Prior to the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949 the formal apparatus of the Chinese imperial state rarely extended below the hsien, or county level. There was, in effect, 'local self government' and in certain parts of China this meant rule by powerful, localized descent groups. While some Chinese patrilineages remained small and politically insignificant, others grew until they resembled petty states. These large lineage organizations, which I prefer to call 'dominant lineages', made dependents out of neighbours, controlled market centers, and maintained their own militias and local defence corps. In this paper the formation of one such dominant lineage is described in detail.

China is one of the few places in the world where anthropologists can trace the formation and development of specific descent groups through many generations, even centuries. This is possible because of the rich documentation available both in the form of county histories (gazetteers) and genealogies. Using these sources one can often determine how and when a specific descent group came into existence. The historical perspective not only provides insights into the development of Chinese
This paper focuses on a dominant lineage of the surname Teng. The Teng are settled in the village of Ha Tsuen, in the northwest corner of Hong Kong's New Territories. Although groups of Teng households were established in a number of neighbouring hamlets as early as the fourteenth century, the available evidence indicates that these households were not drawn into a unified lineage until the mid-eighteenth century. In 1749 Teng householders established an ancestral hall by subscription. This hall which was completed in 1751 was called Yu Kung T'ang ('Hall of Fraternal Reverence'). It was endowed with land, which from 1751 onwards, was held corporately by all those Teng males who joined in the initial subscription. The lineage at Ha Tsuen was formed by a process that involved the fusion of previously independent households and groups. In an important sense Yu Kung T'ang is the Teng lineage at Ha Tsuen. By establishing Yu Kung T'ang the Teng organized themselves into a religious, political, and economic community. Yu Kung T'ang became the framework through which large-scale economic and political activities were undertaken. Furthermore, the hall controlled the lineage's self-defence corps which was responsible for the Teng's domination of a 15 square-mile territory, the hsiang (or sub-district) surrounding Ha Tsuen.

There is little doubt that a 'patrilineal bias' permeates Chinese society. This bias is evident in the forms and patterns of Chinese inheritance, marriage, and residence. However, the importance of patriliney as an overriding ideological principle does not imply that the Chinese are necessarily organized into patrilineal descent groups. Not all of the population of pre-revolutionary China were members of corporate kin groups, and of those who were only a fraction were members of dominant lineages. Nevertheless, these powerful lineages had an influence on the political and economic life of South China out of all proportion to their numerical strength.

Anthropologists have suggested a number of different factors which they believe account for the origin of large patrilineages in China. For example, Maurice Freedman maintained that they are an outgrowth of a frontier environment where cooperation and mutual protection were

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2 Ha Tsuen Hsiang Shih Nien Yi Chieh T'ai P'ing Ch'ing Chiao (Ha Tsuen District Decennial Purificatory Sacrifice). Published in Hong Kong New Territories (1974).

3 In this paper 'patrilineal descent group' refers to a set of males linked by demonstrated descent. The group maintains corporate property and makes up a ritual community based on the worship of common ancestors.
imperative. Freedman believed that the cooperation involved in the development of irrigated rice fields was an important factor in the expansion of China’s descent groups. Based on material gathered in Taiwan, Burton Pasternak has challenged Freedman’s ‘frontier thesis’. Pasternak found that lineages became important only after frontier conditions subsided and agricultural settlements were stabilized. Aside from these very general comments on the origin of large-scale and powerful patrilineages, there has been little discussion of the actual formation and development of specific descent groups. Little attention has been paid to local conditions, the political and economic contexts, within which lineages are established.

Underlying many studies of Chinese patrilineages is the assumption that the development of corporate descent groups is unproblematic. The dominant view is characterized by an ahistorical outlook and is based, I believe, on the idea that lineages develop by a ‘natural’ process of fission: a man leaves his community and sets up a domestic unit which grows and eventually becomes a new lineage. Maurice Freedman writes: ‘I think we must assume that the desire to form a single lineage in one village territory is a motive given in the system. Where there is enough land, a nucleus of agnates strive to build themselves up to form a large homogeneous settlement’. According to this view, demonstrated descent and common residence are sufficient, given the availability of land, to ‘explain’ the formation of patrilineages. In the case of the Ha Tsuen

7 Some historians, most notably Denis Twitchett in his essay ‘The Fan Clan’s Charitable Estate, 1050–1760’, in Confucianism in Action, ed. D. Nivison and A. Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959) and Hilary Beattie in her Land and Lineage in China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), have provided insightful and careful accounts of lineage development in central China. Although these studies are extremely valuable we do not know how the lineages they describe fit into the local environment. Are they localized or non-localized, do they have demonstrated descent or not, do they have a village base, how are they involved in the local political scene? It is therefore difficult to compare their findings with my own. This is not meant to be critical of Twitchett and Beattie, for they are interested in a different set of questions from those which concern me in this paper.
8 Freedman, Chinese Lineage and Society, p. 8.
9 In Chinese Lineage and Society, chs 1 and 6, Freedman develops his ideas about lineage
Teng, common descent and common residence long predated the foundation of a unified lineage. Only after three centuries of settlement did Teng householders unite to form a corporate descent group.

In this paper I wish to focus on the political and economic context in which the Teng established themselves as a dominant lineage. The formation of the Ha Tsuen Teng dramatically emphasizes the importance of understanding kinship (in this case patriliny) as a social phenomenon. In my view, lineage formation in China is not so much a matter of residence and ‘biology’ as it is of politics and economics. As the historian Hilary Beattie in her study *Land and Lineage in China* has said: ‘The question to be asked is, therefore, why some kinsmen descended from a common ancestor organized themselves effectively in this way [into large lineages] and not others. It is all too often taken for granted that the Chinese lineage was a product of “natural growth”’.10

Based on the data presented here I argue that the Teng lineage at Ha Tsuen emerged in response to an economic boom in the Canton Delta. Patrilineal descent and localized descent groups were part of the cultural repertoire available to the Teng, but powerful and wealthy patrilineages do not just ‘grow’. In a society where patrilineal descent does not exhaust the organizational possibilities, the historical context within which lineages developed becomes important. This paper does not pretend to be more than an investigation into the formation of one lineage, but it does, I believe, suggest some general ways of thinking about the Chinese lineage. It is likely, I suggest, that future research into the history of specific lineages will show that many of the patterns found in Ha Tsuen are by no means unique. In fact, there is already some

formation as a process of fission and segmentation. In one of his last published works, however, he accepts the possibility of lineage formation by fusion in Taiwan. Freedman writes: ‘Whereas, therefore, the process of lineage formation on the mainland is seen as a matter of segmentation—a small agnatic group growing and gradually becoming differentiated internally by the emergence of new segments, and segments within segments, as in the simple model constructed earlier in this essay—in Taiwan, lineages appear to have come about by a process of fusion, independent units being welded together.’ He then goes on to conclude this discussion by suggesting: ‘A more sophisticated model of the foundation and growth of the Chinese lineage . . . might then include, before the phase of elaborate internal differentiation, a phase during which scattered elements are brought together (territorially and genealogically, or at least genealogically) to form the lineage to begin with.’ See Maurice Freedman, ‘The Politics of an Old State: A View from the Chinese Lineage’, in *Choice and Change: Essays in Honour of Lucy Mair*, ed. John Davis (London: Athlone Press, 1974), pp. 79–81. In the present paper I show how a mainland Kwangtung lineage was formed by fusion, and I relate this formation to the economic and political conditions of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

evidence that another New Territories lineage has a number of features in common with the Teng of Ha Tsuen. In John Mathias’s brief account of the formation of the Teng lineage at Kam Tin, one finds some interesting parallels to the patterns described in this paper.11

**Ha Tsuen and the Canton Delta**

The village of Ha Tsuen lies along the tidal lands of Deep Bay in the Pearl River estuary (see Map 1). Ha Tsuen is part of the Canton Delta complex which came under Chinese rule during the Han dynasty, 206 B.C.—A.D. 221.12 The delta, however, was not settled by ethnic Chinese in

11 John Mathias, ‘A study of the *jiao*, A Taoist Ritual, in Kam Tin, in Hong Kong New Territories’ (D.Phil. Thesis, Anthropology, Oxford University, 1977). In this paper I stress the view of Teng history held by the people of Ha Tsuen. Readers are advised to see Mathias for details of the Kam Tin Teng point of view. The ‘Ha Tsuen Teng’ and the ‘Kam Tin Teng’ are members of the same higher-order-lineage and their two villages are separated by about six miles.

any significant numbers until the great southward expansion of the Sung and Southern Sung dynasties, 960–1279. Prior to this the delta was largely inhabited by aboriginals, although the city of Canton itself was an important commercial center as early as the seventh century. By the time of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) Han Chinese, mostly descendants of migrants from north China, and sinicized aboriginals were very largely in control of the area. For hundreds of years the people living in the Canton Delta have considered themselves to be ethnically Chinese. Prior to 1898 the area that included the village of Ha Tsuen formed the southern flank of Kwangtung province’s Hsin An County. In that year the British leased the ‘New Territories’, as the region is now called, from the Chinese government. Before this date the whole of Hsin An County was under the administrative umbrella of Kwang-chou prefecture and during the Sung and Ming dynasties it came to be heavily populated by Cantonese and Hakka speaking Chinese.

All males in Ha Tsuen, save a handful of shopkeepers, share the same surname (Teng) and trace descent to a common ancestor who settled in southern Kwangtung during the twelfth century. According to their own calculations the Teng of Ha Tsuen are now in their twentieth generation of local residence. In 1970 Ha Tsuen had a population of about 2500 people, all Cantonese speakers. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Ha Tsuen was the general name for a complex of eleven hamlets. These hamlets are in close proximity to each other and, in fact, form a protective circle around some of the best rice land in the region. The Ha Tsuen complex dominates a network of fourteen satellite villages whose (non-Teng) residents were once tenants of Teng landlords. These satellites were subject to Ha Tsuen’s political control and even now many remain under Ha Tsuen’s ‘protection’. The ‘Ha Tsuen Teng’ were not, however, always the highly unified and powerful lineage that they are today.

**Teng Settlement in Ha Tsuen**

The ancestors of contemporary Teng first settled in the New Territories region in the early part of the twelfth century. Teng Fu-hsieh, a chin shih degree holder, was appointed magistrate of Yang Ch’un County in Kwangtung during the reign of Emperor Ch’ung Ning (1102–06). According to a Teng family history he was so taken with the beauty, and

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with the geomantic possibilities, of the southern coast of Kwangtung that he decided to settle there upon his retirement from official life.\textsuperscript{14} He returned to his native Kiangsi and exhumed the remains of his great grandparents and grandparents and removed them to what was then Tung Kuan County (Hsin An was not made into a separate county until 1573 when Tung Kuan was divided in two). Fu-hsieh set up residence near the present-day village of Kam Tin (see Map 1)\textsuperscript{15} which was to become the parent community for most of the Teng in Hsin An County.

According to villagers, three Teng (two brothers, Hung-sheng and Hung-hui, and their father’s brother’s son’s son, FFBSS, Hung-chih, see Figure 1) moved from Kam Tin to the Ha Tsuen area in the fourteenth century. They settled on the northwest fringe of the fertile Yuen Long rice plain. When the Teng arrived in this area, a community of people surnamed Tu were already in possession of part of the plain. The Tu were very successful and wealthy because, it is reported, their village was sited in such a way that it took advantage of the excellent geomantic influences which flowed from the hills behind the settlement. One of the Teng founders, some villagers credit Hung-hui and others Hung-chih, managed to cut the Tu people off from their mystical source of success and so sealed their eventual downfall. According to local accounts, soon after their arrival the Teng found themselves in effective control of the rich lands surrounding their settlements. The Tu have long since disappeared from the Ha Tsuen area.

The Teng originally settled in two distinct hamlets, Tung Tao Tsuen and Tseung Kong Wai, which are separated by a distance of about half a mile. Soon after moving to the Ha Tsuen area one of the brothers, Hung-sheng, or some of his descendants (present-day villagers are themselves uncertain about this point) moved to the vicinity of Tung Kuan city where other Teng kinsmen were already living. Later, some of Hung-sheng’s descendants returned to Ha Tsuen, but for reasons which will be discussed below, they have never been fully accepted into the lineage or community.\textsuperscript{16} When the Teng themselves speak of the ‘Ha Tsuen Teng’ they refer only to the descendants of Hung-hui and Hung-chih.

\textsuperscript{14} ‘Kam Tin Teng Chia P’u’ (Kam Tin Teng Family History), Vol. 2 (Manuscript, n.d.). Hong Kong University Library.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Some present-day Teng report that Hung-sheng himself moved from the Ha Tsuen area to the vicinity of Tung Kuan City, while others say that it was descendants of Hung-sheng who made this move (at some unspecified date). The various stories do suggest, however, that at least some of Hung-sheng’s descendants have lived in Ha Tsuen since the fourteenth century.
Fig. 1. Outline of Teng genealogy.

At about the same time that the Ha Tsuen settlement was taking shape, another group of Teng were establishing the neighboring village of Ping Shan (see Map I). Ping Shan is located about a mile east of Ha Tsuen. The Ping Shan Teng and the Ha Tsuen Teng both trace descent from Teng Fu-hsieh who first settled near Kam Tin. The two communities, therefore, are along with Kam Tin members of the same higher-order-lineage complex. The patrilineal link between Ha

17 On Ping Shan Teng see Jack Potter, Capitalism and the Chinese Peasant: Social and Economic Change in a Hong Kong Village (Berkeley: University of California, 1968).

18 According to Maurice Freedman, in his Chinese Lineage and Society, pp. 20–1, a higher-order-lineage is made up of local lineages. '[T]he ancestors of these lineages are all descended agnatically from a common ancestor, the whole unit in turn being focused on an ancestral hall or other piece of property.'
Tsuen and Ping Shan has not, however, tempered the enmity with which they have regarded each other for most of their history. The Ping Shan Teng like the Teng of Ha Tsuen have organized themselves into a dominant lineage which controls a hinterland of smaller villages inhabited by non-Teng. The two lineages constantly encroached on each other’s lands and many battles were fought across the small river which divides their respective territories.\(^{19}\)

In the hsiang immediately to the south of Ha Tsuen yet another complex of hamlets was being established. This community was first settled by people of the surname T’ao during the middle of the Ming dynasty.

It is very unlikely that the Teng were ever in sole possession of the western Yuen Long plain, for within three or four generations of their initial settlement a number of farming communities had grown up in the area. In fact, some of these villages were established along the fringe of Teng settlement. According to a local history compiled by the Yuen Long District Office,\(^{20}\) the present-day villages of Ngau Hom and Shek Po were first settled in 1456 and 1531 respectively. These villages are less than half a mile from the Teng hamlet of Tung Tao Tsuen. Most newcomers to the district (Ha Tsuen hsiang) had to settle on inferior land, for once Teng landholders gained control over the best paddy lands they never relinquished their hold.

For the first few generations of Teng settlement there was a certain amount of residential instability. During this period at least two groups (aside from Hung-sheng’s group) moved out of the immediate Ha Tsuen area, in one case to a coastal settlement about two miles away (Mong Tseng Wai), and in the other to an area beyond the hills about five miles distant (Tsz Tin, now in Tuen Mun District). However, both these communities continue to maintain regular contact with their Teng kinsmen in Ha Tsuen by participating in lineage rituals.

**Hsin An and Ha Tsuen in the Eighteenth Century**

Unfortunately little is known about fifteenth-century Ha Tsuen. However, beginning with the late sixteenth century there is a marked change

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both in the quality and quantity of information about the village and its residents. Present-day villagers recount a number of stories and legends about their seventeenth-century Teng ancestors, and documentary evidence is much improved. For the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries local documents include temple inscriptions, genealogical accounts, and the Hsin An gazetteer which was published in 1688 and again in 1819. According to the 1819 revision of the gazetteer, the population of Hsin An county was just under 34,000 at the end of the sixteenth century.21

Generally in China the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries constituted a period of considerable economic growth. Macao, located about fifty miles across the Pearl River estuary from Ha Tsuen, became an important port for the importation of silver during the late sixteenth century.22 How this trade affected the hinterland of the estuary remains to be documented. We do know, however, that during the mid-seventeenth century the people of Hsin An were forced to undergo great hardships. This was a time of increasing confusion and dynastic upheaval. During three or four decades prior to 1669 there was a steady decline in population caused, according to the gazetteer, by disease and banditry.

According to local accounts, however, the Ha Tsuen area did have at least one prominent and wealthy family in the early part of the seventeenth century. Villagers enjoy telling stories about this wealthy salt producer and merchant who lived in Tung Tao Tsuen and was, of course, surnamed Teng. He was so rich, the stories say, that he had a basket of silver delivered to his door everyday. While these stories are clearly exaggerated, they do suggest that by this time some of the marshes near Ha Tsuen had been converted into salt pans. The salt merchant and his family were forced to flee Tung Tao Tsuen in the mid-seventeenth century because, it is said, they were suspected of collusion with Ming loyalists. Presumably they had angered China's new rulers, the Manchus. This was by no means the last time the people of Ha Tsuen were to suffer during the ensuing period of dynastic change.

For the seventeenth century the Hsin An gazetteer reads like a catalogue of misfortune and disaster. The people of Hsin An suffered

21 Hsin-an Hsien-chih (Hsin-an County Gazetteer) (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Reprint Series, 1819), p. 269. It is difficult to know how accurate the population figures presented in the gazetteer are, but I would suggest that they provide an indication of population trends. For a detailed discussion of population figures during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties see Ho Ping-ti, Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).

22 William Atwell, 'Notes on Silver, Foreign Trade, and the Late Ming Economy', Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i, Vol. 8 (1977).
attacks from pirates and bandits and they were racked by disease. In 1630 many people died from an epidemic, and in 1648 another epidemic coupled with a severe drought enveloped the area. According to the gazetteer conditions were so desperate in 1648 that people resorted to cannibalism and rice sold for ten times more than in previous years.23 In the 1650s a Ming loyalist who had turned to banditry caused considerable problems in the area.24 The population of Hsin An is given as 33,971 people in 1573. By 1643 this figure had dropped to 17,871 and during the period from 1662 to 1669 the population fell to an incredibly low 2,172.25 It is not surprising that many fortifications were constructed and walls were put up around villages during this period.26

In the 1660s a devastating blow fell on the people of Hsin An County and other coastal areas in China. In an attempt to quell Cheng Ch’eng-kung (Koxinga), a famous and powerful rebel, the K’ang Hsi Emperor ordered coastal communities to evacuate their homes and move inland.27 This scorched earth policy caused great hardship, and many people died during the period of retreat. The fortunate ones among the Teng drew back to Tung Kuan City and hoped for the best. In 1669, due to the intercession of two imperial officials,28 local Hsin An people were allowed to return to their homes. Although this forced migration created great dislocation, it appears that many former inhabitants were able to reoccupy their homes in 1669. During the period immediately following the evacuation Teng landholders did have to keep a watchful eye over their holdings, both because of the threat from interlopers who had drifted into the area during the disruption, and perhaps more importantly, from the encroachment of powerful neighbours like the Ping Shan Teng. Hugh Baker suggests that in some parts of Hsin An a scramble for land developed in the years after 1669.29 During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was heavy immigration into

29 Baker, Sheung Shui, p. 41.
Hsin An from other parts of Kwangtung, and the population began to increase rapidly.

In the century following the evacuation, I suggest that a pattern of stratification developed which was to continue well into the twentieth century. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a few lineage communities came to dominate the region, each of which had among their membership a small core of wealthy merchants and large landholders who made up a regional élite. These merchant-landlords were a major political force both in their own communities and in the region as a whole. I do not mean to suggest that after 1669 a group of dominant lineages suddenly appeared and proceeded to impose their will on their neighbours. Obviously this was not the case, for some lineage organizations certainly predate the evacuation. For example, according to Baker the Liao lineage came into existence in 1600 when a number of Liao families settled in the village of Sheung Shui (see Map I) and established a corporate ancestral estate in the name of their founding ancestor. However, by the 1660s the Liao had been living in Sheung Shui for only two generations, and it is very unlikely that they could have been called a dominant lineage at that time. What I do wish to stress is that the structure of dominance and stratification found in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hsin An can be traced to the period of great prosperity which followed the dislocation of the evacuation. Many of the institutions (e.g., large-scale descent groups, markets, temple committees) which a few lineages used to establish their power and authority date from, or were substantially expanded during, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The evidence suggests that for a hundred year period beginning in 1669 the area’s dominant lineages consolidated their control over the region, and the élite of these lineages began to cooperate with each other on a regular basis.

When it came to tightening their hold over neighbouring villages and lands, Teng lineages found themselves in an especially advantageous position. By taking advantage of their wealth and official connections, the Teng were able to avoid some of the worst effects of the evacuation. Many Teng spent the years of exile in nearby Tung Kuan with agnatic kinsmen who had settled there earlier. Furthermore, the Teng had been established in Hsin An longer than many other communities and this must have benefited them vis à vis their more recently settled neighbours.

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30 Hayes, 'The Hong Kong Region', p. 120; Baker, Sheung Shui, p. 41.
31 In this paper I use 'élite' to mean wealthy landlords and merchants. Some of these men were also degree holders, but most were not.
Genealogies and local inscriptions also suggest that the Teng counted a large number of wealthy and educated men among their number. Few other communities had such advantages and it is no wonder that, after their ordeal, the Teng were in a good position to make substantial economic gains. These gains were often made at the expense of less fortunate neighbours.

It is particularly enlightening to compare the situation in Hsin An after the traumatic events of the evacuation with that of T'ung-ch'eng County, Anhwei, after the rebellions of the 1630s and 1640s.33 Beattie remarks that after the rebellions the local élite had little difficulty in re-establishing themselves ‘and possibly even in extending... [their landholdings] to include the property of deceased neighbours’.34 Like some Hsin An communities the élite of T'ung-ch'eng County were already organized on the basis of patrilineal descent. However, these groupings of agnates (both in Hsin An and T'ung-ch'eng) were more loosely organized than the corporate lineages found in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beattie could just as well be speaking for Ha Tsuen when she writes: ‘When the survivors returned it quite probably seemed imperative to them to find ways of reasserting their threatened position in the locality... To strengthen their lineage organizations may very likely have appeared to be one means of achieving this’.35 Beattie reports that lineage rules were strengthened and more rigidly enforced after the rebellions of the mid-seventeenth century and corporate holdings were greatly expanded.

For the Canton Delta the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were both colourful and prosperous. This period was certainly more peaceful than the previous half century. While the Hsin An gazetteer abounds with accounts of disasters in the seventeenth century, there are only a few hints of such hardships in the eighteenth and these refer mostly to outbreaks of piracy and banditry, twin scourges to which Hsin An county was prey until the mid-twentieth century. As C. P. Fitzgerald has remarked; ‘Under K'ang Hsi [1662–1723] and his two successors [1723–96] the Chinese Empire attained its maximum material prosperity’.36 Fitzgerald goes on to note that foreign missionaries found eighteenth-century China ‘most splendid’ and ‘the equal, if not the

33 Beattie, Land and Lineage in China, pp. 44ff.
34 Ibid., p. 47.
35 Ibid., p. 93.
superior . . . of their native France'.37 Trade with the West greatly increased during this period. Pritchard, in his study of Anglo-Chinese relations, details the tremendous expansion of foreign trade with China.38 After 1757 this trade was conducted solely through the port of Canton.39 From the early 1700s to 1842 (in 1842 Canton ceased to be the sole foreign trading port in China) the Canton delta reaped the benefits from both the legal and illegal commerce which passed through the area. This was the age of the great schooners laden with legal cargoes and with contraband. Smuggling was rife, and there were opportunities for making money on both sides of the law.40

The number and size of public buildings and markets established in southern Hsin An during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries give mute but striking evidence of the economic boom enjoyed by the area’s dominant lineages. For the area that presently makes up the northern New Territories, the 1819 gazetteer lists three markets.41 Of these three markets, all were established in the hundred year period after 1669 and all were founded by a dominant lineage (or by a member of a dominant lineage). In the early years of the K’ang Hsi reign (1662–1723) Teng Pao-sheng of Kam Tin established the market of Yuen Long.42 Pao-sheng was a large landowner and an active member of the local élite. He held the highest imperial degree (chin shih) and during his official career served as magistrate of Hsin-yu County, Chekiang. Yuen Long became an important periodic market for Kam Tin, Ping Shan, Ha Tsuen and many other smaller villages in the area. According to local people whose families have been involved in Yuen Long Market for centuries, some Ha Tsuen Teng had the responsibility for maintaining the canals which serviced the market. It is also reported that they owned some of the boats which called at the new market. If this is true it suggests that Ha Tsuen people were already involved in coastal boat traffic by the late seventeenth century. (The ownership of boats was an important source of income for some of Ha Tsuen’s nineteenth-century residents.) Two other important markets, Shek Wu Hui and Tai

37 Fitzgerald, China: A Short Cultural History, p. 547.
40 Hayes, ‘The Hong Kong Region’, pp. 121ff.
41 Hsin-an Hsien-chih, p. 83.
Po, were also founded in the late seventeenth century and, like Yuen Long, both were controlled by a dominant lineage.43

These markets all serviced, and continue to service, the rich rice lands of what is now the northern New Territories. The development of the market towns of Yuen Long, Tai Po, and Shek Wu Hui is proof not only of the new-found prosperity of the post-evacuation period, but also of the increasing power of the area’s localized lineages. These markets were not free and open trading centers; they were, in fact, monopolies of the large lineages.44 They were controlled by certain individuals, or later by ancestral estates. In the end one lineage dominated each market, controlling access to it, claiming a percentage of sales, and charging a protection fee to shopkeepers. This control was backed up by the lineage’s self-defence corps. Control over a market both enhanced a lineage’s prestige and, on a more practical level, it provided new sources of income both to individual lineage members and to the coffers of the lineage’s ancestral estates.

While wealthy lineages were establishing markets, a number of temples were also being founded (or renovated). In Yuen Long Old Market, as it is now called, the dates on the bells found in the T’ien Hou and Pei Ti Temples (1716 and 1714 respectively) suggest that these temples were very likely built in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. Near Ha Tsuen the T’ien Hou Temple of Sa Kong Miu was (and continues to be) an important religious center for a number of nearby villages and boat people. Its bell is dated 1707. This date, combined with oral accounts, suggests that Sa Kong Miu was greatly expanded in the early 1700s. A stone in the T’ien Hou Temple at Tuen Mun testifies that the temple was constructed in the Ming (1368–1644) and renovated in 1698. Many other local temples (for example, the Pei Ti Temples at Yuen Kong Tsuen and Fanling) were either constructed or renovated during the Yung-cheng or Ch’ien-lung reigns (1723–96). There can, I think, be little doubt that many of the markets and temples found in the present-day New Territories date from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.


After the work of G. William Skinner, it is hardly necessary to point out that markets are not just concerned with the exchange of goods. China’s marketing centres play an important role in élite culture and politics. Skinner writes:

the standard marketing community can be seen as the locus of such intercourse as petty traders have with the peasantry on the one hand and with the local elite (primarily through the mechanism of market control) on the other. But its primary significance pertains to the relations between peasantry and ‘gentry’... [E]very standard marketing community included in traditional times a number of so-called ‘gentry’ families. And it was in the market town that these elitist families exerted ‘social control’.

On a similar note, one might add that rural temples are not only religious centres. If recent ethnography is any indication, it is very likely that at least some seventeenth and eighteenth century temple committees played a political as well as a religious role in local affairs. During the twentieth century large temples (and markets) have been managed by committees whose membership reads like a Who’s Who in the New Territories. These committees provide an important but informal framework within which members of the local élite can meet, exchange information, and make decisions which often have a direct impact on their home communities. There seems little doubt that in the past, when formal political institutions were less developed than they are today, such informal organizations played an important role in inter-lineage (and inter-élite) relations. A good example of the use of temples for political and economic ends is the foundation of a temple commemorating the two officials who interceded with the central government to end the evacuation in 1669. A group of dominant lineages, including the Liao of Sheung Shui and the Man of San Tin, came together to build this temple in the market town of Shek Wu Hui during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Each lineage contributed to a temple fund, and the money was then used to build the temple and buy land to cover maintenance expenses. Some of the contributions were used to buy a ferry boat, which made it easier for members of the shareholding lineages to travel to the important market at Sham Chun. Baker reports that élite members of the shareholding lineages met for an annual feast at which temple business and, one assumes, many other things of mutual interest were discussed.

46 Ibid., p. 41.
47 Ibid., p. 38.
Considering the extensive building that went on during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it should not be surprising to learn that many of the area’s large ancestral halls also date from this period. In 1709 Teng Pao-sheng, along with other élite Teng, built (or renovated, the evidence is conflicting) a large ancestral hall called Tou Ch’ing T’ang near Tung Kuan City. By this time, the descendants of Teng Fu-hsieh were living in a number of communities in Hsin An and Tung Kuan counties. The establishment (or revival) of such an institution no doubt owes as much to the affluence of the period as it does to the experience of the evacuation which brought many Teng together, perhaps for the first time. This hall provided the Teng of Tung Kuan and Hsin An counties with an institutional framework for united activities. Nearly three hundred years after this hall was built the kinship unit which Tou Ch’ing T’ang represents continues to provide a ritual and political focus for Hong Kong’s many Teng settlements, and Teng Fu-hsieh’s grave is still visited every autumn by his descendants.

There is little doubt that higher-order-lineages of this type were organized and run by members of the regional élite. Teng Pao-sheng, one of the founders of Tou Ch’ing T’ang, was himself a scholar/official and a large landholder. Another founder, also from Kam Tin, is listed as a degree holder (fu-sheng) in the 1819 gazetteer. The location of Tou Ch’ing T’ang near Tung Kuan City also suggests that this hall was primarily an élite institution. Very few Teng peasants would ever have ventured so far afield as Tung Kuan City which lies about thirty miles north of Ha Tsuen. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that peasants and labourers would have been involved in the actual management of the hall, or in its rituals. In many clan or higher-order-lineage halls of this nature only the so-called gentry (or lineage élite) were responsible for ritual and worship.

49 ‘Teng Shih Tsu P’u’.
50 Teng Fu-hsieh’s grave is visited every year during the Chung Yang festival in the ninth lunar month by dozens of Teng elders who worship as a unit. Worshippers come from Kam Tin, Ping Shan, Ha Tsuen, and Lung Yeuk Tao. Even Teng who now live in urban Hong Kong join in the worship. The latter category includes recent migrants from Tung Kuan County, Kwangtung.
51 The mobilization of resistance to the British occupiers in 1899 provides further evidence of the élite nature of these higher-order-lineages. Robert Groves in his ‘Militia, Market and Lineage’, Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 9 (1969) shows how the Teng élite of Hsin An and Tung Kuan Counties used the framework of the higher-order-lineage to organize a show of force against the invading foreigners.
52 The term ‘clan’ refers to associations based on shared surname. Clans often have corporate property and may even build ancestral halls. Although these organizations are patterned after lineages, clan members cannot always trace genealogical links to
By the late eighteenth century large-scale, non-localized lineages like that of Tou Ch’ing T’ang had become a matter of concern for the imperial government. It was believed that kinship organizations of such magnitude might become a threat to central authority. In his study of rural China during the Ch’ing dynasty, Hsiao Kung-chuan says of them:

[by the late eighteenth century] the imperial government was thoroughly convinced of the dangers of extended clan organizations, whether they were composed of bona fide clansmen or persons unrelated by blood. It appeared to the Ch’ien-lung emperor at least that large clans were more likely to cause trouble than small ones.\(^{53}\)

There followed a series of edicts which attempted, on the whole unsuccessfully, to curb the influence of large lineage organizations.

There are many other indications that the dominant lineages were expanding their power and wealth during the eighteenth century. The increasing number of local men who gained imperial honours or degrees is one indicator. Baker shows that the Liao of Sheung Shui had the greatest number of honour holders in the period from 1704 to 1771, reaching a peak in the year 1738.\(^{54}\) The prosperous eighteenth century also saw a rise in the number of educational institutions. Tilemann Grimm has made a study of Kwangtung’s academies (shu-yüan) which prepared students for the highly competitive imperial examinations, gateway to the state bureaucracy. Not surprisingly Grimm discovered that the number of new academies rose steeply during the years 1736 to 1820.\(^{55}\)

Although the Ha Tsuen Teng were not noted for their scholarly achievements,\(^{56}\) they were very much involved in the general social and economic expansion of the eighteenth century. Two large temples (dedicated to the god Yang Hou) were built in Ha Tsuen during the second

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\(^{54}\) Baker, *Sheung Shui*, p. 44.


\(^{56}\) The Teng of Ha Tsuen have only three men in the 1819 Gazetteer listed as imperial degree holders.
half of the eighteenth century. In the late eighteenth century a walled market was established and, of course, in 1751 the ancestral hall, Yu Kung T'ang, was completed. All of these constructions are still standing and have undergone many renovations. Today, as in the eighteenth century, they are highly visible symbols of Ha Tsuen's dominant position in the area.

Local accounts about the 1700s, both those given by villagers and those provided in genealogies, abound with stories of intrigue and adventure. The quality of historical material available for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries makes it possible to enliven, to flesh out the bones of, many long-dead ancestors. These data suggest that the century and a half following the evacuation was not only a period of prosperity but also a time of intense competition. During the eighteenth century the area's dominant lineages established their economic and political control over whole districts, or hsiang. Competition, always vigorous, may well have increased along with economic opportunities.

The Teng living in the Ha Tsuen area were being pressured on many different sides. Teng Pao-sheng, who lived in Kam Tin, established a firm bridgehead in an area near Ha Tsuen when he built Yuen Long Market. There was also increasing population pressure. In 1732 Hsin An had only 7289 inhabitants but by 1773 the number had reached 30,373. In 1819, if the local gazetteer is to be believed, the population had reached the staggering level of 225,979. There can be little doubt that such an expansion had a dramatic effect on the distribution of land.

To the east of Ha Tsuen was Ping Shan, a wealthy and powerful community, and to the south was a group of communities linked in a political alliance but largely controlled by the T'ao lineage of Tuen Mun. At the same time the Teng were confronting these jealous neighbours the regional economy was booming. The Teng were in a good position to exploit the opportunities offered by their location on the coast. The ships and boats which plied the Pearl River and its estuaries gave their local economy, both commercial and agricultural/fishing, a tremendous boost.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that during the eighteenth

57 These two Yang Hou temples were, I believe, built by two rival groups of Teng based in two different hamlets. One temple is located in Tung Tao Tsuen, and the other near the hamlet of San Wai.

58 Hsin-an Hsien-chih, pp. 270–3. In 1898, the population of the New Territories was estimated to be approximately 100,000 (reported in Baker, Sheung Shui, p. 3). The British leased only a portion of Hsin An County and the larger towns remained in Chinese territory. It is therefore possible that the population of the entire county could easily have been in excess of 200,000 in 1819.
century Teng families living in the Ha Tsuen area were not only competing with their neighbours but they were also competing with each other. Two segments, whose descendants were in 1978 still treating each other with some distrust, are most often mentioned in local accounts as direct competitors in the 1700s. Both of these segments are descended from the same founder, Teng Hung-hui. A member of one of the families, Teng Tso-t’ai, is credited with being the main force behind the establishment of Yu Kung T’ang, while a member of the other family, Teng Wei-yü, is said to have been instrumental in the creation of Ha Tsuen Market. Many stories about the rivalry between these two men and their families survive even today. Tso-t’ai’s brother Tso-wen and his ten sons, called the ‘ten tigers of Ha Tsuen’, are still remembered for their belligerence and arrogance. One assumes that their reputations are related in some way to the prosecution of their family’s local and regional interests. Tso-t’ai’s family was the clear winner in this competition and his descendants eventually became the core of Ha Tsuen’s landlord-merchant class during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Ha Tsuen Teng: Background to Unification

By the mid-eighteenth century the descendants of the three men who originally settled in the Ha Tsuen area were scattered in seven small hamlets, all of which are listed in the 1819 gazetteer. These hamlets, occupied by Teng males and their female dependents, were situated in a semi-circle with little more than a small rice field dividing them. However, it is important to note that the two villages on the extreme northwest and southeast ends were separated by a distance of about one mile. To a large extent the descendants of the three original settlers remained geographically distinct. From current residence patterns, and from what villagers have told me, the descendants of Hung-chih lived (and continue to live) in Tung Tao Tsuen, while Hung-sheng’s descendants were concentrated in the hamlet of Sik Kong Tsuen which they shared with Hung-hui’s descendants. The remaining five hamlets were primarily the preserve of the descendants of Hung-hui.

While some dominant lineages in the area were, according to their

59 *Hsin-an Hsien-chih*, p. 92. It may be that the notes on Ha Tsuen which appear in the 1819 gazetteer were copied from the 1688 edition without alteration. When villagers were shown a copy of the gazetteer, they remarked that no Ha Tsuen people were on the editorial board. This explains why, in their view, there were so few references to Ha Tsuen in the 1819 edition.
own accounts, unified into corporate landholding groups in the seventeenth century (e.g., the Liao of Sheung Shui, see page 80), there is no indication that the Teng of Ha Tsuen were so unified. Among the people of Ha Tsuen I found no legends or documents which would suggest that they were organized into a unified lineage prior to 1751—the date their ancestral hall was completed.

During the expansive period of the eighteenth century the advantages of unification must have been apparent to Teng living in the Ha Tsuen area. By the 1740s some communities in the area were already organized into localized descent groups with corporate estates and some had their own ancestral halls. J. L. Watson notes that the T’ao, Ha Tsuen’s southern neighbour, built their hall in 1718, and Baker reports that the Liao of Sheung Shui completed their hall in the same year (1751) as the people of Ha Tsuen put the finishing touches on Yu Kung T’ang. The Teng, for a variety of reasons, may well have encountered more obstacles to their unification than did their neighbours. First of all there was intense competition between families and lines, although this was no doubt a problem in other communities as well. Secondly, in Ha Tsuen the residential clusters divided rather than integrated the major kin groups. That is, the descendants of the three founders tended to live in separate enclaves. The greatest difficulty of all, however, was the absence of a focal ancestor around whom these disparate families, lines, and residential clusters could unite. Unlike their neighbours in other lineages, the people of Ha Tsuen had not one founder, but three.

In a complex society like China there were, of course, many forms which Teng unification could have taken. People do, however, operate with reference to a specific cultural repertoire, and in the case of the Teng, descent was a key element in that repertoire. The Chinese patrilineal descent group with its corporate estates, its written genealogies, and its ancestral halls already had a long history by the eighteenth

60 A stone set in Yu Kung T’ang (see page 91) does make a vague reference to an earlier ancestral shelter/shrine, tz'u yü. Significantly, the term t'ang (hall) is not used in this context but yü, which in local usage refers to a minor shrine. The stone does not make clear who among the Teng used this yü. There is, in fact, no supporting evidence (i.e., architectural remains, records, or legends) to prove that this shrine even existed.

61 James L. Watson, 'The Protection of Privilege: Self Defence Corps and Local Politics on the South China Coast' (Manuscript).

62 Baker, Sheung Shui, p. 31.

63 Compared to Ha Tsuen the residents of the dominant lineage communities of San Tin and Sheung Shui are clustered into what today looks far more like a large village than a dispersed group of hamlets. Both nucleated and dispersed villages are found in the New Territories.
It must also be noted that the Teng who settled in the Ha Tsuen area were already members of the non-localized descent group focused on an ancestral hall in Tung Kuan City (Tou Ch'ing T'ang), and, of course, they traced their descent back to the 'parent lineage' at Kam Tin. Neighbouring communities also provided the Teng with successful examples of lineage organization. Furthermore, the people of Ha Tsuen were lineally related. To use Morton Fried's phrase, they could 'demonstrate' their ties of descent one to the other, in this case by using Teng Fu-hsieh as their focal ancestor. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Teng should unify on the basis of patrilineal descent.

The evidence I have collected suggests that the Teng remained a loose collection of households until the eighteenth century. In effect, I argue that the 'Ha Tsuen Teng' had no corporate identity until Yu Kung T'ang was completed in 1751. In contrast to some other dominant lineages in the area, the Teng had some difficult problems to overcome before they could hope to emulate their neighbours. A consideration of the development of the Liao lineage at Sheung Shui is instructive at this point. Baker reports that the Liao's founding ancestor came to Hsin An in the fourteenth century, about the same time that the founders of Ha Tsuen settled in the Yuen Long plain. As the years passed Liao families became scattered throughout the region. However, in the eighth generation (counting from the first settler in Hsin An) a Liao decided to unite his kinsmen into one settlement, Sheung Shui, which was established around 1600. An ancestral estate, based on agricultural land, was formed and dedicated to the fourteenth-century founder who first came to Hsin An. While Baker notes that the Liao lineage as a unit really dates from 1600, 'the Liaos themselves date it from the Founding Ancestor, whose trust it is which forms the basis of the group's unity'. The Liao had an advantage over the Teng in that they could focus on a single ancestor whose corporate estate provided an organizational framework for their unification.

For the Teng of Ha Tsuen to find a common ancestor around whom a corporate estate could be formed, it would have been necessary to choose as their focal ancestor a man who had lived in another village, Kam Tin (see Figure I). That is, they would have had to go back three

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64 Twitchett, 'The Fan Clan's Charitable Estate, 1050–1760'; Beattie, Land and Lineage in China.
ascending generations to find a common ancestor (namely Teng Shou-
tsu), and this of course would have taken them back to Kam Tin. It is
possible that a corporate ancestral estate dedicated to Shou-tsu existed
before the eighteenth century, but such an estate would have included
both the Teng living in the Ha Tsuen area and in Kam Tin as well. An
ancestral estate in which the focal ancestor is shared by those from whom
one wishes to differentiate oneself can hardly serve as the mechanism for
declaring one’s independence \textit{vis à vis} that larger group. As Maurice
Freedman has pointed out, ancestral estates are about differentiation.\textsuperscript{67}

In forming an ancestral estate a new unit is set off from other units. The
Teng in the Ha Tsuen area were prisoners of the fact that they had three
founders, only two of whom were brothers (the third being their
FFBSS). In addition to this, their very proximity to the parent village of
Kam Tin (about six miles away) made it imperative that they differenti-
tiate themselves clearly from their kinsmen, the Kam Tin Teng. To
show their independence, both ritual and economic, they needed to
create an institution which did not compromise but rather proclaimed
their independence.

It is possible that kinship organizations may have existed among the
Teng of Ha Tsuen earlier than 1751. There is, however, only one piece of
evidence which relates to this matter. A brief history of the lineage is
recorded on a stone inscription which was set in Yu Kung T’ang at the
time of its construction (and can still be found there). In this account
reference is made to the landed properties of Hung-hui and Hung-chih,
who by 1751 had been dead for over 300 years. Unfortunately, the stone
does not provide enough detailed information to determine the exact
nature of the ‘groups’ which owned these properties. The ‘groups’
themselves are not referred to by the term \textit{tsu}, which villagers use when
designating corporate ancestral estates. Instead, the general term \textit{fang} is
employed which in this context simply denotes two similar but opposing
‘groups’ or units. Hence, while the inscription clearly states that the
properties were held in the names of Hung-hui and Hung-chih, the use
of the term \textit{fang} suggests an absence of corporation.\textsuperscript{68} It is significant
that the two \textit{fang} are not listed as sub-divisions of a larger, named
corporation of any kind. Had there been such an overarching organiza-
tion, the Teng would certainly have mentioned it.

\textsuperscript{67} Maurice Freedman, \textit{Lineage Organization in Southeastern China} (London: Athlone
Press, 1958), pp. 77ff. On the importance of geographical separation and migration to
Chinese lineage development see Emily Ahern, ‘Segmentation in Chinese Lineages: A

\textsuperscript{68} When present-day villagers speak of a corporate ancestral estate, they use the term
\textit{tsu}. \textit{Fang}, in this context, does not imply a property holding group.
The inscription was, of course, prepared for public consumption after the lineage had been consolidated. There is some likelihood that the authors may have tried to give themselves, the descendants of Hung-hui and Hung-chih, a more illustrious history than they in fact enjoyed (by claiming to have kinship organizations that predate Yu Kung T’ang). The point needs to be made that even if the people of Ha Tsuen were in some manner organized in two separate groups prior to 1751, this does not imply an overall unity. The fang divisions would only have accentuated the differences between the two groups of Teng householders. Thus, the evidence from the stone supports my contention that, by the mid-eighteenth century, the Teng who lived in the Ha Tsuen area were not organized into a unified lineage.

**Foundation of Yu Kung T’ang**

In 1751 Yu Kung T’ang was completed and, with its inauguration, the Teng of Ha Tsuen became a localized descent group with all the features that an organization of this type implies (i.e., corporate property, demonstrated descent, ritual unity). Villagers today credit one man, Teng Tso-t’ai, with doing most of the planning for the new hall. According to the stone inscription found in Yu Kung T’ang, rents from the properties of Hung-hui and Hung-chih were used to pay for the construction of the hall. However, the land rent did not cover the total costs of the hall. Forty-eight men each contributed 20 liang of silver to complete the construction. These men are referred to as p’ei hsiang chu, or ‘benefactors’. In establishing Yu Kung T’ang, they gave themselves certain advantages which passed to their descendants. Inscribed on the stone are the rights and privileges which the various members of Yu Kung T’ang enjoy. The descendants of the 48 named contributors have special rights to rental income, and every year the descendants of these 48 men receive extra shares of sacrificial pork at the Spring and Autumn Rites held in Yu Kung T’ang. Historical documents relating to Ha Tsuen claim that it took 2900 liang of silver to build Yu Kung T’ang.69 Funds for the hall’s construction also came from the sale of places, or ‘seats’ (wei), for soul tablets on the hall’s altar. Money left over from the construction fund was used to buy land which was set aside to finance community projects and the worship of lineage ancestors.

For reasons which are now unclear, Hung-sheng’s descendants were

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excluded, or chose to be excluded, from membership in Yu Kung T'ang and, in effect, they and their descendants remain outside the effective boundaries of the lineage itself. Therefore, to this day they do not share in the benefits of the hall or its estate. Even though Hung-sheng and Hung-hui were brothers and share a common genealogical relationship to a number of Teng ancestors, and even though descendants of these two brothers still reside in Ha Tsuen, they and their descendants are not part of the same localized lineage. Membership in a hall like Yu Kung T'ang is based on descent and voluntary financial support. It must be emphasized, however, that this element of choice is exercised only at the foundation of an ancestral hall. Once the estate has been established, descendants of the original contributors are members by right of birth.

Significantly, Yu Kung T'ang was not built within the confines of any particular hamlet. It is situated on 'neutral territory' just outside the walls of Ha Tsuen Market. Inside the three-chambered hall, which is respectably large by Hsin An standards, is a carved wooden altar with seven rows of ancestral tablets. Yu Kung T'ang, with its tablets, is today as in the past the focus of some of the lineage's most solemn and elaborate rituals. The Spring and Autumn Rites are held there. Marriages and births of sons are celebrated in the hall, and when Teng males become elders at the age of sixty-one, they make a special offering at Yu Kung T'ang's altar. The hall is at the very centre of the religious life of those who belong to it.

Since Yu Kung T'ang was founded, it has played a crucial role in the economic and political development of Ha Tsuen. The hall played an important role in organizing educational instruction in Ha Tsuen, and it also ran Ha Tsuen's walled market. In effect, those who managed Yu Kung T'ang controlled access to the market and were in a position to stifle commercial competition in the territory claimed by the Ha Tsuen Teng. Yu Kung T'ang also organized and helped pay for the extensive development of the coastline bordering Ha Tsuen hsiang.

Thus far I have written about Yu Kung T'ang as if it possessed a collective will. In fact, particular men saw to the actual running of the hall. One man, the manager, watched over the financial assets (including the property) of the hall. This was a very powerful position, and the evidence suggests that the managers of large estates were, nearly always, wealthy men. As Freedman has pointed out, 'unequal access to the

Yu Kung T'ang was directly involved in the extensive development of fishing stations and oyster beds along Ha Tsuen hsiang's coastline. Yu Kung T'ang was responsible for the management of Ha Tsuen Market, and it was the framework within which most community decisions were taken. I hope to develop the economic and political role of Yu Kung T'ang during the nineteenth century in later publications.
The benefits of common property was a permanent feature of large-scale lineage organization in China.71 At the time the British took over in 1898, Yu Kung T’ang’s manager was the richest man in the lineage, a direct descendant of Teng Tso-t’ai. The manager of Yu Kung T’ang, along with a few wealthy elders, actually ran the hall. Ha Tsuen’s élite was firmly in control of this important institution.

The development of Yu Kung T’ang and the growth of Ha Tsuen’s own landlord-merchant élite are closely related phenomena. This is dramatically brought out by examining Yu Kung T’ang’s role in local security. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and very likely from its foundation, the hall has been responsible for Ha Tsuen’s security. Members of the local defence corps (hsün ting) received their authority to police Ha Tsuen, and its hinterland, from Yu Kung T’ang. Yu Kung T’ang’s position as an economic and political body did not rest solely on its moral authority, which was considerable, but also on the use of force. Regular patrols by the defence corps made it possible for Teng landlords to control their tenants in smaller neighbouring villages. The interests of Teng merchants were also protected by the corps.

The unification under the administrative umbrella of Yu Kung T’ang gave the Teng, both rich and poor, many economic advantages. For the individual peasant, membership in a powerful lineage meant security against marauding bandits and aggressive neighbours. It also gave him a certain status in the eyes of outsiders. The most important benefit of all, however, was that membership carried the advantage of privileged access to rental land owned by the lineage’s ancestral estates. Wealthy members gained even more benefits than those enjoyed by their peasant kinsmen. The lineage’s defence corps protected not only their persons but also their commercial interests and landholdings. Landlords were the effective leaders of the lineage and their position was sanctioned by religious beliefs and filial exhortations. The lineage provided the rich with a ready supply of loyal tenants in the form of their poor agnates. Ordinary members of the lineage also constituted a convenient body of fighting men who could act to uphold the position of the wealthy and the territorial integrity of the kin group. The strength of the Chinese patrilineage can be traced, in part, to its flexibility—it cuts across class barriers, incorporating rich and poor alike. Fei Hsiao-t’ung argues that the lineage served élite interests and was a mechanism for the maintenance of the status quo.72 Based on her work in central China, Hilary

Beattie has concluded: ‘The history of lineage organizations in T’ung-ch’eng thus confirms Fei Hsiao-t’ung’s view that they were deliberately used by the elite to perpetuate themselves and their privileges’. The data presented here gives added support to Fei’s argument.

It is by no means surprising that a dominant lineage like that of the Ha Tsuen Teng should emerge during a period of expanding opportunity and intense competition. The formation of the Teng lineage must be seen within a larger historical context, a context which included the appearance of a new, prosperous élite and a structure of relations which both fostered and enhanced the power of that élite.

**Conclusions**

I suggested in the introduction of this paper that Maurice Freedman’s writings imply a specific model of lineage formation in which there is a logical progression from original settlement by one man, the focal ancestor, to the development of nesting estates through a process of segmentation. According to this view the localized lineage is unified from the very beginning by having a founding (or focal) ancestor, whose estate becomes the material foundation of the organization. Freedman’s scenario suggests that all males living in a community thus formed would be descendants of a single ancestor, and hence, members of the localized descent group. Research in Ha Tsuen, coupled with work in other parts of China, clearly suggests, however, that there is no uniform process of lineage formation in China.

The localized descent group of the Ha Tsuen Teng was created by a process involving the amalgamation of previously separate units into a unified lineage organization. The Teng are by no means unique in this respect. For example, the Liao of Sheung Shui have a similar pattern of development as do some Taiwanese patrilineages. Pasternak and Cohen in their studies of non-localized agnatic groups in Taiwan have shown that fusion can play an important role in lineage formation. In

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74 Although Freedman does not deny the possibility that some descent groups may develop by fusion (see footnote 9 above), his work is almost exclusively taken up by the model of segmentation.
writing about Hakka communities in Taiwan, Cohen remarks: 'In the past, fusion was indeed the process whereby small agnatic groups formed themselves into larger units.'

Aside from the question of fusion, the Teng lineage of Ha Tsuen differs from Freedman's model in a number of other important respects. The corporate property of the Teng is held in the name of a hall (t'ang), Yu Kung T'ang, not in the name of a focal ancestor. In effect, the Ha Tsuen Teng have no recognized focal ancestor at all, owing to the fact that they would have to share an apical ancestor with another localized lineage (i.e., the Teng of Kam Tin). Finally, an analysis of the formation of Yu Kung T'ang shows that genealogical relationship may not be the only criterion for membership in a lineage such as the one under study. Those who made special contributions toward the construction of the hall are set apart from their fellow agnates in lineage ritual and in their entitlement to rents from special fields. Although Hung-sheng's descendants lived in the Ha Tsuen area at the time Yu Kung T'ang was built, they did not contribute to its construction, and therefore they are not part of the lineage. In Ha Tsuen the criteria for membership are demonstrated descent as well as financial subscription. This is an important point; the Teng themselves are fully conscious of the distinction. The localized lineage in Ha Tsuen is organized, to some extent, along the lines which one associates with voluntary associations, not unilineal descent groups.

The work of the historians Denis Twitchett and Hilary Beattie suggest yet another process of lineage and estate formation. In both these cases, previously distinct units (or loosely organized units) are brought together (fused) into a single lineage organization with common property and focused on a common ancestor. The lineages' estates were not, however, named in honour of an ancestor as Freedman's model suggests, nor were they formed by subscription as was the case in Ha Tsuen. Rather, the corporate holdings of the lineages discussed by Twitchett and Beattie were established by a gift of land to the lineage. A wealthy agnate donated some of his own property to the lineage. These charitable estates were then used for the benefit of the entire lineage.

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77 Cohen, 'Agnatic Kinship in South Taiwan', p. 177.
78 Unilineal descent groups are usually thought to be closed. That is, membership is not a matter of choice but is determined by genealogical relationships. In the case of a voluntary association one normally joins as a matter of choice. For Taiwan, Cohen ('Agnatic Kinship in South Taiwan', p. 180) reports cases of 'dispersed lineages' where membership is primarily determined by financial contribution.
79 A similar case is reported in Pasternak, 'Chinese Tale-Telling Tombs', p. 268.
member. All those who traced descent from the lineage’s perceived focal ancestor shared in the estate; it was, in a real sense therefore, a ‘benevolent’ institution. Membership was determined by genealogical relationship based on a written genealogy and not by material contributions—as was the case in Ha Tsuen.

From these cases we can delineate at least two basic processes of lineage formation. One is characterized by fusion or aggregation of smaller units, while the other is characterized by a process of growth in which the founder produces sons who in turn produce more sons and eventually a lineage develops. In those cases involving fusion a number of units are joined together into one institutional framework. In Ha Tsuen this was done by building, and endowing with land, a t’ang, or hall. The corporate holdings of such a hall are not strictly ancestral estates at all. That is, the property is not held in the name of a focal ancestor but rather by a corporation of shareholders. There is some question as to whether the Ha Tsuen Teng constitute a unilineal descent group or a voluntary association posing as a unilineal descent group. This is not, however, the place for a detailed discussion of the definition of ‘lineage’. What is important in the context of this paper is that the Teng act as a patrilineal descent group.

Studies of lineage development are important for a variety of reasons. Cases like the one presented here demonstrate that lineage formation in China is not the simple, or ‘natural’, process it was once thought to be. There is little doubt that lineages in general and dominant lineages in particular played an important organizational role in rural China prior to the communist revolution. Examinations of the formation of specific lineages make it possible to delineate the historical context(s) within which unilineal descent groups develop and flourish. The formation of Yu Kung T’ang and of other lineage organizations in Taiwan and central China show that lineages are formed in a number of ways, and that the subsequent development of lineages depends very largely on the economic and political milieu.

Common residence and shared descent did not in themselves unify Teng householders into an effective patrilineage. Only after the Teng had been settled in the Ha Tsuen area for over three hundred years did they form a corporate lineage. Even then not all Teng residing in the area were included. The Ha Tsuen Teng came into existence during an unprecedented period of prosperity in the Canton Delta. The formation of the Teng lineage (and the Liao lineage at Sheung Shui) lend support

to Pasternak’s thesis that there is no clear relationship between ‘the concentration and elaboration of localized lineage structures in southeast China’ and the existence of frontier conditions.\textsuperscript{81}

There is, of course, great difficulty in specifying what is meant by frontier conditions. A number of criteria have been suggested: the absence of state control at the local level, a high rate of violence, and a low population \textit{vis à vis} available land. The first two criteria (absence of state control and a high level of violence) could, in fact, be said to characterize much of China’s rural southeast until the communist revolution in 1949. The third factor (land and population) is more difficult to assess. There is, of course, the question of what counts as open land and what the ‘carrying capacity’ of that land might be. On this question I can only speak for the Ha Tsuen area. I would suggest that what is now the northwest New Territories could be considered a settled, or ‘non-frontier’, area at least by the eighteenth century and very likely extending back into the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{82} Ha Tsuen had powerful neighbours to the east and south for most of her history. Open land is surely a relative concept under these historical conditions. One assumes that these powerful communities would surely have attempted to exclude newcomers from the area they considered to be their agricultural domain. Furthermore, a number of small villages inhabited by tenants sprang up on the fringe of Teng farm lands as early as ‘the fifteenth century. By most criteria, therefore, the area surrounding Ha Tsuen could not be said to have been a frontier after the sixteenth century.

Yet another factor, irrigated rice agriculture, is sometimes said to be associated with Chinese lineage development. The Teng were certainly settled in some of the richest rice lands in China, but the fact that most of the paddy complexes surrounding Ha Tsuen had been developed long before the lineage was formed suggests that this supposed association must be examined more closely.

The Teng lineage was formed, I argue, in response to commercial prosperity and competition. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a favourable economic climate encouraged the formation of powerful lineages. These lineages thrived in the absence of effective state control and soon came to dominate political life in many parts of the


\textsuperscript{82} Hugh Baker (‘The Five Great Clans of the New Territories’) and James Watson (Emigration and the Chinese Lineage, Ch. 3) have argued that the communities which today make up the New Territories, dominant lineages were settled prior to the mid-seventeenth century. By 1600, the Teng had been living in the area for over 200 years. There is, therefore, some basis for suggesting that southern Hsin An could be considered a ‘settled’ area by the end of the sixteenth century.
Canton Delta. Lineages controlled markets, temple committees, and of course the local defence corps. These commercial and political institutions became the basis of lineage control and a framework for the perpetuation of a social order which lasted well into the twentieth century. The primary beneficiaries of this system were the élite members of these lineages.

I would like to conclude with the observation that lineages were not built into the fabric of Chinese society from time immemorial, as the work of some scholars might suggest. The case history of the Ha Tsuen Teng shows that at least some powerful descent groups are of more recent origin than the testimony of living members would indicate. It is hoped that future historical and anthropological research will create a better understanding of the many factors which led to the formation and subsequent development of one of China’s most complex social institutions, the patrilineal descent group.
Chinese Terms

chin shih 進士
Chung Yang 重陽
fang 方
fu-sheng 附生
Ha Tsuen 厦村
Ha Tsuen Shi 厦村市
hsiang 鄉
hsien 縣
hsün ting 巡丁
liang 部
Pei Ti 北帝
p'ei hsiang chu 配享主
shu-yüan 書院
t'ang 堂
Teng 鄧

Teng Fu-hsieh 鄧符協
Teng Hung-chih 鄧洪賁
Teng Hung-hui 鄧洪惠
Teng Hung-sheng 鄧洪生
Teng Pao-sheng 鄧豹生
Teng Shou-tsu 鄧壽祖
T'ien Hou 天后
Tou Ch'ing T'ang 都慶堂
tsu 祖
tz'u yü 祠宇
wei 位
Yang Hou 楊侯
yü 字
Yu Kung T'ang 友恭堂