

## **From Resistance to Participation: Clanship and Urban Modernization in the Wuyi Rural Market Towns During the Republican Era**

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### **Abstract**

Studies on urban modernization in early twentieth century South China usually attribute rural development only to the government and some returned overseas Chinese. In Wuyi, a region in South China, the traditional clanship that dominated rural society is usually considered to have slowed down urban modernization during that period. However, most of the modernized rural markets were in fact developed by the local clan organizations. It seems that clanship influence on urban modernization in rural society has always been underestimated.

This paper attempts to investigate the neglected role of these clan organizations in the process of urban modernization during the Republican era in Wuyi. It is a historical study that is mainly based on archival documents including government publications, articles in local magazines, share offer prospectuses for village and market establishments, fund-raising articles for construction of bridges, etc.

The above documents show the gradual change of the clan organizations' attitude from resistance to acceptance, cooperation, and finally to active participation in the process of urban modernization in their hometowns. They are further analyzed by referring to artefacts of townscape which show the merger of traditional clanship and modernized practices in rural markets. As an illustration, Tingjiang Xu is examined to show inter-clan competition with neighbouring markets under the modernized administrative system and design.

This paper concludes that clan organizations had acted as a crucial intermediate party among the government, returned overseas Chinese, and the local individual dwellers in urban modernization in Wuyi. It corrects the widely but wrongly held image of a reactionary clanship society being pushed by external forces for modernization in Republican China (1912-1949).

## Introduction

Studies on urban modernization in early twentieth century South China usually attribute rural development only to the government and some returned overseas Chinese. In Wuyi, a region in South China, the traditional clanship that dominated the rural society is usually considered to have slowed down urban modernization during that period. However, most of the modernized rural markets were in fact developed by the local clan organizations (Zhang et al., 1998; Zhang, 2004, 2005). It seems that clanship influence on urban modernization in rural society has always been underestimated.

The Wuyi cultural region in central Guangdong Province is composed of the “five counties”: Enping, Heshan, Kaiping, Taishan, and Xinhui. They share a common dialect and other cultural customs (Figures 1 and 2). This region has had a high amount of emigrants to foreign countries since the nineteenth century. There were also a large amount of markets by the eighteenth century, which were mostly developed by one single clan, or by cooperation of several clans.

This paper attempts to investigate the neglected role of the clan organizations in urban modernization in the Republic of China in Wuyi (Republican era, 1912-1949). It is a historical study that is mainly based on archival documents including government publications, share offer prospectuses for village and market establishments, etc. These documents show the gradual change of clan organizations’ attitude from resistance to acceptance, cooperation, and finally to active participation in urban modernization in their hometowns. They are further analyzed by referring to artefacts of townscape which show a merger of traditional clanship and modernized practices in rural markets. As an illustration, the twin-market of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu in Duanfen Town of Taishan County is examined to show inter-clan competition under the modernized administrative system and design.

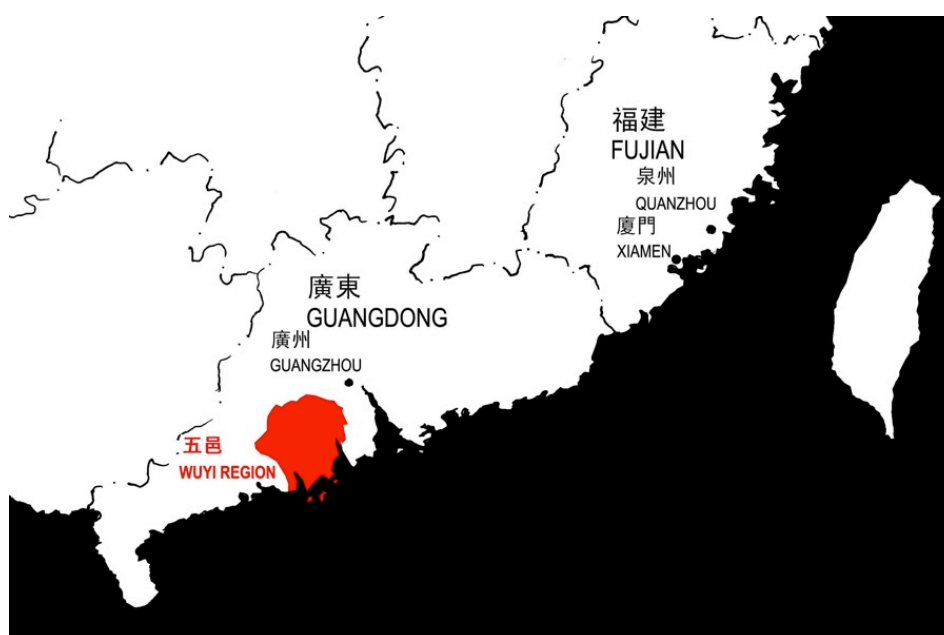


Figure 1. Location map of the Wuyi region

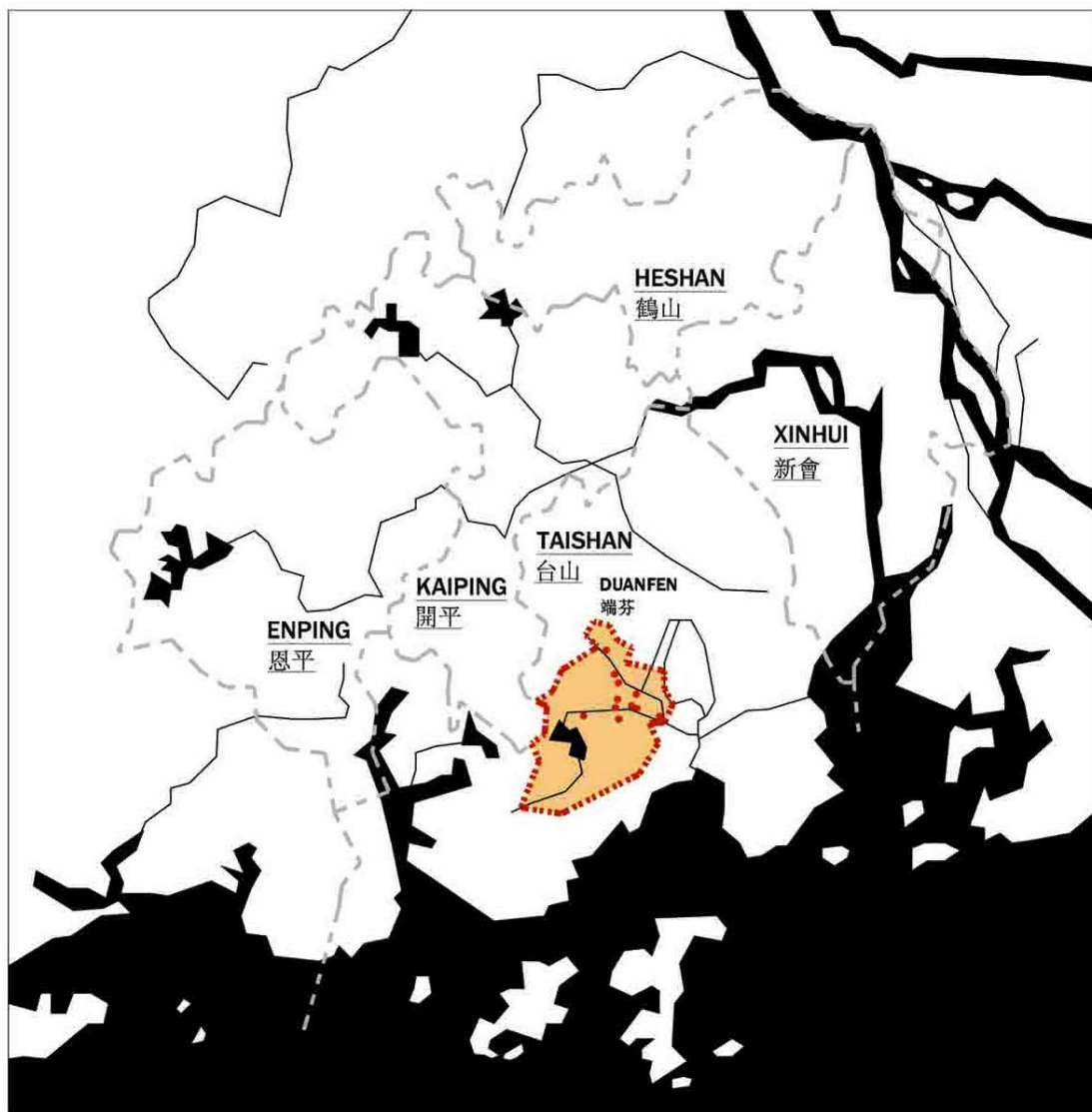


Figure 2. Location map of Duanfen Town in the Wuyi region. The region of “five counties” is composed of Enping, Heshan, Kaiping, Taishan, and Xinhui; Duanfen is a town in Taishan County.

### Government and Urban Modernization: Indirect Governance in the Rural Area

In 1925, the Governor of Taishan County in Wuyi, Liu Zaifu's request for autonomy was approved by Sun Yat-Sen's Nationalist Government in Guangzhou. The county was financially autonomous with the power to raise funds, tax, and spend the tax income. These powers facilitated the county's development in urban construction, education, transportation, etc. In particular, the simplification of the reporting system to the provincial and national governments accelerated the capital-raising and execution of urban development (Zhu, 2004: 34-35).

Similar to Guangzhou, the County Government of Taishan established a Public Works Bureau (*gong wu ju* 工務局). *The Proposal for Material Constructions of Taishan* (*Taishan wu zhi jian she ji hua shu* 台山物質建設計劃書) was issued in 1929 setting the guidelines for public works in this autonomous county (Tan, 1929). It was recorded that the master plan for renewal of the whole county was established by

the Governor in 1923. Two renewal methods according to different degrees of governmental dominance were recorded:

- (1) High degree of governmental dominance:  
This method of renewal consisted of first establishing Municipal Administration Offices (*shi zheng xiang ban chu* 市政勸辦處) in different market towns and appointing prestigious local squires for assistance. These offices were responsible for the affairs of capital-raising and administration, then the Public Works Bureau planned and supervised the works. The appointment of squires was a strategic means of obtaining the trust of local residents in order to minimize the local obstacles and to accelerate the process. There were only thirteen markets on the upper central-place level renewed under a high degree of governmental dominance.
- (2) Low degree of governmental dominance:  
The majority of markets on the lower central-place level were renewed under a low degree of governmental dominance. They were carried out by means of the Public Works Bureau's surveying of sites, site planning, and then indirectly supervising the merchants' administration and construction works.

Although the authority's governance in high-level cities like Guangzhou was stronger compared to that in the lower-level towns and rural areas, it does not mean that the government could easily execute urban modernization with the full support of the city dwellers. There were revolts against these policies by the residents in Guangzhou due to inconvenience and loss of properties (Yeung, 1999). On the other hand, in the lower-level Taishan County, where the power of clan organizations was much stronger, the difficulties in urban modernization are easier to imagine. Therefore, when the Taishan County Government initiated urban modernization in the lower-level towns and villages, they had no choice but to obtain the assistance of local squires. We can also see that the lower degree of governmental dominance in urban modernization existed in the lower-level markets in general.

### **Overseas Chinese and Urban Modernization: Mediator between the Government and the Clans**

In addition to the government, overseas Chinese also contributed to urban modernization in South China. The founder of Xinning Railway 新寧鐵路, Chin Gee Hee, was born in Liucun, Doushan, Taishan County of Wuyi, and immigrated to the West Coast of the U.S.A. He returned to Taishan in 1904, and established the only railway in Wuyi in history (Zheng and Cheng, 1991: 34-39).<sup>1</sup> The capital raised for the first stage of construction was mainly from the overseas Chinese of Taishan origin (Zheng and Cheng, 1991: 43). Other than individuals, some of the capital was in the name of *ju* 祖 or *tang* 堂 [clan organizations] and hometown associations overseas (Zheng and Cheng, 1991: 45).

Xinning Railway was a modern infrastructural work wholly initiated, planned, funded, and executed by civilians without any governmental participation. However, according to Zhang and Cheng (1991: 57), its development process exposed the

<sup>1</sup> Xinning Railway has been demolished since the late 1930s due to the bankruptcy of the operator and Japanese invasion.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunning Magazine* was a countywide civilian magazine of Taishan founded in 1909 (Qing

conflict between the “local feudal power” and the “emerging overseas Chinese’s capital power.” What Zhang and Cheng call “local feudal power” can be regarded as the clan organizations scattering over the rural areas of Wuyi. This can be reflected in the obstacles that local clans posed during each phase of construction. During phase one, the originally planned line to Xinchang was resisted by the Zhen clansmen near Xinchang and was finally suspended. During phase two, resistance by the Kuang clansmen of Shagang Cun resulted in a shift of the line in a more indirect manner. These incidents of resistance were mainly due to blackmail or *feng shui* reason (Zheng and Cheng, 1991: 49-53).

However, the railway was a vital component of the economic bloom in Wuyi during the Republican period. Goods from places outside were rapidly imported to and circulated within Wuyi, and directly benefited the founding or renewal of market towns. Among these market towns, the founding of Gongyi Bu indicated the evident contribution by overseas Chinese (Figure 3). One of the founders, Wu Yuzheng, born in Shachong Cun, Dajiang of Taishan County, returned from the U.S.A. in 1905 (Qing Dynasty). He mobilized overseas Chinese merchants, local squires of the Li , Yi , Wu clans, etc. near Gongyi to establish the Office of Port Affairs (*bu wu gong suo* 埠務公所) for the development of the new port. Unlike other clans, Wu negotiated with Chin Gee Hee and requested for setting a station at Gongyi. This showed the different vision that the overseas Chinese had compared with that of the traditional local squires about the merits of new infrastructure. Finally, Gongyi Bu was opened in 1908 with a railway station right next to it (Cai and Deng, 2006: 48).



Figure 3. Gongyi Bu, Taishan County

The strong local kinship ties are believed to be an important driving force for the overseas Chinese's contribution to the public affairs of their rural hometowns. In fact, they replaced the government in importing overseas knowledge and carrying out urban modernization for public interests. This enhanced their reputation among the clans. Moreover, their strong concept of 'family' meant they sent most of their savings from foreign countries back home. A considerable amount of money was spent on building their own houses (in the form of individual luxurious residences, watch towers, or village houses in the kin-based grid-patterned villages), or invested in building shophouses in the markets for rent. By these means, they could safeguard the living standard of their families, relatives, and of themselves after returning to their hometowns in the future (Li, 1999: 164-172). As a result, these new property developments also constituted the modernization of the townscape of Wuyi.

The overseas Chinese's investment in their hometowns reflected a quasi-modern-capitalist practice influenced by their exposure to the Western commercial system in foreign countries. For example, a clear charter for shareholding and company-limited systems was issued by Chin Gee Hee during his capital-raising from overseas Chinese for Xinning Railway in 1905 (Zhang and Cheng, 1991: 38). Similar practices familiar to the overseas Chinese have also been widely adopted in different property development projects even in the Qing era before 1912 (Qionglin Li, 1908).

For instance, in Duanfen Town of Taishan County, a new market known as Tingjiang Xu was founded by the Mei and other clans in 1932. From the preserved *Tingjiang Xu Shareholding Booklet* 汀江墟股份簿 (Tingjiang Xu, 1933), we can discover very detailed written regulations about the modernized systems of stock launch, capital-raising process, shareholding, organization, operation, property management, tenancy agreement, etc. The procedure of establishment of Tingjiang Xu as recorded in the "shareholding booklet" can be summarized as the following steps:

- (1) Formation of founders and preparatory committee
- (2) Surveying and planning
- (3) Application for government endorsement
- (4) Stock launch for capital-raising from invited clans
- (5) Subscription of shares by the clans
- (6) Purchase of shares by individual clansmen via the clans
- (7) Lottery and allocation of shop lots
- (8) Purchase of farmlands for the market site
- (9) Construction of common works by Common Developer
- (10) Construction of shophouses by individual shareholders
- (11) Renting of shophouses to businessmen
- (12) Operation of business for each shop

The seemingly modernized procedure for market establishment in fact still implied clanship dominance of commercial practice. Particularly in steps 4 to 6, the shares of the new market were only offered to limited clans rather than to the public. Even the shareholding of market, which corresponded to the ownership of shophouses, was not an absolutely free property. Assignment of shophouses required the endorsement by the Board of Directors of the market, which was controlled by the founding clans only.

The contribution of overseas Chinese in Wuyi spanned over different levels of towns. Their capital penetrated into different types of urban projects such as infrastructures, markets, individual buildings, etc. Their knowledge in modern project administration, planning, and design from foreign countries was also introduced to their hometowns. In conclusion, they can be regarded as the intermediate class between the government who dominated the large cities and the local squires and clan organizations who dominated the rural parts of Wuyi.

### **Clanship and Urban Modernization: From Resistance to Participation**

The traditional clanship that dominated the rural society of Wuyi is usually considered to have slowed down urban modernization during the Republican era (Zhang and Cheng, 1991: 5-7; TSXGWJ, 1929). However, we can assume that urban modernization in the rural part, being the lower-level market towns and villages, could never have been achieved without the promotion or at least cooperation of the local squires and clan organizations.

During the Republican era and before, the sovereignty of the government in these rural areas far from the county administrative seats had always been weak and indirect through the local squires and clan organizations. The news of inter-village, inter-clan, intra-clan, or clan-government conflicts were reported in *Sunning Magazine*<sup>2</sup> 新寧雜誌 at that time. These conflicts occurred so frequently that four pieces of such news in issue 25, 1922 of this magazine can be found, meaning that there were at least four such incidents in Taishan County in ten days (Table 1).

These conflicts, sometimes even with firearms, provided the “premodern” impression of the rural Wuyi. Each village was usually occupied by one or several branches of a clan, and a clan might branch out to different villages in a locality. Autonomous association (*zi zhi hui* 自治會) was one form of clan organization uniting different branches and villages under the same clan. The conflicts related to clanship usually broke out over economic benefits, such as property boundaries.

These clan organizations were sometimes resistant to the changes of urban modernization for two reasons. Firstly, the new construction works disturbed their traditional way of life. Secondly, the new developments were regarded as an infringement on their original territories and benefits, such as properties. In addition to the incidents of local squires’ resistance to the construction of Xinning Railway, there were many similar incidents against the construction of highways in rural areas. Four such incidents were recorded in *The Photo Album of the Construction Works of Taishan County* (*Taishan Xian jian she tu ying* 台山縣建設圖影) issued by Public Works Bureau, Taishan County 台山縣公務局 (TSXGWJ, 1929) (Table 2).

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<sup>2</sup> *Sunning Magazine* was a countywide civilian magazine of Taishan founded in 1909 (Qing Dynasty). It was issued three times a month in the Republican era.

Table 1. News of inter-village, inter-clan, intra-clan, and clan-government conflicts reported in issue 25, 1922 of *Sunning Magazine*

Chapter 11	Chapter 2Heading:	Chapter 3“房界之爭訟界” Chapter 4[Litigation for branch territories]
	Page no.:	14-15
	Location:	Chakeng 茶坑, Sijiu 四九
	Rival parties:	Among three branches ( <i>fang</i> 房) in the Kuang 鄺 clan
	Background:	Three branches strove for the common occupation of pond behind village.
	Process:	One of the branches refused the request by the clan elders to return the pond to common use.
	Result:	Two other branches prepared to litigate.
2	Heading:	“爭訟界幾乎釀禍” [Struggle for territory almost resulting in battle]
	Page no.:	39
	Location:	Paobu 泡步, Shuinan 水南
	Rival parties:	The Zhu 朱 clan vs. The Chen 陳 clan
	Background:	The Zhu clan encroached several feet of the territory of the neighbouring Chen clan for construction work.
	Process:	An elder of Chen clan was assaulted when he negotiated with the Zhu clan.
	Result:	The Zhu clan was requested to compensate the Chen clan for medical costs.
3	Heading:	“抗警費被拘” [Arrested for resistance to police levy]
	Page no.:	50-51
	Location:	Paobu 泡步, Shuinan 水南
	Rival parties:	The Zhu 朱 and the Chen 陳 clans vs. Local police branch
	Background:	The Zhu and the Chen clans refused paying the local police levy.
	Process:	The two clans persistently refused to pay after several orders by Police Commander.
	Result:	The police arrested six Zhu clansmen and two Chen clansmen, and ordered payment for release of them.
4	Heading:	“冲夔伍定安村之不平敬告邑人家族父老書” [Declaration of complaint by Ding'an-Cun 定安村 branch of the Wu 伍 clan to clan elders]
	Page no.:	Nil
	Location:	Ding'an Cun 定安村, Chongliu 冲夔
	Rival parties:	Ding'an-Cun 定安村 branch of the Wu 伍 clan vs. Bajia-Cun 八家村 branch of the Wu clan.
	Background:	Two branches strove for territory.



Process:	Bajia-Cun branch employed 300 gangsters to destroy Ding'an-Cun branch's crops and access road, set fire on 11 houses, and assault the women. However, the incident was distorted in the report in a magazine, of which the editor belonged to Bajia-Cun branch.
Result:	Ding'an-Cun 定安村 branch requested the elders of the Wu Clan Autonomous Association ( <i>Wu zu zi zhi hui</i> 伍族自治會) for mediation.

Table 2. Incidents of local squires' resistance to the construction of highways recorded in *The Photo Album of the Construction Works of Taishan County*

Chapter 5 Highway	Chapter 6 Village resisting	Chapter 7 Request by villagers	Chapter 8 Resolutions by government	Chapter 9 Results
Chapter 10 Tai-Di Highway Chapter 11 台荻公路	Chapter 12 Yue shan Cun Chapter 13 月山村	Chapter 14 Rerouting from the right-hand side to the left-hand side of village, due to blockage of water source and <i>feng shui</i> problem	Chapter 15 Lobbying with villagers	Chapter 16 Construction according to original route; traffic convenience; villagers' regret for resistance
Chapter 17 Tai-Di Highway Chapter 18 台荻公路	Chapter 19 Baji a Cun Chapter 20 八家村	Chapter 21 Rerouting further away from village	Chapter 22 Forceful suppression of garrison (external, and not under Taishan County Government) employed by villagers	Chapter 23 Construction according to original route; traffic convenience; and villagers' regret for resistance
Chapter 24 Tai-Di Highway Chapter 25 台荻公路	Chapter 26 Dongkeng Cun Chapter 27 東坑村	Chapter 28 Rerouting	Chapter 29 Lobbying with villagers	Chapter 30 Construction according to original route; traffic convenience; and villagers' regret for resistance
Chapter 31 Tai-Hai Highway Chapter 32 台海公路	Chapter 33 Zengkun Cun Chapter 34 繒困村	Chapter 35 Rerouting to the back of village	Chapter 36 Lobbying with villagers and construction of a roadside school	Chapter 37 Construction according to original route; traffic convenience; improvement in education; and villagers' regret for resistance

From these incidents, we can see that the power of Bajia Cun was strong enough to employ external garrisons to revolt against the Public Works Bureau of Taishan. Therefore, except the incident of Bajia Cun, in most cases the government could only persuade the villagers to accept the constructions. In the incident of Zengkun Cun, the government even offered to help with the construction of a roadside school in order to please the villagers.

Kin-based settlements had spread widely in the villages and towns in Wuyi probably since the Ming Dynasty (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) (Zhang et al, 1998: 25-26). The strong kinship bond had influenced the formation of grid-patterned villages with house blocks closely packed in a regular layout usually deliberately set by a single clan organization. Such an intimate mode of living can only be adopted by dwellers with kinship bonds and a well-structured clan organization.

In 1908 (late Qing Dynasty), near the Mei-clan-dominated Tingjiang Xu, a new grid-pattern village known as Qionglin Li was founded by four branches<sup>3</sup> of the same clan. (Qionglin Li, 1908: 2-3) (Figure 4). From the preserved *Booklet of Shareholding Charter for Establishment of Qionglin Li* 創建瓊林里股份章程簿, although a similar shareholding system to Tingjiang Xu was adopted, we can find that some terms with clanship style were inserted in the regulations of establishment (Table 3).

Table 3. Terms with clanship style in *Booklet of Shareholding Charter for Establishment of Qionglin Li*

Chapter 38 Article no.	Chapter 39 Summary (translated from Chinese to English by the author)
Chapter 405	Those do not want to build houses in the village shall sell the shares only to the shareholders of the village, and sale of shares to external buyers is prohibited.
17	In case of any village houses built close to the graves of other clan branches arousing conflict and litigation, the village association shall fund and help the house owners for protection of territories.
18	Any fee due to removal of stuff encroaching the common areas shall be charged to the violators. Those refuse to compensate the fee of removal shall be deprived of all the rights in the village.
22	The revenues from rent of common properties shall subsidize the educational expenditures of descendants for the glory of village.
24	The two administrators shall be composed of one from the branches of Yuanshao and Keda, and another from the branches of Delong, and Xichong.
25	The descendants of our four branches shall obey the instructions by the ancestors to live in harmony. In case of any quarrels, the elders of our village shall be called for mediation.

<sup>3</sup> The four branches were in the name of *zu* 祖 [common ancestor], namely Yuanshao 元韶, Keda 可達, Delong 德隆, and Xichong 錫重.

Chapter 38 Article no.	Chapter 39 Summary (translated from Chinese to English by the author)
26	The kinsmen of the village shall love and respect each other. All villagers shall be responsible and well-behaved.
30	The remaining four shares are reserved for the branches of Yuanshao and Delong, for reward of their efforts in founding the village.
31	The strip of land behind the village school is reserved for villagers to construct their ancestral halls in the future.



Figure 4. Grid-patterned village, Qionglin Li, Duanfen, Taishan County

Compared to Tingjiang Xu (as a market), Qionglin Li (as a village) was more like a close-knit and autonomous community, restricted to only the founding families from four branches of the Mei clan. This system was clearly enforced by article 5 regarding the sale of shares, implying building and residence in the village, to other clans or even other branches of the Mei clan was prohibited. This “shareholding booklet” was more than a commercial document. The kinship bond of villagers was reinforced by rights of space, such as protection of territory (Article 17), use of common areas (Article 18), and building of ancestral hall in village (Article 31); and finance, such as support for litigation (Article 17) and subsidy for educational expenditures (Article 22). Moreover, the villagers’ obligations in terms of both morality and behaviour were also regulated.

Regardless of the clanship domination hidden in these terms of Qionglin Li establishment as well as those of the shareholding of Tingjiang Xu, there was a general desire for modernization among the clan organizations in this region in the early twentieth century. The purpose of founding Tingjiang Xu by different clans was declared in the “shareholding booklet” as reforming the “administrative organization dominated by a single clan in a patriarchal style and the lack of freedom for the other clans” in a neighbouring old market, Datong Shi (Tingjiang Xu, 1933: 17). The desire for modernization was also expressed in the “shareholding booklet” of Qionglin Li:

“The world is getting more civilized. All organisms survive by competition. We should insist on long-term evolution.” (Qionglin Li, 1908: 2)

Therefore, we can conclude that in the rural area of Wuyi during the Republican period, on the one hand, the modernized capitalist practice introduced by the overseas Chinese was still fused with the residual of traditional kin-based commercial practice. On the other hand, the traditional clan organizations were undergoing a modernization process through new commercial practices. Severe commercial competition between clans, also with the backup of overseas Chinese capital, acted as the important motivator for the development of many modernized rural markets in Wuyi during the Republican era (Mei Weiqiang, 1996, 2002; Zhang, 2004, 2005).

### **Twin-market: Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu**

The phenomenon of “twin-markets” exposed how the market developers, usually composed of one single clan or several clans, reacted with their competing counterparts in market development. Evidenced by various cases in South China, we can see that if the demand is sufficiently high in a locality, a new market would tend to be founded nearby to compete with the existing market. The generally longer distance between markets before the late Qing Dynasty (late nineteenth century) showed an “order of distance” maintained by clanship power in association with the local government. This practice was a social custom rather than a clear legal enforcement. An obvious case in Duanfen was the Chens’ Shangze Xu founded before 1545 (Ming Dynasty) and the Mei’s Shandi Xu founded in 1771 (early Qing Dynasty). Due to complaints by the Chens, the Mei clan’s original intention of utilizing the existing market network of Shangze Xu by establishing the new Jiangshan Xu next to it not approved by the local government.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the Meis were forced to relocate to a new market which was subsequently renamed ‘Shandi Xu’ further away from the old one (Mei Youchun, 1983: 62; Mei Yimin, 1984: 71).

However, the order of distance had ceased since a modernized marketing system was introduced later in the Republican period (Figure 5). Therefore, when this modernized condition combined with a high demand for marketing activities in a locality, a new market would be founded by another clan right next to the original market, giving rise to the so-called “twin-market.”

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<sup>4</sup> Wu Bingwang and Mei Chengji, interviewed by the author, 7 September 2006; and Mei Weiqiang, interviewed by the author, 17 August 2008.

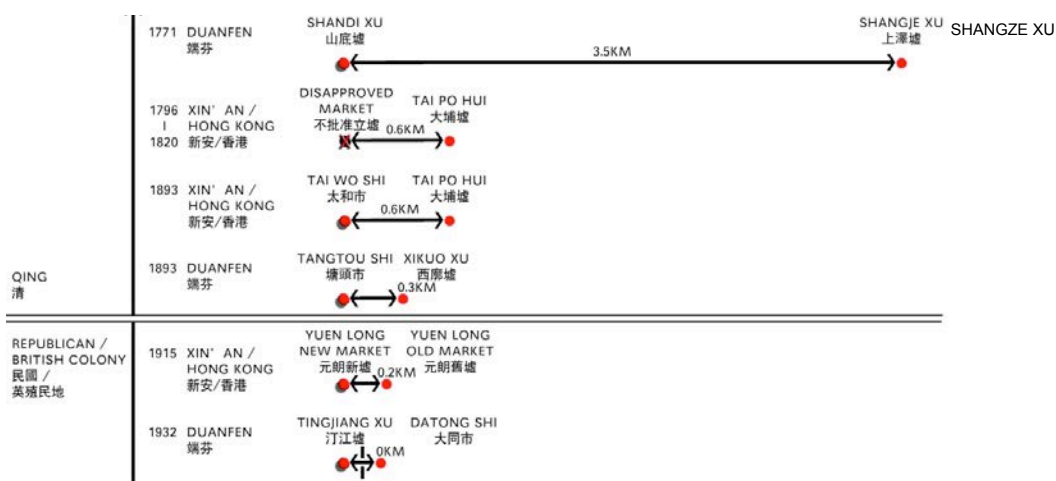


Figure 5. Selected cases on the distances between markets in South China

This section focuses on Tingjiang Xu of Duanfen Town together with its neighbouring Datong Shi, which combined to form a twin-market (Figures 6 to 14). Its process of market-form developments is discussed to illustrate how a new mode of modernized marketing system was introduced to a region of traditionally clanship-dominated economy.



Figure 6. Aerial photo indicating locations of market cases in Duanfen<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Image produced from software “Google Earth.”

The major founder of Tingjiang Xu, the Mei clan, has been the most prominent clan in Duanfen since the fourteenth century (Ming Dynasty). As a result, most of the villages and markets in this town, such as Qionglin Li, Shandi Xu, and Haikou Bu, were solely established by them. Another clan in Duanfen, the Yuans, had their original base at nearby Tangtou Shi. They also expanded their power and cooperated with the Mei and other local clans to found Datong Shi in October 1922 (DFZZ, 2009: 374; Mei Weiqiang, 2002: 42). Other than the proximity to the Yuan clan's villages, the reason for the site of Datong Shi was probably its strategic location at an intersection point of the Datong River and a highway. The Datong Bridge for vehicular traffic across the river near the west side of market was also built by the Yuans in 1930 (DFZZ, 2009: 5). The market is generally in an orthogonal form. The colonnade streets form the pattern of two main streets in northwest-southeast direction and four narrow cross streets in-between.

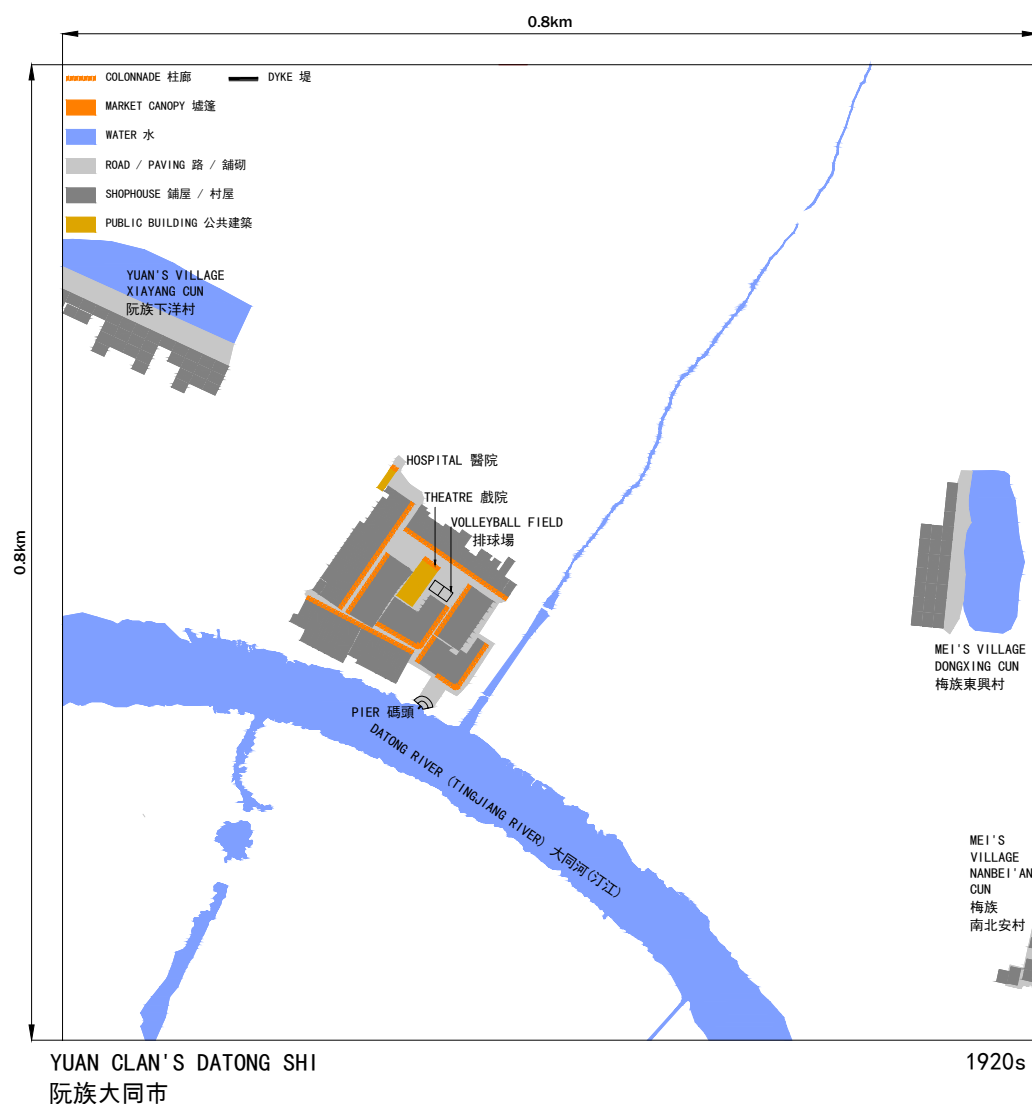


Figure 7. Morphology of Datong Shi and site and the later Tingjiang Xu during the 1920s

Although Datong Shi was formed by inter-clan cooperation, it was dominated by the Yuan clan instead of the most prominent clan of the region, the Meis (Mei Weiqiang, 2002: 42). This might be the reason for the later instability and disputes between the

clans in the market. From the *Tingjiang Xu Shareholding Booklet* written by the Mei and other clans, the “Yuans-dominated” Datong Shi was accused of having an outdated layout, insufficient facilities, and its administrative organization being dominated by a single clan under a patriarchal style and a lack of freedom for other clans (Tingjiang Xu, 1933: 17). Combining these three aspects together with the existing market form, it is probable that the problems were related to the narrow streets without any central square for the free mobile commercial activities during the scheduled market days. The administration of mobile merchants was usually not clearly stipulated in the market regulations, but depended on the merchants’ social relationship with the administrators. This easily led to inter-clan conflicts in a multi-clan market like Datong Shi.

Regardless of whether such an accusation was fair, there was evidently a sense of discontent from the Meis and the other clans about the administration by the Yuans. Finally in 1932, the Meis led the other clans in withdrawing from Datong Shi. Eleven Meis, two Qius, together with one from the Wu, Cao, Liang, and Jiang clans respectively initiated to found a new market on the other side of a narrow stream right next to the southeast of Datong Shi. Their aims were set as “fund-raising from multi-clan, building of public market, improvement of municipal administration, and freedom of business.” The market site acquired was in total twenty-odd acres which housed sixty-five pieces of farmlands privately owned by the Meis. Despite no written limitation of clan, the domination of the Mei clan over the sixteen clans and some other unidentified organizations was reflected in the ratio of Initiators 發起人 (about 65%), Provisional Preparatory Administrators Elected 公推臨時籌辦員 (about 85%), Board of Directors 董事 (about 50%), and shareholders (about 50%) (Tingjiang Xu, 1933: 4-7, 10). Therefore despite the nominal multi-clan cooperation, the new market was in fact dominated by the Mei clan without any Yuan clansman’s participation.

Unlike the linear-street form of Datong Shi, the new Tingjiang Xu was planned in central-square form in a rigid rectangular shape with all colonnade shophouses facing internally. On the one hand, the square provided a spacious marketplace especially for itinerant merchants during the scheduled market days (Tingjiang Xu, 1933: 14), so as to resolve the problem of insufficient space along the narrow streets for mobile hawkers in Datong Shi. On the other hand, the square form helped to perform strict management. For instance, there was a regulation restricting the businesses of kerosene, lime, livestock such as cattle, pigs, and sheep, etc. inside the market so as to avoid danger and hygiene problems (Tingjiang Xu, 1933: 14). Another regulation stipulated the employment of a team of guards in the watch tower for the security of the market (Tingjiang Xu, 1933: 16). It is possible that this internal square form also helped to impose a clear demarcation from the adjoining Datong Shi and even to easily restrict the Yuan merchants’ use of the new market.

As the Datong Bridge was built by the Yuans and was geographically separated by Datong Shi, it was probably inconvenient for the clans of Tingjiang Xu to cross Datong River via this bridge. Therefore, Mei Jiangxing, a Managing Director of Tingjiang Xu, promoted the fund-raising from the clansmen in the region and overseas for construction of the Tingjiang Bridge at the southeast corner of the new market (Mei Jianxing, 1981: 49-50). Finally, the new vehicular bridge was built in 1936 as an alternative river-crossing route.

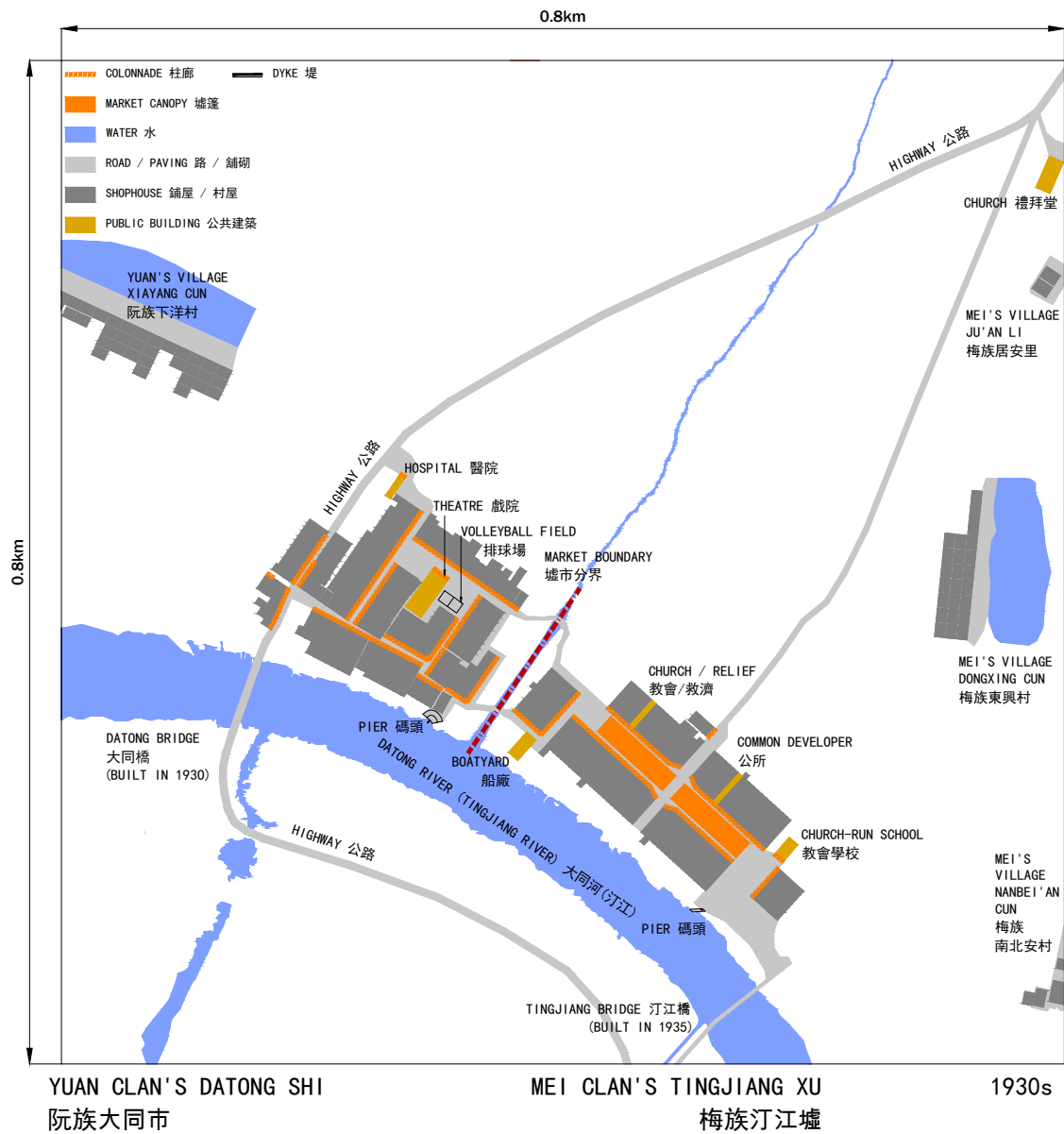


Figure 8. Morphology of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu during the 1930s



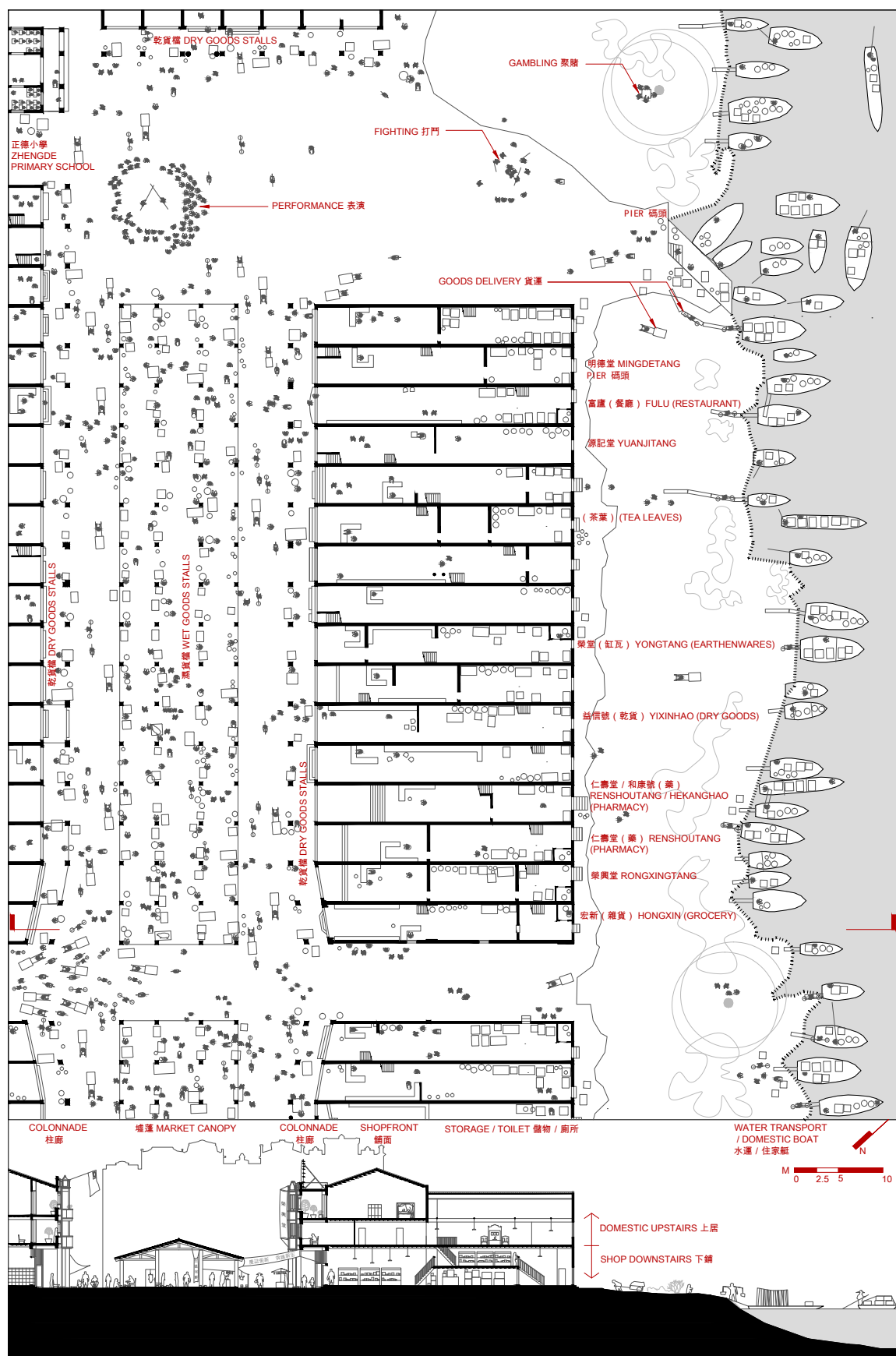


Figure 9. Scheduled market day activities in the eastern square of Tingjiang Xu during the 1940s (Republican period). *Top*, ground-floor plan; *bottom*, section.

There were post-Republican extensions (after 1949) at the fringe areas of the two markets. The highway on the northwest side of Datong Shi is a later extended area filled with post-Republican shophouses and domestic houses on both sides.<sup>6</sup> The attraction of the new highway resulted in a shift of commercial activities to the northwest outside the original colonnade square and streets. With the highway acting as a primary transportation route, the commercial activities in the two old markets have gradually declined. Since the late 1990s, the shops and market have all moved out of Tingjiang Xu, and there are only a few shops still operating along the southern colonnade main street of Datong Shi.

Other than the economic and urban changes, the social structure in the two markets has also been fundamentally altered. The clanship ideology had gradually been eliminated through the land-reform movement by the Government of the People's Republic of China after 1949 (Feng, 2005: 316-318). Eventually, many residents from the original clans had moved out, and new residents from the other clans, including the originally hostile clans, were allocated with their new homes in the markets by the government. With the small stream between the two markets filled up, the original market boundary implying the territories of the two big clans also vanished. Finally, the inter-clan competition for urban modernization during the Republican era had lost its motivation.



Figure 10. Photos of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu: River

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<sup>6</sup> The information of the later development of buildings was provided by 1948-born local resident, Yuan Tingshen, interviewed by the author on 30 August 2009.



Figure 11. Photos of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu: Street and square



Figure 12. Photos of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu: Bridge



Figure 13. Photos of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu: Boundary

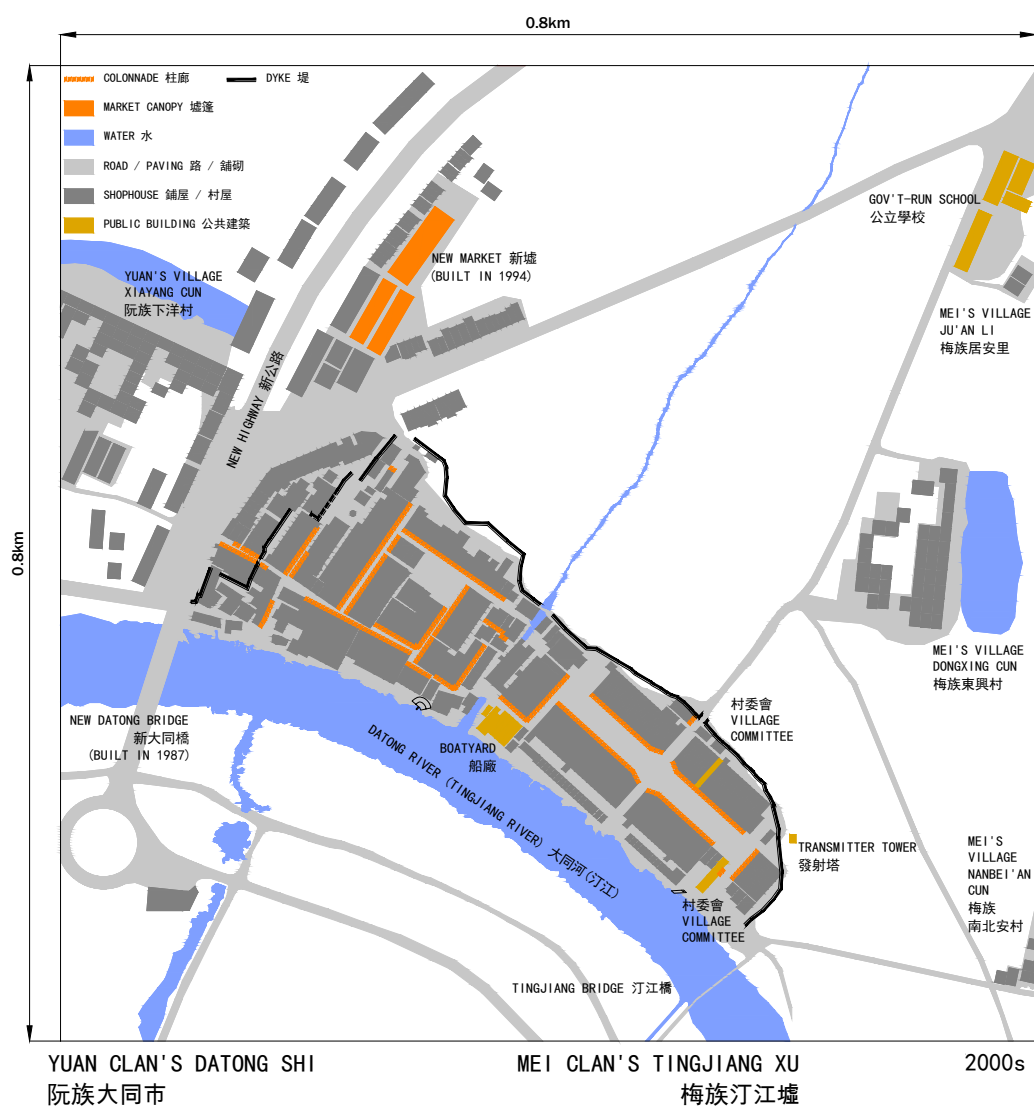


Figure 14. Morphology of Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu during the 2000s

## **Conclusion: Clanship and Townscape**

The main aim of this research was to reveal the underestimated relationship between clanship and townscape in the rural part of Wuyi during the Republican era. It is found that despite much contribution from the government and the overseas Chinese, the strong clanship was a crucial factor for urban modernization in the lower-level towns and villages. In fact, many local squires were also overseas Chinese and even participated in some positions in the government. When these people initiated or supported the new public works, they could easily obtain the trust of the local villagers in their own clans. Moreover, compared with the city dwellers who usually posed their own private interests on top of the public ones, the rural dwellers were more willing to sacrifice for the general interests of the clans who benefited from the new public works.

Therefore, after the beneficial effect of change had been fully understood, the rural dwellers and clan organizations in Wuyi generally changed their attitude from resistance to cooperation in urban modernization in their hometowns. Later, they even actively participated in the new market, shophouse, and infrastructure constructions as the means of inter-clan competition. Finally, twin-markets like Datong Shi and Tingjiang Xu in Duanfen, the upper and lower ports of Chikan in Kaiping, etc., were formulated as artefacts of the keen inter-clan competition for urban modernization and capitalist marketing activities.

The change from Republican to Communist rule in Wuyi in 1949 marked the end of the region's unique marketing activities, which merged traditional clanship and quasi-modern capitalism. Under the new government's suppressions of clanship, market economy, and overseas connections, the townscape modernization of rural markets in Wuyi finally halted.

Another paradigm shift arrived after the economic reform in 1978. Since then, the market economy was restored, remittances from overseas returned, and clanships not suppressed anymore. Market activities had also revived. Nowadays in the rural part of Wuyi, market economy has been reconstructed, overseas remittances have increased, and urban development has been prosperous. However, the crushed clan-based social communities once bearing the responsibility of local urban development before 1949 are gone forever.

## Glossary of Places, People, and Clans in Chinese

Bajia Cun 八家村  
Cao 曹  
Chen 陳  
Chikan 赤磡  
Chin Gee Hee 陳宜禧  
Dajiang 大江  
Datong Shi 大同市  
Doushan 斗山  
Duanfen 端芬  
Enping 恩平  
Gongyi Bu 公益埠  
Haikou Bu 海口埠  
Heshan 鶴山  
Jangshan Xu 象山墟  
Jiang 江  
Kaiping 開平  
Kuang 鄺  
Li 李  
Liang 梁  
Liu Zaifu 劉載甫  
Liucun 六村  
Mei Chengji 梅成基  
Mei Jianxing 梅健行  
Mei Weiqiang 梅偉強  
Mei 梅  
Qionglin Li 瓊林里  
Qiu 丘  
Shachong Cun 沙涌村  
Shagang Cun 沙崗村  
Shandi Xu 山底墟  
Shangze Xu 上澤墟  
Sun Yat-Sen 孫中山  
Taicheng 台城  
Taishan 台山  
Tangtou Shi 塘頭市  
Tingjiang Xu 汀江墟  
Wu Bingwang 伍炳旺  
Wu Yuzheng 伍于政  
Wu 伍  
Wuyi 五邑  
Xinchang 新昌  
Xinhui 新會

Yi 乙

Yuan Tingshen 阮庭深

Yuan 阮

Zengkun Cun 繒困村

Zhen 甄

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