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## **A place of placelessness: Hekeng people's heritage**

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### **Citation**

Wang, R. (2017, February 16). *A place of placelessness: Hekeng people's heritage*. *Archaeological Studies Leiden University*. Leiden University Press, Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/45981>

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**Issue Date:** 2017-02-16

# Preface

## THE RISE OF MASSIVE DEFENSE STRUCTURES IN THE FUJIAN REGION AND THE TULOUBUILDINGS BETWEEN THE MID-SIXTEENTH AND EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the 1950s, Chinese architectural historians became aware of the existence of fortress-like buildings conventionally known as ‘*tulou*’ (literally earthen mansion) inhabited by the local residents in southern Fujian. *Tulou* buildings are impressive rectangular or circular structures, with load-bearing earthen walls up to three to five stories high, each housing up to eighty families (or even more) and resembling a small fortified town. According to Huang Hanmin,<sup>1</sup> there are over 3,000 *tulou* buildings scattered throughout the river valleys in western and southern Fujian and northeastern Guangdong (Zheng, 2012; Wu, 2008). Since the 1950s, architectural historians have been referring to these massive land features ‘Hakka *tulou*’ (Needham, 1971; Kobayashi, 2013), assuming that they have a unique association with the Hakka people; a perception that is inaccurate. The Minnan and Chaozhou people also erected *tulou* buildings in exactly the same way (Huang, 1987; Wu, 2008). The misapprehension, as Chen Chunsheng (2011) suggests, could have arisen from various researchers’ ignorance of the fact that a large number of *tulou* buildings in traditional Minnan and Chaozhou territories had been flattened by the Qing Imperial Court during of the implementation of the Coastal Evacuation (*qian hai*) Policy between 1661 and 1683, creating a depopulated zone to defend against Zheng Chengong’s attacks. At that time *tulou* was already an important architectural type that had been very popular since the middle Ming

dynasty among the Hakka, Minnan and Chaozhou rural inhabitants, the majority of whom lived in the mountainous area located between southwestern Fujian and northeastern Guangdong, that is, the southwestern peripheral area of the Southeast Coast Economic Macro-region (Skinner, 1965) (Fig. 1).

The mid-sixteenth through to the early-seventeenth century AD was the most important period for the formation of the traditional lineage<sup>2</sup> settlements that constructed earthen defense structures in Fujian. By the middle Ming dynasty, the lineage had gradually evolved into a fundamental organizational unit recognized by the government and used in assessing figures for conscription and taxation. Lineage unity and cohesiveness was cemented by the spread of ‘inclusive halls’ – that is, ancestral halls and temples available for use to all statuses in a lineage (Szonyi, 2002). This unruly period of the change in dynasties was also characterized by the rise of widespread robberies, plundering and massacres by pirates and mountain bandits. Their threats exerted a dramatic effect on rural society throughout the Fujian region. The local gentry in almost every rural area of the province (the Appendix) began to take the lead in organizing local defense. With the government’s encouragement, they donated funds and were in the forefront of their communities in the construction of the forts. Importantly, it should be emphasized, as Szonyi (2002) has noted, that local defense primarily meant defense of one’s kin. Consequently, it was the agnatic ties among residents of these rural areas that decisively structured defense patterns.

1. <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2011/08-22/3274963.shtml>.

2. As a working definition, Roger M. Keesing (1976) gives a good explanation of the terms lineage and clan, ‘A *lineage* is a descent group consisting of people patrilineally or matrilineally descended from a known ancestor through a series of links they can trace... A larger descent category...[comprising people] who believe they are descended from a common ancestor but do not know the actual connections is called a *clan*.’

Chen and Zheng (1985) established a complete typology of the earthen fort-like structures widely distributed throughout the rural areas of Fujian. In their typology, fort-like structures can be divided into three primary forms, namely: walled-settlements (*cheng*),<sup>3</sup> walled-dwellings (*bao*) and home-forts (*jiabao*). In the historical records, the local people in Fujian rural areas usually used the term ‘*cheng*’ (city) to describe walled settlements, because in their form they emulated the walled enclosures in the local urban centers, such as towns and county seats. Settlements with various kinds of walled-enclosures are also found in northeastern Guangdong, even extending to the New Territories of Hong Kong, as Freedman (1966), Oxfeld (2010) and Wu (2008) have discussed. Peasants who lived in central Fujian (for example, Datian) and eastern Fujian (for instance, Nantai to the south of the Fuzhou region) (Szonyi, 2002) built huge fortified dwellings, each encompassing a set of courtyard compounds and peasants in the rural areas of south Fujian likewise constructed the *tulou* that strongly resemble them as home-forts. In a nutshell, there was a diversity of earthen domestic defensive systems, but unquestionably the widespread construction of huge fort-like structures of all kinds originated during the social upheavals that began to plague China during the mid-Ming dynasty. Faced with the challenge of the serious threats posed by pirates and bandits and unable to cope with these, the local government loosened its control over the rural areas. Thrown back on their own resources, peasants had to place their complete reliance on their own lineages and construct earthen defense structures in various forms to defend themselves. One of their achievements born of this turbulence is the development of *tulou* architecture.

The influence these earthen structures exerted on the lineage villages in determining the final layout of the settlement varied greatly between areas. Some villages, whose lineage members had built strong walls around the settlements, were eventually transformed into small rural cities. Some even had wide moats. Others only built provisionally used earthen forts, preserving the major part of their original settlements. These developments were not

confined to western Fujian (for example, Shanghang county), but are also found in the rural areas of the Mei and Han River Basins in adjacent northeastern Guangdong (Wu, 2008). In central and eastern Fujian, the addition of earthen forts to villages had little impact on settlement patterns. The historical records of the Ming and Qing (the Appendix) state that, although the people who lived in these two areas did have huge forts, they moved into them only when danger was imminent. By contrast, the peasants who lived in the southwestern peripheral area of the Southeast Mega-region eventually chose to live permanently inside their *tulou* buildings. Unlike the settlements in other parts of Fujian and Guangdong, in the small river valleys occupied by the Hakka and Minnan people the earthen defense structures evolved into the dominant dwelling form. The western and southern foothills of the Daimao Mountain became the foci of *tulou* distribution. In terms of administrative units, settlements located in Yongding, Longyan, Nanjing, Pinghe, Hua’an, and Zhangpu on the Fujian side and Raoping and Dabu on the Guangdong side make up the loci of the huge earthen residences. (Fig. 2)

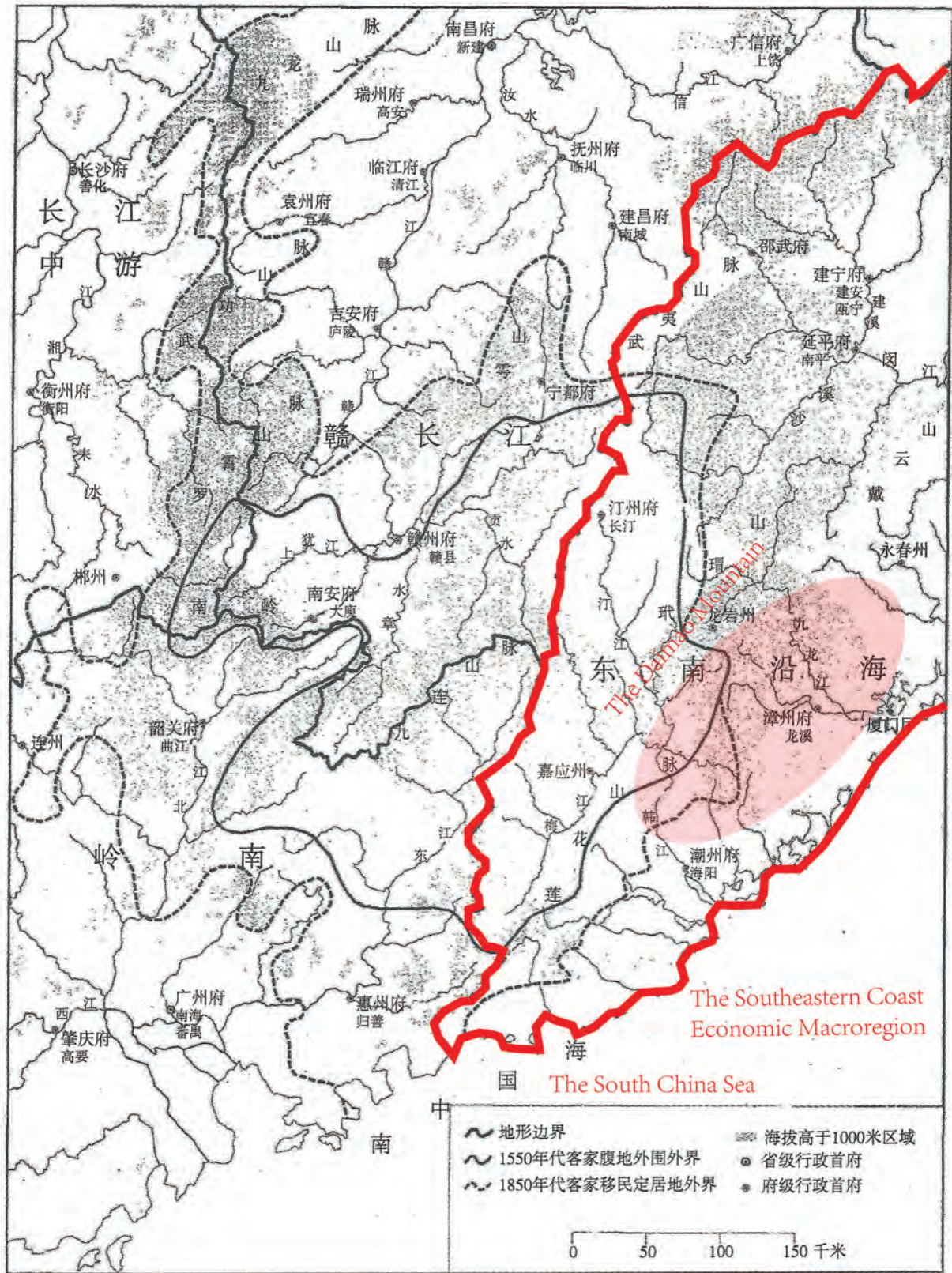
## RESEARCH ORIENTATION

The use of *tulou* buildings as a tourist attraction began in the early 1990s (Kobayashi, 2013). In 1991, the local government of Yongding county took the first steps toward setting up the *Yongdingxian liuyouju* (Yongding County Bureau of Tourism) to manage *tulou* tourist resource development on county level. In 1993, the *Yongding tulou liuxingshe* (Yongding *Tulou* Travel Agency) was established. Touristic use of such ‘old houses’ in the Yongding countryside marks a milestone in the history the adaptive re-use of *tulou* buildings. At the beginning of the 1990s, growing numbers of the local Hakka and Minnan people were seeking new ways to make use of their ancestral properties. Later, in the mid-1990s, the publication of essays about tourist

Right: Fig. 1 The Southeastern Coast Economic Macro-region, Hakka distribution and *tulou* distribution (map based on Leong Sow-Theng, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin and Their Neighbors*, Stanford University Press, 1997).

3. Chen Chunsheng (2011) calls it a ‘*cun zhai*’ (lit. village city).





development increased dramatically.<sup>4</sup> Since 2000, it seems that articles in academic journals about *tulou* preservation and conservation have prevailed over those written solely for exploring their economic value.<sup>5</sup> The preponderance of the former has been even more striking in the 2010s. Significantly, nearly all the regulations governing *tulou* preservation and protection have been made only since the early 2000s. As will be shown in the following chapters, although interest in profit-oriented use and alteration has been stifled in many ways by the officially authorized *tulou* heritage management discourse, spontaneous, non-governmental-based re-planning, development, adaptation and renovation have flourished among the peasants. In short, the active use and re-use of ancestral properties by some rural residents have already challenged the strict regulatory provisions laid down in heritage laws and the procedures set out by specialists with conservation expertise.

Until 2013, architectural heritage experts were appealing for an uncompromising standard for *tulou* preservation. They advocated that the government and people should guarantee that the great historical treasure represented by *tulou* be kept intact and transmitted down to future generations. Realistically, in view of the large number of structures involved and the need of residents to be able to lead their own lives, these wishes seem unattainable. By that time because of these obstacles, some government officials were beginning to be aware of these infeasibilities. Consequently, in 2013 the former director of the *Zhongguo Guojia Wenwujü* (the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, SACH), Li Xiaojie, proposed a new strategy for the preservation of traditional settlement architecture. Li (*China News* reporters, 2014) believed that preservation should be carried out in tandem with utilization. He even suggested the requirement that a specified plan for heritage use be included in any building preservation plan. He argued that these sorts of management plans should take the means of livelihood and the current needs of the local people seriously into consideration. He insisted that this was a sustainable way of going about preservation. His proposal has suggested a possible

way to preserve ancestral properties by using them, and is one that this thesis supports wholeheartedly. As will be analyses in this thesis, the preservation of old dwellings is by no means a simple black-and-white affair. It is impossible for heritage authorities on any level to exercise unconditional control over how buildings – like other complex systems – metabolize. In fact, settlements and buildings have never stopped changing. They are in fact living, organic wholes. Any alterations to buildings reflect new demands felt by local residents. Buildings in a rural context, including but not limited to dwellings, survive by changing and adaptation. How the changes come about and to what extent they actually happen are both complex questions. Any possible answer to these matters depends on the stakeholders involved. The decisions made and compromises achieved by stakeholders determine to what extent a settlement or a dwelling can be preserved, restored, presented to the visitors, and/or committed to adaptive use. However, when it comes to the nitty-gritty, are all the stakeholders able to sit at the same table?

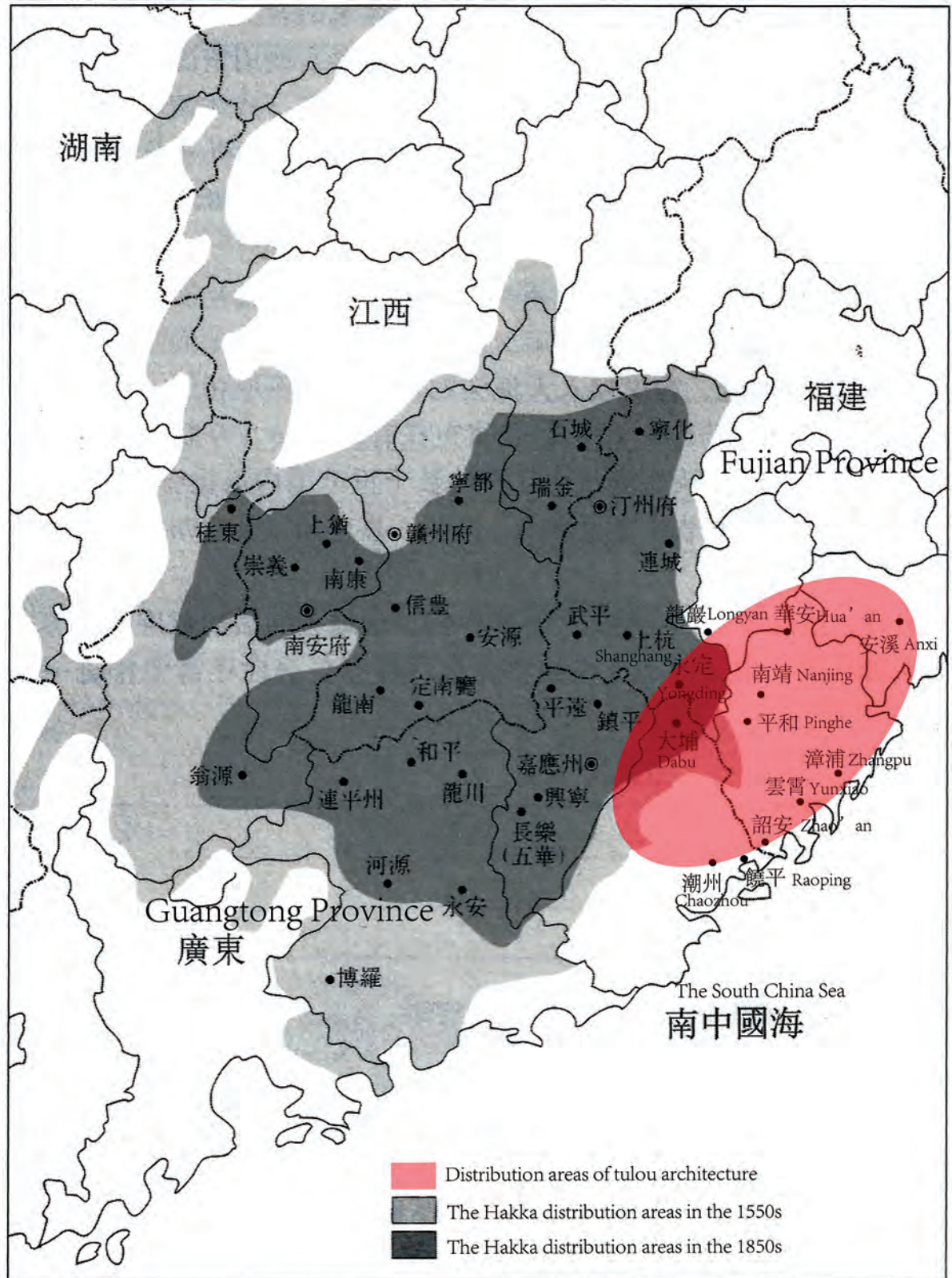
Who are the stakeholders in this sort of discourse? In most cases – in theory – local peasants are the main parties with control over and investments in *tulou*. The drawback is that peasants are generally considered to be the most disadvantaged social groups in the country. They are typically beset by three types of problem. The first snag is that, although their ownership via ancestral inheritance is protected by such fundamental laws as the *Property Law*, their right to cultural property is not properly guaranteed by heritage laws. The second stumbling-block is that the attitudes of the heritage authorities and the effect of heritage designation can have a critical impact on their properties. The third obstacle is that they are having to deal with the stress of survival and are in competition with urban centers. These hubs lure away the young and exploit the rural villages in the interests of tourism. At present, one form of competition is revolving around cultural heritage: the local residents ‘ancestral’ properties,

Right: Fig. 2 The distribution of tulou architecture in southern Fujian and northern Guangdong (map based on Leong Sow-Theng, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin and Their Neighbors*, Stanford University Press, 1997).

4. According to the CNKI statistics (<http://www.cnki.net/>).

5. *Ibid.*





'old houses' in particular. As will be elaborated on in later chapters, the peasants form a social group whose continued existence is required by a number of relevant authorities in the outside world. By law, the rural collectives are the masters of their land, but the uses to which rural individuals can put land are restricted and effectively limited by the interests of other stakeholders, notably the state and the local authorities. In practice, citing and paraphrasing the principles and standards of the international heritage regime, on behalf of the Chinese public a local government can require rural residents to preserve their decaying dwellings as they represent a benefit for urbanites with whom they are not personally acquainted. Similarly, tourist attraction development, heavily inclined toward mountain spaces and vistas, might require whole settlements to be preserved unaltered as part of the 'unchanging' scenery. Under these circumstances, any strongly felt local need to redevelop or rebuild is usually ignored.

Issues involving rural heritage, especially the preservation of old houses, have become hot topics of discussion in China in the last decade, inspiring articles in diverse newspapers and magazines as well as in academic journals. Unlike agricultural fields, the patrilocal residences common in the expansive rural areas of China have long been viewed as private property, not only by the peasants themselves but in practice also by the government authorities. This was true even during the Land Reform in the 1950s and the radical era of the Anti-Four Olds campaign in the mid-1960s (Oxford, 2010). The essential problem is that *lao fangzi*, literally translated as old houses, are not one solid block. They encompass diverse forms, uses, functions, ownerships and ancestral trusts founded by lineage segments on different ritual levels (Freedman, 1958). On the whole, changes in a settlement's buildings and structures are a reflection of the needs of both individuals and upper-level lineage segments. Illogically, among heritage experts and authorities, changes that have occurred in the past are usually deemed part of a building's history, whereas contemporary alterations in response to the same needs as those felt in the past are regarded as inauthentic and deleterious to the building's integrity, and therefore unacceptable. Conversely, for local residents change

is a continuous metabolic process. Consequently it is of the utmost importance to understand the nature of *lao fangzi* as understood by those who live in them.

The most vital point is that these dwellings are an ancestral inheritance the peasants have been bequeathed from their forebears. In precise terms, they are the properties belonging to each household in a lineage village. They stand in contrast to edifices like ancestral halls and temples that are collective properties. Freedman (1958) and Szonyi (2002) have both explored the basic features of ancestral halls and temples. Unquestionably, although it is true that ancestral halls have become more open since the seventeenth century in an endeavor to include as many lineage members as possible, both the ownership of the buildings and the trust that is responsible for each building in the name of the founders are very strictly controlled and managed by only a few individuals or lineage segments in the descent line. In short, lineage members have the right to make offerings in the halls, but ownership remains in the hands of the local gentry families and important donors. The Land Reform in the 1950s did undoubtedly have an effect on the ownership of halls and temples. It seems that since that time, peasants in South China have often preferred to adopt the belief that the ancestral halls and temples should belong to the lineage as a whole. This idea has been gathering growing numbers of adherents since the 1980s, when the Cultural Revolution was officially terminated and the state began to embrace traditional cultural revitalization warmly. Since a large number of ancestral halls and temples were destroyed between 1966 and 1976, the value of the remaining halls and temples have increased for their lineage members who have returned to the observance of their ancestral cults. Unlike residential buildings and structures, that are heritable estates naturally transmitted to descendants, halls and temples cannot be inherited by individuals, and to a large degree they are the public property of the village. Home shrines (*tang*) are similar to halls and temples in terms of ownership. Being on the lowest level of the layered ancestor cult system, they are usually established as part of a household compound. In many cases, home shrines are direct metamorphoses of the old houses once lived in by ancestors. Within



three to five generations after the death of these ancestors, their residences could have begun to be used by their descendants as places at which to make offerings to them. Consequently, they are in effect owned by some of the major branches descended from the initial nuclear family (Freedman, 1966). In view of these legal principles, shrines, halls and temples should be thought of as public or collective properties.

The second important point to be pondered is that, apart from private or collective ownership, buildings and structures designated *zhongdian wenwu baohu danwei* (cultural sites under government protection) by the state are in many cases regarded as the property of the country. China's *Cultural Heritage Law*, the *Wenwu Baohufa*, first came into force in 1982. Its fifth clause states: 'Archaeological sites (*gu yizhi*), ancient burials (*gu muzang*) and grottoes/caves are the property of the country as a whole. Designated sites such as important monuments, ancient architectures, stone carvings, wall paintings, representative buildings and other immovable features of the contemporary past (*jinxianandai*) also belong to the country, unless otherwise noted.' In Chinese heritage discourse, important buildings and monuments can be designated the property of the nation and state on three levels, namely: the county level (*xianji*), the provincial level (*shengji*) and the national level (*guojiaji*). At whichever level a site is designated, it is under the strict protection by the government. Clause Six of the *Wenwu Baohufa* states private and collective owners should use a heritage site in full compliance with heritage laws and regulations.

In the twenty-first century, the country's grip on the right to use land has slackened. Under the *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Nongcun Tudi Chengbaofa* (the *Law of Land Contract in Rural Areas of the People's Republic of China*) (2002), peasants can enjoy the right to use the piece of land (*zhaijidi*) on which their own properties are located. In the past, the right to use *zhaijidi* was transferrable only between different individuals or households belonging to the same collective unit (*jiti*). However, in recent years, the right to use *zhaijidi* has been made transferrable from the local residents to outside developers. Although in the first instance old houses are household estates,

the transference of *zhaijidi* use rights can have a direct and serious impact on these properties. In rural China, all land is owned by the *jiti*. Consequently, a person's ownership of a house is therefore distinct from the ownership of the land on which the house is built. The dilemma is that whereas, on the one hand old dwellings of historic significance are the cultural heritage of the whole nation (*quan minzu*), on the other, they are privately or collectively owned properties. This double-edged ascription of rights can cause the local people many problems in their daily lives. Heritage discourse highlights the relationship between the local people, such as the Hakka and Minnan people, and the government, the principal focus being on the property right issues.

A third discourse in which the disputed status of an old house can appear is the 'cultural resource' discourse. Old houses are cultural resources. They can sometimes also provide opportunities for making an economic profit, and hence become nodes of tension between different stakeholders. Usually, this rivalry is between the local residents/property owners and outsiders who want to exploit the local tourist resource without giving a second thought to the local people's interests. As this thesis will discuss, in China, development in urban areas is usually based on the exploitation of the rural resources. No doubt this is partly a natural extension of the long-term advantages of and the leading role enjoyed by the urban centers (*xian*) throughout most of the Chinese imperial history. Since the Republican period, the dominance of urban centers has been further reinforced by private capital. Furthermore, capital has quickly become centralized in Chinese urban areas since the 1990s. Urban development needs resources that can only be obtained from the country's vast rural areas – labor, energy, farm produce, mines and so forth. However, rural scenery and landscapes are also resources that urban tourist interests pursue. The overexploitation of rural resources has already caused many social problems.

As discussed earlier, to many of the peasants it seems that what the cultural authorities want from them is a combination of authenticity and integrity of *wenwu* (literally cultural materials), and what the tourism companies want from them is usually picturesque scenery. As private land ownership is

not permitted under China's laws, and is so stated in the Constitution, a peasant is unable to use a claim to a small piece of private ownership to obtain fair compensation for any transfer of land-use rights. This disgruntlement lies at the root of many disputes.

The early 1950s to the early 1980s was in effect a very special time period in that collectivism still stood at the core of Chinese socialist ideology. The needs of an individual in this period were largely suppressed. In such a socialist atmosphere, it was everyone's responsibility to serve the country unselfishly and unconditionally. Reward or compensation was a matter about which people felt ashamed to talk openly. Although the Land Quality Improvement Movement (*pingzheng tudi*) led to dramatic landform changes throughout China in the 1960s to 1970s, cultural resources in the form of settlement architecture in South China were less impacted. Despite the Opening Policy and the changes in the land-use right in the 1980s, collectivism still had the rural society in China in an iron grip. The boundary between a person's own property and that of the collective groups was still very blurred. Bewildered by all this uncertainty and confusion, peasants seldom asked for compensation for preserving their own property as cultural sites for the public. They undertook this willingly for their country. Another important reason that they failed to pursue any claims is that in the early 1980s any one single individual or household in a village was just as poor as another.

The tide has turned since the late 1980s. A more divided rural society in economic terms has emerged. The differentiation in economic status among local residents has made them more aware of the importance of money. Since the late 1980s, tourism development has extended into China's rural areas. At nearly the same time, control over *wenwu* was asserted by the cultural authorities. In this period of conversion, many changes took place in people's minds. They certainly became more aware of their own personal interests. Making money reemerged as the most essential matter, as it had been over a half century earlier. The peasants no longer unthinkingly followed the path set out by the government in moral and ideological terms. Although the Chinese government still held its grip on all land on behalf of the public, the economic needs of the peasants began

to be considered an appropriate topic for discussion. Disputes about land- and property-use between peasants and the *gongjia* (government) became more serious than ever before. The individual responsibility of preserving *wenwu* promulgated by the Chinese cultural authorities in the name of patriotism and collectivism began to be seriously challenged in cultural resource management practice. In many cases, the *xian* government officials began to exercise their prerogative to initiate tourism development projects in collaboration with companies from the outside, without bothering to consult the local people properly. Consequently, it is quite natural that the peasants who have been excluded from the right to share the benefits of development need no convincing that government officials preserve and conserve only for the outsiders and themselves.

Some of the *tulou* buildings in western and southern Fujian have already been designated important heritage sites on the provincial and national levels. As discussed above, *tulou* buildings are undoubtedly personal or household property, and, clearly, fundamental laws, such as the *Property Law*, guarantee the right of personal ownership, even though the country overall is owned by the public. However, *tulou* buildings are also part of cultural heritage and cultural resources. To some extent, cultural heritage preservation can be used as an excuse for stopping the natural architectural metabolism of *tulou* structures. As mentioned above, the legal status of *tulou* rooms is quite different from that of ancestral halls in that they are private dwellings, and they are much more closely implicated in local people's daily life. I shall argue in later chapters that governmental intervention might result in a transfer of land-use rights that can have serious impact on local people's way of life, especially on their means of livelihood. In theory, the use of local people's property for the benefit of the public should only be implemented on a voluntary basis. The fly in the ointment is that compensation issues have not yet been properly regulated under any of the fundamental laws.

The only possible legal document we have been able to find so far in relation to such double-edged property is the *Cultural Heritage Law*, that is considered only a subsidiary law. It regulates what can and cannot

be done with properties that have been designated cultural heritage, including some *tulou* buildings, but it does not guarantee satisfactory living conditions for the people who still live inside such listed buildings. The catch is that these conditions can often be achieved only through renovation. The most embarrassing thing is that this law has, in many respects, not been accepted as an integral part of the fundamental laws. As a law it has a comparatively low legal standing overall, but still has enough weight to influence the life of the *tulou* residents. Its influence has increased dramatically since the 2000s with the registration of some *tulou* buildings on the World Heritage List. In the 1990s, people in western and southern Fujian began to use their *tulou* buildings as tourist attractions but in many villages the local people still cannot get their fair share of the benefits from tourism development (Ye, 2006).

Although *tulou* buildings have become a focus of worldwide attention and admiration, many local people have come to associate them with a perceived backwardness of the traditional lifestyle. Some Chinese heritage researchers have concluded that the widespread preservation of these buildings is impossible, simply because they block development and are, in effect, putative symbols of backwardness. Therefore, to preserve as many of the old houses as possible has come to be seen as a metonym for being backward.<sup>6</sup>

In short, the preservation of *tulou* buildings is a very complex question, with answers determined by multiple socio-cultural factors. Most of these factors are to be discovered in the abovementioned three discourses, all of which pose a dilemma for the continued existence of *tulou* architecture. One thing that is certain at present is that the social conditions in *tulou* settlements vary from building to building. Therefore, in terms of preservation, there is no single answer. In some settlements, there might well be a good opportunity to preserve *tulou* for the future, whereas in other settlements, the old houses have had to be demolished to make way for new buildings. It seems to me that we, as heritage practitioners, have become accustomed

to highlighting, even overstating, the legitimacy of architectural preservation, while failing to evaluate the case for redevelopment that does have rational purposes even though it irrevocably results in demolition. As professionals, we talk only about the ways to preserve the past rather than about ways to live with the past. Redevelopment is sometimes a kind of taboo subject in *wenwu baohu* (cultural heritage protection) discourses in China.

Taking Hekeng village in south Fujian province as an example, this thesis begins by exploring the factors that might have had important impacts on a 'traditional' Chinese settlement in the South in its evolution from entirely an ordinary peasant occupation toward a place well-known for its *tulou* residences, whose registration as World Heritage site was approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2008. There are three specific questions that I want to try to answer: (1) Who are the Hekeng people? What is the character of their lineage settlements, and how has settlement in the Hekeng area evolved into the way it looks today? (2) How have the *Cultural Heritage Law* and regulations on local, national and international levels influenced the settlement in terms of heritage preservation? (3) How have people both inside and outside the site area used and how do they intend to use Hakka heritage? What roles have these different intentions played in reshaping the built environment? (4) How have the Hekeng people been able to compete with outsiders in their struggle to protect their own cultural heritage rights? On the basis of these analyses, I hope to arrive at some suggestions that will improve the management of *tulou* heritage in the future.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From 2010 to 2013, I participated in a project called 'Cultural Heritage Preservation and Contemporary Chinese Society', funded by the Ford Foundation. In this project I was responsible for investigating the four *tulou* settlements located in the Nanjing rural area. In 2010, I lived in Hekeng village for forty days, and carried out preliminary investigations in Hekeng, Nanou, Taxia and Shiqiao villages. Two colleagues in the Fujian Provincial Museum, Zhang Jinde and Lan Dongyang, helped with the interviews in these settlements. The initial purpose of this research was

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6. Personal communication from Wang Xuerong.



to explore ways to protect the cultural heritage in rural South China. However, after the investigation had already commenced, I began to realize that nothing is absolutely destined to be preserved or protected. Preservation can only be sustainable when it is really needed by, or at least has the endorsement of, most stakeholders. In short, nothing can be preserved unconditionally. It is also in the interviews that I was made aware of the three discourses mentioned above, namely: the property discourse, the heritage discourse and the resource discourse.

Important sources of information obtained in 2011 and 2013 include the historical records of Nanjing county, genealogies of the local Zhang surnames, oral history materials, questionnaires and digital interview recordings. I maintained contact with four important informants: Zhang Enhao, Zhang Mintai, Zhang Wenzhu and Zhang Kuncheng. They are the descendants of the major branches (*fang*) of the Hekeng Zhang surname. It is important to note that Enhao, Wenzhu and Kuncheng have each served as head of Hekeng village (*cunzhang*). Enhao had this honor in the 1990s, Kuncheng in the 2000s and Wenzhu in the 2010s. They provided important information on lineage history, kinship relations, the histories of the settlements, sources of livelihood, local industries, oral histories pertaining to the extant buildings and the buildings demolished during the Cultural Revolution, and so forth.

In 2012 to 2013, I began to analyze the materials. I used the data the informants had provided to reconstruct the landscape evolution process. With the information extrapolated from interviews and questionnaires, I undertook a stakeholder analysis to determine how people from different backgrounds understand the peasants' property, what their intentions concerning the use of heritage are, what changes these intentions have introduced to the local society and how such intentions and subsequent practice have influenced their daily lives. I then classified the information about the use of the *tulou* heritage in Hekeng into three categories corresponding to the three discourses, and attempted to determine how, in each context, the local people have interacted with other stakeholders, especially those from the outside the river valley. I was then in a position to answer the four questions outlined above.

## CHAPTER ARRANGEMENT

Chapter 1 explores the diffusion of *tulou* buildings and settlements in the Fujian area. Before discussing the three heritage discourses in detail, it is necessary to set the scene by examining the heritage itself and the people living there in some depth. Who are these Hakka people? What is their heritage, and how did it become heritage? It is also essential to state clearly how the local people have linked themselves and their social memories to their built environment. How did they use the built environment and the landscapes? The goal of the chapter is to provide a context into which later discussions on heritage right issues can be put. This context is conceptualized in relation to landscape biography. As Roymans (2009) has argued, 'places and landscapes play an active role in the biographies and genealogies of people, binding persons and generations together, while at the same time creating their own life histories at different time scales through successive social contexts.' Landscapes provide the settings against which real personal and public lives are played out over time. Therefore, a landscape biography can combine communal memory with the evolution of the land surface features. Consequently, it provides a good standpoint from which to view the past of a small society such as that of the Hekeng Valley. A landscape biography offers a narrative about the correlations between the Hekeng landscape evolution and changes in Hekeng society at different critical points in history. This analysis should substantially enrich interpretation of Hakka heritage.

In Chapter 2, I explore *tulou* buildings as private properties. In the past, agnates who were members of the same lineage segment usually raised the construction funds by collecting money from each household in that branch. Although a *tulou* building remains as a whole the collective property of a lineage segment, the rooms inside are the private property of individual single households. In the villages such as Hekeng, Nanou, Taxia and Shiqiao, the local Hakka people usually observe the *fenjia* (household-split) ceremony when the eldest son of the family gets married, at which time when senior members of the family are usually still alive. This is quite different from the situations reported by Freedman (1966), Cohen (1979) and Hugh (1979).

In practice, the private ownership of the household dwelling is actually legitimized by *fenjia* customs. Usually, the eldest son and his wife are given a new room inside the same *tulou* building in which his parents and siblings live. Hence, the ideal is that the nearest relatives in the descent line live together in the same building. At least some of the male descendants of the donors in each generation are able to find a place to live inside the building. This guarantees that the household residences in a *tulou* building can be inherited patrilineally. The special internal arrangement of *tulou* buildings reflects the fact that most of the families in it are stem and joint families. Therefore, a *tulou* is larger than the building compound defined by Hugh (1979). Each one is a small-sized community. In fact, people from the five degrees of mourning relations (*wufu*) can still live in the same building. Purchase and transfer with compensation are both possible, because the rooms are *de facto* personal property. The chapter focuses on the peasants' rights under the fundamental laws governing the use of their own immovable property (*budongchan*) and the violations of such rights under the Heritage Law and relevant regulations on lower administrative levels. To date, compensation for *wenwu* use is still a problem pending in the Chinese legal system. I shall also present some thoughts on this in Chapter 2.

Through a discussion of the Hekeng settlements, Chapter 3 explores the questions of what should be remembered and for whom it should be remembered. The World Heritage (WH) framework is a state-based management regime of a typically European sort (Willems, 2014), intended to protect an important heritage of all humankind. The goal of this international regime is to help each state preserve its own social memories by recourse to systemized procedures. The WH system works as a selection tool, employing the 'Outstanding Universal Value' (OUV) principles, that are based on European values (Smith, 2006). However, the question is: Who is eligible to judge whether the features selected by the World Heritage Commission as WH sites under the OUV rules can or cannot represent the past of a place? Who should have the final say? To what extent can such designation represent the social memories in a place? Logically, the people who are the best qualified to

answer such questions are the local people, because they are the heirs to all the architectural properties. The chapter will examine whether and to what extent the past reconstructed using the WH method does reflect the past in local people's minds, or do they have their own ways of commemorating the past? These questions are very important in that they can help us reassess the role the WH system can play in preserving social memories.

The bulk of Chapter 4 is devoted to a discussion of the 'cultural resources' discourse. Since the 2000s, heritage experts in China have become increasingly worried about the disappearance of vernacular buildings in South China. The biggest problem they face is that the reasons for these disappearances are by no means cut and dried. One of the most important stumbling-blocks is that the adaptability of the old buildings to modern use is not straightforward. Without heavy investment, it is virtually impossible for buildings in traditional styles to escape the fate of being totally redeveloped. If their financial status allowed them to do so, understandably most people want to improve their quality of life by constructing completely new small apartments with better sanitary facilities. Redevelopment can usher in a dramatic change in the built environment in only five years or so. What is often overlooked is that the dwellings are highly variable parts of the built environment. The outside world has provided the peasants with various architectural styles to emulate. 'If I cannot make a good use of my old houses (to earn money), why not make it a better place to live in?' one of my informants, from the Jinjiang rural area in southern Fujian, stated pragmatically. In the small village in which he lived, over 90 percent of the *tulou* buildings have already been replaced by brick and reinforced concrete houses. Old houses are disappearing from these villages simply because the local people refuse to use homesteads in traditional ways. They prefer to have their property in the form of a private residential resource rather than as a public cultural resource. In view of this, as said earlier, Li, an official of the Chinese cultural authority, has put forward some constructive proposals. My understanding is that, if a body wants to preserve the built environment, it has to provide the peasants with a compelling reason why it is worth their while to do so. Therefore

the corollary is ‘to preserve’ a building necessarily implies ‘to use’ it profitably. In some extreme cases, in which the local residents display little affection for their own ancestral properties, the preservation of this cultural resource – if it occurs – has to be based on a deal in which outsiders help the local residents exploit their cultural resources in exchange for their maintenance of the house. However, the waters are muddied as the outsiders, either the government or the tourism companies, might have their own interests in the use of the insiders’ properties. Undoubtedly, the maximization of their interests can dramatically lower the strength of the peasants’ desire to preserve cultural resources. This chapter will discuss the sustainability of the vernacular built environment by exploring the fundamental rights and duties of both insiders and outsiders in this heritage game.

The last chapter will have an open ending. It is not my purpose to provide conclusive results. Therefore, the chapter will focus on some suggestions for the future, in the hope that they can be of some use in resolving dilemmas in the use and preservation of vernacular buildings and settlements.