in the village, and they have not experienced any organised crime activity, harassing them for protection fees. Huanggang Village is well managed in terms of crime prevention or harassment. Every month, the shop owner pays 300 yuan to the village security team for their services. (Sign makers in Huanggang Village, 26/6/2010).

The group of sign-makers in Huanggang Village are some of the better-off migrants in the urban village. They have stable employment and their business seemed to be doing well, despite their complaints. The most striking thing about their conditions was the carefree work environment and general relaxed atmosphere. Foxconn, the largest manufacturing subcontractor of Apple Inc. is located just fifteen kilometres away, in an area that represents the less attractive alternative to migrant life and employment in Shenzhen. Foxconn, under its Taiwanese Chairman Guo Taiming, is notorious for its militant command structure and relentlessly tight work shifts. In 2010 alone, more than a dozen young migrant workers committed suicide at Foxconn's Shenzhen factories (BBC 2010). This illustrates the sharp contrast to the conditions of the migrant sign workers at Huanggang village, who were sufficiently relaxed to speak to a stranger like me.

It is clear that some migrants fare better than others. In Huanggang Village, an elderly migrant gentleman in his late 60s attends his son's flower shop. His shop is next to the village's main road and sits directly opposite a disco. It is a convenient location for young couples to buy flowers. The shop is encircled by a garden fence and has a plastic sheet covering. The elderly gentleman is from Shaoguan, located in the northern Guangdong Province. The shop belongs to his son, but the elderly gentleman was here to temporarily look after it. He said the business had not been good. The rent for the flower shop was around about 4,000 yuan per month. He lives with his son in an apartment that costs them 1,800 yuan per month (Male Migrant at Flower Shop 22/6/ 2010). Also in Huanggang Village, a male migrant street cleaner I interviewed, was working the streets in the northwestern section. Aged in his 50s, he hails from Zhuzhou County in Hunan, and explained that the village company had hired him, as he also lived in Huanggang. He said the rent of around 1,400 yuan was slightly expensive for him, so he now lived with his son and his daughter in-law. His son, a taxi driver, covers the family rent and food expenses. According to the street cleaner, his job is necessary to support his family living in the urban village, and Shenzhen in general. He works just about every day with no weekends off. Every day, he works roughly ten hours and receives a monthly wage of

around 1,200 yuan. This is his fifth year in Shenzhen. He once had dreamed of retiring in Hunan, but his son and family no longer wish to stay in their hometown, so he has had to settle with living in and continuing to work in Shenzhen. During this period, he rarely had any contact with original villagers (Male Migrant Street Cleaner 22/6/2010). When I asked other migrants about the original villagers, this seemed to be a common reply, further confirmation of the disconnection between original villagers and the migrants.

The migrants of Shenzhen have a strong tendency toward regional based job specialization, very much in the same manner as many immigrant populations of particular origin dominate certain jobs in mainstream society. Some large migrant groups have come to dominate particular occupations in Shenzhen. For example, since the early 1980s, large numbers of Hunanese have come to Shenzhen, where they began to dominate the taxi-driver profession. More than half of Shenzhen's taxi drivers are from Hunan. Among them, more than 60 percent are from You County in Hunan. In the urban village area of Shixia alone, there are over 1,300 migrant taxi drivers from You County and, together with family members, You County migrants account for more than 5,700 of the residents, a significant portion of the total urban village residential population (He 2012).

Urban villages are the place where the migrant taxi drivers live, eat, switch shifts, rest, and maintain their vehicles. In Xiasha Village, a popular hub for migrant taxi drivers, I met with a female taxi driver. Female taxi drivers are still a rarity in Shenzhen. She is in her late 30s and came from north-eastern China. She and her husband together rent a car from one of the private taxi companies for 10,000 yuan per month. She lives in Shangsha Village and rents a studio apartment with her husband for 1,000 yuan monthly. She and her husband take shifts driving the taxi. She mostly drives during the day, and her husband drives the more dangerous night-shift. She commented about security in the village worsening in 2008, but she felt safe about her residence, which is run by an original villager, and her apartment has a *guanlichu*, an office that keeps a record of people entering the building (Female Migrant Taxi Driver 12/2008). The story of the

female taxi driver depicts the life and work of the typical self-employed migrant. The female driver and her husband rent a taxicab from a taxi company and make their living from the vehicle. Here 'rent' becomes the key word for migrants living in Shenzhen or any other city. They have to rent in order to afford their existence in the city, regardless of employment or living space.

Some migrants in the urban village are among the poorest people in Shenzhen. Living in the urban village is a financial necessity. On the outskirt of Huanggang Village there is the example of an old garbage collector in his late 1960s, from the northern Anhui Province. He looks very much like a beggar with his dirty, shabby clothes. He drags a large bag of plastic bottles and other recyclable goods with him. On that particular day, he had been working in 38-degree weather. Not far from here, there is a recycling station. They would pay him for whatever recyclable goods he collected. He also lived in Huanggang with his wife and son. Every month he earns slightly less than 1,000 yuan. He was a farmer back home in Anhui and earned very little money. Together with his son's and his daughter-in-law's income, they rent an apartment for 1,800 yuan. Pooling the family income together, there is still some extra cash left over after food and rent. He said that he and his family still return to their village every year during the Chinese New Year, despite the train tickets costing over several hundred yuan. He rarely meets with the original villagers of Huanggang. In his words, 'they are all landlords of big buildings. I don't have any opportunity to meet with them (Male Migrant Garbage Collector 22/6/2010).' Although the old men said the above in a humble manner, his language suggests a hidden transcript of a kind of infrapolitic and commonly shared knowledge among the migrants that the original villagers are landlords. They are rich and powerful, beyond the reach of their rural migrant tenants.

In the words and stories of so many migrants, there were several common themes. Their evaluation of the urban villages is generally positive, no matter where they lived and how much they earned. Although they earn very little compared to the urban main-street citizens or their landlords, they can still make ends meet. The opportunity of living in an

urban-village environment also offers the migrants a sense of safety. Ironically, the urban village is often considered unsafe by those who live outside it. The 'safety' felt by the migrants was in the sense of employment and lifestyle because the great city outside the border of the urban villages does not welcome them. For the migrants, there was not much for them outside the urban villages, except for the massive factory dormitories like those of Foxconn, where the *China Daily* once described the workers' living conditions as 'seemingly endless lines of grey, ten beds per rooms' (Hu 2010). The urban villages are zones where the migrants are able to live and work normally in the city. Their lifestyles in the urban villages are a significant improvement on the rigid schedules of factory labourers who are forced to eat and sleep on tight shifts. The urban village also provides the comforting possibility of family life for the migrants.

Regional and Provincial Culture Melting Pot

The migrants have brought their provincial cultures to the urban villages. Walking down the street of any urban village in Shenzhen, one cannot mistake their multicultural nature. For those with keen ears and eyes and an understanding of Chinese language and culture, the urban villages are an "out-of-place spaces", much as the Jackboot Ranch in Beijing, the Thames Town in Shanghai, or other European-style villas that now dot the landscape of major Chinese metropolises and inspire a kind of strange 'otherworldly feeling'. The urban villages do not appear to belong to the urban and cultural landscape of Shenzhen, which is now a major technological and financial hub of China. They seem to belong to a different level of urban development that is not in harmony with the rest of the city. In addition, they do not seem to fit into the local cultural fabric. In a similar way, the migrants have made the urban villages their colony, or enclave, in the city as the Latinos have done in many north American cities, with their 'Latinization' by small ethnic minority enclaves reurbanising the cities, bringing with them their native cultures, that add diversity and vitalization to the city (Davis 2000).

One obvious sign of cultural diversity due to the migrant influx is the restaurant scene in Shenzhen. Restaurants have become a favourite place of employment among the city's migrants. Today, urban villages' streets are lined with regional menu restaurants, a simple but obvious indicator of cultural diversity. The cuisines represented are from the spice-obsessed mountainous provinces of Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi, as well as the central Yangtze provinces of Hunan and Hubei. These restaurants are usually small, with room enough for only six to eight tables. However, they are intensely loyal to their regional style and flavour. Shenzhen's urban village culinary scene is in fact as diverse as those in long-established food courts of Beijing. There are many famous local food chains that have grown out of the urban villages. For example, the locally famous Chao Tai Beef Restaurants were originally founded by the Chaozhou migrants in the urban village of Gangxia.

Photo 20: Migrant restaurant scene in Shangsha village. Photo by author 2009

Photo 21: Migrant restaurant scene in Da Chong Village. The restaurant in the middle - *Maikenji* - is a *shanzhai* (imitation) diner, suggestive of KFC and McDonalds that also serve Chinese food. Photo by author 2009

The migrant cultural scene in the urban villages of Shenzhen is not just about food. They are increasingly diversifying. Urban villages have spawned a wealth of migrant music and literature. The urban village is also a wonderful place of creativity and inspiration for young and up-and-coming writers of migrant backgrounds. Their experiences between the rural and urban worlds often offer distinct insights into the migrant experience and China's rapid modernisation. In Shenzhen's urban villages, there are also singers and musicians. Many of Shenzhen's young novelists have experienced living in the urban village. The urban villages continue to serve as their inspiration and essential focal point of their writing. More prominently, Shenzhen's urban village is famous for its migrant painters and artists. Dafen Village, in Shenzhen's northeast, is now known nationwide—n worldwide—as an oil-painting village. Dafen has made a name for itself as a village of painters who are mostly rural-to-urban migrants. Dafen's migrant painters have a reputation for working quickly and being affordable. Shenzhen's real-estate boom created a high demand for Dafen's hand-made replicas (reproductions) of Western oil masterpieces. The oil paintings of Dafen are now made to order for worldwide sale. Hence much in the same ways as the southern and eastern European immigrants has added to the cultural fabrics and complex street life of Jane Jacobs (2011) Greenwich

Village, the rural-to-urban migrants have done the same for Shenzhen's urban village. Here the migrants are emerging as a creative force in the city.

Photo 22: The famous Dafen Oil Painting Village. Over the years, it has become a hub for artists, who are mostly migrants. Photo by author 2009

Migrant Crimes and Gang Activities in the Urban Village

Crimes by migrants in the urban villages or some of the historical and existing slums have always been a major concern for the city government and its planners in China, as well as internationally. Le Corbusier famously praised Baron Von Haussmann's plan of clearing Paris of slums and their migrant residents as an essential measure to prevent crime and ensuring the efficiency of police work in all urban areas (Scott 1998, p.116). Hence migrants and their crimes are a major justification for the local government and their high modernist urban planners to enact projects to "clean the slate." On the other hand, migrants out of whatever socio-economic reasons indeed participate in illegal activities in

the urban village. By association with the migrants the urban villages become "dangerous zones."

As Shenzhen and the urban villages grew richer, an 'underworld economy' also started to appear in the villages. Jonathan Bach gives this blunt description of the relation between the urban villages and the overall crime of Shenzhen, if not the entire Pearl River Delta region:

> With security provided by the village, there are tales of profitable relations between some villages and organized crime. This lends the sketchier villages an aura of deliberate but restrained violence. Crime is one of Shenzhen's biggest preoccupations: It has a deserved reputation as a transit point for drugs and human trafficking, stolen cars and goods from and to Hong Kong and Macao, abductions for ransom, car jackings, random violence and all manner of petty and grand theft. (Bach 2010, p. 436)

Just as Hong Kong people started to find 'fun and excitement,' prostitution started to expand in the urban village. In the 1990s, the phenomenon of prostitution became widespread in the urban villages and the prostitutes were almost exclusively migrant females. Shenzhen was probably the first city in China to embrace the resurrection of prostitution as a career in the PRC, whose elimination had been proudly pronounced by a Maoist China. The prostitutes of Shenzhen mostly live and work in the villages. Once again, loose tenancy registration and cheap rent have facilitated this phenomenon. Prostitution is still illegal in China, so the prostitutes of Shenzhen's urban villages must operate very adeptly in the urban village environment. They operate in a variety of venues, such as barber shops, discos, and massage parlours. Urban villages all along Futian's border region are famous for prostitution. Among them, Shazui Village once stood out for the first mass petition for rights by 'massage girls' submitted to the city government in 2006, and the mass parade of arrested prostitutes in 2007 (Gao 2007).

With the flourishing of prostitution, concubines, and fresh money from Hong Kong for cheap pleasures in the urban village, the underground economy of the urban village is growing, which makes it fertile soil for gangs. Just like prostitution, gangs, triads, and mafia like organisations were once almost totally eliminated in Mao's China. After the economic reform, there was a resurgence of organised crime activities in China. Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta region is a breeding ground for gangs as they have close access to Hong Kong—one of the remaining enclaves of traditional triads that have networks with just about every overseas Chinese community. In 2000, the current vice Public Security Bureau chief of Shenzhen, Luo Jun, wrote an article for *Gongan Yanjiu* (*Public Security Research*) on organized crime in Shenzhen. Luo essentially presented Hong Kong as the main source of organized crime in Shenzhen. As early as 1981, two years after the founding of Shenzhen City, organised crime activities were initiated and directed from Hong Kong. All major Hong Kong triad-style mafia have branches in Shenzhen. Luo commented that the historical and lineage connections between Shenzhen and Hong Kong have provided cover for organised crime growth in Shenzhen, as the Hong Kong gangsters disguise their activities in Shenzhen in terms of 'visiting relatives' (Luo 2000). Luo's talk of lineage is of particular interest, because his article suggests early involvement by original villagers of gang activities in some of the villages.

Today, much of the gang phenomenon in urban villages involves migrant populations. The migrants are able to join Hong Kong triad-affiliated branches in Shenzhen, as lowly foot soldiers. Or, they can form their own gangs based on regional allegiance, or their province. Here Mobrand's (2006) research on migrant internal network took a very dark turn. Pooling from the large migrant population in the urban villages, the migrant gangs became highly visible in some villages. In a visit I made to one of the urban villages in 2008, among the most memorable scenes were the large outer-province migrant gangs roaming the street in groups of up to thirty. These people had robust physiques and military crew-cuts. They uniformly wore tracksuits. In most cases they intimidated the local shop-owners in the village, demanding protection money. When a shop refused to pay, they would sit or stand around the shop all day, creating a terrifying atmosphere and blocking costumers from the entrance. Over the years, gangs in the urban village have

been a major headache for the city government to confront. In most cases, the gangsters knew the village better than any government agency. Over time, instead of providing stable, systematic law enforcement within the villages, security was often left in the hands of the original villagers—to carry out crime prevention and neighbourhood watches. When crime by migrants reached unmanageable levels, the city government would wage *yanda* ('strike hard') campaigns by sending large number of police officers into the village for short periods; however, there were rarely any positive long-term effects.

Other than the prostitutes and the gangs, crimes that have frequent occurrence in the urban village take the form of home invasion, robbery, and other petty crimes. To the credit of the high modernist planners, they had warned that crammed and informal zoning indeed made conditions favourable for petty crimes. According to Mobrand (2006), the profit motivated casual tenant registration system in the urban village has acted as a kind of protection for potential criminal element. Similarly, Wang Ruyuan also provided this indirect reference to rental apartments and crimes in the village:

> Because of the pursuit of highest rental rate for the units, the landlords rarely provide any proper management and hence created a vacuum for unlawful elements, making the rental units places of 'hidden dirt' [criminals]. Some villages use the security situation as an excuse and use the security teams to provide protection rackets for various criminal activities. (Wang 2004, p. 80)

The high crime rate is one of the persistent stigmas of the urban villages. In a balanced observation of the urban village, there is no denying the relatively high crime environment of the urban village. However, just like slum and ghetto like neighbourhoods worldwide, the residents often carry on living their usual lives despite the high crime rate. The high crime environment of the urban village is on one hand due to the urban villager's deliberate tenant arrangement with the migrants and the high concentration of low-income rural-to-urban migrants. On the other hand, the high crime environment is

also caused by the stipulations of the state, which force migrants into the urban villages. In addition, they had little choice due to the high cost of rental units on main streets.

Not-So-Harmonious Relations

In June 2011, in the Pearl River Delta region, two major migrant riots broke out in the urban villages of Chaozhou City and Zengcheng Township, only ten days apart. The riots first started in July in the medium-sized Guangdong provincial city of Chaozhou in the suburb area of Guzhen, which houses numerous urban villages. These villages are much like Shenzhen's urban village was in the 1980s, being centres of manufacturing. The riots began when a migrant of Sichuan origin approached his factory's management, to demand his delayed salary payment, and was brutally beaten (Xu 2011). This sparked retaliation by other Sichuan migrants in the area, who held long-simmering resentment of the manner in which they had being treated. The Sichuan migrants mobilised and collectively demanded justice from the local security bureau. When their demands for justice were not answered, widespread looting and damage occurred. Unlike previous riots in the past across China, the Sichuan migrants did not just approach local government institutions. They also targeted the original villagers' establishments, which they deemed related to the factory boss's family. This development led to heavy fighting between the migrants and the original villagers, with many urban villagers among them.

Just ten days later, in the suburb of Guangzhou, a second migrant riot broke out. Like the other one, it was led by Sichuan migrants. In Zengcheng's Xingtang urban village, long-simmering tensions between the security team made up of mostly local villagers and the migrant population flared into open physical conflict. The riot was started when a pregnant, Sichuan-migrant street-vender was roughed up by security teams led by original villagers. According to rumours, she was beaten after she refused to pay the security team protection money (Liu 2011). When rumour spread that a pregnant Sichuan peddler was bullied by the local villagers security team, the situation was exacerbated by the migrants'

anger. This time, tensions and rioting were more direct and palpable than in Chaozhou. Automatically, the migrants and the local villagers formed opposing camps. Large-scale riots continued for days, and troops had to be sent from Guangzhou to restore calm. The lessons from Zengchen's Xingtang Village and Guxiang County in Chaozhou showed that in current-day China, relations between migrants and the local original-villager population in an urban-village setting can be easily inflamed, if not properly managed. The two major riots days apart in Guangdong province showcased how quickly and explosive the rural-to-urban migrant could organize and resort to violence.

As Solinger (1999) has pointed out, the Chinese urbanites fear and loathe the rural migrants, who in many ways have threatened their employment and material privileges. The entrance of the migrants to the city poses a threat to the lifestyle and privileges of the urbanites, particularly among those with lower social-economic status (Yang et al. 2010). The prejudice of the Chinese urbanite against the migrants is a form of hidden transcript by the dominant class. Sometimes, the prejudice toward the rural migrants is expressed openly by government agencies and private companies, in the form of careless public expressions. The treatment of Henan migrants in Shenzhen is particularly interesting as examples of urban prejudice against rural migrants. In late 2005, Shenzhen police unfurled banners in one of Long Gang's urban village that clearly stated, 'Strike hard against criminal elements from Henan province'. The banner made front-page news in the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, noting that the Shenzhen police openly targeted migrants group from Henan Province (Liu 2005). However, this was not an isolated incident. Prejudice against Henan migrants became palpable in the context of factory employment. In early 2012, there was news about prejudice against Henan migrants. The mainstream media reported that many companies had placed similar recruitment advertisements noting that 'the quota for Henan migrants has been met', which obviously singles out Henan migrants as unwanted workers, during the hiring process (He 2012). The prejudice against Henan migrants in Shenzhen is not just a simple problem of regional prejudice, pitting the local Cantonese against the Henanese, because it could easily spread to other migrant groups framing them for some potential criminal characteristics. The Chinese form of regional prejudice is a subtle prejudicial form. Its modern form had its origin in

the urban–rural divide and the caste-like system of *hukou* segregation, where the rural migrant is generalized as being low status, uncultured, and dangerous. The modern form of regional prejudice is systematic in some government circles and widely accepted by the urbanite Chinese. The uneven development of China, both industrially and in terms of urbanisation, is reflected in the prejudices, as they reinforce the traditional regional discrimination where the people from different provinces are pitted against each other. And the 'locals'—whether identified by the province or more specifically the cities—gain a sense of superiority to 'outsiders' (*waidiren*) who can be identified either by their often less-developed provinces or their rural status. Conversely, the migrants also direct their prejudices at the 'locals'. In my study, it is very interesting to see this kind of 'hidden transcript' by migrants directed at the original villagers who host the migrants. Here, James C Scotts' (1985, 1990) description of passive resistance and hidden transcripts by the poor comes alive. The migrants also direct gossip, jokes, and ridicule at the original villagers in their day-to-day conversation. There is a strong anti-capitalist, anti-landlord tone in their language. The original villagers are often ridiculed for being rich but lazy. Hence, the reflected a sense of unfairness felt by the migrants toward the urban village and the urban–rural divide in general. The city is built by migrant construction teams, sustained by migrant labour forces in the factories, and further sustained by migrant rent payment in the urban villages. The migrants' sense of unfairness is reflected in their relations with the rest of the city and the original villagers who happen to host most of the migrants in the city. This relationship between the migrants and the city and the original urban villagers invariably has the potential to be explosive.

Chapter Conclusion

Every Spring Festival from the late-1980s has witnessed the *chun yun* or 'spring transit', that is, the mass return of migrants to their homes, a unique population movement with numbers and a magnitude that occurs only in China. Every year between the months of January and March and depending on the lunar calendar, around one hundred million Chinese annually leave from the factory floors or other menial employment in the big

cities like Shenzhen. In fact, the North Station (railroad station) of Shenzhen is the southernmost tip of the *chun yun*. Chinese urbanites often marvel at the annual Central Television news footage of extraordinary numbers of migrants who are on the move, over a three-day period, from the developed coastal areas. They return home to the rural hinterland with whatever they earn from areas that house most of the export-oriented factories. Yet all the reports seem to overlook the fact that, for most of the year, they live in the cities and only during the two-week break do they return to their ancestral soil to observe traditional obligation. When they live in the cities, they do not just live in the dormitories. Urban villages such as in Shenzhen are the places that host the migrants. With the large numbers of migrants living and working in the villages, the urban villages of Shenzhen became synonymous with migrant villages. They became identified with the migrants, and all their perceived negative qualities. The migrants are subjected to prejudice by the general urban mainstream citizens. They are also thorns in the sides of the 'high modernist' aspiring urban planners. Le Corbusier, one of the leading figures in high modernism urban design movement of the 20th Century, once described the slums and their migrant residents in Paris as: "how many of those five million are simply a dead weight on the city, an obstacle, a black clot of misery, of failure, of human garbage?" (Cited in Scott 1998, p. 116) In similar ways, the urban villages of Shenzhen become 'guilty' by their association with migrants. The prejudice and vilification of the migrants has transferred to the villages. Hence, it is even more interesting to see the high modernist language of 'black clot of misery' being translated into a Chinese equivalent of 'urban disease' and 'tumours of the city'. In addition, Le Corbusier's concern of crime and slums with particular emphasis on the potential difficulty of police work are also echoed in Shenzhen. In many cases, the stereotypes of the migrant ghettos in the urban villages hold true. However, the urban villages, as a part of the migrant world in the city, are much more than crime and chaos. They are also places of culture, life, and countless stories behind China's economic 'miracle'.

Chapter Six

Urban Village Inc.

Introduction

Ever since 1992, original villagers of Shenzhen have no longer governed their village politically. The villagers' collective identity is solely represented by their joint-stock company, which also continues to manage much of what goes on in the village economically. Although the urban village companies were often ignored and categorised under the much larger category of TVEs (Township Village Enterprises), the urban village companies operate in a distinctively different manner to the manufacturing-oriented TVEs, existing within clear urban limits and using an economic model heavily dependent on rental income and real-estate development on village-owned lands. Very few scholars have extensively researched the urban village company, possibly because access to them is difficult. Hsing Youtien of University of California Berkeley is perhaps the only scholar who has written in English about the urban-village companies in China, focussing on Guangzhou and Beijing. Hsing has described the joint-stock company of the urban village a form of 'village corporatism' with bottom-up initiatives and attempts at community-based autonomy (Hsing 2010, pp. 125-158). Among the Chinese language sources, Li Peilin (2004), Wang Ruyuan (2004), and Chen Guijun (2006) are scholars who have devoted minor sections of their work to urban village companies. Among the Chinese language works, Li Peilin's observations of Guangzhou's urban village companies are quite insightful. Li suggests the nature of the urban village company is a type of unique "*cunluo danwei zhi*" (village danwei system) in the city (Li 2004, p.44). Li describes the urban villagers as having a deep psychological need for this kind of village danwei structure, especially after the urbanisation process. The sense of being alienated by the rest of the city, and the feeling of being surrounded, exacerbated their feelings of dependency. Li notes that the nature of the village company's election system, based on

the villagers' joint stocks or shares, has both economic effects within the company and subsequent indirect political effects in the urban village areas. Hence, the urban village company has essentially become a form of localized shadow government within the Chinese city. Through elections, via the urban village company, the urban villagers have in theory participated in democratic self-government within the city of Shenzhen. This chapter examines the urban-village company as a crucial component to the current state of Shenzhen's urban villages. It focuses on history, structure, performance, leadership, and potential problems of the urban village company. It provides specific examples of village companies, and demonstrates through interviews and other evidence why the village company is crucial for the continued survival and self-government of urban villages.

Emergence of Urban Village Inc.

The 14th Party congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held in 1992. In that meeting, Deng Xiaoping introduced the concept of a Socialist Market Economy and Socialism with Chinese Characteristics that signalled to the general public and regional governments the deepening of economic reforms in China. By sheer coincidence, or by coordinated move, the Shenzhen government passed decrees in 1992 to allow villages to form their own joint-stock companies (*cungufengongsi*) (Shenzhen Municipal Government 1992). This of course was designed as a planned transition for the villages as they hand over their political administrative control of the village to the local street office while maintaining their economic collectives as companies. It also makes them singular united entities to conduct negotiations, especially during urban renewals which we shall discuss in later chapters. Nonetheless this was an historic moment for the villages that during the era of the PRC, had changed from natural villages, to work brigades then back to villages, and finally, to community based companies. Every village in Shenzhen now has a village company of its own. The companies act as economic collectives for the villages. The villagers become shareholders in the companies. Every year, the companies distribute dividends to the shareholding villagers. The companies also take care of

village-related cultural activities, religious festivals, and villager-exclusive social welfare, in the form of community clinics, kindergartens, and activity centres.

Prior to the founding of Shenzhen, most urban villages had already developed a wide array of business operations. These entrepreneurial ventures were developed before the 1990s. For example, Huanggang's business operations ranged from sand transport to recycling to import-export. In 1992, Huanggang Village combined their existing business ventures to form a united and much larger Huanggang Shareholding Company (*gufengongsi*) which had unified control over all village-related business operations. (Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company 2010). In other villages such as Buxin, the formation of the urban-village company has resulted in a process of reunification for the village. During the communization process in the 1960s and 1970s, Buxin Village was fragmented into work brigades, which were divided along the different lineage lines. During the company's formation process, the different lineage branches were reunited to form a village company (LWH 29/6/2010).

Since 1992 and the formation of the companies, the villages were brought into the city government administration network. The old political unit of the village, the village committee (*cunweihui*), no longer existed. It was replaced by the urban administrative categories of the street office (*jiedaoban*) and residential committee (*juweihui*). The new structures of governance that were once controlled by the villages are now controlled by the city government (Shenzhen Municipal Government 1992). The companies are thus crucial to the villages' efforts of maintaining self-governing power in a period when they no longer hold collective political power. Chinese Scholar Wang Ruyuan (2004, p.88) once colloquially summarized the function of the urban village company of being 'a pirated copy [*fanban*] of the old village committee. It is essentially a family run institution with traditional lineage characteristics.' Wang's statement captures the essence of the village company's two practical functions. First, it is doing many of the same duties as the previous village committee, but without the political authority. Second, much of what they do is in some manner related to the village's lineage.

As the transition body (or later. the transformed body of the former village committee), the new urban village company, despite being stripped of political titles and office of former village administration personnel, continues financial support to their communities. According to Wang (2004), the initial city government appointed street office that replaced the village administration was in fact for a long time supported by the village company on budgets and salary. In addition many, if not most, of the disputes involving original villagers were resolved by the village company without legal proceedings going to court. The village company has also shouldered many responsibilities of the street office, such as organizing militia, land zoning, urban renewal, and foreign relations [contact with local villagers in the overseas diaspora] (Wang 2004). The village company has also partially supported the local infrastructure and community development budget. From Wang's research in early 2000, it would seem that the initial street offices were very weak, while the urban village company wielded real power, despite not having personnel with political rank in the actual administration.

All urban village companies have a standard corporate structure, a board of directors, and shareholders of varying importance, based on the number of shares owned. Second, all of these companies have an election system that selects the personnel for key posts. Third, the companies must perform and create profit for the continued function of the company. They must distribute dividends to the shareholders, who are exclusively villagers. In most villages, the number of shares is fixed at the numbers originally allocated when the urban village company was founded. The shares can only be passed on from one shareholder to another usually, between parents and children. Some villages have attempted to increase the number of the shares. Usually such procedures need to be voted in annual shareholder meetings that decide the number of the shares to be added, or the status quo retained. The first generation of village-company chairpersons were almost all original village chiefs and the senior management positions were almost exclusively filled by former village cadres.[9] This is the common pattern in Shenzhen. Over the years, in principle, the villager

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[9] To the best of my knowledge, there is no female village chief in the Shenzhen region.

shareholders select the company leaders by election. Across different villages, the rules of election vary. Most village companies have elections every five years, but in many villages, the old village chiefs have remained in their positions as company chairperson for the better part of a decade, and some, apparently, never seem to retire.

As shareholders in the village company, the original villagers' identity gave them the right to vote in shareholder elections to choose the chairperson and manager. In China, all rural villages have local-level elections to choose village chiefs from candidates of adult villagers (over eighteen years old). The villages have preserved, through corporatization, the village election tradition that was abandoned after being absorbed into urban governance. In most village companies, there is an election every four to five years. As Wang Ruyuan suggests, the urban village companies often hold commanding powers over the original villagers and their land. Hence, the election of the urban village company is more important than the normal shareholder election within a mainstream corporation. It has political and administrative repercussions as well. By voting in the village company election the villagers theoretically are participating in a form of local sub-district level self-government. As Li Peilin (2004) comments, their vote is no longer just an economic vote but a political one as well, on the administrative affairs of the urban village area.

As with most things in China, the urban-village company is a matter of management by individuals. The leadership and personality of certain individuals often overshadow the entire organisation. In her study of Chinese economic reform and the township village enterprises, Jean Oi describes the role of the cadres as crucial components in the market-economic transition at the village level. The quality of the village cadre will often determine the quality of life and productivity of the village (Oi 1989). On the surface and in principle, the village companies in their various manifestations have a modern corporate structure. However, in an interesting twist, it still has the management culture, the strength and failings, of the collective past. The cadres and village chiefs have exchanged their titles for the more modern version of manager and chairperson. The inner circle of any village company in most cases has been the former village leadership circle,

or *banzi*, of the past. Retaining the old leadership of the past offers the newly-formed village companies a sense of stability and unity for the company. As already noted, in Shenzhen, the company heads have been almost always the former village chiefs. In addition, the central management circle has largely been made up of the old village-cadre-leadership team (*cunwei banzi*). Since 1992, the political leadership and governing structure within the original villages—whether the chiefs, the cadre heads, the different village representatives and other people of power in the villages—have transferred this leadership and structure over to equivalent posts in the village company. This is a widespread phenomenon. All the villages involved in this doctoral research have followed this pattern. During visits and interviews at various village companies, I was reminded time and time again that it was the *banzi* that matter, and the success or failure of any urban village company is dependent upon it (Interview with ZSF 2010). The term *banzi*, which stems from the word *cunwei banzi* ('village committee leadership team') is the traditional political-leadership-circle of the village throughout much of the pre-reform era. The use of this term by current village company leaderships shows a clear link between the existing urban village companies and their agrarian collective past. Hence, the "village danwei system" of Li Peilin (2004) is not solely reflected in the villager's dependency on the organization, but in the management and the leadership of the urban village company as well.

Cultural and Lineage Obligations of the Urban Village Company

Speaking of lineage duties, organising cultural and religious events for the urban villagers is one of the important duties of any urban village company. Ancestral halls (*citang*) and the local temples have all been built and maintained by urban village companies. As is the case with most Chinese villages, *citang's* were rebuilt after their widespread destruction during the Cultural Revolution. In Shenzhen, most *citangs* were rebuilt in the 1990s, when the villagers and village companies had accumulated sufficient resources to embark on these expensive endeavours. The rebuilding of the *citang* was one of the two most important symbols of the resurgence of the lineage culture in China, the other being the

compilation of ancestral records (Xiao 2010, p. 67; Feng 1994, p. 271). The resurgence of lineage culture is particularly apparent in the urban village, where the former group identity was purposefully emphasized and there is no shortage of financial backing in undertaking tasks such as rebuilding the heritage halls and temples. On cultural and religious holidays, the urban village companies are in charge of organising celebrations for the villagers. At year's end, it is a particular busy time for the companies, as they organise a variety of ceremonial events to reward their villagers/shareholders, and promote their mutual historic interests.

Photo 23: Lineage festival at Xiasha Village, hosted by the village company. Photo by author 2008

Photo 24: Community library at Huanggang Village. Photo by author 2010

Photo 25: A community-based book-rental machine supported by the village company in Huanggang Village. Photo by author 2010

An example of promoting village collective identity is Xiasha Village's *Pencai* festival, prior to Chinese New Year, hosted by the Xiasha Village Company in Xiasha's main square. *Pencai* is a large bowl of slow-cooked food, enough to feed a table of ten people. *Pencai* is served in a single large pot in the traditional Chinese-village style, with simple soy-based marinade and an assortment of meats. This feast is an age-old village tradition of Shenzhen's urban villages. Xiasha's feast is quite famous among urban villages. It used to be a villager-exclusive event, but these days the village company uses this occasion to host the villagers and their friends in various positions of power in the city. It has essentially become a public relations event run by the village company. Of course, this also suggests that the original meaning of the *pencai* festival has changed slightly from an exclusive clan-based festival celebrating one's surname lineage to a general public-relations event that is open to society in general. It has become an event to showcase the power, prosperity, and even *guanxi* of the village by playing host to the rich and the powerful.

Other than the cultural and religious duties to their village, Shenzhen's urban village companies pay for many exclusively-villager welfare services. Much like Unger (2009) has observed in Chen Village, the modern corporatized villages have created a kind of mini-welfare state. This is essentially the case among the urban village companies of Shenzhen. Take Huanggang Village Company, for example, pays for the maintenance of a community-based, three-storey library, one community clinic, one kindergarten, one social club for the elderly, and one community recreation park. These facilities are well patronised and are all there for the welfare of the original village community.

In addition to shouldering the duty of community-based welfare and cultural/religious activities, the urban village company is also in charge of public security. This is a particularly interesting aspect of the village company. It is one of the least-changed aspects of the transition from a rural to urban community. Certainly, the village security teams are not the fearsome village militias that once defended the socialist frontline against British imperialism in Hong Kong. Since urbanisation and the founding of Shenzhen city, the village militia has handed over their heavy weapons. But they continue to possess small arms such as handguns, which are kept locked in the security station, to be used in an emergency. The militia helps manage the village security team which functions like a 'neighbourhood watch' to prevent burglary and theft. They have no arresting powers, but they can detain suspects until the police arrive. In some of the more developed villages, such as Huanggang and Xiasha, the village security teams have sophisticated roadblocks and road check systems for car-theft prevention. During a visit to Huanggang Village, I witnessed the efficiency of the system, as the village security team efficiently sealed-off the village during an attempted robbery. Once again, the function of the security team was to improve the security and safety within the village. With a presumably safer environment, more business and tenants are attracted to the village. As a result, the village company can charge higher rents. The efficiency of security is a crucial marker of the effectiveness of any village company.

Land Development and Real-Estate Developers

The ultimate asset of any urban village company is their land. The management of land holdings determines the wellbeing of a village company and a village. Shenzhen in fact is one of the first places where the villages were given a free reign over their land, the effective beginning step of land marketization in China. Terry McGee summarizes the importance of the new land policies in Shenzhen and its villages as:

> This land classification system has existed since 1988 (actually 1987 where it was first applied in Shenzhen in order to experiment with these new system) when the Chinese government introduced constitutional amendments that enable them to separate landownership from land rights, which enabled urban land to be still owned by the state but its use right can now be transferred to commercial users. The issue of transfer of land in rural areas characterized by collective ownership is more complicated because while the state has attempted to limit the conversion of agricultural land (for reason of food security) it has allowed the institution units of the rural collective (villagers' committee, village economic cooperative, or township collective economic entity) to allocate rural construction land for other uses subject to approval by the land bureau at the county level or above. In the coastal provinces where the growth of TVEs and numerous "development zones" (*kaifaqu*) was very rapid in the early 1980s, this was in effect closing the gate after the horse had escaped (McGee at al 2007, p.24).

Ever since the 1980s, Shenzhen has enacted two series of land marketization policies both focusing on its villages and their land: 'Methods on Urban Renewal in Shenzhen City' (*Shenzhenshi Chengshi Gengxin Banfa*) (Shenzhen Municipal Government 2009) and '*Shenzhen Shi Tudi Guanli zhidu Gaige Zongti Fangan*' (general proposal for reform of Shenzhen's land management system) (Shenzhen Municipal Government proposal 2012)

In the wide sampling of urban villages for this research, a general mode for urban village-company development is through partnerships with real-estate developers. The transition process from villages to corporations is not an easy one. Although they control the most

vital resource (land), the villages often lack both the capital and the experience to run corporations. Hence, the village companies have had to learn through experience, for they were often out manoeuvred, by better-prepared and better-informed developers. The real-estate developers of Shenzhen have to some extent been the inadvertent business mentors to the village companies. Beginning in the 1990s, developers emerged as a crucial and powerful third force in the already complex business relationship between urban villages and the city government. The real-estate merchants of Shenzhen were both original and unique in their dealing with the urban villagers and the city government. Since the 1990s, the village collectives have been cooperating with the emerging sector of domestic real-estate companies. The developers were initially all state-owned companies. As the spirit of the economic reforms took hold among the general population, a new class of private real-estate developers emerged in Shenzhen.

It is now commonplace for urban-village companies to enter into partnership with real-estate developers. In fact, in Shenzhen, according to the 'Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Gengxin Banfa' ('Method of Urban Renewal in Shenzhen City') (Shenzhen Municipal Government 2009), the city government has encouraged real-estate companies to become involved in property development in urban villages. The developers, big and small, state-owned or private, fight for a piece of the urban-village pie, and they can only do it by partnering with urban-village companies. The developers have brought with them money, planning, and government connections. When entering a partnership with the real-estate developers, at the very least there is financial gain for the villagers as they sell their land to the developers. This is a preferred arrangement by villages over the acquisition of land by city governments, who often take land very cheaply and offer very little compensation in land or money. In partnerships with real-estate developers, both parties are in principle equal corporate entities. Still, the partnership with real-estate developers is a business decision for the village company. There are strategies in such partnerships to create maximum profits for the village. Although not as acrimonious and one-sided as relations with city government have tended to be, the village company and real estate developers are business partners with sometimes-competing interests.

The urban village companies face the dilemma of selling their land or holding onto it for better future prices. The real-estate companies obviously want the land as cheaply as possible. Land is a finite resource for the urban villages and Shenzhen. In Shenzhen, it is clear that those village companies who were able to hold onto most of the land under their control and sold it only on well-negotiated terms are the stronger companies. On the issue of collectively-owned land by the village companies, scholar Hsing Youtien notes:

> Reserved construction land is crucial to the territorial autonomy of villages in the city for two reasons. First, hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls give the village a physical, political, and economic presence in the expanding metropolis – they are statements of the village asserting its rightful place in the city. . . Second, reserved construction land is pivotal for the village's self-organisation. ..Profit generated from reserved construction land is also the main source of income for the village and its welfare program, which reinforces the villagers' dependence on the village organisation. (Hsing 2010, pp. 136-137)

Hence, the importance of village-owned land is both symbolic and practical. It symbolizes the actual control of the village company over an area in the city. In addition, the land owned by village companies is also a kind of strategic reserve for future development of the companies and the villages they represent. A better strategy for urban village companies in partnership with real-estate corporations has been to develop the land in phases. The village companies can demand a share in the profit generated from the real estate sales on projects developed on village land in addition to the land sale. Some villages have successfully demanded that the real-estate company construct side projects for the village, ranging from vital basic infrastructure to department stores. In Shenzhen, there is a high tendency for shopping centres to be located directly under high-rise apartments. In community-scale construction projects, some urban villages can demand control over the rental properties. Hence, the villagers take control of much of the commercial-renting operations within newly-constructed luxury apartment blocks located on once urban village land. Gradually, the villagers will also develop their own construction companies by learning from the large real-estate corporations. This is especially true among the larger and more successful urban-village companies. The

gradual evolution of Huanggang Real Estate Holding Ltd is a case in point, whereby it gradually evolved from partnering medium-sized real-estate companies in developing residential projects to eventually partnering with some of the largest developers to develop commercial high-rise office buildings, such as the *Huanggang Shangwu Zhongxin* in partnership with the Excellence Group, a large scale real estate company specialising in constructing office building.

Examples of Urban Village Companies

The urban village companies of Shenzhen are not made from the same mould. They often need to adapt to their special circumstances and form their own strategy of development. Hence, the performance of the urban village is not guaranteed to be successful and efficient. Only the companies with the right strategies and visions thrive.

LWH, who is in his late 70s, is Buxin's longest-running village chief. He also has overseen the village from the Maoist 1960s to the reforms of the early 1990s. According to LWH, it was rather easy during his years as village chief in the old collective because there were only about six hundred people living in the village. The few Chaozhou youth, a part of the *shangshanxiaxiang* movement during the Cultural Revolution, were sent to the village were the only outsiders in the village. When the village company was first founded in 1992, shares were assigned according to the accumulated work points from the collective past. Those who had fled to Hong Kong received no work points, and hence no shares in the company. The method of assigning shares varies among Shenzhen's urban villages. In general, the initial company share allocations were based on the villager's original financial contribution to the founding of the village company. For example, among LWH's children, only the eldest daughter is eligible to receive dividends from the village company because she was present at the founding of the company. His two sons who fled to Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s in the *taogang* waves receive no dividends (LWH 29/6/2010).

On the development of the village and the village company, LWH gave this blunt description: 'Land is everything for Buxin Village or any other urban village. Without land, there is very little wealth-creating potential. There is no space for industries' (LWH 26/6/2010). Some of the earliest and still-remaining industries were set up during his days as village chief. The factories were rented out to Hong Kong entrepreneurs for value-adding manufacturing. The biggest problem with Buxin Village is the limited amount of land. The land was all developed or sold to real-estate developers or acquiesced by the city government. Currently, there is no undeveloped land left under the collective ownership of the village company. Originally, the village possessed approximately 3,000 *mu* of land (1,980,000 square metres) but government acquisitions have seen the loss of two thirds of the village land. The government's land acquisitions have since become the northern part of Luohu District. Some of the land was resold again at higher prices to local real-estate merchants for development. Other land was rashly sold-off in the early decades of the 1990s. Buxin Village's land was not efficiently managed by the village company. The company's rush to develop the remaining land left behind by the government acquisition turned out to be disastrous. As the village developed the land too quickly and cut deals with real-estate developers without careful planning and negotiations. As a result the village company did not achieve the maximum benefit for their village community.

There are geographical factors that would shape the urban village company's development. LHG, the vice-manager of Wutongshan Village's company, provided a brief overview of the organisation's structure. Wutongshan Village has a villager population of roughly 1,000 and occupies a land area of about two square kilometres. It is a Hakka-speaking village. The largest lineage in the village is Li to which LHG belongs. The current head of the village company is also from the Li lineage. At present, the village company provides approximately 8,000 yuan in dividends per year to the average villager shareholder. The company assigns dividends to the families residing in Wutongshan at the time of the company's foundation. All registered villagers prior to

1992 are guaranteed shares and yearly dividends. All those who are new-born and married into the village do not immediately receive shares. The shares are only available when they are passed from one holder to the next, from parents to children. LHG gave me the example of his own children who, even though they are villagers by birth, will not automatically be assigned village company shares. The Wutongshan Village Company holds an election every five years. There are nine board members up for election every time. Unlike other villages, there is no fixed number of electable candidates. LHG is a board member of the village company and was elected to his job. He is not given any additional shares in the company by virtue of his position. There is a national park and a water reservoir bordering the village that recently earned the label of first-rate national reserve. Because of the closeness to the national park, the company was forced to limit its industrial development, court tourism, and develop more environmentally-friendly industries (LHG, 29/6/2012).

The Xiasha village company is one of better functioning village companies in Shenzhen. The village is located next to mangrove forests bordering Hong Kong and its urban village company owns a variety of businesses from hotels to restaurants, from golf ranges to department stores. Located at the main street entrance of the village, there is the Shatian Hotel and on the first floor there is the famous Xiasha Seafood Restaurant locally famous for its seafood. Currently, Xiasha features one of the biggest department stores among the urban villages of Shenzhen. From early on, the village was in partnership with one of Shenzhen's major department stores—Suibao whose chain in Xiasha occupies the first three floors of a multi-storey modern high-rise apartment building. At street level, there are DVD shops, clubs, restaurants and convenience stores such as Seven Eleven mostly leased or directly managed by the village company. Xiasha also features a research and development (R & D) park focused on mobile technology. It was one of the village's adventurous investment projects to distinguish itself from other village companies. Before urbanisation, the company had a total collective capital holding of 63.15 million yuan and average yearly income of a few hundred yuan. After the formation of the village company, the village built eleven factories on village land in an area of over 100,000 square metres. The village now hosts twenty-three industries with 780 shops

producing a variety of products, from toys to electronics to small metal parts. In 2001, the village had total assets of 360 million yuan and an average annual dividend of 15,000 yuan per villager, a tenfold increase from ten years earlier (Futian District Office 2002). In 2011, the village company chairman of Xiasha, HYC, commented that his village company is going to undertake massive urban renewal projects in partnership with various real estate developers. There will be a kind of unified planning for the village. He is planning on reforming some of the villages own industries by incorporating green energy related production (HYC 8/1/2011). During some of my recent visit passing through the village, there are already major visible changes as construction zones start to cover large sections of the village.

Very few urban village companies in Shenzhen can match the power and wealth of the Huanggang village company. This is a well-known fact among the urban villagers who see each other as competitors for political recognition. The wealth of Huanggang village and its villagers is also well known on the main streets by local citizens. In 1984, several production brigades in the local area began to form the modern Huanggang Village. This was long before the full impacts of urbanisation were felt. The Huanggang villagers had already begun to test their new economic freedoms and entrepreneurial spirit. The villagers first started a sand-transporting business. Sand was dug up from the local river banks and transported to various construction sites during Shenzhen's building boom in the 1980s. Later on, the village founded a specialized sand factory. They also set up a rubbish collection and recycling business by importing waste from Hong Kong (ZSF 24/6/2010). For a while, they became experts in importing used tires from Hong Kong. Still, ZSF's (the old headsman of Huanggang village) main focus was attracting manufacturers to the village. In the initial stages, the Huanggang village would enter joint ventures to open many factories in the village. Around 1984, the number of factories grew significantly to total more than thirty. There was an average annual growth of 25 percent for village-related companies between 1984 and 1992.

In 1992, following a government order, Huanggang Village founded its first village joint-stock company, Shenzhen Huanggang Real Estate Holding Ltd., with a registered fund of two hundred million yuan, not a small figure for a village in the early 1990s. Most of the leadership personnel within the company are original villagers. Out of 340 employees, 44.1 percent are original villagers, roughly 10 percent of the original 1,700-villager population. Most villagers, who were in the village in 1992 and participated in the founding of the company, have shares in the company. The number of shares for each villager was dependent on the amount of money the villagers originally invested in the company. Currently in 2011, by conservative estimates, the company is worth more than six billion yuan, a thirtyfold increase from the date of its foundation. The company owns two three-star hotels, a variety of properties, ranging from office buildings to restaurants, and property for rent, including apartments, factories, and shops. In June 2009, the company finished construction on its first skyscraper, the Huanggang Shangwu Zhongxin, a 62-floor office building with a height of 268 meters in Shenzhen's CBD (Shenzhen Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company Ltd. 2010). The centre was designed to be leased out to companies looking for office space in Shenzhen's CBD. Huanggang's move into commercial real estate was extremely well-timed. Since 2008, the Chinese government, at both the central and local levels, has begun to apply forceful policy measures against high residential real-estate prices. However, commercial real estate is exempt from these measures. During the 1990s, Huanggang had participated in several profitable adventures with residential real-estate developers. In fact, some of the biggest apartment buildings surrounding the village were all built during this period. Although rent from commercial properties continues to be one of the main pillars of Huanggang's financial wealth, the village company has been increasingly moving into service industries. The measure of their success is that the yearly dividend for the Huanggang villager shareholders has raised from a mere few thousand yuan to 30,000 yuan in 2010, tripling the lifesavings of an average villager in the early 1990s.

Photo 26: Inside the office of the Chairperson of Shenzhen Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company
Photo by author 2010

Photo 27: Huanggang Shangwuzhongxin completed in 2011. Photo provided by Shenzhen Huanggang Real
Estate Holding Company 2012

Photo 28: Handout of New Year rice for original villagers and shareholders hosted by the Shenzhen Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company. The young men in uniforms helping out are Huanggang Village's security team. Courtesy of Shenzhen Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company 2009

Photo 29: Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company headquarters. It is a multi-functional building that acts as both a hotel and an office building. Courtesy of the Huanggang Real Estate Holding Company 2010

Possible Short Comings of Urban Village Company

The urban village company just like the TVEs of rural China also have many flaws. In fact, as corporations operating under market economic principles, there are definitely gains and losses for the urban village companies. Rarely has any urban village company bankrupted, however, the performance of the village companies vary greatly.

One of the main potential short comings of the urban village company is its personal structures. There are questions and disputes over fairness and transparency in the shareholder election processes. The election can be controlled and manipulated by a powerful lineage in the village. In most of Shenzhen's urban villages, the post of village chief has always been dominated by the most populous and powerful lineage. This is why even though the villages have different geographical or historical names, they have always been known by a surname lineage, such as the Wen's of Gangxia, the Huangs of Xiasha, or the Zhuangs of Huanggang. Village headsmen have held onto the post for decades, often because they are from the dominant surname lineage. The lineage system (*zongzu*) has always been the most powerful self-government system at the village level in Chinese history. The wars and revolutions in modern Chinese history have wrought great damage to the networks of village-level lineages across China. An expert on Chinese lineages, Xiao Tangbiao (2010), contends that the early period of the People's Republic (1949-1978) was the most damaging period to the lineage system throughout Chinese history. However, along with the economic reform, there was the resurrection and re-emergence of lineage culture and networks. One should note here that present village-company election politics is an extension of old lineage politics that has been going on since the founding of the villages. In her study of Guangzhou's Shuping Village, Hsing observed there are indeed systems of dominating a village's key administrative post by the three most populous surnames since the 1960s. Hsing interpreted this kind of arrangement as having the potential benefit of legitimizing the village leadership and avoiding potential political conflicts (Hsing 2010, pp. 142-143). The powerful lineages and their potential for manipulating elections bring the fairness of the urban village company elections into question. In addition, this kind of election also has to potential of

creating village strongmen who in the style of the old cadre culture can dictate the economic affairs of the village companies for a long period. Certainly, if the village strongman is effective and visionary it can lead to the advancement of the village companies. However, there is plenty room for strategic error even corruption for personal gain at the expense of the village company. In my research of the village company, there are plenty phenomenon similar to the above mentioned. However, for issue of sensitivities and anonymity, I will not name people or village companies while discussing issues on the mistakes and problems of the companies.

Chapter Conclusion

The urban village companies are important because their varied degree of success suggests that the urban villages can effectively govern themselves and continue to do so in the future. Essentially, since the disbanding of the village as a rural administration unit, the urban village company acted at first as a form of transition structure and later full blown parallel administrative structure in the village wielding tremendous influence over the original villager population and the collective economic operations that the village used to run. The surprising thing after 1992 is that most of these villages could perform very well financially earning handsome dividends for the original villagers who in this new era are identified by their shareholder status in the village company. Hence these urban village companies are the economic manifestation of the old village collective identity and community after urbanisation and the absorbance by the city governments. The villages transformed into companies, the villagers into shareholders, the cadres into managers, and the old village headsmen into chairmen. There are no more seeds, farm tools, and new lands for internal distribution but companies' shares. Although no longer carrying any direct political significance, there are still elections held every few years for the villagers within the companies, a rarity for any community in urban China considering its indirect political and administrative effects. This is partially due to the overwhelming influence that the urban villagers have retained as a collective through their companies. As Wang Ruyuan has noted in the early transitional stages of the urban village company,

there is no question who is really "running the show" in the urban village areas. The urban village in theory is a sub-district level self-governing organ, a shadow government in the modern Chinese city.

Chapter Seven

Urban Renewal and The Rise of Shenzhen's Real Estate Developers

The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire. We need to be sure we can live with our own creations. But the right to remake ourselves by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights.

David Harvey, 'The Right to the City' (2003)

The rebuilding technique variously known as "selective removal" or "spot renewal" or "renewal planning" or "planned conservation" –meaning that total clearance of a run-down area is avoided –is largely the trick of seeing how many old buildings can be left standing and the area still converted into a passable version of Radiant Garden City.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American City* (2011, p.32)

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the ultimate fashionable buzzword of urban China is *chaiqian*, the physical representation of urban renewal in China, often known for its forceful actions and social grievances. *Chai* means to demolish, and *qian* means to move or relocate something. Together, *chaiqian* is used both as a noun and sometimes a verb in Chinese. Those 'evicted households whose homes are demolished' are called *chaiqianhu*. The term has appeared frequently in the Chinese media since the early 2000s as one of the most controversial social key words in China. Between 2000 and 2012, there were more than 8,342 newspaper articles with *chaiqian* in their title in the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database. In 2012 alone, there were 432 articles. *Chaiqian* is a powerful and controversial symbol because its potentially violent nature between the parties involved in the process: the *chaiqianhu* people were are forced to relocate for

demolition and the forces that stands for potential gains from the process. The Beijing Olympics of 2008, the Shanghai World Expo 2010, or the Universaide of Shenzhen 2011, were all built on *chaiqian* land under various slogans of urban renewal (Hsing 2010, pp. 59-91). In a way, these are projects of high modernist visions, constructing grandiose urban projects to demonstrate the will of the planners with little regard to residents who once lived in those *chaiqian* grounds.

Shenzhen's urban renewal placed particular emphasis on the urban villages. According to the latest Shenzhen city government proclamation, 'Methods on Urban Renewal in Shenzhen City' (*Shenzhenshi Chengshi Gengxin Banfa*) (Shenzhen Municipal Government 2009), the entire city will need to conduct urban renewal over an area of two hundred square kilometres, the equivalent of one tenth of Shenzhen's total area. The urban villages will be one of the top priorities for renewal consideration.

Photo 30: On the wall, *chai* (to be demolished) indicating the building's eventual fate. In the background, rubble may be seen, piled up along the street. Photo by author in the Gangxia village's *chaiqian* zone 2009

This chapter provides a general overview of the urban renewal processes in Shenzhen. It will analyse the strategies and perspectives of the urban villagers and real-estate developers during the urban renewal process and its *chaiqian* phases. Through interviews

and other secondary sources, I present insights into the urban renewal process from the angle of the real estate developers, whose operations in the urban villages are rarely studied. The real estate developers have essentially become the vanguards of the urban renewal process with the local governments' political backing. On the *chaiqian* ground of the urban villages, fierce struggles are being waged between urban villagers and the real estate developers both as partners and as competitors. And it is from these *chaiqian* grounds of urban renewal projects that the long unfulfilled dreams of high modernism are reignited. The urban renewal project and its often brutally efficient *chaiqian* process are a physical manifestation of the "cleaning of the state" movement in high modernist urban vision. Only with the shabby and crowded urban villages demolished, can new, grandiose high value space be created on the grounds of these former urban villages. Local government has provided the will; the real estate developers have provided the funds. It is through their combined efforts that the high modernist transformation visions have been brought to the urban village, under the state's ideological umbrella of a market economy and value creation.

The General Structure of Urban Renewal

The urban renewal process in China is a rather complicated and opaque process that involves the forces of many vested interests. In the pre-economic reform era, urban renewal was the sole jurisdiction of the state, more precisely, the urban authority of the city government. In current-day China, the urban renewal process can be state or privately-driven. The modern form of urban renewal has a rather short history in the PRC, as many of the cities were rebuilt after WWII and the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949). Material and financial shortages also made urban renewal a non-essential task in the early years of the PRC. Only after major political policy changes, resulting in two decades of economic boom from the early 1980s, did the urban renewal process begin to occur on a massive scale in (Hsing 2010, pp. 65-66).

In China, urban renewal generally falls under the Chinese terminology of restructuring of old urban sectors (*jiucheng gaizao*). The term refers mainly to existing neighbourhoods with out-dated construction standards and zoning rules. Almost every major Chinese city has a district-level office specifically devoted to the Chinese version of urban renewal. They are called *jiugaiban*, an abbreviation for 'old city restructure office'. Shenzhen's urban renewal happened frequently in the urban villages that involve the local government, local villagers, and, more recently, real-estate developers. The city government is the regulator and administrator of zoning and urban planning around the city. It is the ultimate decider for on where and when buildings need to be renewed in the city where land is mostly owned by the state, except those urban village's own collective holdings. After the urban villagers' informal building construction booms of the 1980s and 1990s, the urban villagers built large numbers of substandard buildings, with confusing zoning, in Shenzhen City. Many of the self-constructed informal buildings were deemed dangerous and overcrowded. With their high modernist aspirations and obsession with city image, the Shenzhen city government, as local government did elsewhere in China, tried to reduce or outright eradicate the urban villages using urban renewal. Symbolically, this is the conquest by the city, of the once rural village. However, the actual urban renewal procedures surrounding the urban village are very complex. In principle, city governments everywhere in China are supposed to be the sole owners of all urban land. However, when those cities expand into rural communities, or are created from scratch on largely rural land (as with Shenzhen), there are inevitable administrating and legal conflicts that prevent the city governments arbitrarily demolishing buildings on urban village lands that are collectively owned by the urban villagers, according to the Chinese Land Administration Law Article 8. In order to carry out urban renewal in urban village areas, the government must first persuade the villagers to sell their land back to the urban domain, preferably at cheap prices. Once that transaction is complete, the former collective village land becomes state owned land. As presented in early chapters, the city government has often succeeded in buying land cheaply from the villagers. The villagers have now have learned from their early mistakes and resist further selling by coercion. Thus far, due to legal and budget constraints, city governments have not yet succeeded in their desire to acquire all remaining villages.

Since the 1990s, there has been a rise in the number of domestic real estate developers, large and small, private and state owned, who are keen to buy up land from the government for development projects. The city government of Shenzhen, as with other local governments, have gained a great deal of revenue from land sales at seemingly ever skyrocketing prices. However, soon Shenzhen started to run out of state own lands. In fact, the situation became so serious that the local city government developed China's first land management bureau (*tudi zhengbei ju*) to oversee the few remaining, valuable undeveloped lands comprising 58 square kilometres, just 2.9 per cent of the original 2000 square kilometre (Hu 2012). New land resources must be exploited to fulfil the desire of further developments of Shenzhen's greatly expanded real estate sector. Subsequently, the urban villages' collective holding of land has become very attractive to all types of real estate developers, who see the collective land holdings of the urban villages as a kind of lifeline and opportunity for their larger-scale projects. Developers, big and small, wanted to get into the "urban village renewal game." They are able to negotiate with the village company directly, for collective land holdings that are often cheaper than the openly auctioned and listed prices of state owned land. In addition, some of the prime locations of land held by the urban village companies are in the centre of cities, in the CBD area, and offer great profit potential.

The city government has encouraged real estate developers to engage in the urban renewal scene largely because they bring ready investment funds to be injected into urban renewal. Hence, the urban renewal in Shenzhen and in other Chinese city has quickly become privatized and commercialized by real estate developers. Symbolically, the real estate developers have become the shock troops of the city government to acquire the urban villages, the strategy being that their money will lure the villagers into selling their legally guaranteed collective land holdings. According to the Land Administration Law of PRC, Article two; rural collective holding of land can be sold to a third party only for other non-agricultural purposes, with the approval of the Chinese state council. Once those lands are sold to the real estate developers and reconstructed as real estate

residential property, they enter the urban domain. It becomes a win-win situation for both the local government and the real estate developers, who improve the city image and increase the overall property values surrounding the urban villages. In addition, the real estate developers also generate substantial amounts of tax revenue for the local government, through new property sales.

The urban villagers view all these developments with both caution and opportunity. On one hand, the urban renewal offers represent a great change to their lifestyle and income. For years, the urban villagers relied on the rent generated by their informal, self-built housing. With the urban renewal projects, the real estate developers can clean the slate by removing the former urban village housing and develop high value residential property for sale. However, the real estate developers often bring with them a one-time large sum to pay off the villagers to leave their land and buildings, which present an once-in-a-lifetime financial opportunity for them. For example, on 1 February 2010, Hong Kong's *Tsingdao Daily* ran the sensational story of 'Shenzhen's Urban Villages Creating Communities of Barons' (*Shenzhen Chengzhongcun Zaojiu Fuwongqun*). According to the article, out of the total investment of twenty billion yuan by the mega state-owned China Resource Group[10] in their Dachong Village urban renewal project, villagers were paid six billion yuan for compensation (Shu 2010). Such high compensation packages were not always produced through softly spoken or civilized negotiations. There were occasionally strategies that led to outbreaks of outright violence, involving both villagers and the developers, each angling to achieve maximum financial return. Although very fierce, these processes are not exactly zero-sum in nature, because both parties eventually have to settle on a deal, in order to get paid. The villagers, understandably, are after the highest compensation package possible.

The Urban Renewal Process in the Urban Villages

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[10] China Resource Group is a multi-region developer and retailer that run some of Shenzhen and Hong Kong's prominent shopping malls, department stores, and supermarkets.

Shenzhen's urban villages are some of the first examples in China where urban renewal has been applied on a large scale, due mainly to the rapid expansion of the local real-estate sector. In many other parts of China, the developers, with government backing, have in some cases forced the residents to accept their negotiated terms, and to move from their existing homes. However, this is not always the case. In Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta Region, the highly organised villagers have been able to hold their ground. Most recently, there was the publicised example of Wukan village in Guangdong province's northeast, where the rural villagers successfully resisted under-the-table land grab deals between the local government and real estate developers (Jacobs 2011). The scenario in Wukan was typical of the strategies of rural collective resistance over land issue in Pearl River Delta region[11]. On the other hand, collective actions over urban renewal are rare in Shenzhen, where the real estate developers have tried their best to compromise during negotiations with the urban village collectives. In most cases, the real estate developers have been successful in signing a comprehensive development agreement with the village companies. The importance of the urban village company is such that real estate developers can no longer bully their way into urban renewal projects in the villages.

However, even after the process of successful negotiation by village companies with the real estate developers, there are usually still individual villagers who want to dig in and pursue further compensation packages. Their individualistic resistance is much more visible and vociferous. Individual villagers of Shenzhen often employ their own style of passive resistance in dealing with powerful real-estate developers with high rate of success. The individual urban villagers' resistance is usually not motivated by grandiose social or political ideologies, but simply to win the best possible financial result for themselves. This paints a rather complex picture of the urban renewal *chaiqian* scene, in that there are no simple victims, bullies, or exploiters. Both the urban villagers and the developers are engaged in a game and each manipulates to achieve maximum financial return.

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[11] Technically, Wukan is not in Pearl River Delta but in the adjacent Chaoshan Region within the same province.

In the urban renewal *chaiqian* process, the residents who refuse to enter a deal and drag-out negotiations are commonly called *dingzihu* ('nail households'), now a well-known term in China. On the subject of *dingzihu*, Hsing Youtien once described the Chinese mainstream perception of them as 'uncooperative and opportunistic negotiators for higher compensation and are accused of sacrificing the public interest for personal gain, and even causing housing price hikes' (Hsing 2010, p.78). The *dingzihu* nail households are a recent phenomenon in modern urban China. In Shenzhen, the *dingzihu* have taken passive individualistic resistance to a new level, partially due to their urban-villager identity. When they have been successful in their individual or collective resistance, they have been able to extract more compensation than their fellow-residents and villagers.

In this sometimes-vicious game between the villagers and developers, the village building owners resort to the strategy of *qiangjian*, a phenomenon with high frequency in Shenzhen's urban village. '*Qiangjian*' basically means to rush through construction. In Shenzhen, when villagers use the *qiangjian* strategy it usually means building on top of existing buildings, done with the express purpose of inducing developers to pay higher compensation. Alternatively, they 'rush' previously non-existing buildings into existence, to cheat compensation. *Qiangjian* has been a headache for many developers and it is not exactly legal. It is technically a kind of *weijian* (illegal construction). It is also clearly at odds with the interests of local government. In late 2009, the *Southern Metropolis Daily* wrote a revealing article about a certain 'most stubborn illegal building' in Longgang District Shenzhen (Cheng 2009). The news story placed special focus on the *qiangjian* aspect of the urban-village renewal process and described the *qiangjian* scene in Puxia Village in the following way:

> This is the most stubborn village house. The party secretary and the mayor of the city had issued many warnings, and the enforcement team had made many visits. However, every time after the inspections, they [the villagers] will [would] resume their building process. In a few days, in broad daylight they will build openly and at full speed. (Cheng 2009)

Aside from violating the planning of the city government, the action of *qiangjian* also raises serious safety concerns. The mostly small migrant construction teams are not comprised of professional builders. They often lack proper protection and safety equipment. During one of my visits to a village undergoing the *qiangjian* process, it was common to witness makeshift elevators made of rope and wood to carry building materials up and down the buildings. Migrant construction workers, who sometimes did not bother wearing safety helmets, or erect safety nets, operated the elevators. It seemed that they were using the same method of construction as they had back in their home villages, for two-storey farmhouses. Many, if not most, *qiangjian* buildings do not meet safety and construction standards, and show frequent cracks and water leaks. There are no fixed working hours, either. Construction may proceed day and night. Residents of buildings under *qiangjian* often complain about the noise and poor safety standards. Still, some *qiangjian* processes by the villagers succeed in forcing the real-estate developers to compromise, and pay higher sums of compensation.

Photo 31: Qiangjian in process. Note the new living spaces being added to the existing building, all being done with the minimum safety net. Photo by author 2009

When government and real estate developers react harshly to the villagers' *qiangjian* or other strategies, some desperate villagers would physically obstruct the *chaiqian* process by attacking the demolition teams and sabotaging their equipment. In a recent case in Longgang District of Shenzhen, the urban-villager residents surrounded and obstructed the government-sanctioned demolition team for more than six months. The *Southern Metropolis Daily* reported that the villagers used something akin to human shield strategies by stationing themselves day and night on top of dangerously unstable buildings to prevent the demolition process (Cheng 2009). A case in Puxia also gained widespread media attention and was purposely portrayed in a negative light.

The real estate developers, often with local government backing, were not without power in these disputes and were far from helpless or at the mercy of the urban villagers. Harsh measures taken against the nail households - *dingzihu* - were commonly referred to as the campaign of 'pulling out the nails' (*bading*) or 'crushing the nails' (*zading*) (Hsing 2010, p. 79). *Qiangjian* or rushing-through construction for compensation is one of the areas that often elicit a strong official response. Reacting to scenarios of *qiangjian*, the city government and the district government often uses the *Chengguan*, the City Administrative Unit, which has now achieved 'urban legend' status in China for its ruthlessness and use of force (Ramzy 2009, p. 20). The *chengguan* units are the enforcer of government in urban renewal disputes. When the government wants a certain *qiangjian* building torn down, the *Chengguan* are called in. They also protect demolition zones and prevent the urban villagers from protesting, or returning to their former homes.

The real-estate developers also have developed their own strategy for dealing with uncooperative residents. One of the notable strategies is to 'build around' the remaining nail households. The real estate developers can initiate area-wide demolition process while leaving the nail households isolated and stranded within the construction zones, with frequent disruption of water and power supply. The strategy is designed to weaken the resolve of the nail households by reducing their neighbourhood to one large demolition zones. Without using any form of violence, this strategy of 'building around',

or 'demolition-zone encirclement', makes life for the remaining nail households a living hell and puts great psychological pressure on the remaining nail households. Hence, there is a perilous game of brinksmanship between the nail households and the real-estate developers, with each placing a variety of pressures to achieve their goals.

The Rise of Shenzhen's Real Estate Developers and Their Impacts on the Villages

The real-estate companies are now the vanguard of the city in urban renewal. Armed with capital and the profit motives, they are the most aggressive in Shenzhen. However, relations between the urban villagers and real estate developers are never a zero sum kind of game. There are indeed much room for partnership. The Kingkey Group is a private real-estate company founded by Chen Hua, now a self-made billionaire and one time migrant construction worker in the urban villages. The rise of Chen Hua captures perfectly the partnering yet competing relationship between the urban villages and real estate developers. Chen owed his success to the urban village and urban renewals. Chen was born in 1966 in the small village of Ha Lin of Zhanjiang County in the far west of Guangdong province, traditionally one of the poorest areas in the region. He came to Shenzhen in 1985 at the age of nineteen with only ten yuan, borrowed from his sister. Chen was one of the city's first generation of migrant labours. He never worked in the factory assembly lines, probably because he lacked basic education and work-related training. Like many unskilled migrant labourers, he sought a job in the migrant-dominated small construction teams working small jobs in urban villages. Step by step, he worked his way up and founded his own real-estate company in December 1994. While speaking to reporters in 2010, Chen commented that his original strategy of expansion was according to the old red-army strategy of Chairman Mao 'to use the villages to surround the city' (Zhao 2010). In this case, the villages are urban villages.

Chen's many early projects all involved urban renewal in the urban villages. *Bi Li Hua Yuan* in Meilin village and *Yu Jin Hua Cheng* are just two of his better-known projects.

Chen's involvement in Meilin village and many other urban villages helped him accumulate capital for larger and later projects (Interview with Chen Hua 12/2010). *Zhongtouguwen*, an online business investment journal, once commented that Chen Hua and his company were experts in urban renewal projects because of Chen's unique ability to be the middleman in negotiations between local government and the urban villagers. He was able to negotiate on all fronts with both the villagers and the city government to reach agreements. Chen also had the creative strategy of compensating the villagers with building space of a one-to-one ratio, square metre for square metre, one of the first to do this in Shenzhen. In exchange, Chen's company would be given a monopoly on real estate development in the village. Chen's company met little resistance by the villagers in his early projects, due largely to Chen's established *guanxi* network in the villages. Chen commented:

> In those days, the villagers were poor. They thought of my deal as a very good one, because they did not spend a penny and got new building space. Hence, there is my first major project in Meilin Village in Shenzhen's north. This was the Jin Mei Hua Yuan [golden plum flower garden]. When the project was finished, building floor space was given to the village collective who would in turn distribute it among the villagers. (Chen Hua 6/12/2010)

Chen's company is a phenomenon builder of high density apartments, which in return generates fast returns that counterbalance the cost of settlement with the original villagers. Chen's *Bi Li Hua Yuan* apartment complex consisted of 80,000 square metres and is one of the first mega-urban renewal projects in Meilin Village in the northern part of Shenzhen. Developed between 1995 and 1997, it was well known locally for its distinctive 'other-worldly' European styled architecture, and won several awards for its quality and environmental designs. Chen has been an active promoter and marketer of his buildings. In 2002, he even issued an invitation to the former US president, Bill Clinton, to visit one of his projects, *Bi Hai Yun Tian* in Shenzhen (Zhao 2010).

Photo 32: Chen Hua's company headquarters during my visit. Photo by author 2010

In 2004, Chen began to embark on his most ambitious project, an urban renewal project involving Caiwuwei Village. Chen's eventual plan was to build the tallest building in Shenzhen in this strategically-located urban village at the heart of Shenzhen CBD. Chen's Caiwuwei Financial Centre project was completed seven years later in 2011, and renamed Kingkey 100, the tallest residential building in the Pearl River Delta. Kingkey 100 is 439 metres high, has one hundred floors and 450,000 square metres of floor space. Despite the extraordinary tasks involved in its construction, Chen encountered his greatest challenges in dealing with the *chaiqian* process. There were quite a number of *dingzihu* nail households who refused to negotiate the demolition and relocation of their homes. The struggle to remove the *Dingzihu* delayed Chen's project almost three years. Eventually, Chen agreed to the demands of the *Dingzihu*. One of the last remaining nail households, a certain Cai couple from Caiwuwei Village, received a payout of more than ten million yuan (US$1.63 million), certainly one of the highest property payments in Shenzhen and China (Zhang 2009). The irony was that the urban villagers who made Chen the tycoon he became were the very people who almost bankrupted him.

I had the honour of interviewing Chen Hua for this research. He is surprisingly, a very modest man, and he spoke frankly about his peasant background and his involvement in Shenzhen's urban villages. He holds no grudge toward the *dingzihus,* preferring to explain their behaviour as rational, one based on personal financial gain. He had great respects for the urban villagers of Shenzhen. He gave this startling comparison between his home village and the urban villagers of Shenzhen:

> First, they [the urban villagers] are much richer than the farmers of my home village. Second, their way of thinking or mindset is much more ahead of the villagers of my home village. My home village had no collective *guannian* (views or way of thinking). The villagers are not united and the villages' development is not planned. Every family went about their own way to make money. Here in Shenzhen, it is different. They (the urban villagers) act collectively. Since 1992, the urban villagers are no longer farmers. Their ideas and concepts were all changed. There is also a gradual change in their concept of land. In the old days, land was to be guarded for generations. [Now] They think first about improving their living environment, lifestyle and children's education (Chen Hua 6/12/2010)

Despite all his achievements, Chen has a somewhat pessimistic outlook on the urban renewal in the urban villages. He believes it will be increasingly difficult carry out such projects and the profit margins are increasingly shrinking. Tough *Dingzihu* nail households will be the norm in future urban renewal projects all over China.

The Actual *Chaiqian* Ground and the Nails

Speaking not-totally-metaphorically, the *chaiqian* ground is a war-zone. In a matter of months, villager's self-built, informal buildings are torn down and turned into rubble. Sometimes, the war of *chaiqian* goes on for years, reducing large section of a city into urban war zones, a kind of deserted ghostly slum, with not a soul living there. The largest *chaiqian* ground in Shenzhen is without doubt the Gangxia Village. Since 2009, I have

made repeated visits back to this same village. It is an extraordinary example of urban renewal in Shenzhen, which has experienced almost all the dramas, extremes, and struggles that an urban renewal project could have. Located just slightly east of Shenzhen's central CBD in Futian District, there is Gangxia Village—or what is left of it. When I first visited Gangxia in 2009, the village just had its initial *chaiqian* process which technically started in late September 2008. By the time I visited the *chaiqian* site in January 2009, the dust had already settled. Just five minutes' walk from Futian Sheraton Hotel, Gangxia Village appeared on the horizon. Fu Hua Road cuts Gangxia Village into a big northern section and smaller southern section. From a distance, as one walks into the village, one is greeted by a large billboard that pictures doves soaring through a blue sky. On the billboard, the large slogan in red reads: 'New *Gangxia*, a model of civilized urban renewal.' The billboard had an eerily Potemkin Village feel to it. Just like the original Potemkin village, the billboard around Gangxia Village is also a kind of illusionary façade for high modernist Shenzhen.

Photo 33: A slogan at one of the main street entrances to Gangxia's *chaiqian* grounds. Photo by author 2009

Walking a little further past the billboard into the village itself, the reason for the billboard became apparent. Holes of various sizes from machine drilling or sledge hammers covered the external walls of many buildings. All windows were gone. Some buildings were literally cut in half, yet amazingly left standing with the internal structures exposed. Contrary to the message of harmony on the big billboard outside, the ruin of Gangxia is covered with the Chinese character '*chai*' (to demolish), indicated either by a

big red grammatical character with a circle around it or by white-paper posters. A little further inside the village, there is a landscape of seemingly endless rubble. Some buildings remained, and there was also a scattering of shops around the entrance. During my visit, many Uyghur migrants lived inside the village's *chaiqian* zone. They were transporting dry goods, such as walnuts and raisins, on the back of their tricycles in and out of the village. They seemed to have settled into this demolition zone and made it their trade distribution centre for migrant hawkers mostly from Xinjiang. A little deeper into the village, there was a vast flat area of building rubble. Despite the ruined landscape, there is a clearly marked road. It takes about fifteen minutes to walk from one end of the village to the other. At the other end, there is the *chaiqian* office in charge of demolition.

Photo 34: The *chaiqian* ground of Gangxia. A *dingzihu* building is still functioning amidst the demolition zone. Photo by author 2009

Photo 35: *Chaiqian* zone at Gangxia, a contrast between the demolished and the new buildings, between the remaining grassroots and the high modernist. Photo by author 2009

Essentially, only the western half of the village is under the *chaiqian* process; the eastern half of the village remained untouched during my trips in 2009. There is a functional new subway station right next to the main gate of Gangxia Village, with a road leading to various communal buildings for the villagers and, of course, rental apartments for migrants. Life remained seemingly normal here, despite the war-zone-like destruction on the western side. In mid-2009, I visited the eastern side of village for the purpose of witnessing first-hand the special phenomenon of *qiangjian*, rushed-through construction. As already mentioned, this is one of the popular strategies by villagers to claim more compensation from real-estate developers. It appeared that the eastern part of Gangxia might also undergo the urban renewal process in the near future. Hence, many opportunistic villagers were building new floors on existing buildings, hoping to enlarge their compensation claim. I witnessed first-hand this *qiangjian* process.

Photo 36: A building undergoing the *qiangjian* process in Gangxia Village. The newly added sections were the product of *qiangjian,* by original villagers. Photo by author 2009

In November 2010, I returned again to Gangxia Village, surveying both the ruins and the remaining sectors. I was surprised at how little had changed. The *chaiqian* zone basically remained the same as it did one year previously. This is not normal, considering Shenzhen's rapid construction pace. In fact, I expected the removal of old buildings and the emergence of new ones. However, the reality is that the *chaiqian* process had stalled. Those stand-alone buildings from early 2009 were functioning normally in a sea of rubble. They are the remaining 'nail' households. One on year since I visited the village, the relevant parties of Gangxia, the developers and the urban villagers, seemed to have very little patience left in their prolonged struggle. On 24 November 2010, the *Southern Metropolis Daily* ran a long investigative report on the *chaiqian* process in Gangxia, naming '*gangxia te ding*' (Gangxia super nails) (Ye 2010). In the article, there was the story of Wen Tianyin, a female 'nail' resident of Gangxia (Ye 2010). On 16 November 2010, she rushed outside her building with a machete to confront the demolition team because of an area-wide power and water outage. Wen is one of the *taogang* people who

fled to Hong Kong for economic reasons in the 1970s. She returned to Gangxia village in 1993 when she was 32. With one million yuan she had earned in Hong Kong over fourteen years, she built a ten-floor red-coloured building within two months. In the meanwhile, she continued to work in Hong Kong while her apartments generated rental income. In 2006, the Futian District Government, the Gangxia village company, and the Gemsdale Group began negotiations for the urban renewal of Gangxia. Wen quit her job in Hong Kong and returned to Gangxia to defend her building. Wen claimed that she 'no longer feels fear after all the surrounding buildings fell' (Ye 2010). Every morning she goes to work on the first floor of her building's managerial office. The demolition process around her, and her insistence of holding out, has certainly had a financial impact on her. One of her fellow *dingzihu* neighbours had his apartment suites' leasing price reduced from 1,000 yuan to 300 yuan, and the single room rate from 600 yuan to 150 yuan, by far the cheapest rate in Shenzhen. Wen's story is just one of the many ongoing "nails" stories in the *chaiqian* zones, waiting for their compensation package. Their resistance is highly individualistic and not necessarily representative of the urban village as a collective.

There are several rates and standards of compensation for residents of Gangxia Village. The first standard is based on size. For all buildings smaller than 480 square meters, the owners of the buildings have been compensated on a scale of one-to-one for new residential spaces in future buildings. For buildings larger than 480 square meters, the compensation in building spaces is at a scale of 1:0.88 for spaces in new buildings. The second way of compensating the original inhabitant is based on floor height. In general, any commercial property on the ground floor is compensated at a scale of 1:0.9, and any floor beyond the first is also compensated at 1:0.9 for future residential space. The inhabitants had the option of receiving their compensation in property, money, or a combination of both. In terms of money, the villagers were to be compensated at a rate of 12,800 yuan extra per square metre for their existing housing prices. According to the above article, Wen Tianyin and three other 'nails' were each expected to receive more than ten million Yuan compensation, based on the existing offer (Ye 2009).

Urban Renewal Stalemate: Gemsdale Group and Gangxia Village

On the opposing side to the 'nails' of Gangxia, there is the Gemsdale Group, the second-largest real-estate developer in Shenzhen. It was originally founded by the Futian District Government. In 1995, it became a joint-stock company with the employees. Before that, it was a fully state-owned enterprise. The company went through its IPO (initial public offering) process in 2001, and has since become a publicly traded company on the Chinese Stock Exchange. A majority of the shares of the company were divided among company employees and the general public. With personal shares in the company, the employees—especially those in the management circle—are very motivated. Since then it has developed into a national brand, with major projects in Beijing and Shanghai. Its headquarters are still located at a cross-section bordering two major urban villages. Most of Gemsdale's early projects involved urban villages. In 2010, I had the opportunity of interviewing Ling Ke, the chairperson of Gemsdale Group. This large state-owned real-estate company obviously has its own perspective of the *chaiqian* process and the behaviour of the 'nails.'

Lin Ke was born in 1959 in Wuhan City. He came to Shenzhen in 1988 after a college education in Wuhan. Hence he is one of those highly educated urban migrants who came to Shenzhen and straight to his assigned office. He first worked in *Te Fa*, an abbreviation of *Te Qu Fa Zhan Gong Si* ('Special Economic Zone Development Company'), a large state-owned company in Shenzhen, essentially an economic arm of the city government. Lin was a colleague of Wang Shi[12] at *Te Fa* Company. Both of them were in the export and import branch. Lin then was transferred from *Te Fa* to the Futian District Government and placed in charge of a state-owned export company. After two years, he was transferred to the Gemsdale Group, which was a state-owned real-estate company, originally founded in 1988 (Lin Ke 12/12/2010).

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[12] Founder and former chairman of Vanke Group, the largest real estate company in China with origin and headquarter in Shenzhen.

Gemsdale's relations with the urban villages have been rather troubled. Partly, Gemsdale inherited many of the legacies of its state owned past with some of the earliest land resources for the company given to it by the Futian District Government. These are lands that were bought at very cheap prices from the villagers. From very early on, the company did not have much face-to-face contact with the villagers. Its government backing meant it did not feel the need to deal directly with the villagers in many early projects. The district government often negotiated on Gemsdale's behalf. With strong state backing, they were careless in public relations and networking with the urban villages. Gemsdale turned many of the village former rental factory lands into residential real estate projects, a first in Shenzhen. One of Gemsdale's first projects was located in Shazui Village just across the road from its current head office. Then it expanded its operation to Shawei and Xinzhou Villages, all in very close proximity to its company headquarters, within a five minutes driving radius.

At present, Gemsdale's urban renewal projects have earned them a very mixed reputation. Gemsdale's first urban renewal project was in Yunong Village, close to the old Hong Kong–Shenzhen border terminal in Luohu districts. This was a monumental undertaking for Gemsdale. It was largely a smooth and successful project that lasted from 2004 to 2008. The major test of Gemsdale's ambition was its urban renewal project in Gangxia village in 2006, which was not finished as late as 2012 (Lin Ke 12/12/2010). There are numerous *dingzihu* nail households in the Gangxia *chaiqian* zone with their standalone buildings. That urban renewal project is not undertaken by Gemsdale alone, although Gemsdale has the vast majority of the *chaiqian* area under its responsibility. There are two other private real-estate companies[13] involved in the *chaiqian* process. Currently, Gemsdale is in charge of roughly half of Gangxia village's urban renewal area—about 1.56 square kilometres. In 2006, Gemsdale signed the first round of agreements with the village company. In late 2008, there was another round of formal agreements signed with the village. At the time, 90 percent of demolition was completed, but several *dingzihu* remained in the area. Lin admitted that the *chaiqian* process in Gangxia had been extremely difficult. Originally, the compensation scheme for Gangxia villagers was

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[13] The two other companies are Dabaihui and Galaxy Group.

strictly cash, about 12,800 yuan per square meter. Now the compensation options include cash, real property, or a mix of both. Lin commented that the urban renewal phase should have been finished by 2010 (Lin Ke 12/12/2010). The project has run on two years beyond initial planning, largely due to the individual villagers' resistance. Gemsdale's experience in Gangxia shows that no matter how big the real estate developers, how strong their government backing, they can still run into major obstacles in urban renewal projects involving urban villages.

Chapter Conclusion

Buildings are like crops for the state and the real estate developers. High density vertical growth will guarantee higher yields of financial return, which translate into revenue and higher GDP numbers that earns prestige and revenue for the local city governments. Hence there is the very addictive cycle with the local governments selling land to real estate developers, who in turn develop the land into high value property, and then sell to speculators, individuals, or companies or agencies. However land resources are finite and always limited within one city. Once the land resource is exhausted, the city can only grow in density and vertically through the production of space from urban renewal. Space—be it housing, commercial, or otherwise—is the ultimate commodity in China, and a pillar of the economy that is equal with—if not more important than— manufacturing, commerce, technology, and finance. David Harvey has brilliantly summarized the nature of capitalist geography globally as: 'the inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the restless formation and re-formation of geographical landscapes' (Harvey 1985, p.150). New space and new value has to be created. In New York and Boston it is the old immigrant ghettos that served as the experiment sites for the high modernist urban renewals (Jacobs 2011). In Singapore, they arose from the burnt wreckage of the kampungs along the Singapore River, where modern Singapore was born after a baptism of fire (Loh 2008). The pattern and the fundamental aims of the urban renewal never change across developed and developing worlds, or across cultures and political system. It all comes down to creating value and space, preferably out of the poor

and oppressed areas. On the surface, Shenzhen's urban villages should be easy targets for urban renewals. However, as this chapter shows, it does not always go as smoothly as some would hope. The urban villagers are experts in passive resistance, and they understand the game and play it to their advantage. Ultimately their resistance is of an individual nature. The nail households are highly individualistic units who pursue personal gain. They will follow the developers' lead, but only at the right price. They are the exceptions and a counter trend in this thesis that largely discusses the collective nature of the urban villagers. However, I would also argue that it is the aura and the identity of being a part of the village that has protected them for so long. Their success as a 'nail' is partially due to the environment of the urban villages, where there is an inherent spirit of freedom and self-government that give the villagers alternative choices to that offered to them by powerful developer interests.

Chapter Eight

Urban Villages in China: A Regional Comparison

Introduction

Urban villages do not exist only within the city limits of Shenzhen. There are now countless urban villages emerging from rapidly urbanising landscapes throughout the country. China's urban village is an emerging and constantly changing entity. Among the urban villages of China, there are many interesting similarities and differences. By examining these different, regional urban villages, one gains a better appreciation for Shenzhen's urban-village model and a better understanding of China's greater on-going urbanisation trends.

At present, just about every major Chinese city has some form of urban village within their boundaries. This is particularly true among cities that attract large populations of migrant labourers. After three decades of economic growth through expansion of the manufacturing sectors and the subsequent surge in migrant labour population, urban villages have become a wide spread phenomenon in most of the first-, second-, and even third-tier cities. From the capital of Beijing to the commercial city of Wenzhou, from the suburbs of Guangzhou in the south to the ancient quarters of Xi'an in the west, urban villages, which used to be a limited phenomenon in Shenzhen, are emerging in all major urban areas of China.

Despite the great variety in location and geography, the urban villages do exhibit characteristics similar to those that first appeared in Shenzhen. The urban villages in other major Chinese cities have provided affordable rents and are magnets for migrant tenants. There are also the characteristically chaotic and crammed buildings constructed by the original villagers. Just like in Shenzhen, urban villages elsewhere are, rightly or wrongly, also infamous for their high crime rates. In addition, they are all preferred targets of the

urban renewal process, a preferred arrangement by high modernist planners worldwide and in China. Also like Shenzhen, urban villages are perceived differently by different population groups across different social strata. For poor migrants and students, urban villages are their refuges in the city. For local citizens, the permanent-*hukou*-holding urban middle class, urban villages are ghettos where crime and lawlessness run rampant. For original villagers, urban villages are their lifetime-income guarantee and zones of autonomy in cities (Hsing 2010). For local city governments, urban villages are both a threats to city image or places that need proper urban administration. For real-estate developers, the urban villages are always potentially profitable opportunities for urban renewal projects.

Although urban villages across China are similar in demographic makeup and appearance, they often differ significantly in their administration. The sense of collective identity after the formation of an urban village is also different from place to place. There are intriguing aspects of regional characteristics among the urban villages in China. This chapter examines the regional variants of urban villages of China that have different collective mentalities, cultures, and organizational capacities. It explores their similarities to the original urban villages in Shenzhen, as well as what made/makes them different.

Guangzhou's Urban Villages: Close Cousins of Shenzhen's Urban Villages

Guangzhou's and Shenzhen's urban villages are within the same Pearl River Delta region. Reminiscent of McGee's (1991) *desakota* metropolitan zone, the great cities and countryside of the Pearl River Delta region are now connected through highways and high-speed rail networks from Guangzhou to Dongguan to Shenzhen. Urban villages almost simultaneously emerged around the manufacturing hubs of Dongguan, Zhuhai, Zhongshan and other cities along the banks of the Pearl River. The original villager populations and the urban villages of this region are culturally and linguistically linked. And yet, despite the similarities, there are still regional distinctions. Among the urban villages in the Pearl River Delta, excluding those in Shenzhen, none has reached the scale and development level of those in Guangzhou.

After the initiation of economic reform of 1978, and the expansion of Guangzhou city into nearby agrarian counties in the late-1980s, the villages bordering the city (*chengbiancun*) were incorporated into the urban landscape. New districts of financial CBDs or R&D parks were created on former urban-village land, such as the Guangzhou Economic and Technological Development Districts (GETDD), which were formed in the mid-1980s. This move to form new districts helped create many of the first urban villages around the suburb of Huangpu (Guldin 2001, p. 31). A similar transformation occurred around the current district of Tianhe, which was once a rural suburb of Guangzhou. The Tianhe area became a newly-formed urban district in the mid-1980s. Since then, Tianhe has been the site of some of the most famous urban villages of Guangzhou: Shipai, Liede, and Yangji. All of these are very large urban villages formed since the mid-1980s, when Tianhe District was turned into a new CBD area. As historical suburb villages, Guangzhou's urban villages are well incorporated within the urban framework. Guangzhou's locals know these villages and have a familial connection with them. One of the popular local news magazines, the very reform-minded *Southern Metropolis Weekly*, once called the local urban village a kind of spiritual symbol of the Guangzhou resident (Xuan *et al.* 2009). Many Guangzhou residents have strong emotional bonds with the local urban villages. The urban villagers were treated as neighbours and their villages as traditional neighbourhoods. By contrast, the villagers in Shenzhen have been treated as a kind of special minority. They are often called *tuzhu* or 'aborigines' with negative connotations by the urbanites living outside their village. This is not the case in Guangzhou, where the local citizens identified themselves partially with the original villagers who, for generations, have lived in Guangzhou's suburbs.

Photo 37: Yangji Village of Guangzhou under *chaiqian* process. Photo by author 2013

Ever since their formation, the urban villages of Guangzhou have undergone similar stages of historical development as those in Shenzhen. As seen in Liu Mengqin's (2010) research subject of Kezi Village in Guangzhou, the villages of Guangzhou are similar to those of Shenzhen in terms of lineage tradition, population, and land area. Although developed later than Shenzhen, the urban villages of Guangzhou have also gone through a similar stage of informal building boom and rushed construction since around the time of Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in 1992 which was widely seen by the local villagers as a kind of green light for them to expand their informal housing constructions (Li 2004). Many residents in Guangzhou's villages rushed their buildings to new heights and five/six-floor informal apartment buildings became the norm among the villages. One modest apartment claiming to be the lowest in *Yangchengcun*[14] is a four-floored building constructed on a 10-square-metre patch of land which had an astounding floor space of 60 square meters when finished (Li 2004, p. 24). In terms of population density, the urban villages of Guangzhou are quite high—even by Shenzhen standards. Take Shipai Village,

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[14] Li Peilin's pseudonym for an urban village in Guangzhou. It could also be a general representation of Guangzhou's villages. Yangcheng was the historical name of Guangzhou City.

for example: as of 2009, its residents included not only 10,000 original villagers but also more than 80,000 migrants (Xuan et al. 2009). According to the statistics cited by Hsing Youtian (2010, pp. 132-133), 'in Guangzhou, by 2000, the village in the city housed more than three million people and occupied 80 square kilometres, or 26.2 percent of the city's built area, with an average density of 37,000 residents per square kilometre.' Hsing's research subject village of Shuping has an astonishing population density of 174,450 people per square kilometre, twenty-five times the average of Tianhe District, an area famous for its urban villages (Hsing 2010, pp. 134-135). By contrast, the original villager population of Guangzhou's urban villages is significantly larger than some of the biggest urban villages in Shenzhen. The original villager population of Shenzhen's urban village are on average between one and two thousand people.

The urban village of Guangzhou is a comfortable place for new migrants who are chasing their 'urban China dreams'. The urban villagers of Guangzhou have a great variety of occupations. There are large numbers of venders of electronics living in the villages. There are also numerous migrant-owned restaurants that specialize in provincial cuisines from outside Guangdong Province. With cheap rent of approximately 1,000-1,500 yuan per month, the migrant restaurant owners can usually make a decent profit despite the strong competition by large numbers of similar restaurants. Most of their customers are migrants, young factory workers, or city dwellers who work close to the urban villages in Guangzhou's CBD (Niu *et al.* 2009). The urban villages of Guangzhou house not just rural-to-urban migrants, but also white-collar residents. Many single white-collar workers live in the villages for reasons of convenience. For example, the villages of Tianhe District are only blocks away from many large domestic and international companies. For these white-collar workers, the urban villages are sleepover places. Many college students have also made their home in the villages to take advantage of the cheap rent. Several urban villages are located next to the provincial universities of Guangzhou, such as Jinan University and the Guangdong Art Institute.

Much like the urban village of Dafen in Shenzhen, where migrant painters and artists congregate; Guangzhou's urban villages are also favoured by up-and-coming musicians. The chaotic and *laissez-faire* environment of the urban villages is vibrant with creative

energy. Such energy comes from the chaos of the village, and relative freedom from the prying eyes of the authorities. As long as the migrants pay the rent, they are free from the judgement of others. They are also free to roam the villages. The population and environment of the urban villages have contributed greatly to the popular music scene of Guangzhou. Many rock musicians in southern China had their beginnings in the urban villages of Guangzhou. Music Commune is a recording company that was started in the urban villages. It is in the urban village of Shipai where the now-famous rock musician, Wang Lei, found his inspiration. Wang, a native of Sichuan Province, came to Guangzhou as a migrant worker at the age of 17. Even after all his commercial success, he insists on living close to one of the villages and composes songs about his experiences in Shipai Village as a place where young migrants strive hard for their urban China dream. In his song "Shipai Village", he wrote:

> Under my floor, there is a security door factory; the business is very good and the noise is very loud. It wakes me up and the girls who love to sleep. The dog and chicken are singing, welcome to Shipai Village, where the neon lights up the night. The night plays its drama and sings its song. Singing from Shipai Village to Tianhe Village, from Tianhe Village to Yangji Village, is this village or city, city or village. The day just dawned, sleepiness on the bed, the sun is hope, the day is stressed (Hong 2009).

In his songs, Wang presents the urban villages of Guangzhou as wild and interesting places. Similarly, *Wutiaoren* ('five men'), a folk rock band, recently rose to fame from their base in the urban village. This is a group of Chaozhou migrants from northeastern Guangdong province who sing only in their native Chaozhou dialect. They are famous for their outlandish style, guitar, and beach-style music, singing about their lives in their seaside hometown (Hong 2009). In 2009, the *Wutiaoren* group released their first CD album *Xianchengji* ('story of a county town'). In 2012, they released their second CD *Yixianfengjing* ('some scenery'). Both albums won the acclaimed Golden Banyan Musical Awards from the *Southern Entertainment Weekly* (2 February 2013).

The urban villages of Guangzhou are different in terms of their financial capacity and organisational abilities. One indicator of this is the monthly dividend paid to the villagers. In the village of Shipai, it is estimated that the village pays roughly 1,000-1,500 yuan per

month to average stockholders of the company. Just a few miles away, in the village of Xiancun, the dividend paid there is only a few hundred yuan per month (Niu *et al.* 2009). Shipai is one of the more successful urban villages in Guangzhou. Shipai is in fact much better off than most other villages in Guangzhou, primarily because of its location, which is close to the IT sectors of Tianhe District. However, even the significantly higher dividend figure of Shipai is minuscule compared to the figures from Shenzhen's average urban villages, which tend to range from 2,000-6,000 yuan per month (one thousand Yuan traded for US$163 on the world's foreign exchanges in mid-2013). In terms of total assets, Shipai has only eight hundred million Yuan; by contrast, the village of Huanggang in Shenzhen has about six billion yuan (Tai 2009, Zhuang Clan Association 2010).

As with Shenzhen, the urban villages of Guangzhou were greatly reduced in size due to government land acquisitions. At present, no urban villages in the Tianhe area have collective landholdings of more than one square kilometre. In the extreme cases of Liede and Shipai, the villages have no collective ownership of land. Fifty years ago, Shipai Village had a collective landholding of more than six square kilometres (Xuan *et al.* 2009). Most of Shipai's land is now either already developed as private housing for villagers or by real-estate developers for commercial properties.

In the eyes of local city government planners, Guangzhou's urban villages are also a priority for urban renewal. The urban renewal process of some of the biggest urban villages began in around 2000. Almost exactly one year before the Asian Games, held in Guangzhou in August 2009, plans were put in motion to demolish and rebuild the areas occupied by nine different urban villages in Tianhe District. Guangzhou's city government initiated the strategy of *yi cun yi ce* ('one village, one strategy'). The so-called *yi cun yi ce* basically means to have a tailor-made urban renewal strategy for each of the villages, acknowledging that not all villages are at the same development level (Xuan *et al.* 2009). Nine major urban villages in the Tianhe area would have to undergo urban renewal processes because of the Asian Games in 2010. This is very much the standard global practice of high modernism: using a special event as justification for the clearance of slums or other forms of undesirable quarters in the eyes of the planners. From the banishing of slums in the days of the Le Corbusier-inspired Costa Plan of

Brasilia in the late 1950s to the banishing of slums in Rio in preparation of the 2014 World Cup, very little has changed. (Scott 1998, p.125, *Daily Mail*, 20 June 2011)

With concerns over the city's image, Guangzhou's city government took action. The urban renewal projects within Guangzhou were extremely costly, partly because many of the villages were already located in the newly established CBD district surrounded by skyscrapers. Some observers have speculated that the total cost for the urban renewal projects for the nine villages in Tianhe could have reached several billion yuan per village. At present, local real-estate tycoons such as Hengda are actively involved in urban renewal projects because the Guangzhou city government can no longer shoulder the cost of urban renewal alone.

Overall, Guangzhou's urban villages are very similar to those of Shenzhen. The two cities share similar geography, climate, and culture. The sense of community among Guangzhou's villages is very strong, due to the ever-expanding functions of the local village companies, which have been incorporated into just about every aspect of the villagers' lives. As Liu Mengqin has pointed out, the phenomenon of the urban village company is a unique phenomenon to Guangdong Province, with some spectacular examples in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Liu has noted that there is a crucial difference between the urban villages of Guangdong and those of Northern China, which for various reasons, never developed fully (Liu 2010). This notion of disparity between the power of urban village companies and their organisational capacity is also noted by Hsing Youtien (2010), who attributes the distinction to the phenomenon of lineage tradition resurgent in southern China, particularly along the Pearl River Delta. Lineage expert Xiao Tangbiao confirmed this notion of lineage-resurgence disparity between north and south China, noting that the village lineage resurgences are far stronger in the south than in the north. Xiao is not just commenting on the villages of the Pearl River Delta but also villages generally south of the Yangtze River (Xiao 2010, p. 57). As in Shenzhen, the urban village companies of Guangdong have provided community based welfare for most of the original villagers, helping them with employment, retirement, communal activities, and even scholarships for those who enlist in the army. Again similar to Shenzhen, the village companies have played their parts in maintaining village traditions and historical sites.

The villages of Guangzhou have many intangible cultural traditions and heritages, and village companies have been credited for maintaining many of these traditions.

Guangzhou's African Villages

Dengfeng Village is one of the most unusual urban villages in Guangzhou—if not all of China. Although it is one of the smaller urban villages in Guangzhou, it stands out due to the high concentration of African migrants. Located in the Yuexiu District, which has been located at the very center of traditional Guangzhou City since the late 1990s, it has become a magnet for African migrants. Historically, from the seventh century CE onwards, Yuexiu has had a tradition of being a settlement area for Muslim merchants from the Middle East and northwestern China. Now it hosts migrants from seven different West African countries. The African migrants in the urban villages form a unique cultural scene of their own, in sharp contrast with the overwhelmingly homogeneous local population. Just like the typical urban village, Dengfeng village has roughly one thousand original villagers but it hosts several thousand African migrants. The Guangzhou authority officially claims there are about twenty thousand African migrants in Guangzhou. However, some of the local people estimate that the actual population figure could be ten times the official figure (Xuan, Shen, & Shan 2009).

The African migrants have turned much of Dengfeng Village into a kind of African town in Guangzhou; in much the same way as Chinese migrants have formed Chinatowns in metropolises worldwide. The African migrants have a system of communal services tailored to their needs. Dengfeng Village is next to several historic mosques in Guangzhou including the iconic Huaishengsi Mosque, one of the oldest in China. Many Chinese Muslims from northwestern China who knew Arabic provided much-needed translation and language assistance when the first migrants arrived from Muslim-majority African countries. Later on, many of the African migrants were Christians who also found shelter and help from the local churches. The African migrants, unlike the typical Chinese migrant laborers living in the villages, are generally wealthier. They are merchants who came to China for the sole purpose of trade, mainly buying large quantities of merchandise and exporting these to their home country. Many African migrants have also

set up businesses, stores, and cafes in local areas (Liu Mengqin 2010, p. 90).

Photo 38: Dengfeng Village with large African international migrant population. Photo by author 2013

For most of the 2000s, Dengfeng Village was the only village that offered tenancy to the African migrants. Many villages in the surrounding areas refused to offer accommodation to the African migrants. Over the years, many African migrants have re-allocated to the main street high-rises. However, Dengfeng remains a popular area for them.

The authorities have tended to view the African migrants much like other Chinese rural migrants: as a kind of social-control issue and a potential risk for crime. Many Africans have overstayed their visas and yet refuse to renew them, or leave the country. The difficulty in re-applying for visas might be one of the factors contributing to this. In addition, the local police often shy away from enforcing law on the migrants regarding issues of prostitution and other small commercial violations. Hence, the city government is sometimes anxious about the African migrant area (Xuan, Shen, & Shan 2009). There is little evidence that the African migrants contribute in any significant way to violent

crime and gang activities in the urban villages and the surrounding areas.

After some delay, the Yuexiu district government established a migrant assistance station close to Dengfeng Village, equipped with information posts in both English and Arabic. Local residents within and outside the village feel mostly awkward about the African migrants. They often complain about the Africans' strong body odor or overuse of perfume. Some females complain about the Africans' romantic pursuits (Xuan, Shen, & Shan 2009). Overall, however there is not any serious social conflict. The African migrants fare pretty well because of their above average financial standing. In fact, the rent they pay to the original villager landlords is often 30 percent more than the average rate.

The phenomenon of the African migrants of Dengfeng is telling in terms of the globalizing story of the urban villages in China. The urban village again represents a kind of carefree residential block, much like the famous Chongking Mansions[15] in Hong Kong, which are also favoured by African migrants (Mathews 2011). Both Chongking Mansions and Dengfeng villages of Guangzhou at first attracted commercial migrants who wanted to take advantage of China's cheap surplus production of goods, be it clothing or small electronic goods. In both areas, eventually the African migrants want to settle down with their family. They settle in the urban villages such as Dengfeng because of their loose tenant registration systems and the subsequent protection they provide from visa checks by the relevant authorities, very much the same way as the protection against hukou check for domestic migrants.

The Urban Villages of Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province

Outside Guangdong Province, large numbers of urban villages emerged in Zhejiang province around its manufacturing hubs. Unlike the province of Guangdong, with its vast financial resource of foreign direct investment (FDI) capital by way of Hong Kong, Zhejiang is a coastal province with no special policy advantage such as SEZs and limited

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[15] A famous residential apartment building in Hong Kong housing large number of temporary migrants from South Asia and Africa.

FDI capital streams. However, historically, Zhejiang lies within the important regional industrial network in the lower Yangtze Delta, with Shanghai at its centre. The mountainous and overpopulated Zhejiang Province traditionally has a weak agricultural sector. Overtime, it was forced by its disadvantaged geography to develop powerful trading networks and traditional homegrown manufacturing industries. Even before economic reform policies were formally announced in China, Zhejiang cities had already begun to develop a vibrant market economy, which initially operated underground during the stringent years of the early 1970s. At the village level, Zhejiang has some of the most industrial township village enterprises (TVEs) in China, in networks of small towns. Since the economic reforms got underway, Zhejiang as a province has been able to mobilize tremendous entrepreneurial spirit at the grass-roots level and industrialize itself through domestic capital. The grass-roots industrialization of Zhejiang was also the main engine of this province's urbanisation, very much in line with Fei Xiaotong's (1986) small-town urbanisation through self-industrialization. Among the cities of Zhejiang, Wenzhou has some of the most distinguished urban-village clusters. The city of Wenzhou is now the 'king' of small-commodities manufacturing and trade in China. The so called 'Wenzhou *Moshi*' ('model') first coined by Fei Xiaotong, referred to Wenzhou's networks of small rural factories, linked by distribution centers of small towns in the Wenzhou vicinity. The Wenzhou model has the effect of drawing towards it both the local rural population and regional migrant populations toward the small rural towns and villages around Wenzhou, which has created many urban villages.

Wenzhou has one million urban residents with six million more rural residents living in the prefectural township areas under its jurisdiction. In terms of land area, it is five times larger than Shenzhen, being 11,000 square kilometers compared to Shenzhen's 2,000 square kilometers. The Longgang Township is one of Wenzhou's biggest subsidiary towns on the outskirts of the city, with an approximate population of 150,000. The locals in Wenzhou call Longgang the number-one 'peasant town' in Zhejiang, which was formed by combining many local villages. The local villages there basically urbanized themselves through local TVE industries, reminiscent of the townization process discussed by Guldin (2001). The local township government seemed to have a premeditated way of going about urbanisation in the villages. Based on interviews with local officials by Chinese

scholars, the original aim of Longgang's townization was to help develop their industries. Longgang had a dire labour shortage in the early 1970s. Officials wanted to form towns for the sole purpose of attracting more migrant labour (Zhu and Gu 2008). Here the towns provided extra housing for the migrant laborers who would be employed in the rapidly expanding manufacture sectors owned by the original villagers of Longgang. Such process were repeated in most of Wenzhou's surrounding rural suburb villages and made Wenzhou the small commodity manufacturing and trading power house it is today. It once more showcased the importance of migrant laborers in the industrial and townization development of China.

In the area of Longgang, large areas of land were taken away from many villages during the formation of the Longgang township in 1993 (Zhu and Gu 2008). The new township government forcefully and quickly acquired land from the peasants while providing minimum non-negotiable compensation. In an interesting contrast with the urban villages of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, the village stock companies in Wenzhou were formed much later—in 1997. On the formation of village companies, the Wenzhou villagers' attitude seemed to be radically different to those of Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Wenzhou's rural people seem to have a natural disdain for communal economic organization. As one author put it, they would rather have companies within the family and bearing family names instead of working for a village company (Hu 2007). Wenzhou's villagers demanded frequent financial reviews and transparency reports when village collective companies were formed. In the Lucheng district of Wenzhou, the local urban village chief was arrested because of frequent complaints from local villagers. Thus, the local family-oriented entrepreneurial culture of Wenzhou is naturally at odds with the creation of powerful urban village companies.
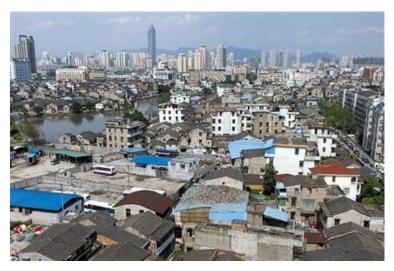
Photo 39: The urban village scene in Wenzhou in early 2000s. Source: People.com.cn

The Urban Villages of Beijing from Zhejiang Village to Ant Tribe Village

Thousands of miles from Wenzhou, urban-village-like phenomena also emerged in Beijing. Despite being the national capital with supposedly more stringent enforcement over migrants and residential registrations, there have been numerous urban villages emerging there in recent years. In fact, many of Beijing's urban villages were 'trendsetters' in China. This section will look at two exemplary forms of urban village in Beijing: the Zhejiang Village and the Ant Tribe Village.

Before the full-blown development of Pearl River style urban villages, the one form of pseudo-urban village like phenomenon in Beijing is the 'Zhejiang Village.' Xiang Biao (2005) and Zhang Li (1999) both have extensively documented the 'Zhejiang Village' phenomenon in Beijing. These Zhejiang villages are not exactly urban villages in the sense of those in Shenzhen. However, they provided embryonic forms for future urban-village developments in Beijing. In most cases, the 'Zhejiang village' is a very loose term that is applied to all sorts of Zhejiang migrant settlements within Beijing, which may or may not be located in historical villages. The Zhejiang villages were first formed in the mid-to-late 1980s on the outskirts of Beijing. They were the immediate product of economic reform, where ambitious Zhejiang migrants, mostly from Wenzhou, tried to set up bridgeheads to distribute their textile goods on the outskirts of Beijing. The Zhejiang Wenzhou migrants particularly targeted the urbanite customers of Beijing, who at the time

had several times the spending power of citizens of other cities. The Zhejiang migrants were able to out-do the state's department store, not only in price but also in the variety of garments and textiles. Due to the increasing demand from Beijing, many Wenzhou people migrated to Beijing and set up not only their distribution centers but also add-on family factories on the city's outskirts. In a way, this is a part of the great expansion of the Wenzhou model from a local business network to a national business network. In order to find places to live, the Zhejiang migrants rented houses from the local villagers in Beijing's rural districts mostly in the south of the city. One of their favorites was the Nan Yuan area, which is close to a domestic airport in the south of Beijing.

The Zhejiang migrants' initial relations with their Beijing villager landlords were not as cooperative as those in Shenzhen and other southern cities. At least in the mid-1980s, the villagers of Beijing's outskirts often acted in a prejudicial and discriminative way towards the coming migrants, and some were even afraid to lease units to them. However, their attitudes changed over time. Beijing's villagers were very slow to establish rental operations. Even after leasing to the migrants became a norm, the villagers were not sufficiently ambitious to build more apartments to accommodate more migrants. As a result, the migrants from Zhejiang started to build walled compounds with the approval of the locals (Zhang 1999).

In addition, the Zhejiang migrants' existence was at the mercy of the Beijing municipal government. In preparation for the Asian Games 1990 in Beijing, as with the Asian Games 2010 in Guangzhou, massive demolition and relocation projects were forced upon Beijing's Zhejiang migrant village, a form of high modernist slum clearance project in disguise. In 1991, the Beijing government went out of its way to demolish the Zhejiang Village on the outskirts of Beijing, which was clearly a severe setback to the emerging urban village scene in Beijing. For a while, the Zhejiang migrants and their settlements of Zhejiang villages were displaced and scattered. However, they were to regroup and return to their familiar outskirt villages, after the Games.

For quite some time, the Zhejiang Village was the closest example of an urban village in Beijing. However, as Beijing has expanded in size since the early 90s, urban villages in

the structure and style of the southern urban villages began to emerge. All along Beijing's fourth, fifth, and sixth ring roads, urban villages of different sizes began to emerge. As in many other cities, the urban villages in Beijing served the very practical purpose of accommodating massive migrant inflows. One of the most visible differences between Beijing's urban villages and those of Guangdong was that the former tend to be located on the extreme outskirts of the city and far from the city center, with rare exceptions. Hence most of Beijing's urban villages are *chengbiancun*, city border villages. In general, Beijing's urban villages formed several large clusters. Interestingly, many major clusters were formed around the same locations that the Zhejiang villages had earlier formed in the south of the city prior to their demolition by the city government (Zhang 2001).

In the northwest of the city, approximately 10 kilometers from the former summer palace Yuanmingyuan, a large urban village was developed in Tangjialing. This village is quite unique and carries tremendous significance in contemporary Chinese social studies because this is the village where the popular social keyword 'ant tribe' was first used. Beijing University professor, Lian Si (2009) first coined the term 'ant tribe,' after his fieldwork in Tangjialing Village, published as *Yi Zu: Daxue Biyesheng Jujucun Shilu* (*Ant Tribe: A Documentary of College Graduate Congregate Villages*) (2009). Lian Si defined his 'ant tribe' as congregations of young unemployed or minimally paid college graduates living on the outskirts of large cities. In most cases, they were crammed into urban villages where the rent was affordable. Urban villages with large numbers of college students and recent college graduates have since become known as 'ant tribe villages,' which is a new development to the traditional concept of urban village (Lian 2009).

Photo 40: The remaining parts of the ant tribe village, Tangjialin after series of urban renewal projects.
Photo by author 2013

The ant tribe village, by all estimations, definitely had its beginnings in Beijing, which also has the largest number of 'ant tribe' residents due to its high concentration of tertiary-education institutions. With the overwhelming numbers of 'ant tribe' youths being college students, many of the big ant tribe urban villages tend to be located in the general proximity of universities. With Beijing's top universities located mostly in the northwestern section of the city, some of the largest ant tribe villages are also found in that general direction. Every year, when tens of thousands of young Chinese students of rural background graduate from college, many will linger in the ant tribe village waiting for employment opportunities in Beijing.

Among the ant tribe youths, many of the students are from a rural background while some are from second or third tier cities, with more limited employment opportunity than Beijing. They are, in fact, 'migrant students'. Like the migrant laborers of Shenzhen's urban villages, the ant tribe villages of Beijing provide the students with their only refuge in the city. With their low rent, many students use the ant tribe urban village as their base of operation in job-hunting across Beijing. They sustain themselves with minimal wage jobs in order to wait for better-paid job offers. The social vocabulary of *Beipiao* (Floating North) is popularized by the ant tribe youths. Tangjialing village is a real urban village in the style of those in Shenzhen, featuring most of the architectural and zoning trends of the

Pearl River Delta urban villages. The narrow streets and crammed buildings are very similar to those of Shenzhen. In both scale and density, Tangjialing is on par with the average Shenzhen's or Guangzhou's urban villages. The only difference is that it is not as culturally and economically vibrant as the southern urban villages. It has no powerful village company, and its sense of village lineage and its related tradition is relatively weak.

Beijing's urban renewal efforts have also prioritized the urban village areas. The urban renewal process surrounding Beijing's urban villages are often much more forceful and efficient than those in Shenzhen or Guangzhou. Consider the example of Guanxi Village, in the north of the city: it was quickly demolished in the space of three months in 2006 (from June to September) in preparation for the Olympic Games in 2008, which contrasts sharply with the average duration of one-to-five years required for similar *chaiqian* processes in Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Basically there are no 'nail' residences, no opposition, and no protracted negotiation for compensation, due to the much more forceful measures put in place by the central and local government. The importance of preparing for the Beijing Olympic certainly sped up the process. The demolition in Guanxi village, one of the largest urban villages in the north of Beijing, created 100,000 square meters of empty land for construction. It is on the *chaiqian* grounds of Guanxi and Longyutang Village that the main venues of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were built (Wang 2006). Since then, the village of Guanxi no longer exists. Not even a name on the map remains today. In March 2010, *chaiqian* also began for the famous 'ant tribe' village of Tangjialing (Wu, Zhang, &Webster 2012). On its original location, a large forest reserve is planned for the beautification of Beijing's technology R & D park of Zhongguancun. The experience of Beijing's urban villages once again demonstrates the powerful influence of high modernism in China's city planning. Villages are treated as if they are meaningless obstacles in the way of the cities' progress. Villages may undergo changes in mere months, transformed into ultra-modern sports stadiums or green belts for the technology elites. There is no more concrete proof of China's existing high modernist mentality than this process.

The urban villages of Beijing are significantly less organized and administrated than their southern variants. The communal organization of the original villagers is very weak. Hence, the villages have not been able to form any powerful village companies like those of Shenzhen. In addition, the cultural scene of the villages is almost non-existent compared to the multiple layers of intangible cultural heritages in the villages of Guangzhou, or the variety of temples in Shenzhen's urban village. The villages of Beijing have minimum self-government endeavor and administration. This is more likely due to the weak lineage resurgence in North China compared to the south. Lineage expert, Xiao Tangbiao, explained this phenomenon from a historical perspective: that the northern China's village lineage system has never quite developed like the southern China's, and has indeed faded sharply in recent history, both in terms of organization and number (Xiao 2010, p. 84). In other words, the sense of collective identity is weak in Beijing's urban villages. Many villagers have permanently moved out of the village in order to maximize rental income. Furthermore, the original villagers rarely formed village schools or other welfare centers.

The Urban Village of Xi'an

At present, the urban villages exist in most first- and second-tier cities. The city of Xi'an is a historical city and a provincial capital. It is the largest city in northwestern China. Overall, it is not as economically powerful as many large cities in the east. However, even in this city, there has been a booming urban village phenomenon. As of 2004, Chinese scholars have estimated that there are 187 urban villages in Xi'an, with a total residential population of 200,000. Of the 187 urban villages, half of them have no land left for agrarian activities; they are totally urbanized (Guo and Liu 2004). In 2007, Xi'an Municipal Government passed the decree of 'Xi'an Shi Chengzhongcun Gaizao Guanli Banfa' ('Methods of Urban Renewal for the Urban Villages of Xi'an') and initiated the demolition and relocation of 106 urban villages. The decree also encouraged local villages to form a joint-stock company, as Shenzhen did in 1992. For example, Shitai Village of Xi'an's Beilin District formed its first joint-stock company in 2007, following the decree (Lingdaoxingxi 2009). Some of the local media has commented on the massive *chaiqian* process of Xi'an that has the unique characteristics of the Xi'an *moshi*

('model'). One magazine praised the Xi'an model of urban renewal as being 'silent and stealth-like' (Xibu Dakaifa 2008). More specifically, the Xi'an model had a very effective compensation scheme that was applied city-wide, with a single standard written into the urban renewal decree which stated that the owners of all *chaiqian* buildings were to be compensated fully on the first two floors, with a decreased rate for any building space above the second floor. Within one year, the city government had spent 4.6 billion yuan on the demolition of 2.2 million square meters and the construction of 2 million square meters of new building space (Dakaifa 2008).

Based on the observation of local scholars, Xi'an's urban villages share many similar fundamental structures and appearance with the urban villages in Shenzhen. One particular example is Shajin Village, which has a fully functional joint-stock urban village company in the style of Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta region.[16] Other than the few original villagers employed in the village company, most villagers live on rent collected from their properties and the dividends provided by the company. Also like Shenzhen, Xi'an's Shajin Village hosts a great variety of small business such as restaurants, clubs, massage parlors, barbershops, et cetera. Local scholars commented on the vibrant 'grey economy' within these locations. Here, their definition of 'grey' means tax-evading and illegal activities, such as gangs and prostitution (He et al 2012). Shajin Village is also home to a great number of illegal and semi-illegal informal buildings. The villagers have often added self-constructed new floors to existing buildings to gain more rental space—akin to the *qiangjian* of Shenzhen. Lastly, Shajin Village also hosts a large number of low-income migrants. In the 1990s, 45 percent of the migrants earned less than 1,000 yuan a month, and a large number of them were fresh college graduates, which is reminiscent of the *yizu* ('ant tribe') phenomenon of Beijing (He et al 2012).

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[16] Shenzhen also has a Shajin Village in the northwest.

Photo 41: Shajin Village of Xi'an. Photo by author 2013

In the city of Xi'an, the Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television station produced a 2011 documentary series on the young residents of an urban village called *Chengzhongcun Li de Qinchun* (2011) (*Youthful Years in the Urban Village*). The famous journalist and TV show host, Yang Jinglin, was the presenter of this TV documentary series. In the documentary, Mr Yang followed the lives of three young people living in two different urban villages of Xi'an. Through Yang's script and the camera's images viewers witnessed an eerily similar landscape between Xi'an's urban villages and those of Shenzhen and Beijing. Yang stressed the point that the urban villages of Xi'an are an attractive place for young people, despite their chaotic and potentially dangerous environment. Most of Yang's migrant interviewees came from Sanfuwan Village, historically located in a swampy area belonging to three local lords. According to Yang's local guide, after a period of rushed construction of informal buildings, most of the Sanfuwan villagers have since left this area and live elsewhere, in order to maximize their rental income from migrants. This situation is very similar to those urban villagers of Beijing who moved out permanently from their villages. Some of the wealthier villagers make over several hundred thousand Yuan per year just from their rental operations.

Yang's first interviewee was a female model living in a *chaiqian* zone with a sea of rubble

much like those in Gangxia in Shenzhen. Every day, she walked through construction grounds to undertake free-lance modelling jobs that paid well, but were irregular and uncertain. Interestingly, the woman moved to Xi'an from Shenzhen, claiming that she did not like Shenzhen's fast-paced lifestyle. She believes that the urban village is a necessary stop for any young rural migrants wanting to succeed in the city. In her words, 'there are indeed awkwardly crammed living conditions and a horrible crime rate, but one just has to get used to it (Chengzhongcun Li De Qinchun 2011).' Yang's other interviewees including a young man with the surname Zhao, and his girlfriend, who resided in a typical urban-village-style six-floored self-constructed building with window view of a new high-rise under construction a few hundred metres away. Zhao was a college student who tutored computer graphics part-time to help with the daily expenses and tuition. He came from a very poor village and it is his dream that he will finally leave rural life behind and start a family in the city with his girlfriend. Both of them experienced many inconveniences living in the village. For example, there were only a few public bathrooms, shared among eighteen different apartment units within the same building. Zhao's girlfriend was very concerned about crime to the extent that she refused to travel outside their home when Zhao was not with her. Living in the urban village is not exactly a luxury for the young couple; however, it is the only place they can afford. It is also the only place that accepts them as rural-to-urban migrants unconditionally. From interviews of young migrants living the urban village of Xi'an, one could recognize shared struggles of rural youth trying to survive in the cities, be it in Shenzhen or other cities. The urban villages belong to the migrant youths of rural China who, unlike their elders, will no longer be tied to their ancestral soils and be satisfied with the caste-like title of agrarian peasants. They are now in the urban villages, and from there, they begin their 'China Dream' for eventual settlement and employment in the city proper.

Chapter Conclusion

Since the economic reform and expansion beginning in the 1980s, the cities of China have grown at an astonishing rate. They are growing in size and pushing the cities' boundaries further into the surrounding rural hinterland. Together with large-scale infrastructure projects, China is experiencing an urban revolution. During this

monumental process, countless urban villages are created, similar to those in Shenzhen. And these urban villages are interesting manifestations in this nationwide urbanisation drive. On the surface they are similar urban communal developments of zones of informal buildings housing large low-income migrant populations. However, there remains clear evidence of regional characteristics in Chinese urban villages. The regional urban villages of China are diverse and seemingly at different stages of development. Some of them limited by particular weakness of lineage or particular entrepreneurial culture never seemed to be able to develop powerful urban village companies, as in Shenzhen. Only in Shenzhen and to a lesser extent in Guangzhou are there successful developments of village companies. The urban villages outside the Pearl River Delta—be it in Beijing, Wenzhou, or Xian—have failed to develop powerful urban village companies. The weakness of urban villages outside Shenzhen is further confirmed by their reactions to the *chaiqian* urban renewal process forced upon them. In all cities outside Shenzhen, the *chaiqian* process could be smooth and speedy, often carried out within less than one year, which is unheard of in Shenzhen. The regional urban villages of China clearly put the future of the general Chinese urban village phenomenon in doubt. Without the formation of powerful collective identities and economic organizations such as the urban villages, the regional urban villages are vulnerable, and may easily fell prey to high modernist local governments who can erase villages in matter of months for prestige projects, using all kinds of slogans and justifications. Hence, it is possible that the urban villages will only be a limited phenomenon around the Pearl River Delta, with the rest being evanescent urban formations.

Chapter Nine

Villages as Imagined Communities: Stereotypes and Potential Models

West Enders did not think of their area as a slum and resented the city's description of the area because it cast aspersions on them as slum dwellers.

Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers*, p. 20

In Shenzhen, the urban middle class and the local government planners aspire to a high modernist form of urban environment, devoid of the urban villages. To them, the shabby looking, slum-like urban villages are unwelcome reminders to them of the traditional "*tu*" or earthiness of the Chinese countryside and peasantry, images that throughout the preceding 20th Century were portrayed internationally as crowded, backward and poor. The opposite of the colloquial expression of "*tu*" is "*yang,*" as in "*yangqi*" style of the "oceanic", a common reference to Western styles and attitudes, which is the earliest equivalent concept of 'modern' in China. *Yangqi* is often used in describing Shanghai in the early 1930s, the dazzlingly prosperous treaty port city comprising British, French, and other colonial concessions that gave the city a "modern" look, a term that continues to be associated with Shanghai city and its urbanites. Although the Shenzhen city government and urban middle class were largely made up of basically skilled migrants from different rural and urban regions of China, they also aspired to build and live in a high modernist city of industry and technology. By building glass and steel skyscrapers, in the architectural style of Columbus Circle or Fifth Avenue, and research and development parks along Silicon Valley lines, they may now proudly proclaim that they have largely caught up with the developed world and left the images of villages and earthy "*tu*" China behind. Unfortunately, their dream of high modernist city remains incomplete, much as the planned Brasilia (Scott 1998). In Shenzhen there remained the original villages that later were transformed into urban villages. These villages were tough, collective entities

that had withstood the tests of political turmoil and urbanisation. The mainstream city's high modernist aspirations are constantly clashing with the existence of the urban villages, whose major aspiration is survival. Over the years, the mainstream media and government organs of Shenzhen have systematically campaigned against the urban villages by portraying them using negative stereotype labels that are partly based on factual evidence, but partly also on exaggeration and hyperbole. These media-driven campaigns amount to a form of targeted prejudice, alienation and ghettoization of urban villages and their inhabitants, who are then unfairly and summarily judged by Shenzhen's non-village residents.

This chapter will examine many of the controversies surrounding the urban villages of Shenzhen. It seeks to explain the negative conceptualization of the urban villages in the minds of outsiders, and contrast these with the reality on the ground in Shenzhen. It will not shy away from raising some of the persistent problems of the urban villages that give leverage to the negative stereotypes. Later parts of this chapter will examine the potential for an urban village based communal self-government model that effectively could rebut many of the negative stereotypes. The urban village is what you wish it to be: a slum, a ghetto, or a lively self-governed community.

The Symbolic Representation of the Urban Village and Related Problems

Slums and ghettos are largely in the eyes of the beholders. American scholar Herbert Gans, in his study of the urban villages of Boston, argued that 'residential structures—and districts—should be defined as slums only if they have been proven to be physically, socially, or emotionally harmful to their residents or to the larger community' (Gans 1962, p. 309). Population groups across different social strata have an important influence in defining an urban community and neighbourhood. The concept of a community or residential area being 'physically, socially, or emotionally harmful' is particularly interesting, for it is subjective and open to broad interpretation. In Gans' observation, the

West Enders of Boston complained about the potential of dangerous crime in their neighbourhood, but the urban village was their home and they would never portray their own urban villages as 'socially and emotionally harmful' because it is where they originate.

Thousands of miles away from Boston, the urban villages of Shenzhen also have an image problem. In the media, academic, and government circles, there is the repeated mantra of the urban villages being '*zang, luan, cha*' (dirty, chaotic, substandard) which in fact is the standard saying in Chinese in describing an area of poor administration. More than anything, the urban village is seen as a zone of chaos (*luan*). This idea of chaos is entrenched in both the stereotypical perceptions and reality. The chaos of the urban village is not just appearance but also in fact. The physical criminal activities are in the majority of cases carried out by rural-to-urban migrants on other rural-to-urban migrants, and these migrant related criminal activities have provided the basis for exaggerated negative portrayals in the local media.

The chaos of the urban village is further reflected in its external physical appearance, much to the dismay of high modernists who place emphasis on aesthetics and order. As explained in Chapter Three, in most urban villages there is no uniformed planning. The urban village buildings are not elegant. They are blocks upon blocks of hastily constructed informal apartment buildings, crammed together along narrow streets. They lack standardization in height, colour, and architectural style. In some poorly managed villages, there are trash laden, dirty and inadequately drained streets.

Photo 42: Narrow divide between two urban village buildings. This is what Shenzhen locals commonly called *Yixiantian*, 'one line of sky.' Lights remain switched on, even during daylight hours, because no natural light is able to penetrate the building. Photo by author 2008

Photo 43: The urban villages of Shenzhen are not always clean and orderly. Take for example this untidy street in one urban village in Shenzhen. Photo by author 2009

As Shenzhen develops and is able to construct increasingly sophisticated shopping and residential complexes, the urban villages are often therefore are seen as outmoded and outright undesirable areas. Some even suggest that the existence of the urban village

affects property values in surrounding areas (Luo & Cai 2007). In a mainstream publication about major social events in Shenzhen, '*Shenzhen Shehui Biange Dashi*' (Great Moments in Shenzhen's Social Transformation), the urban village is singled out as the '*huogen*', or the root of all urban problems in Shenzhen:

> From initial estimates, there are 2,000 natural villages within Shenzhen and 200 within the SEZ with 300,000 private constructed housings, which strongly affected the image of Shenzhen and the quality (*suzhi*) of the city. Because of the urban villages' existence, Shenzhen, as a new city has already had urban problems like many of the old cities such as traffic, pollution and complex security concerns. (Meng 2008, p. 15)

It is very interesting from the above passage that Shenzhen was portrayed as anthropomorphized, and its *suzhi* ('human quality') damaged because of the urban villages' informal buildings. The urban villages are now part of the urban problem because they are alleged to create traffic chaos, pollution, and crime, tarnishing the image of Shenzhen. The Government's answer to the villages' unrefined external appearance was urban renewal projects and campaigns to 'cover up.' In 2011, Shenzhen city hosted its first major international sporting event, the *Universiade*, a sporting event for college athletes. While conducting a major building campaign of high modernist styled sport venues, the city government also quietly turned its focus to the long ignored urban villages.

Photo 44: Universiade 2011 Shenzhen, one of newly constructed main stadiums in Nanshan district. Photo by author 2012

In preparation for the games, Shenzhen's urban villages were ordered to 'cover up' their chaotic appearance. The makeover attempts were quite apparent around some of the villages that bordered main streets. A type of symbolic Potemkin village-like construction began to camouflage the villages. Although no grim Berlin Wall era separation was constructed, a more sophisticated facade was put to use. The city government redecorated all urban villages bordering main streets. Their walls were repainted in a uniform colour and their balconies were redecorated. Driving though Shenzhen's Binghe Road, crossing the highway interchange toward Xiangmihu Road overlooking the village of Shangsha, Xiasha and Xinzhou, one might almost mistake the once urban village on the side of the road for a European coastal small town with multicolour exterior walls and intricate metal frame bronze balconies, along with small rectangular hanging flower baskets, complete with plastic flowers. This barrage of visual manipulation created a pseudo-European appearance on the borders of the urban village. The great makeover of the urban village before the games was a massive project. Villages as far as Nanshan were redecorated. The new appearances were not intended for those who lived in the village, but to hide from visitors the sights of urban villages. Nothing actually changed inside the urban villages. The villages were still the same crammed buildings, with migrants still living in the same conditions as before. In precise Potemkin nature, the redecorations cover only those most exterior buildings bordering roads that could be seen from hotels frequented by foreign

visitors. The redecorating of the urban village reflected a kind of high modernist mentality that is deeply rooted in the minds of government officials in Shenzhen: that the urban villages are an unpleasant visual aspect of an otherwise ultra-modern city like Shenzhen, the jewel of China's economic reform. The villages represented chaos, unplanned zoning, and over-crowding, all taboos to the high modernist planners, according to Le Corbusier (1967). And they firmly believe that the urban villages should be hidden from the view of foreign visitors, as it will reflect badly on the city's 'modern' image.

Photo 45: Attempts to redecorate the urban villages along the main roads near Baishizhou Village before the *Universiade*. Photo by author 2011

Aside from the image issue, the most serious danger of the chaotic dense construction of urban villages is actually fire safety. In June 2009, the fire bureau of Shenzhen published a study on fire prevention in the urban village area, 'Fire Prevention Methods Research of Shenzhen's Urban Villages' (ed. Shenzhenshi Xiaofangju 2009). The Report made it clear that most urban villages would fail fire safety tests, in one area or another. For example, there are several requirements regarding access paths for standard fire trucks, which require an unobstructed pathway four metres wide by four metres high. Even the smaller fire trucks require an access path of three metres by three metres. In the author's experience, very few urban village paths meet this requirement. Another requirement of

this report demands building of six floors and taller to have metal staircases for fire emergency evacuation. Again, few if any village or building can fully meet this requirement. Hence, on the fire danger of the urban village, there is a strong disconnection between official requirements and existing conditions. In late 2010 there was the great fire of Longgang, which began in a nightclub in a predominately urban village area. Nine hundred partygoers were crammed into one club called 'Wuwang' (King of Dance), which the media later reported to be unlicensed and had never had a fire safety check. Out of control partygoers, fired flare guns into the ceiling, causing the fire, which resulted in forty-three deaths and eighty-eight injured, mostly from the stampede while escaping the building (Wang 2008). This is one of the largest fire-related incidents in Shenzhen and it was in an urban village area entertainment venue. Although it is an extreme example, it still shows the potential danger in poorly regulated villages. Fortunately, for the last 30 years of Shenzhen's history, large-scale fires with casualties have rarely happened in the urban villages' residential areas. In one notable example of residential fire in one of Guangzhou's urban village (Zhanqianjiexicun), there were only three casualties when an entire urban village style apartment building caught on fire. This incident was recorded in the Guangzhou Municipal Government office (2005) as a serious incident and series of decrees were enacted after the fire, targeting urban village areas as high risk. The mainstream citizenry is correct in their concern for fire safety in the urban villages, but it is the responsibility of the urban village company to keep a close watch on potential fire hazards. It is their home and source of income, after all. Historically, great fires have often been considered useful tools in slum clearing by the authorities as early as ancient Rome, to the post-WWII Singapore river *kampungs*. The issue of fire safety is one of the weakest links in the urban village's continuous survival. No matter how well an urban village can self-govern itself, it can not make much improvement to the quality of their historical 'grey' properties who are already built and housing tenants. The old crammed self-constructed housing can only be done away with through urban renewal. Ideally, it would be done on the urban villagers' own initiative, than to be forced out by fire or forced demolition.

Chaos Reflected in Crime

The high crime environment is without doubt a continuing reality in many, if not most urban villages. Over the years, Shenzhen, despite being one of the richest cities in China, has the reputation of having one of the highest crime rates among Chinese cities. In fact, most of the Pearl River delta cities where urban villages are a major phenomenon have higher than national crime rates. Dongguan, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen are some of the most dangerous cities in China. According to some local scholars, the urban village resident is accountable for sixty to ninety percent of crime in the cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou (Xie 2005). In 2004, the *People's Daily* published a very condemnatory report on the urban villages of Shenzhen, quoting some crime statistics that are notoriously hard to uncover in Shenzhen: 'according to Yantian street office's record of last year, 95 percent of the all crime was caused by residents of the urban villages. According to the city's public security bureau, 70 percent of all crime in the city occurred around rental apartments in the urban villages (Hu & Zhao 2004). The reporters commented that most urban village residents have experienced being robbed. During an interview, one migrant Xiaoli from Jiangxi province commented that he had been robbed three times since moving to an urban village near Xinzhou road (Hu & Zhao 2004). There may have been degrees of hyperbole and exaggerations in this report; however, it largely reflected the truth of long standing crime issues associated with the urban villages.

Unfortunately, there has been very little research on crime in Shenzhen's urban villages. Among the handful of experts in the field of crime research is, Liu Zhanguo, who published two articles on crimes in Shenzhen's urban villages in 2010. In one of the articles, Liu focused on a village codenamed 'T', a typical village in Shenzhen with only 200 original villagers, and 20,000 migrants (Liu 2010). In the two-year period from 2007 to 2008, there were 328 serious crimes recorded by the local village security office. Home invasions accounted for eighty percent of the crime, with the most common items stolen being electronics, cash, metal materials and modes of transport, such as motorcycles, electric bikes sometimes cars. Liu (2010) assumed that criminals used the latter stolen items to generate income. Of the 187 criminals with records who were processed, most

were young migrants born after 1980. Liu concluded that the highly mobile but low socio-economic status of the migrants, combined with ineffective community mobilization in crime prevention, were the main causes for the high crime rate. Furthermore, the fractured coexistence, between the migrants and the original villagers, and between the migrants of differing provincial origins, also contributed to the high crime environment. Liu's believes that there existed a culture of crime among some migrant networks. The criminals often first started their career of crime by learning from other criminals within their '*laoxiang*' (hometown people) network (Liu 2010).

Liu's (2010) work pointed the finger straight at the migrant populations in the urban villages as the main source of the crime due to their low social economic status and loose residential registration. The urban village, as Mobrand (2006) has pointed out, has made a special arrangement for the migrants to evade *hukou* registration checks. The system of loose tenant registration in the urban village certainly provides cover for the criminals. However, this factor could be improved, if the original villager landlords' used their own initiatives. As the *hukou* system has been loosened, there is also no longer a need to shield the migrants from *hukou* checks. By better screening of tenants, the urban village can provide a safer residential environment that attracts a wide variety of rent seekers as the housing prices becoming increasingly unaffordable in China. The migrants themselves would also appreciate a safer environment, as they are often the victims of crime in the villages. Overall, the crime and safety issue is often a marker of an urban village's performance in self-government and administration. The poorer villages are always the more dangerous ones and the richer villages the safer ones.

Slums, migrants and crime are the obsessions of high modernist planners. Decades ago, the leading high modernist thinker, Le Corbusier, emphasized strongly the combination of slum, migrants and crime in obstructing police work. To Le Corbusier the clearing of slums and of its migrant residents as in the Haussmann Plan of Paris would not only result in decreased crime but also reduce potential political agitation. Hence his famous quote on the slums of ancient Rome: "St Paul of Tarsus was impossible to arrest while he stayed

in the slums, and the words of his Sermons were passed like wildfire from mouth to mouth." (Le Corbusier, cited in Scott 1998, p. 116) In a way, Le Corbusier clearly demonstrates the state's high modernist's point of view that slums amidst of an orderly and socially stratified city are sources of crime and fertile soil for rebellion by the poor.

Farmers and the New Urban Rentier (Landlord) Class

Aside from the loose association between migrants and crime, the original villagers of the urban villages are also stigmatized and despised by powerful forces outside the village. Regarding villagers' productivity, some officials in Shenzhen have commented on 'the small peasant mentality' (*chuantong xiaonong yishi*) of the villagers as being a major handicap to progress for the urban villages and Shenzhen. It is used as a criticism of the villagers' but has its origin in Mao's criticism of the Communist Party, whose initial core members were of peasant background. Mao warned the cadres against their feudal and conservative instincts, which was later loosely interpreted as the so-called 'small peasant mentality' (Yuan 2012). The small peasant mentality alluded to by Shenzhen's local government officials refer to the perceived intrinsic backwardness of the villagers. Hence their resistance to many government zoning and other planning initiatives were interpreted as rooted in their backwardness. In a way, the resentment toward the perceived backward peasantry and their "resistance" has been apparent in most high modernist government circles since the day of Lenin's Soviet Union (Scott 1998). In Shenzhen, the peasants were seen as selfish in refusing to sacrifice personal or familial interests for the greater good of the city or nation. Hence no matter how rich they have become, they are still '*nongmin*' (farmers) to the officials.

On a different front, the village company has often been singled out and criticized for lacking highly quality (*gao suzhi*) personnel. The original villagers of the companies were criticized for not realizing the full potential of their companies. This criticism is aimed at the older generation of village company staff, who were essentially former village cadres.

This, along with the persistent image of the 'idle village youth', formed the basics of the '*suzhi*' accusations levelled against the original villagers. It is indeed true that on average the older generation of village company staff has had only middle school education, regardless of their position. This is a general impression gathered from fieldwork. However, middle school education was considered to be highly educated across rural China in the pre-reform China because college education was stalled during the Cultural Revolution. The nationwide college entrance exam was restarted in late 1977, toward the end of the Cultural Revolution.

In Shenzhen some government officials and scholars have frequently raised this issue of the villagers' city profiles, hinting they were a parasitic class of people who contributed nothing to industrial production, and by living on rental income alone (Liu 2010). The original villagers were often portrayed as a kind of rentier, or landlord class, who live solely derived from rent and business investments. There is the persisting stereotype of young urban villagers being 'idle youths' because of their rentier class lifestyle and easy money. They had become what local Cantonese colloquially called '*Er Shi Zu*': someone who is good for nothing, living off family wealth (Liu 2010). The media's frequent stories about the amazing wealth of the urban villagers, derived from rents or *chaiqian* compensation, have greatly enhanced this stereotype over the years. Hence a derogatory term "rentier class" from the pre-reform era has been revived by the mainstream, to criticize the original villagers.

There is an obvious double standard here, in accusing original villagers of becoming a Landlord rentier class, while the real estate developers are doing the same activities on the main street, but on a much larger scale. The urban villagers have not done anything untoward in post-reform China, in making from land that they legally owned. Their rentier model was not by choice, but by necessity. Shenzhen city was built on around and over them. They were agrarian villagers who were forced to adapt to urban life in a very short period of time, with no previous industry-related training or education. Constructing

apartments and collecting rent as an income was the most efficient way for them to survive in the new urban environment.

A Model of Urban Communal Self-Government beyond Stereotypes

Despite the long-running image problems in the eyes of city government and urban mainstream public, the urban villages of Shenzhen have for the last 30 years successfully self-governed their communities. Stereotypes and prejudice towards the urban villages and their inhabitants cannot overshadow the fact that there are numerous successful urban villages that are exemplary models for countless other urban villages in China. Shenzhen's urban villages can indeed go through an "unsluming" of themselves, as demonstrated by Jane Jacobs: (Unsluming...) 'hinges on whether a considerable number of the residents and businessman of a slum find it both desirable and practical to make and carry out their own plans right there (Jacobs 2011, p. 356)." The existence of so many successful urban villages suggests a kind for model of community wide self-government in Shenzhen's urban village. The following section will take a focused, in-depth look of potential models for urban village communal self-government, using the example of a village in Shenzhen –Huanggang.

Going through literature on Shenzhen's urban village by local scholars, I noted that scholars write rarely write about the self-governing potential of the urban villages. Instead, Shenzhen's urban villages are widely noted for their problems. When local scholars discuss models of urban villages, they most often refer to the potential *moshi,* or models for rural urbanisation (*chengshihua moshi*), or urban renewal (*chengzhongcun gaizao moshi*) (Chen and Du 2004, Liu 2010). For example, in the previous chapter, there was the *Xi'an moshi* term, coined by local scholars on the speedy and stealthy urban renewal *chaiqian* process (Xibu Dakaifa 2008).

As Hsing Youtian (2010) has suggested, there is indeed potential for community based autonomy in urban villages, and Shenzhen certainly has its own model. In this author's view, the Shenzhen model of communal self-government is characterized in several main functions; some of them have been explained sporadically in previous chapters. First, the Shenzhen Model of communal self-government is a collective act based on the past tradition of the village, be it socialist commune or the old lineage systems of local gentry rule. Second, the Shenzhen model of communal self-government is largely dependent upon the parallel economic and political administration of urban village joint stock companies. They retained and transferred the former village based election system into the more corporate shareholder based system. The village company also founded the villager exclusive welfare systems and strengthened the village collective identity. Third, the Shenzhen's urban village's communal self-governing model involves positive cooperation and interaction between original villagers and migrants. Lastly, Shenzhen urban villages strengthen their communal self-governance through active promotion of village identity and public image, and maintain good relations with influential forces outside the village.

Fundamentally, the communal self-governing of urban villages is a collective venture by a former agrarian community. One can either interpret this collective communal self-government along the lines of socialist communization experience in the not so distant past, or one of the age-old agrarian gentry self-rule of the type that had been in place for millennia in China. In chapter six, I discussed the '*banzi*' (leadership team) managing culture in the village, which is essentially inherited from the socialist communes, where decision making in the agrarian commune was group based and the village was managed by a select team of local cadres. The significance of the *Banzi* showed that the villages had long governed themselves quite efficiently, well before urbanisation and absorption by Shenzhen. Also in chapter six, I noted the lineage resurgence in the village as the re-creation of a collective identity in the village. The age-old local gentry rules were based on the dominant family lineages, another collective self-rule tradition of the past. Here, I would argue that the modern form of communal self-government in Shenzhen is

influenced by the two above-mentioned traditions. They provided the framework for the Shenzhen models of communal self-government in the urban villages.

The urban village is a place, a spatial form comprising a large number of informal or hastily constructed buildings; but it is also a group of people comprising families, clans and lineages. The urban villagers live not as individuals but as groups of people. Their collectivism is reflected in their very existence, and their legitimate, communal self-governing status. Acting collectively is not an easy manner of survival, especially in this day and age in China where individualism seems a dominant trait in both rural and urban life (Yan 2009). However in the urban villages, collectivism is the key to their autonomy and communal self-government. The collectivism of Shenzhen's urban villages comes in various forms. One of the more obvious one can be appreciated visually, in the physical appearance of the villages' buildings and their zoning. Here, the collectivism is much like a form of internal discipline of the villages, though varying greatly among villages, and this is what distinguishes the better self-governing urban villages from the less successful villages.

Huanggang village made a strong impression on the author, as an entity whose zoning and buildings strongly reflected their collective character. Although Huanggang also has its own share of crammed, informal buildings, there is clear evidence of the later centrally and collectively planned buildings, in both residential and public areas. There are layers of different levels of building developments inside the village, from crammed and individualistic on its border, to a newly built planned core, radiating from the ancestral lineage hall (*citang*), reconstructed in 1992. The newer buildings along with the reconstructed traditional lineage hall form a belt that now is the core of the village along two main roads with shops, restaurants and supermarkets. The centrepiece of Huanggang's new collectively planned core is the Huanggang village square, which was also built in the early 1990s. Huanggang's new core was a collective enterprise, planned and constructed by the village, without outside assistance. This is an "unsluming"

enterprise of an urban village, by Huanggang's own villagers, on their own terms, not one driven by external interests. Huanggang village independently developed the "Shenzhen CBD Huanggang District Urban Renewal Planning" co-operative research and guidelines, to plan the village (Zhuang Clan Association 2010). When interviewing original villagers and village company employees, they made it clear to the author that the urban renewal *chaiqian* process experienced minimal individual resistance in the 1990s. After the urban renewal, the new core of Huanggang connected the lineage hall, the Huanggang square, and the buildings along the square. The cohesiveness of the residential buildings surrounding the Huanggang Square is a rare scene in Shenzhen.

Photo 46: Huanggang Village's Centrally Planned Village Square. Photo by author 2010

The ultimate symbols of the collectiveness of Shenzhen's urban villages are their urban village companies. Each urban villages of Shenzhen has a company, and it is the most important mechanism for urban village to function and self-govern in this day and age. The political governance of the village was transferred to the city government in 1992. The village companies have become a form of parallel governing structure that oversees villager affairs and welfare. One would estimate that urban village company, as the collective representation of the original villager community, holds significantly more

power than the government street offices, which are only token political symbols, and are in any case subsidized by the urban village company. The street offices of the city government are also heavily dependent on the urban village to manage villager affairs, especially during familial disputes and other conflicts of interests. Most important of all, the village company supplements the self-government of the urban villages, through their shareholder elections, which may be, interpreted as an evolved version of the traditional a village election system. In agrarian China, village self-government was encouraged, and one of the crucial pieces of their administration was the local village election that would, ideally, inspire the villagers and keep the cadre leadership in check (Wang 2007). What is remarkable about the urban village's company-based elections is that they have transferred this democratic election system for self-government into an urban setting, which in China does not have any equivalent form. Although such elections largely stay in the confines of the village company there can be no doubt that due to the overarching influence of the company, the elections have broader implications in every corner of the urban village community. Also, just like the rural setting, the urban village company election serves to check the power of the now urban village company leadership, as it did previously, for cadres.

Shenzhen urban village companies since their formation in the early 1990s have provided core structure for the urban village's continuous self-government by merging the functions of the urban village administration. As explained in Chapter 6, the urban village company of Shenzhen represents the collective wealth of the village. It generates income and profit though its projects that range from large scale rental operations of shops and markets, to operating hotels and constructing office buildings. It is the urban village companies that pump funding into social and cultural projects, such as the reconstruction, redecoration and maintenance of the ancestral lineage hall. It is the village company that pays the villager shareholders dividends and the exclusive welfare. In Huanggang, as with many other urban villages, the kindergarten, aged homes, lineage halls, library and community clinics are all maintained by their own Urban Village Company.

Furthermore, Shenzhen's village company employs, mobilizes and organizes the original villagers particularly the youth. For example, in the village of Huanggang, about half of the village company's staffs were young, original villagers. The employment of the original village youths represents a preservation of the village identity, by giving them responsibility via employment that serves the village. For example, Huanggang Village Company is now led by ZCY in his mid-30s. He was elected to the post of company chairman of Huanggang Village Company and succeeded his father ZSF in 2007. Upon receiving a BA degree from a Canadian university, he returned to the village to serve in the village company. He is what the Chinese people now colloquially called *haigui* or 'sea turtles', that is, foreign educated people who choose to return to China for employment. Since taking over the post in 2007, he has weathered the storm of global financial crisis in 2008 and overseen the completion of Huanggang Commercial Centre, a skyscraper office building in Shenzhen.

During my most recent travels back to Huanggang in 2011, I met with ZSFN, a capable young original villager employed in the Huanggang village company. With a Master's degree in management, he is an office administrator in the village company. He is from one of the most prominent families in Huanggang, the subject of gossip among original villagers because of his family's numerous property holdings and enormous wealth. In the popular stereotype of the idle urban village youth, people such as ZSFN are portrayed as idlers who just sit around and play mahjong all day. Instead, ZSFN has chosen to work for the company, on a medium level monthly salary of a few thousand yuan. He chose to take on his responsibility for the village. In his words, his job was much like a volunteer worker (*yiwulaodong*), but he enjoyed it (ZSFN, 6/7/2011). Similarly, there is the young original villager ZSB, in his late 20s. He is a current employee of the village company and the leader of the local branch of Communist Youth League. It is ZSB's duty to organize the local village youth and encourage them to participate in political activities such as seminars, debates and community wide mobilization for popular campaigns. They regularly hold periodic meetings discussing political ideologies, conditions in the village, and social issues. According to ZSB, the young villagers of his generation on average have technical college or regular university degrees, which bring them opportunities that

their parent's generation did not have. They are now in the majority of those who attending the shareholder meetings (ZSB 12/6/2010).

As a parallel structure to the local street office, the urban village company, as with the former village committees of the past, organize their own security teams that have evolved from the former village militias that were once very common in Shenzhen. Here, the village company not only provides income and welfare but also partially takes on responsibility in public safety. It also reinforces the notion of communal self-government by the original villagers, by challenging the stereotypes of high crime environment head-on. In street level observations during my visits to Huanggang village, the village security team fulfilled almost all the daily duties of the public security bureau, with physical presences in key commercial and cultural locations throughout the village. In fact, they looked like the police (public security personal) in their light green uniforms, reminiscent of public security personnel uniforms of the past decades.[17] They manned roadblocks at main road entrances to the village, which collect one time parking fee and record car license plate numbers for mainly car theft prevention, a rather common form of crime throughout the 1990s in Shenzhen. The roadblocks can effectively seal off the village to automobile and motorcycle transport in the case of major robbery, a system that appears to have become standard practice in many villages. In my own travels, I noted that, Shangsha, Xiasha, Buxin, and many other villages employed different versions of roadblock systems, partly to collect parking fee and partly for crime prevention purposes. They also do street patrols by foot, or on motorcycles. In addition to a well-manned security team, Huanggang is able to invest in a cutting edge CCTV surveillance system. I was taken by the former chief ZSF himself to their control centre, which is manned 24 hours and keeps watch over the village, using more than three dozen cameras, often mounted on top of the buildings at key points with rotating and zoom capabilities.

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[17] The current Chinese police (*Gongan*, Public Security) uniform is black.

Photo 47: The security monitoring room at Huanggang Village. Photo by author 2010

In order for the urban village communal self-governing model to work, the original villagers must prove that they can have live a harmonious coexistence, and interact with the rural–to-urban migrants who now make up the population majority in the villages. Throughout its existence, the urban village has not been just an empty shell of informal houses run by original villagers, but enclaves and safe shelters for rural to urban migrants. No matter, how one sugar coats it, the rural-to-urban migrant is a strongly prejudiced and disadvantage group of people, yet their numbers in the city have long exceeded the threshold of population control imposed by the *hukou* system. As demonstrated in chapter 5, the rural-to-urban migrants can have a very volatile relation with the original villagers and the general urban public. Hence harmonious relations between original villager and their migrant tenants are very important for the legitimacy of the urban village's communal self-government. The urban village can improve the inter-population relations, through their own initiative. The one particular method that Huanggang Village uses to smooth relations between migrants and original villagers is by encouraging migrants to work in the urban village company. In 2010, Huanggang Village Company employed about 60 per cent non-villagers, particularly those migrant residents living in the village. In Huanggang, the village militia was mostly made up of migrants, except at the

leadership levels. Still, this made a great difference when the low-level militia members were all migrants. As I observed during my repeated trips to Huanggang village, the militia members mostly of migrant backgrounds spoke accented Mandarin. They conversed quite casually with the local shopkeepers, hawkers, and peddlers. Because of the militia's migrant background, there is a sense of equality when conducting their duties with the migrants, who are also at ease when facing migrant security team members. There is no bullying, or collection of protection money by original villagers, as seen in the case of Chaozhou and Zengcheng's urban villages where the largely original villager manned security teams were responsible for escalating tensions between the populations, prior to the migrant riots (Xu 2011, Liu 2011).

Lastly, the urban villages cannot exist in a vacuum, isolated from outside contact. Despite their early and sometimes difficult relations with the city government and real estate developers, they must coexist with them. Sometimes, in order for the urban village to strengthen their case for self-government, they must take an active approach to promote their village, and combat stereotypes. In Huanggang village, the village company has launched several initiatives to promote their village's image in the eyes of the average Shenzhen main street citizens and officials. To this end, the Huanggang village readily employed and mobilizes its villager population who willingly participate in large organized events to support the village's collective public relations initiatives. The village held group Tai Chi exercise almost every day at the Huanggang square, led by professional instructors. The exercise was joined by a large number of elderly and female villager members, often numbering in the hundreds. Onlookers were free to join in. The village company also sends teams of villagers representing the village to compete at national and city level Tai Chi competitions (Zhuang Clan Association 2010). In more recent years, the village had spent much energy promoting the exercise of Tai Chi Ball, also called *Rouli Qiu*, a semi-meditational and dancing exercise based on Tai Chi. The village has won many prizes at the national level and is now one of national centres for this new sport. All of these efforts by the villagers are designed to increase the village's profile, and they appeared to have succeeded.

On the 23rd of August 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao visited Shenzhen to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Xinhua News Agency reported Wen's visit to Shenzhen in great detail. Among his various ceremonial stops in Shenzhen, the Premier visited Huanggang village. Such a visit by a head of state is highly choreographed for its symbolic values. Interpreting the visit in terms of Chinese social and political contexts, his visit highlighted Huanggang village's successes as a major achievement of the Shenzhen SEZ. The official story by Xinhua News Agency described the village as the following:

> Thirty years ago, the Huanggang villagers made less than nine *mao* (cents) daily on fishing and farming. Fleeing Hong Kong had become a popular activity among villagers. At its worst, there are only 16 people left in the village. Today's Huanggang is a land of high rises, beautiful environment and collective economic holding of more than 6 billion yuan. Every month, the average village has a dividend of 6000 Yuan. (Hu 2010)

Premier Wen led the Huanggang villagers in a Tai Chi ball exercise. It turned out he was also practitioner of Tai Chi Ball. After premier Wen's visit, a large photo of him practicing Ta Chi Ball with the villagers was erected in the village's public square.

Photo 48: Premier Wen leading Huanggang Village Women in a Tai Chi Ball exercise. (Source: Huanggang Real-estate Holding Company Ltd 2010)

Chapter Conclusion

The urban villages and their people are marred by stereotypes and negative perceptions. Some of the negative perceptions are partially based on realities such as high crime rates, untidy streets, crammed buildings and potential fire hazard issues. However, some of the stereotypes are uncalled for, particularly the accusations of the 'rentier' or 'peasant mentality' or *suzhi* of the villagers. The negative perceptions in part reflect the high modernist mentality of the local government and its mainstream urban populace. Their subjective views often overlook the efficient self-government administration success of the urban villagers themselves. In the latter part of this chapter, I chose to use Huanggang village to demonstrate that the Shenzhen urban village success acts as a counter to the negative perceptions. As seen in Huanggang, the village staffs, both young and old, are capable of administrating their village on par or beyond the average urban neighbourhood in China.

Conclusion

The city cannot keep the city planner all to itself; the countryside is crying out for him too. The country is the other city of tomorrow. Our cities are crammed to the bursting point with parasitic elements of population. Our city must be purged.

(Le Corbusier 1967, p.331)

What the urban villages of Shenzhen have had to contend with in the last thirty years since the foundation of the new city is a high modernist mindset of government officials and city planners, a mindset which has influenced all levels of power and all walks of life in China. For a long time, I had trouble describing this kind of mindset, the obsession of self-proclaimed backwardness and the relentless drive to catch up with the west and 'modernity' through the seemingly endless pursuit of technological progress, planning, and order. Growing up in Shenzhen, I remembered that I used to be able to ride my bike across two districts between Shenzhen middle school and Hongli Village. In present Shenzhen, there is simply no such luxury because bike traffic was at first discouraged and eventually banned on the main street, in accordance with the high modernist ways of separating pedestrian/bicycle and automobile traffic. A lot has changed in the city I grew up in, and in the urban villages.

The creeping effect of a high modernist inspired policy is also threatening the urban villages of Shenzhen. The urban villages struggle for zones of autonomy in the city is obviously at odds with the interests of local city government and property developers (Hsing 2010, pp. 125-158). The urban village stands out as a problem in the high modernist vision in so many ways. It is a zone of self-constructed, informal housing by the original rural villagers who were developing their land in accordance with the central planning of the city. It is a zone of migrant residence that is now at odds with the high modernist obsession with population control. Yet after all these years, urban villages are still standing, and functioning in the same manner as they did since their formation.

I began this thesis with the following question in mind: can the urban village sufficiently function in Shenzhen and continue to do so in future? I questioned the urban villages' sustainability and survivability in the long term. In addition, if the urban village in Shenzhen can successfully adapt to the political challenges of high modernist thinking, could other urban villages in China follow their lead? Since then, I have gathered many facts and perceptions of the urban villages in Shenzhen. Quite confidently, I will suggest that a great many of the urban villages will remain largely in their present form. This is largely due to the strength of the original villagers' collective identity, their administrative organizations (urban village companies) and the role they play housing the migrant population in the city for which the local government lacks a feasible alternative. There will be exceptions; some villages will struggle and perhaps vanish in the face of relentless high modernist inspired urban renewal schemes.

Lessons from Shenzhen's Urban Village

The urban village remains a complex phenomenon, much more than the 'urban' and 'village' implied in its name. It is rather difficult to evaluate the urban village as a success, failure or to put a quality tag on the urban villages. They have a great variety of existing forms that vary across China and even across districts in Shenzhen. Thus it is very hard to speak of a definitive urban village model. To me, there simply is not a one-size-fits-all model for urban village development. As seen in the discussion on urban village companies, the development of urban villages is indeed limited to geographical and socio-cultural factors. The village company leadership perform very differently across villages, just as corporations in the market economy perform differently. The room for error, strategic mistakes, even corruption, are great in some of the companies. Hence the success of Shenzhen's urban village company is not guaranteed. Increasingly, some urban villages are becoming specialist villages, be it in terms of artistic production, food and beverage, tourism, light industry or entertainment. In addition, there are aspects of

Shenzhen's urban village that other regions simply cannot copy. As I demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 8, there is indeed a discrepancy in terms of urban village companies in China. Not all regions have them. In some regions like Zhejiang, there is an inherent cultural resistance to urban village companies. In some of the northern Chinese cities the urban villages were simply unable to form village companies in the first place. It is only in the Pearl River Delta region where the urban village company has been able to form and thrive. Notably, the urban villages of Guangzhou and Shenzhen are some of the most powerful in China. It is also no coincidence that the urban villages in this region have better protected their village traditions and cultural heritage. Hence, we are faced with an interesting correlation between local cultural identity, village companies and subsequent cultural protection. As the evidence in this thesis suggests, the lineage tradition and its resurgence of this tradition after the economic reform in the Pearl River Delta region might have contributed to the very unique strength of the local villages and the village owned companies (Hsing 2010, pp. 125-158).

Although the village companies are modern joint-stock corporations, they strangely echo the air of collectivism of the past. This can be seen in their company's leadership, dividends distribution, lineage duties, support for villager welfare and community mobilization. Among Shenzhen's urban villages, there is indeed an interesting correlation between successful urban villages and their collective organization. More specifically, the control over collectively owned land and the step-by-step careful development of these lands are crucial to the long term wellbeing of the village company and their urban villages. The collective nature of the urban village community is truly a strange phenomenon in the increasingly individualized and privatized Chinese society as suggested by Yan Yunxiang (2009). For the urban villagers, individualization will only serve to scatter them and erase them from the urban future of Shenzhen. Individualized urban villagers are essentially the 'nail residents' during the urban renewal *chaiqian* process, who either received compensation during the urban renewal process, or are being brutally evicted by the combined force of the local government and real estate developers. Either way, the individualized urban villager will mean the end of the urban village and the identity of urban villagers. It would signal the final absorption of the urban villages

into the high modernist city where the urban villagers and their descendants will only be known as 'citizen such and such' and nothing more.

The very essence of the urban village is its people. More precisely, the urban villagers are two groups of people. One group is the original villagers, the locals, the natives, and rightful owners of the land in the village. To use a very Chinese way of conceptualizing this, the original villagers are the 'bone and skeleton' of the urban village. They and their organization provided the form of the urban village. However, the modern form of urban village is largely populated and powered by the migrants who are the 'muscles and tendons.' Their rent paid to the villager owned informal housing makes up the main income of the urban village. Their service and their labour to the village company owned organs are also of vital importance to the continuous existence of the urban village. Hence, the future of the urban village is dependent on the cooperation of these two groups of villagers. Any successful village must achieve a kind of balance between these two groups.

The original villagers' relation with migrants is a somewhat more difficult one to determine. In my estimation, it is a tense one at best in Shenzhen or in any other urban villages of China. There are indeed emerging hidden transcripts among the migrants. The migrants are very sensitive about their standing in the urban villages where they provide both the labour and the capital, in the form of rent. Thirty years ago, the peasants of Shenzhen and the peasants everywhere else in China were very much the same, with minor differences in modes of production. Today, it seems that that the original villagers and the migrants are two entirely different classes of people crowded together within the confines of the urban villages where live. Some old ideologies of class struggle die hard. Some migrants will see the original villagers as the 'old land lord' from the pre-communist era, which is a powerful symbol in Chinese communism, which used the rural countryside as their resurgent base, and land reform campaign as a chief recruitment tool. Since 1949, officially there are no landlords left anywhere in the new People's Republic of China. However, the original villagers of the urban villages are essentially a new

landlord class of a more urbanised China. In the urban village, many migrants view the original villagers negatively as the exploitive class of the past. The migrants in their passive resistance often gossip about the original villagers behind their back calling them lazy, useless and exploitive.

The inherent exploitative position of the urban village landlords over their migrant tenants cannot be changed in any urban villages. However, there are indeed ways to better improve original villager's relations with migrants. Recruiting migrants for the village security team is a good start. As mentioned in Chapter Five, many migrant riots in Guangdong province were escalated by poorly managed village security teams, made up of the original villagers. During physical confrontation it could quickly turn into an us-versus-them situation between the clannish original villagers and the much more numerous migrants. By employing migrants in the village security team, the once clear line of provincial and regional allegiance is blurred. The routine patrol by the village company run security team is no longer seen as the equivalent of "native gangsters" collecting protection fees, as in many other Chinese urban villages. Interaction between security teams and the migrants is also much more relaxed and friendly. Such opportunities are not limited to the security team. The urban village company can also employ skilful migrants as regular company employees. The migrant employees of the urban village company often know the need of other migrants better and are respectful because of their similar economic circumstances and provincial cultural background. In Huanggang village, I witnessed firsthand how this has improved urban village social relations.

Reflecting on the Dual Identity of Urban Villagers

Much of this thesis has been focused on the original villagers, their history, changes to their lifestyle, the methods of production, their collectives, their emotions and their success. I recall interviewing various urbanites living outside the urban village in

Shenzhen. They often prejudicially referred to the original villagers simply as '*nongmin*' (farmers). They called them farmers even though there is no more farmland left in the urban villages. When they used the term 'farmers' they were not emphasizing the positive connotation of farmers, but the *hukou*-based caste-like status of being a lower class, with the common prejudicial adage: 'once a farmer, always a farmer.' Even after thirty years of the urbanisation process, being a legitimate citizen of Shenzhen, the original villagers still could not shake off the old prejudicial labels associated with the *hukou* system. At the end of the day, the urban villagers are still struggling with their dual identities of being rural and urban.

However, there is still the acceptance issue by urbanites living outside the village, who continue to view the original villagers as a kind of 'other.' The mainstream urbanite's prejudice stems from a mixture of jealousy and ideological prejudice. On jealousy, the urban village's original villagers are on average richer than the salary-based urban middle class. While the average Chinese citizen's lifelong urban China dream was to own an average-sized eighty-square-metre apartment in a big city such as Shenzhen, the original villager may own up to several apartment buildings with dozens of average size apartment units for lease, while having a much larger living space in their own buildings. The blocks of informal buildings and their zones of collectively owned land made them the 'born landlords' of the city. Hence, here we have a case very close to the concept of class monopoly rent (Harvey 1985, pp. 62-72). Some were even able to support a middle-class lifestyle in Hong Kong. Hence, many urbanites share the migrants' hidden transcript that portrays the urban villagers as parasitic, lazy, and unjustifiably wealthy.

However, the label of *nongmin* (peasants) is not exactly rejected by the urban villagers. One surprising thing I learned while interviewing the original villagers was that despite the scorn of urbanites calling them 'peasants', many of them are fiercely proud of their agrarian past. In fact, they are quite proud of their previous ability to grow food and to physically labour for an "honest living" (ZSF 24/6/2010). Hence the absorption of the

new city and the whole scale abolishment of the village administration was not exactly something that the villagers supported. They were forced to adapt to it.

Potential Futures of Urban Villages

The urban village is facing a strong tide of high modernism, driven by local government and urban planners. Since, the reforms in China there have endless drives toward a high modernist model of modernization. At the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in 1978 and around the time of the birth of Shenzhen City, Deng Xiaoping summarized his approach to China's future development and the economic reform as 'the four modernization' policy, targeting the areas of agriculture, industry, defence, and science. More than thirty years have passed since then and China has made great strides in all these areas, and of course now has to deal with all the problems that accompany 'modernisation'. Aside from the great modernization program, one aspect that has changed the most at the visual level has been the cities themselves. In China, the endless drive towards modernity has been accompanied by seemingly endless urbanisation. The Chinese cities are great reflections of China's aspirations of high modernism. In this regard, the Chinese city is the antithesis of the Chinese village. This is the contrast between the *tu* (earthy, Chinese [local] and traditional) and *yang* (oceanic, western, and modern). The Chinese city represented control, order, and planning. The city in its idealised form represents the state and all its high modernist aspirations in efficiency, industrialization and technology. It should be said that high modernism is a shared value in China, not just among the elites but urbanites in general who, to varying degrees, are prejudiced against anything rural in appearance both in human and community terms, as *tu* and backward.

The urban villages represent the very opposite of the high modernist urban vision. They are perceived as not only crowded, unplanned, dirty, slum-like, but also unsafe and unsightly. In addition, with all its residents who are fresh-off-the-train migrants and

traditional, rural peasants, the urban villages remind the urbanite living in the rest of the city how close the backward earthy China still remains to them. Giving this contrast, it is no wonder the urban villages are often deemed the most preferable target for urban renewal by local governments in their campaigns to uplift the city image. According to the authorities, only when the urban village is completely gone, can the Chinese city shed its peasant characteristics and rural remnants. As the borders of Chinese cities stop expanding, more focus will be devoted to making better cities, as intended in the slogan of the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai: 'better city, better life.' For the local government, there is an almost systematic purge and elimination of the urban villages from the beautiful main streets lined with skyscrapers and high-end shopping malls. The high modernist city cannot coexist with shabby slum like migrant inhabited districts. For real estate developers, the urban village represented a zone of profit. Urban villages are opportunities for real estate developers of different sizes and stages of development in their urban renewal projects. As seen in Chapter Six, the urban villages' renewal project is where some future real estate tycoons began their careers. It is also where large established real estate developers undertake their signature monumental projects when they turn whole villages into demolition and construction grounds. Through their money and organization, the urban villages have been redeveloped and renewed in their ideals for a new urban China, a semi-high modernist but mainly profit driven location, with increasingly unaffordable housing prices. In a way, Shenzhen is turning into Hong Kong, her sister city.

The phenomenon of the urban village is a micro-representation of the so-called Chinese economic miracle. It is where the urban China dreams of countless migrants begin. In Jonathan Bach's short article 'Shenzhen, City of Suspended Possibilities', the author explains the experience of migrants discovering Shenzhen as an act of searching for a dream. To be specific, this is not just the rags-to-riches Chinese version of the American Dream, but the urban China dream. It is a dream of been accepted by the city of their residence and employment. This is the eventual goal of countless migrants living and working in the urban villages that now hold for them a type of transitional home quality. In reality, the migrants' urban china dreams are still well contained within the borders of

the urban villages, but no one can stop them from looking through the narrow divides of the urban village informal housings and aspiring to be part of that shining glassy city in the background. Interestingly, the original villagers are also searching for acceptance by the mainstream urban public. For long, they have been the targets of vicious defamation campaigns where they were called names ranging from "low *suzhi* peasant" to "rentier parasites" and their children the "idle youths." The urban villages' original villagers despite maintaining a fierce and proud rural collective identity want their presence in the city to remain, a kind of semi-autonomous community within the greater urban frame work. There is no way for them to reject the city which is simply too powerful and all around them. What they strive for is coexistence and acceptance.

The urban village is at a cross-road. In Shenzhen, many villages have experienced complete take over by urban renewal which left only token symbols of the village, such as subway station place names, hotel names, or an occasional local shrine. Alternatively the process could go the way of Huanggang, being transformed into modern cooperation and semi-autonomous entity, with better protection of cultural heritage, community, and most importantly with their future resting in their own hands. During my last visit to Huanggang village, ZCY, the young chairman of Huanggang Village Company showed me their village's future development blueprint, drafted by the village company. I could not help but notice the high modernist designs in the blue prints, the computer generated graphics with high rise apartments, wide streets, green belts, separation of pedestrian zone and automobile traffic straight out of "Voisin" Plan of Paris that was so lauded by Le Corbusier (1967, p. 206). At that moment I realized the resistance of the urban village toward high modernism might eventually end. The "barbarians" have finally embraced the custom of their "civilizers." Interestingly, what the local government and real estate developers have tried so hard to force upon the urban villagers without success were eventually adopted by the urban villagers themselves when they arrived at a position of power and wealth. The urban villagers in their thirty years of corporate evolution have eventually arrived at their own stage of adopting high modernism planning, on their own terms. After viewing his blueprint of the village's new development for the next twenty years I asked him: 'Would there still be a Huanggang village in next one hundred years?'

He answered: 'As long as Huanggang still exists in in the minds of Huanggang villagers' descendants, there will be a Huanggang village, no matter what physical form it will take' (ZCY 22/11/2010). Here, the village has become a symbol for the villagers. Its existence is dependent on the villagers themselves. As long as there are urban villagers left and continue to live on their ancestral land, the village will continue to exist, in imagined form. Being 'urban' is only its present form. What remains unchanged is the spirit of the village that comes to define the urban villages of Shenzhen.

Photo 49: This future blueprint of Huanggang village has numerous of high modernist traits in its planning.
Courtesy of Huanggang Real-estate Holding Company Ltd 2010

In summary, Shenzhen's urban villages and their counterparts in the rest of China are clinging on to their current semi-urban informal existence in the high modernist Chinese cities. They are able to do so because of their organization, collective identities and attempts to self-govern. Some of the more successful urban villages have adapted to their urban existence with ease, and even openly embrace their own high modernist designs for their villages. This is not to say that all of them will succeed as prosperous urban communities backed up by their own powerful village companies. There is the chance that many urban villages will fail due to mismanagement. The once transitional nature of the urban village is changing. They can never return to their agrarian village days, which

remain a powerful ideological and romantic symbol for the villagers, the pride of hard labouring days producing one's own food. The urban villages have to move forward, maintain their unique community of migrant tenants and embrace the urban life with all of its prejudice; otherwise, they face extinction, by being literally demolished under the guise and justification of urban renewal.

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Notes on Interviewees

Female taxi driver in Shangsha Village	12/2008
ZSF, former village chief/village company chairman Huanggang village	12/2008
ZCY, current village company chairman Huanggang village	12/2008
News Stand Lady Baishizhou Village	16/1/2010
Cleaning Lady in Baishizhou Village	16/1/2010
LDS, district government official	23/1/2010
ZN, Real estate Company Clerk on urban renewal project	12/5/2010
LZ, original Villager of Buxin Village	4/6/2010
ZMG, Female former Huanggang village Cadre	12/6/2010
ZJN, Male Huanggang Villager and Former Company Clerk	12/6/2010
ZSB, Male Huanggang Villager Youth Organizer	12/6/2010
ZXH, Manager of Huanggang Village Company	12/6/2010

Sign makers in Huanggang Village   22/6/2010

Male Rubbish Recycling Collector   22/6/2010

Local Restaurant Manager Male Migrant   22/6/2010

Male Migrant Street Cleaner   22/6/2010

Male Migrant Flower Shop Clerk   22/6/2010

Female Migrant Unemployed   23/6/2010

Female Original Villager at Huanggang Village with Child   23/6/2010

Migrant Teenager Couple at Huanggang Village Square   23/6/2010

Hong Kong Resident at Huanggang Village   24/6/2010

ZSF at Huanggang Village   24/6/2010

LZ's Cousin, Female Original Villager of Buxin Village   29/6/2010

Security Team Chief Buxin Village   29/6/2010

Vice Security Team Chief Buxin Village   29/6/2010

LHG, village company manager of Wutongshan village	29/6/2010
LWH, Old Village Chief of Buxin village	29/6/2010
Migrant Employee at Huanggang's McDonalds	19/11/2010
ZSF after PM Wen's Visit	22/11/2010
Chen Hua, Chairman of Kingkey Group	6/12/2010
Lin Ke, Chairman of Gemsdale Group	12/12/2010
HYC, Village Company Chairman of Xiasha Village	8/1/2011
HJC, nephew of HYC	8/1/2011
ZSFN, Huanggang Village Company office administrator	6/7/2011
LXX, retired city government official	9/1/2012