

## PART I THE PRACTICE OF *LISHANG-WANGLAI*

I mentioned in the section titled “ESRC social support” within the Introduction that rural Chinese people sought social support resources from many different sources. Table 4 shows how we generalised those sources into three categories: household support (members of one’s household), private support (relatives, neighbours and friends), and public support (official or unofficial sources, i.e. village collective, local government, bank, etc.). This means rural people had to engage in reciprocal social relationships with both individuals and institutions in order to manage their everyday life and special events along with changes in their situation. From my fieldwork in two villages I found there were patterns of mutual support and that they were hugely complex in various ways. They can be described with my academic concept *lishang-wanglai* (see section 6.1) which is derived from the folk expression *li shang wanglai* (see “The villagers’ usage of *li shang wanglai*”).

Based on the Kaixiangong villagers’ notions of *bao’en*, *zou renqing*, *la guanxi*, *buxiao* and *laiwang*, etc. I have categorised their complicated reciprocal social relationships as four basic kinds of *wanglai*. They are generous *wanglai*, expressive *wanglai*, instrumental *wanglai* and negative *wanglai*. In section 6.1.3 I will show how this *wanglai* typology is influenced by previous researchers (see Table 3) and also how I borrowed the terms of expressive, instrumental and negative from Befu (1966-67) and Sahlins (1965/72) separately.

Part I will show how the concrete practices of *lishang-wanglai* in social relationships are experienced by ordinary people in a modern Chinese village – Kaixiangong. The experience not only includes different kinds of *wanglai* practices by the villagers, but also indicates basic principles derived from the villagers’ explanations and local customs (*lishang*). The basic principles or criteria are moral judgement; human feelings, rational calculation and religious sense (see section 6.1.3). They illustrate how and why the different types of social relationships (*wanglai*) changed, not through chaotic change, but by calculation of a set of reasons (*lishang*) behind the changes.

According to my fieldwork notes, generous and negative *wanglai* (*bao'en* or *buxiao*, etc.) make up a small proportion, roughly about 17 and 3 per cent, and instrumental *wanglai* (*guanxi* – although another part of *guanxi* can be categorised into negative *wanglai*. see section 1.2) about 20 per cent respectively of the whole of the *wanglai* activities, whereas the remaining 60 per cent of the *wanglai* activities are expressive *wanglai* (*renqing*). Therefore, in Chapter 1 I will cover three types of *wanglai*: generous *wanglai*, instrumental *wanglai* and negative *wanglai*. The above quantitative data shows that generous *wanglai* and negative *wanglai*, the two extremes of *wanglai*, in everyday life make up one fifth of the overall *wanglai* activities. The reasons for covering instrumental *wanglai* in this chapter are not only because it makes up a small proportion of *wanglai* activities in the village, but also to show how I use instrumental *wanglai* as a part of my *wanglai* typology in distinction from previous researchers on *guanxi* studies (see 6.1.1). In contrast to instrumental *wanglai* (*guanxi*) expressive *wanglai* has not been covered in such depth by other researchers. I will devote a further three full chapters to this important aspect of *lishang-wanglai*.

## 1. Generous, instrumental and negative *wanglai*

This chapter will dwell on three types of *wanglai*: instrumental *wanglai* and the two extremes of *wanglai* typology, generous *wanglai* and negative *wanglai*. The two extremes of *wanglai* can be described with Yang L.'s (1957) *bao'en* (to pay a debt of gratitude), *baochang* (repay, compensate), *baochou* (revenge) or *baoying* (retribution) etc. (see *bao* of section 6.1.1). The frequency of the two extremes is actually not the same in villagers' everyday life. As I have shown in the introduction in Part I in Kaixiangong there were many more cases of generous *wanglai* than negative *wanglai*.

Although instrumental *wanglai* (*guanxi*) is very popular in Chinese studies (see section 6.1.1), in Kaixiangong it only makes up a small portion of all the *wanglai* activities. But this is not to say it carries less weight in arrangements of social support or the process of *lishang-wanglai*. Although the state seems to provide almost nothing for rural villagers' welfare in everyday life (see Table 1), it controls and affects their life enormously. In the villagers' words: the government controls the whole country and they manage their own life (*zhengfu guanli guojia zhege dajia, women guanhao ziji de xiajia*). Since the way in which the state manifests control of the country and the people is unpredictable the villagers had to create different ways to adjust different relationships around them from time to time. This is why I have extended the flow of social support and *lishang-wanglai* from interpersonal relationships to relationships between individuals and any institutions – whether or not the institution can be personalised is another matter. I will further develop this issue in Part II showing how personal relationships were turned into personalised relationships or personalised institutional relationships based on Polanyi's (1957) and Parsons's (1937/49) work.

### 1.1. Generous *wanglai*

Generous *wanglai* relates to people giving without expecting any kind of exchange in return (see section 6.1.3). In other words, it is to do something for nothing, or for no obvious reason or for the pure enjoyment of giving. Instances of this are most clearly visible in the villagers' festivals or rituals where everyday and religious life

is mixed. The villagers categorise these occasions as being between people (*huoren jie*), the villagers and ancestors (*bai shangzu* or *siren jie*), or the villagers and the local gods (*bai shen* and *bai zao*).

I found in the village generous *wanglai* works both horizontally and vertically. When such *wanglai* happened between the same generational family members, a family with its relatives<sup>1</sup>, neighbours, friends, fellow villagers, etc. they can be horizontal *wanglai*, whereas the *wanglai* that happened between different generations of members of a family, relationship between village collective and villagers, ancestors and members family, etc. can be seen as vertical *wanglai*. In this section I will show related cases within one family, and between two or more extended families, which illustrate how such *wanglai* works in everyday life. I will then extend generous *wanglai* in villagers' everyday life to see how it worked between villagers horizontally and vertically between villagers and ancestors / gods in their religious life.

#### 1.1.1. A family based example of horizontal and vertical generous *wanglai*

An old lady called FY Tan told me her lifelong story in which generous *wanglai* and other types of *wanglai* formed a vertical cycle in her life, as well as different *wanglai* with others horizontally. FY was born in 1926. She told me that she came to the Tan family when she was 16 years old as a daughter-in-law-to-be (*tongyangxi*). After she got married she gave birth to three children. The oldest was a girl, but she died two weeks after she was born. In 1945 she had a boy, XR Tan. FY adopted a two year old girl as a daughter-in-law-to-be in 1950. In 1957 FY gave birth to her youngest boy, JR Tan. However, the Tan family became very poor during a series of natural disasters that were exacerbated by the social policies of the Great Leap Forward. They were forced to give two-year-old JR to the Gu family for adoption and agreed never to claim him back. In 1990 during the lunar New Year's holiday XR Tan found JR, who was then a director of the county hospital. XR told JR how much their mother and the Tan family had missed him over the 30 year period and how much XR wanted to fulfil their dead father's unfulfilled wish (*yi yuan*) and mother's long-cherished wish (*suyuan*), before her death. Surprisingly, JR's response was cold: "It is better that you do not claim me

at all since we have not *laiwang* (come and go) for so many years according to the adoption agreement”. XR felt utterly disappointed in JR. However, from 1997 onwards, JR and XR and the two brothers’ families began to *wanglai* with each other expressively. In August of the same year (1997) JR brought his wife and son to pay the first visit to his own mother and brother’s family for a family reunion. The second visit was for XR’s younger son’s wedding in 1999, at which JR assumed the role of a close relative. In 2000, after a conference in Suzhou City, JR made a detour and visited his mother and brother’s family again. XR brought his family to pay a visit to JR Tan’s family in 2001 during the period of the Mid-autumn Festival (*zhongqiujie*, 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month). It is also called Moon Day or Family Reunion Festival (*tuanyuanjie*). XR told me that six members of his family attended this important family reunion. They were his mother, two sons, the oldest son’s wife and daughter and himself. XR’s wife and the younger son’s wife could not come because they needed to look after the younger son’s baby girl who was ill then. In 2002 JR’s son spent his Moon Day holiday with his grandmother and uncle’s family in Kaixiangong Village. During 2003 summer holiday JR’s son visited XR’s family in Kaixiangong. XR took him to Wujiang City to see XR’s wife who was helping in looking after their younger son’s child. Then they went to Suzhou City for sightseeing together. In recent years XR and JR’s families talk to each other by telephone two or three times per month on average.

This case shows there is a horizontal generous *wanglai* between the Tan family and a two year old girl who was taken into the Tan family as a daughter-in-law-to-be, and the Gu family with the Tan family when the Gu family adopted the Tan family’s two year old son. In both cases generosity is involved because the adopting families saved the girl’s and boy’s life. According to FY this kind of generous *wanglai* is different from when she was taken into the Tan family as a daughter-in-law-to-be because that was a part of a marriage arrangement and the relationship between her natal family and the Tan family can be seen as expressive *wanglai* (see section 6.1.3). FY told me another difference that the two year old daughter-in-law-to-be was allowed to contact her natal family, but FY’s son was not. This means the generous *wanglai* between the girl’s natal family and the Tan

family could be developed into different types of *wanglai*. After the girl was married to XR, FY's older son, the relationship moved down from generous *wanglai* to expressive *wanglai* as with the majority of in-laws' families in the village. However, the relationship between the Tan and Gu families looks simple but is in fact more complicated. It seems that after JR was handed over to the Gu family any type of *laiwang* between the two families was stopped, whereas for FY, inside of her heart the relationship between her and JR / the Gu family was never finished. This can be seen as a quiescent relationship which could be mixed with different types of *wanglai* and could be reactivated into any type of *wanglai*.

A few years after JR was adopted the Gu family's situation went down to the bottom of society due to the Cultural Revolution (I will explain this later). FY thought it could be a good chance to claim JR back, but she didn't and the relationship between the two families remained the same. By 1990 she thought it was time to claim JR back, but JR refused it. According to fieldwork notes of the ESRC social support project, by Lu Yinghao, in 1991 the relationship between Tan family and Gu family (JR's new name is Gu YM) was negative *wanglai*. If the Tan family gave up the attempt to claim JR back their relationship could be ended. However, FY decided to create a new type of *wanglai* between the two families. After many efforts made by both sides the relationship had reached a positive aspect, namely, they understood each other much better, when I was there in 1996. From 1997 onwards the relationship between the two families has grown into an expressive *wanglai*. The Tan family categorised JR's family as non agnatic kin or close kin (*jinqin*) rather than agnatic kin (*zijiaren*) according to the local custom because JR was treated as a married out daughter. This means whenever the Tan family had any family events the JR family would be invited with treatment as relatives.

The mobility of the above different types of *wanglai* between Tan and Gu families horizontally can be understood with *lishang* criteria. (a) FY believed firmly the Chinese moral code which says "good is rewarded with good, and evil with evil (*shan you shan bao, e you e bao*)". For her, if her family accumulated merit by hard work and good intentions towards other people it would be rewarded with good. In practice, when and how to claim JR also involved a moral judgment. FY

told me that it would have been morally wrong if she had claimed JR when the Gu family was in a difficult situation. During the Cultural Revolution, Gu was denounced as a capitalist and he and his family were repatriated to his home town. Although this would have given her a good chance to reclaim JR, she did not do so. She said she would not requite kindness with enmity (*en jiang chou bao*) because Gu was the Tan family's benefactor. For her, to keep this moral code was part of accumulated merit (*jide*) and it would lead to a good future. (b) FY said she was heartbroken when her younger son was adopted by the Gu family. She would feel much happier in her remaining life if she could make some compensation (*baochang*) for JR, which can be for either material or human feelings. FY made clear that she never expected JR to provide for the aged in the traditional manner. On the contrary, she and her family worked very hard to be wealthy enough to claim JR and compensate him for the loss of his own parents by providing love for him and his family, because she believed that "this was what JR should be repaid and compensated (*zheshi JR yingde de baochang*)". (c) For FY to let her younger son be adopted can be explained with rational choice because it was the only way he could survive. This is why she always dreamt of claiming him back. However, she kept the adoption agreement for 30 years without claiming JR, also by rational choice. FY told me that although JR was her own son, the way in which she eventually claimed JR was under the condition that a new agreement had been reached between the Gu and Tan families. She would have otherwise only broken the agreement if Gu had been killed in an accident or if the Gu family had been unable to survive during the Cultural Revolution. (d) FY had quite strong religious sense. She believed in accumulated merit (*jide*). She also believed if she broke the original agreement without a proper reason she could receive evil (*zao baoying*). Here retribution (*baoying*) functioned as a warning for people to avoid a negative result by accumulating merit. FY even believed fortune and misfortune could be changed in a circle either within one's life or another life in the other world, as retribution or karma (*yinguo baoying*). In her case, it happened in different periods within her life in which the ups and downs of fate moved in cycles. She told me that when she was 16 years old her family was too poor and she had to be contracted as a daughter-in-law-to-be of the Tan family, which was a kind of poor families' marriage arrangement. When she knew a family in a neighbouring village

was too poor to let a two-year-old girl be a daughter-in-law-to-be her heart went out to the girl. She adopted the girl as a daughter-in-law-to-be for her 5 year old son. Nine years after that it was the Tan family's turn to feel too poor to survive. They had to let their own two-year-old son be adopted by the Gu family. However, the hope of reclaiming JR never died. She also planted this seed into her older son's heart and encouraged him to be successful in order to claim his younger brother. Thirty years later XR tried to reclaim JR for a family reunion and failed. This was not a sad ending for FY. It didn't stop her son from seeing her forever. She told me that her heart told her that JR would forgive his own parents gradually and claim the Tan family eventually since she had been praying devoutly to the local god and the god would help her. After many years' efforts FY has her son JR reunited with the Tan family. XR told me recently that his mother is 78 years old now and lives in happiness and health. The villagers said she has good fortune (*youfu*) now, although she suffered from cruel fate (*kuming*) when she was young. FY said the gods turned her bitter life into a happy life (*tuo laotian de fu*). In other words, having suffered enough hard life it was her turn to enjoy her old age. FY thought this was by deriving gain from misfortune (*yin huo de fu*).

This case also shows there is a vertical generous *wanglai* between the elder son XR and FY, and FY's younger son with his adopted parents the Gus. This can also be explained with *lishang* criteria. I didn't interview JR but from his mother and elder brother's explanations I understood him more or less accurately. (a) To pay a debt of gratitude to parents is to do with moral judgement. XR told me that he worked very hard as his parents expected because this was the best way to pay a debt of gratitude to his beloved parents for their hardship of bringing him up (*bao'en*).<sup>2</sup> He also told me that the reason he wanted to claim his younger brother was mainly for *bao'en* to his parents. He remembered his father's words before he passed away in 1985; that he would take his lifelong regret at giving up JR to the other world and pray there for the reunion of JR and the Tan family. XR said to fulfil his father's unfulfilled wish and his mother's long-cherished wish was his responsibility as a filial son (*xiaozi*). As for JR, according to FY, she found different understandings of morality in JR through *wanglai* with both JR and his adoptive parents by letters and telephone calls after JR's refusal. She said JR is a filial son (*xiaozi*). Just like

his elder brother, JR's actions came from the root of "pay a debt of gratitude" (*bao'en*) to his adopted parents. He refused his natal family's initial attempt to reclaim him because of his obligation (*yiwu*) of filial duty to his adopted parents (*jinxiao*). (b) When XR was first refused by JR he told his mother that JR still hated his own parents for leaving him with other people. This hateful human feeling was interpreted by FY as "a kind of revenge (*baofu*)" because JR was hurt deeply. FY understood that it was human nature for JR to have negative feelings of hatred for his own parents, who left him to other people and appeared to not want to see him again. For FY the negative feeling could determine a negative *wanglai* between two families. She made efforts to create a positive *wanglai* with JR and the Gu family. She was right. Over the seven years (1990 to 1997) after XR first visited him, JR was himself involved in a struggle between his great gratitude to his adopted parents for his upbringing (*yangyu zhi en*) and his feelings (*gurou zhi qing*) towards his blood relatives who gave him life. Actually, the way in which JR refused XR when he tried to claim him back to the Tan family can be described with "embodied *ganqing*" (Kipnis's term 1997). Later he told his brother his feelings were very complicated when he saw him. He didn't mean to hurt XR but he couldn't help but express his feelings in that way. JR told FY and XR that he was happy that in the later years of his life the family reunion helped him to recover from the knowledge that his own parents gave him away in infancy and the loss of his adopted father after his death. (c) In this case rational choice can be seen in different ways. XR thought the best time to claim JR was when he had achieved high enough social status and accumulated enough wealth to be compatible with the Gu family. This is his way of rational calculation. So in 1990, when he became a vice-director of the Miaogang Township (*fu xiangzhang*), XR went to Sheyang County of Jiangsu Province to see his younger brother. When he was refused by his younger brother one of the reasons he gave his mother was that JR did not want to be involved in any financial trouble by having a relationship with a poor relative from a rural area, because JR and his family were urban people. However, it was a misunderstanding. JR's point of view was that he should keep the agreement of adoption that he shouldn't *wanglai* with the Tan family, which had been kept by everybody for a long time. JR told FY that he was moved by his adopted father Gu, who told him that the agreement was less important now since JR was grown up

and it was JR's choice whether or not to claim his own flesh and blood - mother and brother. This means the agreement adapted to the changing situation, which is also rational choice. Thus, with JR's adopted father's permission he decided to keep the agreement until his adopted father passed away in April 1997. (d) Both XR and JR agreed that it was fate that brought them together, which involved a religious sense.

So far I have shown how horizontal and vertical generous *wanglai* between families and generations can be treated separately. It won't be easy to understand it without a further clarification. The relationship between FY and her younger son JR should be vertical *wanglai*. But for her the whole business of letting JR be adopted and claiming him back is to do with the Gu family, which determined the nature of such relationship to be horizontal. Although in both cases all four criteria of *lishang* had been involved, I should point out they weighted differently. For example, FY's religious sense is much stronger than her sons', whereas for JR the reconciliation with the Tan family was mainly determined by moral judgment and rational choice.

#### 1.1.2. Horizontal generous *wanglai* in annual life cycle events

I am now moving on to villagers' practices of generous *wanglai* based on various customs. According to the local custom there are three festivals for human beings (*huoren jie*), in contrast with the four festivals for ancestors (*xiren jie*, see next section). The three festivals are the Spring Festival (also called Chinese New Year or lunar New Year), The Beginning of Summer (*lixia*) and the Moon Day Festival (*tuanyuanjie*). Moreover, there is at least one ritual or event per lunar month throughout a year (see 5.4). The villagers mixed up rituals and customs in the four seasons (*suishi*) and solar term or periods (*jieqi*)<sup>3</sup> for people of different ages and sexes, as well as different kinds of local gods as a supplement. This kind of ritual was less religious than recreational (Fei, 1939:104). In other words, there was much entertainment only slightly coloured by religion and so these can be treated as part of the cultural (Xu, 1996:194-97) or social life (Wujiang general records: 1994:791-93). The above festivals and events involve different objects which mix with ancestors, local gods or goddesses. The relationships among the people can be

counted as generous *wanglai* because people enjoyed treating each other kindly by providing nice feasts to members of a family, extended families, guests and non-agnatic kin, etc. without expecting anything in return. Here I would like to show how generous *wanglai* in the villagers' everyday life in a horizontal way.

*Agnatic kin (zijiaren)*

The local customs pay little attention to agnatic kin in terms of generous *wanglai*. However the lunar New Year's Eve feast (*chi nianyefan*) involves an issue of reunion of close agnatic kin. Traditionally the family reunion feast at the lunar New Year's Eve is the most important moment for members of a family to enjoy themselves. As the Chinese saying goes: a second of a fine moment is worth a thousand grams of gold (*liangxiao yike zhi qianjin*). I found 87.5 per cent of sample families had the lunar New Year's Eve feast. This is made up as follows: 47 per cent were stem families<sup>4</sup> who enjoyed New Year's Eve feasts themselves, 6 per cent were nuclear families without brothers who invited their parent(s) for the feast, and 34.5 per cent were nuclear families divided from joint families who invited brothers' families and their parent(s) for the feast. Only 12.5 per cent of sample households with close agnatic kin did not have the New Year's Eve feast. This in fact consisted of four households. Amongst them, one family had two sons who lived in the village but they stopped having this kind of *wanglai* (Case 3), and three families had sons living outside of the village who could not come back for the New Year's Eve feast. This included BY Zhou's family.

My fieldwork started on the lunar New Year's Eve with BY Zhou's family. BY's parents had no sons of their own but two adopted sons. One became BY's husband. Another, BX, had not yet married and had been working in another township for many years and came back once or twice a year. Although this family was not a typical case for agnatic kin, it was categorised as agnatic kin and should have had a lunar New Year's Eve feast. But, contrary to the custom, BX was not present at the family reunion feast. Amongst the four families without the family reunion feasts three cases were due to geographical distance. The case of BX's failure to reunite with BY's family is more complicated. As BY's husband pointed out, it was BX's obligation to make an effort to join the feast. This involved a moral judgement.

BY's father said that given the complicated family background BX's behaviour was not a surprise because he would feel little interest or fun (*mei shade yisi*) in a reunion with the family. This is another element of *lishang*. BY's adopted daughter said BX must prefer to earn holiday double pay in the tortoise farm where he worked rather than come back to the village for the family reunion. This kind of explanation is a typical rational calculation. BY was clear herself that BX had no luck with this family (*yu zhege jia wuyuan*). So there was no point in making him return to the family if he did not want to *wanglai* with the family.

However, these reasons for BX's absence for the New Year's Eve feast were changed in 2003. From 1996 to 2003 many big events happened in BY's family: BY's father passed away, her son became engaged, bought a flat in a Zhenze township where he worked, got married and had a son. During the last few years BX attended every lunar New Year's Eve feasts regularly. He also took his share of fulfilment and obligation according to local customs in each event on his initiative. He even gave his nephew, BY's son, 40,000 *yuan* for his wedding. The above behaviour won a high praise morally. BY's daughter QZ said when I was there all her family members felt embarrassed by her uncle's absence for the New Year's Eve feast, so they misunderstood him. This kind of embarrassment in losing face (*diu mianzi*) is a human feeling. AM, BY's husband, said the way in which BX gave 40,000 *yuan* to his son was just like the return of a "big pig" for his daily "pig feed". AM farmed for BX's share of the grain ration field (*chengbao de kouliang tian*) and allowed BX to take his share of grain once or twice a year from home. He allowed BX to take his share of grain for free over years, just like giving a small amount of feed to a pig everyday, whereas when BY's family needed money BX returned it with a big amount (4,000 *yuan*), like giving a whole pig. Although there was not any kind of agreement between them, the principle behind their behaviour was analogous with saving small coins in a piggy bank for later use and therefore is a rational calculation. However, according to BY, the big pig from BX is much greater than AM's pig feed, the good relationship between members of her family should be traced back to thanks for her mother (*tuo niang de fu*). She never forgot where the family's happiness came from. This typical religious statement means

that her mother accumulated enough merit (*jide*), i.e. by adopting BX, working hard to raise four children, etc., which benefited her descendants.

For the villagers, whether or not to attend the Chinese New Year's Eve family reunion feast is a way of expressing generous *wanglai* between family members. In 1996 my view was that the relationship between BX and the family had dropped down to a kind of instrumental *wanglai* because he only came once or twice per year as was convenient to collect his share of grain. However, since then the relationship between BX and BY's family improved to expressive *wanglai* which can be seen from his behaviour of taking part in major family events (funeral and wedding, etc.) as well as attending the yearly family reunion feast. I suppose the changing point of the relationship between BX and the family is his stepfather's death, which brought them together again.

#### *Non-agnatic kin (qinqi)*

As I have shown in section 5.1 non-agnatic kin are much more than affinity relatives because they include relatives by marriage, un-married sisters, married out daughters, the natal family of a married son-in-law's, quasi relatives, etc. According to local custom, the New Year's Eve feast is for family reunion between brothers' families or members of the extended family based on agnatic kin. The feast on New Year's Day is used for a married out son or daughter, as close non-agnatic kin, to reunite with their natal family as equals. Moreover, FK Yao told me, that during the period of the lunar New Year his family would prepare a few more such feasts for the rest of the families on the non-agnatic kin list and his family would attend several such feasts too. All these feasts between close non-agnatic kin are categorised as generous *wanglai* by the villagers. Here I will demonstrate a case of generous *wanglai* with non-agnatic kin in a lunar New Year feast.

I attended a feast on the lunar New Year's Day (*xinnianfan*) in FK's family. This is a stem family with five members. They are FK's parents, wife and daughter. So on this feast FK's father's married out sister and FK's three married out sisters' families should all have been invited. Around 11:00am one of FK's sister's family

arrived with gifts. Soon afterwards FK's other sister's family and his father's sister's family arrived with their gifts. The gifts of cakes, general medical tonics (*zibupin*), sugar, and fruit were for FK's parents. The rest of the gifts included sweets, biscuits, fireworks, etc. and were for his daughter. The gifts embodied a moral code of respect for the elderly and love for the children (*zunlao aiyou*), although they can be shared with all the members of the family.

As host, FK's wife provided the highest standard service to their guests. It started with a double cup of teas. One was sweet tea made with fine glutinous rice crust (*daidi*) and sugar. Another was savoury tea made with green tea, smoked dry green beans (*xun qingdou*)<sup>5</sup>, and dried carrot chips, etc. The feast was held as a late lunch rather than an evening meal. There were 12 different dishes. The dishes were made of the upper part of pork leg (*tizi*), fish, prawn, chicken, duck, goose, eggs, bean curd and different vegetables. The event ended with a pure green tea after the main meal.

Everybody seemed to very much enjoy their feasts. During this period villagers dressed up in their best clothes, saw lots of relatives, enjoyed lots of feasts and gifts, etc. They also enjoyed playing the roles of both host and guest. I remember I saw many people carrying a basket covered with red cloth and walking in and out of the village. They always proudly announced, with happy voice, that they were going to be guests (*zuo keren*). The flowing of gifts and enjoyment of banquets reveal the villagers' true feelings. The above behaviour is mostly pleasurable. Kipnis (1997) regards *ganqing* as an activity mainly concerned with propriety, which may however also involve genuine pleasure. My observations are similar to his, but there is a significant difference in my interpretation. For Kipnis, the obligatory element of *ganqing* is primary; and from my observations the natural expression of real pleasure is more important.

There are always some local customs that conflict with each other at any occasion. To interpret the local customs and make a right decision involves rational choice. FK told me that according to one local custom his elder sister's family would come on the New Year Day's feast. But they didn't come this year because she could not bring her whole family with her. According to another local custom after FK's

older sister's son got married he and his wife needed to attend the lunar New Year Day feast arranged by their in-law's family. So this arrangement had to be rearranged accordingly. From this year onwards FK's older sister's family would come on another day because establishing a new generation of non-agnatic kin is more important than maintaining an existing relationship (see Figure 5 and 6).<sup>6</sup> Rational calculation can also be seen through a family labour division. As I mentioned earlier, FK's wife was in charge of entertainment at the feast. FK's mother's job was sorting out all the gifts from guests. At the same time she put back little things for returned gifts, such as different kinds of sweet and biscuit, etc. because nobody is allowed to bring an empty basket back home. The way in which FK's wife and mother did their jobs must be based on proper treatment for their guests, based on local custom. This is how the guests understood that they had been treated properly. If FK's wife served only one kind of tea before the feast or FK's mother did not put little things into a gift basket it would mean something for the guests or a guest, and vice versa. If FK's older sister's family could not attend the feast she must give a proper reason.

The modification of non-agnatic kin also involved rational calculation. FK's father listed ten families of non-agnatic kin for the New Year feast. Apart from the above four families they were FK's mother's brother's family, FK's wife's sister's family, and both her older and younger brothers' families, and two quasi kin's families. One of them was FK's mother's quasi daughter and another was FK's wife quasi mother. The reason for claiming a quasi relative is not only to increase the numbers of non-agnatic kin. It can also be for a health reason, or to make these families' relationships even closer in this family's case. As the villagers saying goes, to add closeness on top of the kinship relations (*qin shang jia qin*). Both FK and his wife had enough sisters and brothers so they claimed two of FK's sisters and FK's wife's sister to be their daughter's quasi mothers. This means FK's daughter has three quasi mothers and they were also her aunts. At the same time this kind of arrangement limited the numbers of their close non-agnatic kin.

The religious sense can be seen from the meanings of gifts. For example, the fruit from guests must be apples and oranges. The pronunciation of apple is similar to *ping'an* which symbolised peaceful life, whereas orange's pronunciation is similar

to the local accent of *jili* which symbolised luck and good fortune. Moreover, the whole period of the lunar New Year is coloured with religious sense. It starts from the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the twelfth month to 15<sup>th</sup> of the first month of lunar year, which is called ceremony New Year period (*guonian*). Here *guo* means passing a moment with ceremony and *nian* is a general designation for different kinds of spiritual beings. For example, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the twelfth month villagers hold a ceremony for the kitchen god, which is also called passing a moment with ceremony for a less powerful spiritual being (*guo xiaonian*). The events on the New Year's Eve, such as the family reunion feast combined with ancestor worship and villagers going to local temples to worship local gods, etc. (see sections 4.3.1 and 2) is called passing a special moment with ceremony of a powerful spiritual being (*guo danian*).

### *Friends*

In Kaixiangong Village everybody has a list of friends. For a male, his friends are called little friends (*xiao pengyou*) before his son or daughter marries or old friends (*lao pengyou*) after his son or daughter marries. For a female her friends are called little sisters (*xiao jiemei*) until she gets married. After a female marries, in theory she should stop *wanglai* with her little sisters. In practice if the female and her little sister(s) live in the same village or group they can keep their relationship, though this is unlikely to happen. They would say “they were little sisters” rather than “they are old sisters” (see section 7.2 for more details). Friends are made through playing, studying, or working together. The Beginning of Summer (*lixia*) is the second festival for human beings. It is the day marking the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> of the solar term (5, 6, or 7 May). Apart from the family event on that day there is a kind of picnic (*yehuofan*) which involves generous *wanglai* among friends in children under 15 years old (see photo sets 2:23-24). It will illustrate how friendship networks form and join to family *lishang-wanglai* networks, and why part of friendship relationships can be counted as generous *wanglai*.

On 5<sup>th</sup> May 1996 I arrived at XL's house around 9:00am. XL's 5 year old daughter JY had reached the age to have some fun with other children without an adult's supervision. The girl also asked her mother to make an arrangement for her. XL

invited five children from her group to her house on the day before the Beginning of Summer. I saw that the child guests brought a little bit of rice mixed with oil and salt in different containers to XL's house. They comprised three girls and two boys. XL gave her daughter JY a basket which contained a few bowls, spoons, and a box of matches. Another girl carried a saucepan and a bottle of water. A boy, DM, carried a bunch of rice straw. Six children started the picnic trip. The oldest girl was 10 years old and was in charge of the gang. On the way to a field two boys joined them. Some children picked up broad beans, peeled them and threw them into the saucepan. Others collected sticks and small branches. DM dug a pit and placed in some rice straw. Then they lit a fire with the rice straw, but the fire did not burn properly. Two bigger girls came from 100 meters away, where they were having their picnic, and helped them. Soon the fire burned well and the broad bean rice was cooked. They enjoyed themselves very much and let me try a bit. It was really delicious.

I then went to the older girls' picnic site. There were four girls. They had just finished their broad bean rice. They were drinking coca cola, eating some snacks and playing cards at the same time. They told me that they all lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> group of the village and had grown up together. They started such picnics when they were about age 5 and followed some older children. This was the last picnic for them because they were age 15. According to the local custom once children pass their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday they are not allowed to play in this way. NI, one of the girls, told me that they were little sisters. They formed the gang after they passed their tenth birthdays. According to the local custom, at this age children were allowed to decide who would be their little friends or little sisters. This means they were no longer purely playing with each other. They also committed themselves to help each other whenever it was needed. There was even a ritual for the establishment of such a sister relationship. The ritual was that, with their parents' help, they took turns to be hosts and guests at each other's houses for feasts. At the feasts they made their promises. From then onwards they invited each other for their birthday feasts.

I will now consider *lishang* criteria to show how the friend relationship is formed and why some *wanglai* between friends can be seen as generous *wanglai*.

According to local custom, children under 11 years old cannot form a real friendly relationship with responsibility. In other words a friendship between children under 11 years old cannot involve any obligation and parents always help children to make friends. At this stage their *wanglai* is mainly generous *wanglai*. (a) The moral sense behind it is that villagers generally believe it is right to encourage children to play and make their friends freely. I saw that the children gathered beans as soon as we got to a broad bean field. I asked them whose land it belonged to? They told me that it doesn't matter whose land because children were free to pick anybody's broad beans on this day. I checked with the older children afterwards. They confirmed that this was a local custom. The older girls came to light the younger children's fire on their own initiative. To help others is a moral code which is put on children from a very young age (see section 3.1). By 11 years old children have even learnt how to commit themselves to friends. For example, they went to school together and came back home together. They collected lunch boxes for each other and ate lunch together in school. They did homework together after they went back home. They helped each other with the general cleaning of a classroom (*dasaochu*) at school. They often went away for a day out together on Sunday. Of course they shared each other's birthday parties. They also talked lots amongst themselves on all sorts of different topics. Moreover, on the busy seasons' holiday they helped each others' families with some housework and farming, like cutting grass to feed rabbits, feeding chickens and ducks, picking up leaves of mulberry tree for silk worms, etc.

(b) Human feelings affected friendship a great deal. On the one hand, children enjoy each other's company. I noticed the two children who joined the younger children's group on their way to a field for the picnic. They worked hard to pick broad beans and enjoyed themselves very much, even sharing spoons and bowls with the other children. The older girls told me that when they were playing together or entertaining others, everybody did it in turns. This part of the whole relationship among friends can be counted as generous *wanglai* because they enjoyed giving to others rather than asking from others. The dominant feeling is enjoyment. On the other hand, emotional attachment also strengthened their relationship. They enjoyed each other's company very much and felt attached to

each other just like real sisters. The girls told me that they really missed each other if they could not meet, especially after a row. They would sometimes use emotion to blackmail each other when they were childish<sup>7</sup>. They also helped each other to solve problems, although sometimes a problem could not easily be solved. For example, originally there were six girls in their gang. One of them had a boyfriend when she was aged 12. She was showing off about this in front of them. Other girls thought it was not a good idea to have a boyfriend so early. One year later she left them. The girls said it was difficult to say whether or not she would return to them. Although she left the girls, they still kept the secret about her from the school because if the school found out about it she might be expelled.

(c) Although it was not easy to lose a little friend from one's friends' list, the appellation of little friends or little sisters would be changed along with one's life journey. QN, a 42 year old man, had eight children as little friends originally. He dropped three of them and added two others. This kind of modification was mainly based on rational choice. He started his gang from primary school in the village, and went on to middle school in the township. After he passed his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday the above friends became part of his family's guests and came every year for a feast during the period of lunar New Year. During the Cultural Revolution when he was working to reclaim the Lake of Tai with some villagers from another village he made another little friend. When he was serving in the army he made one more little friend who came from a neighbouring township. All the above friends formed his current friend networks.

(d) There was much less religious colour in gangs of little sisters or little brothers in socialist society than there was before the Liberation in 1949. An old lady told me that when she was young she was a member of a gang of little sisters. Apart from playing together they also joined a bigger group called the Buddha Guanyin group (*guanyinhui*). Almost all the girls would attend this group. They went to worship Buddha Guanyin twice a year. One was on 19<sup>th</sup> of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month and another was 19<sup>th</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> lunar month. Boys and men would join another group called the group of sons and grandsons (*zisunhui*). They met twice a year: on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month and the 20<sup>th</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month. They first went to a temple, then walked round fields carrying statues and afterwards settled in a host's

house where they would have a feast. They carried the statues back to the temple after they finished the event.

Anyway, emotional attachments and enjoyment of human feelings mainly affected children's actions in their friendly relationships when they were younger. When they got older they shared housework or farming in the busy seasons, which would be seen as an outcome of their friendship. This part of the relationship can be counted as expressive *wanglai* (see "Events for a child starting school and under sixteen years old" of section 3.1.1.).

#### *Neighbours and fellow villagers*

As part of family *lishang-wanglai* networks Kaixiangong villagers also had lists of neighbours and fellow villagers. My sampled families can easily provide lists of their neighbours and fellow villagers, just as they provide lists of agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin, little friends or sisters, etc. Unlike Fei's (1939) geographical finding that "Conventionally people take the five households on each side of their residence as being their neighbours" (98), a village neighbourhood network can be formed with vertical and horizontal lines. One of the former heads of the village, Yao, told me that there was a custom called *zoudai* which means an older generation can pass its family's neighbours to a younger generation. In other words, a newly established family can inherit neighbours from its parents' family and pass them to its younger generation forever in a vertical way. This cycle is broader than the *yang* circle (Stafford 2000a) because the latter limits its object within a family system. The local custom, on the one hand, requires villagers to keep inherited neighbours wherever they move within the village. On the other hand, it encourages a household to make new neighbours in a place it settles. As a Chinese saying goes, neighbours are dearer than distant relatives; a relative far off is less help than a neighbour close by (*yuanqin buru jinlin*). The two translated versions of the saying can be seen as generous and expressive *wanglai*. Thus any family can have vertical inherited neighbours as well as newly made neighbours in a horizontal line. The list of fellow villagers in a family *lishang-wanglai* network was the easiest one. AL told me that on average there were about 30 families in one group. Apart from her family's agnatic kin, non-agnatic kin, if there are any living

in the same group, and neighbours, the rest of families who lived in the same group were fellow villagers (*tong xiaozui de ren*). This can be any numbers between 10 to 20 families.

After the villagers finished lunar New Year's feasts amongst close families of non-agnatic kin, they would hold tea parties for their neighbours and fellow villagers. This custom is called tea parties in English (*kaichaguan*; see Photo sets 2: 7-9). I attended one such tea party held by JF Shen. It was in the evening because JF was working in a village enterprise during the daytime. There were eight people including two children, two men, and four women. The adults came from different families who were neighbours and fellow villagers. JF served double cups of tea for her guests which was the same as FK's wife did before and after the feast on the lunar New Year Day. One was sweet tea and savoury tea. There were also many sweets and watermelon seeds, etc. Throughout the tea party they enjoyed themselves with joyful drinking, snacking, talking and laughing.

I was told there were 10 to 20 different kinds of tea party throughout a year. But only three of them can be counted as generous *wanglai* for they are nothing to do with instrumental purpose.<sup>8</sup> They are after the lunar New Year, after the Qingming festival (later the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month) when the fresh tea went on market, and after the harvest of green beans. For example, the tea party after the green bean harvest is different from a tea party held after villagers finished helping each other peel green beans in expressive *wanglai* (see section 3.1.) In the above three tea parties women treated each other nicely and enjoyed themselves just like they did with the feasts amongst close non-agnatic kin during lunar New Year and after harvest.

Different *lishang* criteria can be seen from this kind of generous *wanglai* amongst neighbours and fellow villagers. For the villagers the moral judgment is that a tea party is an important form of socialising with each other. Fei (1939) had mentioned a kind of teashop (*chaguan*) in township for men to enjoy themselves (129).<sup>9</sup> However, in the village the tea party is supposed to be a social event for women.<sup>10</sup> Women are always busy with their everyday housework so a tea party is a way specially designed for them to relax and enjoy themselves. Apart from tea parties women sometimes pop into somebody's house in the afternoon and they serve each

other a cup of tea. It is so important to the villagers that even in the most difficult period this kind of tea party custom did not stop in the village. For example, in the early 1960s they infused salted vegetables rather than tea and smoked soya beans to entertain their guests. Recently, some old women took this custom with them outside the village. FY Tan, the old lady introduced in section 1.1.1, currently lived in Miaogang Township with her older son and older grandson's family. She and four other old female villagers who lived in the same township took turns to hold tea parties every day. This formed an important part of their life.

Human feelings in the custom of the tea party mainly show in the villagers' enjoyment of tasting tea and being company for each other. I attended another tea party during the Qingming festival, held by AL. There were eight other people attending the party, including one little boy and one baby. The adults were all female. The purpose of this tea party was to taste a fresh tea that they had just bought from the market. In this village women buy a tasteful tea and share it with others to form their tea culture. Apart from a cup of fresh tea for everybody on the table there were peanuts, watermelon seeds, sunflower seeds, sweets, etc. The party lasted for two hours from two to four o'clock in the afternoon. During the tea party some of them were chatting while drinking fresh tea and eating snacks, whereas others were either feeding a baby, sorting out yarn, or knitting a sweater. They said it was more fun to do the boring work with others than do it at home.

Rational choice can also be seen clearly in such a tea party. Although the villagers told me that a tea party is supposed to include neighbours and fellow villagers within the same group, one can hardly gather more than 10 people at one party. Whether or not to attend a tea party involves rational choice. In a tea party after the lunar New Year, I asked the two men why they came to the tea party when it was supposed to be a women's activity? They explained that they represented their families for the tea party because their wives were either busy with children or housework in the evening. The choice of holding a tea party in the evening instead of afternoon also is the result of rational choice, since the host would have to take a day off from work in order to meet the custom of holding it in the afternoon. In the Qingming tea party, AL explained to me the reason the attendance was so low was because she chose a bad date, which was a day before the Qingming festival, and

most of them decided not to come for they needed to wrap *zongzi* (a pyramid-shaped dumpling) at home.

I didn't find any evidence for drinking tea that related to religion in the village, even when I checked a custom of Anhui Province with the villagers. It said in rural areas villagers believed tea can purify one's heart or mind. They put a tea bag on a hand of a dead body rather than pour a magic potion (*mihuntang* or *yao*) into a dead person's mouth in order to avoid being bullied by ghosts in the other world. This fact serves as a foil to the Kaixiangong villagers, where drinking tea is mainly for enjoyment of their everyday life and a way of socialising.

### 1.1.3. Vertical generous *wanglai* in villagers' festivals and religious life

The vertical generous *wanglai* relates to relationships between the village collective and villagers, ancestors and members' families, etc. They flow downwards and upwards reciprocally. Amongst them the vertical generous *wanglai* between the village collective and villagers during periods of the village's festivals is to do with human beings, vertical generous *wanglai* in villagers' religious life is more complicated. Although there are already a multitude of studies about rituals, ceremonies and worship for ancestors and gods (see section 6.1.3), I touch upon this field because Kaixiangong villagers extend their everyday life into the nether world. In other words, religious life is a special part of villagers' everyday life. It forms endlessly circulating *lishang-wanglai* networks. I will show during such occasions why the vertical generous *wanglai* works between the villagers and their ancestors (*bai shangzu* or *siren jie*) and the local gods or goddesses (*bai shen* and *bai zao*) with *lishang* criteria, and leave the vertical expressive *wanglai* between villagers and their ancestors, local gods and goddesses for the next chapters.

#### *Village festival*

In Kaixiangong Village there wasn't an annual festival on a fixed day, like the Village Day in Roe Green Village in London where I lived. Spring performance (*chuntaixi* - a stage play or drama in the Spring) is a yearly entertainment in Kaixiangong. It normally happens during the period of lunar 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> month. I am not sure when such a custom first appeared there. Fei (1939) mentioned there

was a *degi* (*taiji* - the foundation of the stage), ten years earlier than he was there, and which served both religious and recreational functions annually in autumn (103-04). An informant told me that in the old society (before 1949) there were sometimes two such events in spring and autumn. It involved vertical generous *wanglai* between organisers and the villagers because rich persons paid for it as presents to fellow villagers. A villager told me that in the neighbouring townships successful businessmen also did the same thing nowadays. In Kaixiangong the arrangement is much more complicated. The village collective's involvement seems a vertical generous *wanglai* with villagers, but the villagers are not grateful for it very much.

I experienced the two kinds of completely different performances (see Photos sets 2: 4-6). On 8<sup>th</sup> March Chunlei Shaoxing Opera Troupe (*yuejutuan*) came to the village from Shanghai. They lived there for about 20 days. The Troupe was formed of 20 people: 14 female and 6 male. They lived in different villagers' houses but cooked and ate in XQ Yao's house. The village collective provided a warehouse free of charge. The warehouse can hold 200 people. The Troupe built a stage in the village warehouse themselves. They performed twice a day and the places were full all the time. On 10<sup>th</sup> March a circus came from Fuyang Prefecture, Anhui Province. The 13 people in the circus were all relatives. The village collective provided one of the village's warehouses for their accommodation and a village ground for their performance, free of charge. The circus ate and slept together in the warehouse. After each show a clown closed his fists in front of his chest and asked the audiences to show their appreciation either by money or by their cheers if they had little money (*you qian peng qian chang, mei qian peng ren chang*). The villagers left some tips. On top of that the village collective donated 80 *yuan* to them as expenses for the villagers' cultural life from the village account. The above play and show looked like a combination of "Spring Snow" and the "Song of the Rustic Poor",<sup>11</sup> or the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden where there are mixed street-performances in London. They enriched very much the villagers' everyday life. As a yearly event the Spring Performance in Kaixiangong was similar to the Roe Green Village Day in London where I lived. The differences are that the former is more focused on a particular theme and the latter is much more mixed,

with individual performers, games, sale of different goods, etc. On the Roe Green Village Day the relationship between residents, resident association and performers or helpers in selling different goods can be counted as generous *wanglai* with each other because the profits would be spent on the village's Children's Christmas Party. Similarly, in Kaixiangong Village some villagers told me that over the matter of the Spring Performance the relationship between the village collective and the villagers can also be counted as generous *wanglai* because the collective helped the villagers' enjoyment of the cultural life.

Strictly speaking the relationship between the Troupe or Circus and village collective mixed an institutional relationship and generous *wanglai*. It is clear that both the Troupe and the Circus made a living as actresses<sup>12</sup> and performers, which involves market exchange. However, the relationships between the Troupe or Circus and village collective are not market exchange because the village collective provided warehouses to them free of charge. There are slight differences between the village collective's treatment of the Troupe and of the Circus. On the one hand, the relationship between the Troupe and the village collective is an institutional exchange because they represent different groups or institutions. The relationship between the village collective and the Circus can be counted as generous *wanglai* because it treated the latter as a family business and gave them a tip of 80 *yuan* on top of providing a warehouse for them to live.

I was surprised that there was no gratitude (*bao'en*) from villagers to the village collective over the matter of providing the villagers with Spring Entertainment because it was different from the idea that I have learnt throughout my educational life. I sought to confirm the above idea with the villagers. They told me that the idea of (*bao'en*) to an institution is not suitable for their everyday life. Their replies can be seen from *lishang* criteria below. (a) The villagers believed that individuals or groups in higher positions are more likely to bestow favours on others as some rich people make donations for the public good. From the villagers' point of view, the moral judgment of this is an idea of good being rewarded with good, and evil with evil (*shan you shan bao e you e bao*). They never believe entirely the popular Chinese saying of *di shui zhi en dang yong quan xiang bao* (to one who gave you a drop of water when you were in difficulties you should give back a whole spring of

water in return when you get better). (b) When regarding the human feeling of paying a debt of gratitude to a higher placed individual or organisation the villagers' examples always related to some rich people who hold grand funerals for their parents. It can be an extreme way of paying a debt of gratitude (*bao'en*) to their parents and at the same time showing off. I asked them how they feel about *enqing* (loving-kindness or gratitude) to the party and the government. OM told me that the party and the government always involve the words of human feelings when they call people to do something voluntarily, although he never believed there is any human feeling between the party and villages. He speculated that maybe this is the way in which the government mobilised resources from people. (c) OM's reply involved rational calculation. He admitted that the village collective, as part of *lishang-wanglai* networks for a family, played a relatively important role because it controlled resources, as many researchers (i.e. Djilas 1957, Szelenyi 1978, Walder 1983/86 and Yan 1996b) pointed out. OM said he couldn't see how much they owed the party and the state. All he saw was that the village collective took money and so on from the villagers and controlled some resources from the higher level (*shangji*). In this case the villagers paid fees to the local government through the collective and it was the collective's duty to provide cultural life for the villagers. (d) There was no religious sense involved in a relationship between the village collective and the villagers. During the period of Spring Entertainment, the village collective as an executive organ always stopped religious activities, which always happened in the old society (before 1949).

#### *Worship of ancestors*<sup>13</sup>

The reason ancestors are counted as part of a family's *lishang-wanglai* networks is because a son inherits the family name, property, and everything from his ancestor. He does not have absolute title, but rather holds these things in trust from the ancestor and must pass them on to the next generation, one after another in a reciprocating circle. Therefore, the ancestor worship (*bai shangzu*) is a kind of vertical *wanglai* within a family. The internal relationship of family members and their ancestors is a personal relationship. In the villagers' words our own ancestors are members of one's family after all (*zijia xianren zonggui shi zijia ren*). It is very similar to Rubie Watson's (1988) statement that "Ancestors are, after all, members

of the descent group; they are not ‘outsiders’, like gods and ghosts” (226). Since the ancestors are no longer corporeal both *wang* and *lai* between villagers and their ancestors actually involve the actions of villagers themselves and the imaginary reactions of their dead ancestors. I shall refer to the ancestors as imaginary because their responses are imagined by their descendants. Without the reactions of their imaginary ancestors the vertical *wanglai* between villagers and their ancestors would stop.

The villagers used two different terms of *bai shangzu* and *qing shangzu* to distinguish generous *wanglai* and expressive or instrumental *wanglai* with their ancestors. The purpose of *bai shangzu* means to express their memorials to ancestors through worship without asking anything in return, whereas *qing shangzu* means to ask or invite ancestors to take part in different family events for some instrumental uses (see 1.2, chapters 2 to 4). Amongst many ancestor worships there were only four such events related to generous *wanglai*, corresponding with festivals for human beings; villagers called them celebrating four festivals (*guosijie*, details see 5.4). They are *qingming* festival (Tomb-sweeping Day), *qiyueban* (ghost festival), *dongzhi* (the Winter Solstice) and *nianye* (lunar New Year’s Eve). Here I will show why the villagers’ imaginary ancestors react to the ancestor worship in vertical generous *wanglai* with *lishang* criteria.

Based on *lishang* criteria the vertical generous *wanglai* exists between the villagers and their ancestors. (a) About 90 per cent of my sampled households replied that they celebrated the four festivals for ancestors<sup>14</sup> annually and this embodied a strong moral sense. It was to fulfil their duty to continue family blood, property, and especially family tradition (*jia feng*). Frankly I didn’t see much property inherited from their ancestors, but I heard villagers quoting lots of sayings from their “ancestors” – in a very broad and loose way. Perhaps the villagers carried out their family traditions more than anything else. The local *zongzi* (a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves) can be expressive of this. Traditionally, *zongzi* is popular in many areas of China for the Dragon Boat Festival (*duanwujie*, the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> lunar month).<sup>15</sup> However, the villagers adopted it for the *qingming* festival by specifying two kinds of fillings in two types of *zongzi*. They are candied date (*mizao*) and cured meat (*larou*), which symbolised

the sweet and bitter in their life. JF Tan told me that eating these fillings of *zongzi* was the way in which they shared the weal and woe, comforts and hardship, or joy and sorrow with their ancestors (*tonggan-gongku*). This seems to me just like the morality of *yiku-sitian* when I was in primary school during the Cultural Revolution. *Yigu-sitian* was when a school invited a poor person to tell of his sufferings in the old society (before 1949) and his happiness in the new (after 1949), or recall the sorrows of the past and savour the joys of the present. The purpose of it is to keep people in their current position and encourage them to work hard for a better life.

(b) The four festivals for ancestors were imbued with villagers' human feelings. An English translation for *wenhan-wennuan* is inquiring with concern about somebody's well-being or welfare.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese characters of *wen* means inquire with concern and *han* and *nuan* means cold and warm. The term represents one's concern with someone's basic well-being. The villagers' four festivals for their ancestors vividly evoked the origin of the term. In the brightest day of spring villagers pull weeds and sweep the graves for their ancestors. In the hottest summer the villagers gave their ancestors *wonton* soup with rice cakes. In the coldest winter they sent their ancestors food, clothes, and money. In the longest night they gathered together to celebrate the New Years' Eve with their ancestors. Human feelings can also be seen from feelings of veneration, reverence, awe and fear, etc. towards their ancestors. This can be confirmed by my sample households' most common reasons for the continuance of their ancestor worship. They were that the villagers were afraid of stirring up their ancestors and getting into trouble themselves in their life.

(c) The villagers respected and loved their ancestors, but also made many adaptations based on rational choice in order to carry the above festivals out because they sometimes conflicted with their everyday life. For example, BY Zhou's stepfather set up a table for ancestor worship and BY set up a New Years Eve' family feast at the same table (see 5.4). This was a new way of setting a table for worship. In the village traditionally every family has a fixed *zhongtang* in the main room of its house. *Zhongtang* is formed of a long thin side table against the central northern wall of a main living room and a central scroll of painting hung

above the table. The ancestral shrine was kept on the side table, as well as all the offering sacrifices and candle holders. They also have a separate dining table for everyday eating. Along with changing life styles, a side table can hardly be seen in the village now.<sup>17</sup> The villagers normally put their dining table in the middle of the dining / living room, surrounded with four benches on each side. BY said this new way was convenient for their family life and social life.

Villagers also created new local customs in order to keep their traditions of ancestor worship. In regards to sweeping the graves the adapted customs are as follows. If a family finished the ritual of *sanqi* (three weeks after the person's death) one month before the festival then it should perform the ritual of *wuqi* (seven days after the person's death) on the day of the festival. If a family has just finished the ritual of *wuqi* before the festival then the family does not have to sweep the grave again during the festival. They also had some customs to balance the different rituals of local gods and villagers' everyday life events. If the festival period, within four days, covered a *yueban* (the 15<sup>th</sup> of any lunar month), i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1996 was 15<sup>th</sup> of 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, the villagers should go to a temple to burn incense and offer sacrifices to the local god apart from offering sacrifices to ancestors at home. If the festival period covered a ritual of *shengqian* (ceremony for completion of building a house) the family has to hold two separate feasts for different people and to offer sacrifices to ancestors separately with different kinds of offerings.

(d) The four festivals for ancestors themselves are an expression of villagers' religious sense, even though one can still see the sense in other ways. During the *Qingming* Festival period and on the *Dongzi* Day only the older generation (*laobei*) is allowed to visit the younger generation's (*xiaobei*) families because it shows they are full of activity and health. The younger generation is only allowed to visit families whose older generation has died and pay respects (*baibai*) to them. They are not allowed to visit older generation's families because this kind of activity would bring bad luck (*bu jili*) to the older generation, symbolising that the younger generation wish the older generation to die quickly (*cuiming*). The religious sense can also be seen from the symbolic meaning of food. The upper part of pig leg (*tizi*) meant increasing life standard. Fish was for year after year with surplus

(*niannian youyu*), which is almost everywhere the same in China because the pronunciation of *yu* (fish) is the same as *yu* (surplus). Meatballs symbolised family reunion due to the shape and the pronunciation (*tuantuan yuanyuan*). The shape of a single bean sprout<sup>18</sup> looked like *ruyi* (an S-shaped ornamental object, usually made of jade, formerly a symbol of good luck) and they symbolised good luck (*jixiang ruyi*). The Chinese leaves symbolised the relationship between the villagers and their ancestors as evergreen. The offering sacrifices for the four festivals are always odd numbers, i.e. 5 or 7 dishes, whereas those for human beings are even numbers, i.e. 8, 10, and 12, etc. For the villagers the even numbers are lucky numbers in this world and in the nether world the lucky numbers are odd numbers. The distinction between human beings, ancestors or gods in some details of the rituals also involved religious sense. For example, the villagers distinguished between home gods, e.g. a land god (*tudi gonggong*) or a kitchen god (*zaojun gonggong*) and visiting gods, e.g. a life goddess (*ataimo*) or a medicine goddess (*xinganmo*). The home gods were established when the house and kitchen were built, whereas the visiting gods were only invited for special occasions. They worship the established gods by facing inwards into their house and outwards for the visiting gods or goddesses. The villagers also varied the directions of worship for ancestors and gods. Sometimes they faced north to worship ancestors and faced south to worship visiting gods, and sometimes they faced west to worship ancestors and faced north for established gods. The directions of north, south, east and west is a typical idea from *feng shui*, although the houses are not always laid out strictly north-south facing.

#### *Worship of local gods*

Compared with ancestor worship, worship of the local gods is an external relationship for a family with the nether world. In other words, the different kinds of rituals form another vertical *wanglai* in the villagers' *lishang-wanglai* networks. The villagers classified the many rituals into different types: generous, expressive and instrumental *wanglai*. It seems nobody wanted to have negative *wanglai* with the local gods and goddesses on purpose, because they are too powerful and sacred. There was almost one ritual in each lunar month for a particular local god throughout a year (see 5.4). They became common customs with religious colour

as part of villagers' everyday life. As religious life, according to the local custom, the generous *wanglai* related rituals or worships between the villagers and the local gods or goddesses (*baishen*, *bailaoye* or *baitai*) are as follows. In every year there was one biggest worship for the local gods in general (*qiang touxiang*), one medium worship for the land god (*baitudigong*) and twice each lunar month as small regular worships for local gods and goddesses (*xiaobai*). Also, the villagers distinguished a system of worship for the kitchen god (*baizao*) from others in particular. Amongst kitchen god worship there were two big, two medium and twice monthly regular worships (see 5.4 and Figure 8).

Here I will use *lishang* to explain how generous *wanglai* between villagers as individuals, a family or a group of people and the local gods or goddesses worked in the village. Meihui Yang found that Chinese people always act according to popular opinion (*heli*) or agreed principles, human feelings (*heqing*) and rules and customs (*hefa*) (1994: 326). In addition to the above, Kaixiangong villagers also acted with human nature or heart (*hehu renxing* or *renxin*) which can be seen in particular in *wanglai* with gods and spiritual beings. These kinds of actions by the villagers can be expressed with four criteria of *lishang*, which will be presented below.

(1) One of the most important judgments for the villagers in maintaining a relationship with local gods or goddesses through different rituals is that they believed they were morally right based on local agreed principles or popular opinion (*heli*). The villagers believed that the gods either averted evil or blessed them throughout the last year, so they should be thanked. There were some caretakers who did voluntary work in the temples to accumulate merit (*jide*). The term of *jide* (accumulate merit) was first given by the old man whom I mentioned in the Chinese New Year's Eve event (see 5.4). He was taking the ends of candles from the big basin with a big strainer in order to let more people burn candles. A woman who worked in the East temple on the Chinese New Year Day also mentioned *jide* (accumulate merit). She told me that she was one of the people who started to rebuild the temple in 1993. She sold incenses, candles, and money papers, etc. on special occasions. She also did voluntary work to look after the temple by presenting offerings and selling the above things at cost price.

Apart from the above caretakers ordinary villagers also followed local popular opinion and carried out religious rituals even under special circumstances. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month 1996, a few days after the local temples were destroyed, I went to the temples but saw nothing. However, I saw bundles of incense burning on a burned honeycomb briquette outside different houses (see photo sets 1: 27). I went into one house and asked a woman, JF Tan, for a reason. She told me that it was her way of worshipping local gods at the middle of the lunar month. She also told me that the people who destroyed the temples were committing a sin (*zuonie*), which is the opposite of accumulating merit (*jide*). She said that she wouldn't give in to Governmental policy which changed all the time like a baby's face or weather in June (*zhengce duo bian xiang xiaohai de lian he liuyue de tian*), although one should be careful to survive different political campaigns.

I also interviewed a local official in the township about the destruction of the local temples. He told me that the Miaogang Township was praised by higher-ups as a “non religious township” in the 1950s. He couldn't understand why those feudal superstitions (*fengjian mixin*) always revived (*sihui fu ran*). A village leader also complained that it was very difficult to collect fees from the villagers, but there was never any problem getting them to make donations to the temples. This happened in Neiguan Village too. The villagers complained heavily about fees from the local government, at the same time as they willingly donated money and materials to the temples.

Although the local official and village cadres wondered at the above phenomena, Kaixiangong villagers understood the reason. Those days villagers always said to each other with a jocular tone that *Miaogang mei miao le* (the “temple port” township has got no temples now)<sup>19</sup>. They were all laughing because they sensed the others' meaning. This meaning was explained by an old man. According to him the temples can be destroyed temporarily by the Communist Party but people's religious sense cannot be killed. The villagers can worship the kitchen god by the stove at home instead. Even though the stoves were destroyed during the periods of Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, villagers still carried out their local traditions with their heart for they believed they were right morally (*youli*).

(2) The case of burning incense on a burned honeycomb briquette outside houses involved two types of human feelings. JY Yao, the woman I mentioned in the previous point, told me, on the one hand, they were afraid of getting into trouble if they sang a different tune from the government (*yu zhengfu chang fandiao*). So nobody went to a temple place for the ritual of *yueban* (15<sup>th</sup> of a lunar month). Similarly, a villager Tan explained to me that some villagers didn't admit to going to the township temple for the Chinese New Year's Eve event because they were afraid of being accused of superstitious behaviour (*mixin huodong*). This is why Figure 8 showed fewer families at such an occasion than those worshipping the kitchen god at home.

On the other hand, the woman also told me that she and a number of neighbours adopted the above way to worship the land god and keep the routine for worshipping local gods in the middle of the month after the temples were destroyed. They really enjoyed (*you yisi*) the way in which they created such a way to carry out their religious observances under special circumstances in their everyday life. The human feeling of enjoyment can also be seen at other occasions. JY Yao told me she always enjoyed different kinds of worship and even more the creation of ways to deal with the changing situation. She saw some children enjoyed them in the same way, even asking for the ritual a few days in advance because they treated this as their game. More commonly, the way in which the villagers dressed up and came to the temple happily was definitely as what they said *haobaixiang* (to be cheerful and have fun). There is a local saying that also reflects this point. It is *chanzui de poniang qin baizao*, which means housewives who are gluttonous like to worship the kitchen god often. In Neiguan, my other fieldwork village, the villagers made different paper statues to represent local gods and ghosts. A villager told me that the most enjoyable thing (*zui haowan de shi*) was to hit the ghosts with a stick or shout at the ghosts because that is the way for people to get rid of the anger stored up from everyday life.

(3) Apart from political interference, there were always conflicts between villagers' everyday life and their religious life, so the way in which they dealt with them embodied rational choice. According to local custom, villagers should have something with rice and noodles for breakfast on the lunar New Years Day. They

symbolise the reunion of family members, sweet and long life. However, BY Zhou's family, where I had my breakfast, only ate small rice balls with sugar because they simplified the above custom. They normally had one of each of the above foods each day during the Chinese New Year period. There were many other cases where practical concerns simplified local customs. For example, JY Yao explained to me how worship of the land god was simplified. In the past she took her grandchild to the East temple for the worship. After the 1980s the villagers stood a honeycomb briquette or an aubergine outside the main entrance of their houses in order to insert incense sticks. In this case she presented offerings on a stove, burnt candles and incenses and bowed by the stove at home. Recently, honeycomb briquettes are no longer used in everyday life so villagers simply stick incenses into the soil in their courtyard to worship the land god.

Local customs as well as manners of worship can be modified. Like many villagers, Mrs Tan told me that she too was too busy to go to temples for so many worships. So she worshipped the kitchen god mainly at home and worshipped the local gods in temples sometimes. She recognised from the 1990s onwards a detailed rule for combining the worship of local gods and the kitchen god on *chuyi yueban* (the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each lunar month) at home because more and more people used such a way. It said if one carried out the ritual of worshipping local gods at home then one should burn candles and incenses only. At the temples one should burn incenses and money paper. Mrs Tan felt more comfortable with the new custom because it fitted well with her everyday life and religious life.

Again, instead of having a quiet relaxed New Years Day, as dictated by local custom, I found a family holding a wedding on that day. Mr Tan told me the custom was only a guide and people can make slight changes depending on their circumstances. He told me that when he was young the New Year's day had to be a quiet and relaxed day because people always *shousui* (see the Old Year out and the New Year in) until midnight, hold a reception for a new kitchen god (*jie zao*) on New Year's day, and prepare food for feasts for the following days. So they wanted to have a peaceful day. When he got married the custom changed slightly because the reception for a new kitchen god (*jie zao*) on the New Year's Day was less important, which meant one could either hold it at a different time or not do it at

all. So a new custom appeared and the villagers agreed to move the date of *hui niangjia* (for a married out daughter's family reunion with her natal family) on to the New Year's Day from the second day. Tan told me he only had one daughter and decided to take a man as son-in-law (*zhao nuxu*) from a neighbouring village. His daughter and her little sisters (*xiao jiemei*, namely friends) preferred the New Year's Day, therefore, they chose that day. The reception of a new kitchen god is not on a fixed day because they have so many arrangements, e.g. worship of ancestors, wedding, family feast with closest agnatic kin, etc. around lunar Chinese New Year. So the local custom allowed villagers to choose a quiet day for the reception of a new kitchen god on any day around the period of the lunar New Year.

The above examples came from my observations. I believe that some local customs had different versions, which I did not take part in, but which are changed by the villagers creatively and rationally in order to cope with changing circumstances. For example, a custom on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month was the birthday of pets, cats and dogs. However, a villager told me that the customs changed for a couple of dozen years. The saying *liuyue liu mai lai huntun liu yi liu* (See 5.4) is still there but the meaning is changed completely now. On this day both fiancé and fiancée and married couples should bring *huntun* wrappings, pork meat, and fresh fruit to visit their future or present parents-in-laws.

(4) Religious sense can also be seen in various ways. The old man, who looked after the *Laotai* temple voluntarily, told me such a story. He said that the grandpa Qiu was a very powerful lake god. People normally called him Qiu *laotai ye* respectfully. The lake god is also called “favus of the scalp Qiu (Qiu *lali*)” because he has favus on the scalp. Whenever great wind and waves appeared on the Lake Tai people shouted “Qiu *lali*”, and then the storms would stop immediately. I checked grandpa Qiu with many people who went to the temple of different ages and sexes. They did not know much about it, but believed he could bless them and keep them safe and sound on their life journey, one year after another. So it was very important to worship him to keep all well and lucky and auspicious before the start of the next Lunar New Year. Moreover, the reason people stroked their face

and hair with their hands after they stroked a tree was to get energy, luck, shelter, blessings and so on from the local gods through the spiritual tree.

The religious sense can be seen easily in everyday life events, but it can be confused with religious activities in religious life. I need to point out the difference between religious activities and religious sense. The former are performances of vertical *wanglai* from the villagers to their ancestors or gods, whereas the latter is a part of *lishang* criteria which relate to *fu* (luck, fortunate), *yuan* (predestined relationship), *ming* (fate), or symbolic meanings of food and decorations, etc.

Although the above four criteria of *lishang* appeared in turns evenly when I demonstrate different cases, I learnt from villagers that they work differently. When I asked random interviewees “why do you come to worship” at the temples on the lunar New Year’s Eve and the Near Year day I got different answers. (a) Some villagers come there by following local customs. They put the palms together in front of chest and shake them, make a bow or a deep bow, or on bent knees, even kowtow, etc. They offer sacrifices, burning incense, candles, and papers. This kind of rational activity tallied with some answers that “*laile jiu yisi daole* (If one went to the temple for rituals in person this shows one’s sincerity to gods).” (b) Some people use the above body language, offerings, and performances to make an obeisance to the gods to express gratitude for keeping away bad luck or evil spirits. It related to moral restraint. (c) At the same time most villagers prayed to the gods to go on blessing them with good fortune (*fuqi*). As some people said “*laile jiu you fu* (only one coming here can be blessed).” (d) Some villagers said that they came to the temple simply for enjoyment (*hao baixiang, wanwan ma*): “one enjoys the lunar New Year by remembering to worship the local gods (*zija guonian wu wangle baibai shen*)”. The above answer shows the four *lishang* criteria always co-exist in a particular *wanglai* but not necessarily in the same order. Sometimes they do not all work together at one occasion. Sometimes one or two criteria counted for more than others on another occasion. In this case religious sense is stronger than others like moral restraint. This kind of understanding *lishang* criteria provides a space for creativity in changes of situation. For the villagers the important point is that if one takes the *lishang* criteria with one wherever he or she goes and however the situation changes at the same place one should be able to

meet all changes by remaining unchanged. It is called *yi bubian ying wan bian* (cope with a constantly changing situation by sticking to a fixed principle or policy).

So far I have shown how “pigs were fed” at the stage of laying a foundation or investment for having a reasonable human relationship and supernatural being relationship. I need to make it clear that I use the word enjoyment in three ways. (a) The broad sense can be a deep level of motivation for *lishang-wanglai* as a whole as an enjoyment of social creativity (see 6.3). (b) The narrow sense can be a kind of human feelings related to *lishang* criterion. (c) It can also be a characteristic that distinguishes generous *wanglai* and expressive *wanglai*. If enjoyment for its own sake predominates the *wanglai* is generous, whereas if expectation of material return or obligation the *wanglai* is expressive. According to the Kaixiangong villagers, festivals and annual cycle events are life cycle events with generous *wanglai* and expressive *wanglai*. For them the gifts and feasts given during the festivals are generous *wanglai* because they enjoy giving to others without expecting any kind of material return at that time. This is different from expressive *wanglai* in life cycle events and house construction (see chapters 3 and 4) because that kind of *wanglai* requests certain returns of finance, labour, materials and information, etc. at the same time. It is a part of social support. In other words, the reciprocal visits with gifts and feasts during the festivals (generous *wanglai*) can be seen as investments for maintaining relationships. The reciprocal visits with gifts and feasts during the life cycle events and house construction (expressive *wanglai*) can be seen as outcomes of the investment.

### **1.2. Instrumental *wanglai***

As I mentioned in the introduction in Part I, instrumental *wanglai* is very close to *guanxi* (see sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.3). Kaixiangong villagers use *tuo renqing* (looking for different resources through personal links for benefiting everyday life or emergency with their own resources) for instrumental *wanglai*; whereas *guanxi* refers to negative *wanglai* (see 1.3). Therefore, I divided a common usage of *guanxi* into two parts: instrumental and negative *wanglai*. According to the villagers’ standards instrumental *wanglai* relates to people giving something (e.g.

loaning money, providing materials, information, emotional or spiritual help, offering special skills or ability, introducing a personal link, etc.) to others for direct gains or long-term benefit in horizontal and vertical ways. Both the horizontal and vertical instrumental *wanglai* relate to individual or groups using their own resources to meet their own interests. Horizontal instrumental *wanglai* normally happened between the same generational members of a family with their personal networks, or a family as a whole with its networks including relatives, neighbours, friends and other personal relations, etc. Kaixiangong villagers always use examples of asking help for getting somebody into hospital earlier or finding better decorators, etc. In order to make a contrast to Yan's bottom up instrumental gift exchange (1996b: 21 and its chapter 7), I will stress a bidirectional vertical instrumental *wanglai*. It can be mobilised bottom up (e.g. villagers seek spiritual support - blessing or protection from ancestors or gods) and top down (e.g. from a local official to village cadres, or a village cadre to villagers, etc.) directions.

#### 1.2.1. Bottom up vertical instrumental *wanglai*

The previous examples in 1.1 have illustrated how villagers had generous *wanglai* with ancestors and gods: the next chapters will similarly deal with expressive *wanglai*. The following example illustrates a bottom up vertical instrumental *wanglai* between a family and goddesses. Normally when a family holds a ceremony for a child's sixteenth birthday they should present offerings to *ataimo* (a life goddess). However, if the child had an illness the *xinganmo* (a medical goddess) should also be prayed to in the ceremony. According to the villagers on this occasion praying to *ataimo* can be counted as expressive *wanglai*, whereas praying to *xinganmo* is instrumental *wanglai*. Apart from an individual who used his own resources to gain spiritual support (e.g. blessing or protection from ancestors or gods) such vertical instrumental *wanglai* also involves groups. The most obviously instrumental *wanglai* between the villagers and spiritual beings can be seen from religious activities in township for protecting against drought, locusts or flood before 1949 (Fei 1939:103). It can still be seen in other parts of China (e.g. praying to the dragon king or water god for water, Luo 1997, 2000).

Behind this kind of bottom up vertical instrumental *wanglai* there were *lishang* criteria involved. a) Morally, praying to *xinganmo* is an alternative if someone generally respects spiritual beings rather than just for the sake of curing illness. There is a Chinese saying that to *pingshi bu shaoxiang, linshi bao fojiao* (never burn incense when all is well but clasp Buddha's feet when in distress) is wrong. b) Sympathy and comfort is another reason for villagers to carry on *wanglai* with spiritual beings. Many villagers told me that the local temples are rebuilt again and again because some villagers insist that they need them to cure illnesses. This excuse gained a wide range of sympathy from local officials and other villagers. c) The direct purpose for asking spiritual beings to cure illness is obviously rational choice. There was a custom in the village that if a father got ill then his daughter should pray to *xinganmo* for him, whereas if a mother got ill then her son should pray to *xinganmo* for her. Along with the one child policy, from the 1990s the custom also became more practical. Xu told me that if a family only has one son or one daughter the son-in-law or the daughter-in-law should pray to *xinganmo* for their mother-in-law or father-in-law. d) The villagers' answer as to whether praying to spiritual beings to cure illness actually works is definitely imbued with religious sense. They said "it would have effect if one truly believes (*xin ze ling*)". Besides, interestingly enough, there are some common Chinese sayings related to instrumental *wanglai* originating from people's religious life, i.e. it is wrong that *wu shi bu deng sanbaodian* (one never goes to the temple for no reason or I wouldn't come to you if I haven't got something to ask of you).

There is another case involving a bottom up vertical instrumental *wanglai*. When villagers seek resources to support themselves the public sources are always considered, although financial support from public sources only makes up 12 percent compared with household and private sources.<sup>20</sup> I found one case, JG Wang's family, who borrowed money for a wedding from the Village Collective, whereas normally Kaixiangong villagers arrange their wedding fund through expressive *wanglai* via private sources. Wang and other villagers agreed that this case can be interpreted as instrumental *wanglai*. a) It was proper that JG Wang should ask for help from the Village Collective because he was a head of one of the village groups and worked very hard for both the Village Collective and the

group's villagers. b) Villagers had sympathy with Wang because his mother had a major operation a few months before the wedding so they didn't mind that the Village Collective lent money to him under this circumstance. c) JG Wang's case didn't fit into the existing category of "special difficulty subsidies (*tekun buzhu*)". The way in which the Village Collective sorted out the problem was by creating a new category of "reimbursable assistance". This way on the one hand kept the account book clear, on the other hand, it didn't set a precedent for the other villagers because there were only limited families who could meet the above two criteria in the village. d) It was bad luck that Wang's family had to spend lots of money on his mother's operation. However, she believed that "there is always a way out with god's help (*tian wu jue ren zhi lu*)".

The following case can be counted as a negatively valued bottom up vertical instrumental *wanglai*. When I was in the village many villagers complained that the Party Secretary Shen used his relatives and relations in village enterprises. This case involved two types of *wanglai*. The relationship between Shen and his relatives who got jobs in the village enterprises is negatively valued instrumental *wanglai*. The relationship between Shen and the villagers, especially the villagers who lost their possibilities of gaining the posts in the village enterprises, is negative *wanglai* (see next section). The negatively valued instrumental *wanglai* is still instrumental *wanglai*, but it is very close to a negative *wanglai*. According to the villagers' standards in this case some villagers got posts in the village enterprises by giving gifts to Shen, which was wrong morally. Shen gave the posts to those who gave him gifts by using his power unfairly, which was also wrong morally. However, some villagers told me that to get into the village enterprises was not a big deal (*mei shenme liaobuqi*) and Shen wasn't yet a corrupt cadre because he didn't bribe, embezzle or act villainously. This is obviously moral judgment.

Bribery is a complicated matter in China. The previous head of the village Zhou distinguished between bribery and necessary expenditure on business. He told me that in 2002 Kaixiangong Village spent 40,000 *yuan* on communications, sales promotion, or intercourse with others in order to carry on trade or other business dealings. Instead of the commonly used *guanxi* fee Zhou used *jiaowang* fee because he thought it sounds less negative, since it is necessary expenditure on

business *wanglai* with others. So *jiaowang* fee can be seen as instrumental *wanglai*, whereas *guanxi* fee can be negative *wanglai*.<sup>21</sup> Zhou agreed with me on this clarification of the difference between instrumental *wanglai* and negative *wanglai* (see 4.3).

### 1.2.2. Top down vertical instrumental *wanglai*

The following case of house construction mainly involved a top down vertical instrumental *wanglai* between local officials with a village cadre, and the village cadre with villagers. House construction needs to go through administrative formalities. This is an administrative relationship between villagers and the Township Land Bureau (TLB) and is not *lishang-wanglai*. However, the vice Party Secretary of the village, JM Wang, told me that the establishment of such a relationship did involve *guanxi* or instrumental *wanglai*. The TLB published a regulation in 1982. It said an application form with a plan should be signed by surrounding neighbours, and approved by the head of a group, village collective, and Township Land Bureau. Fees were also stated quite clearly, i.e. building control fee, security fee, land occupancy fee, and a deposit of 1000 to 2000 *yuan* for a domestic house, dependent on land size, or some amount up to 30,000 *yuan* for a workshop of a private industry enterprise, etc. However, for the first few years a couple of dozen villagers ignored this when they built new houses. The officials of TLB asked JM Wang's favour to sort out this problem and said to him "you have a good *guanxi* with your fellow villagers". Although it wasn't a part of Wang's job because it was a new phenomenon, he worked on this issue through his *guanxi* (instrumental *wanglai*) between local officials and villagers for about 14 years until 1996 when a new version of the regulation was issued.

Let us use *lishang* to find out how this worked with Wang's information. a) The officials of TLB needed JM Wang to do ideological work with the villagers. Wang found the villagers thought from the bottom of their hearts that it was wrong morally to ask permission and pay a fee for their efforts in rebuilding a house where they had lived for generations. This was the main reason they ignored the regulation. The villagers praised Wang for helping many villagers go though the regulations and for bringing villagers' concerns to the township and modifying the

regulation eventually. b) The villagers who went to the TLB for the administrative formalities with Wang mainly did so to give him face (*gei mianzi*), because they were either Wang's old friends, family or personal relations. This kind of human feeling played a vital role in establishing the administrative relationship between the TLB and villagers. c) The main reason the villagers refused to meet the TLB's regulation was that the figures of house sizes, dimensions, directions of location, etc. were not applicable in reality because the village is located along the lakeside and river rather than on a plain. They wanted a more practical version, i.e. a proportion of foundation, house, courtyard, place for livestock, etc., rather than exact dimensions. Wang understood this kind of rational calculation. This is why he didn't enforce fines against the households which exceeded the foundation site, or destroy the overstepped houses. Instead he made a bargain with the TLB by bringing many of his fellow villagers to the TLB to go through administrative formalities and related payments. He believed the more villagers he brought there the better impression he could gain from the local officials and the easier it would be for him to take part in policy making. He was right. The adapted regulation was issued in 1985 and it worked well until 1996. Wang also won credit from his fellow villagers. Thus the administrative relationship between the TLB and villagers was fully established and he was no longer needed to do favours for either side.

There is another case involving a top down vertical instrumental *wanglai* from the villager cadres to the villagers. Entering the Army through the back door (*zou houmen*) used to be a typical example of *guanxi* before the Social Reform (1970s). However, from the late 1990s onwards it was the Village Collective's turn through *guanxi* to make some villagers join the Army. The local township asks the village to choose one person a year to enter the army. Although a person chosen to enter the Army fulfils his or her obligation, the choice of candidate among the 20 or so villagers of the appropriate age involved *guanxi*, because nobody wanted to go due to losing income or chances of other benefits. Normally, physical exams would eliminate some candidates, according to Zhou, a previous head of the village. Then the most difficult thing was to draw on (*dongyong*) all kinds of *guanxi*, i.e. relatives and friends of the candidates and their families in the village or township to do

ideological work (*sixiang gongzuo*) and to intercede with them (*shuoqing*) for the village collective.

Here, a) to do ideological work can be seen as a moral criterion in which the soft and hard ways were involved. The hardest way was to tell the candidate that on the day two cars would come to collect him. One special decorated “glory car (*guangrong che*)” would take the candidate to the Conscription Station of Wujiang City; another would be a policy car which would take him to a policy station. b) The way in which the soft way worked was to intercede with them (*shuoqing*) for the village collective. The people who were village cadres or representative of the village collective would express deep concern for the candidate and his or her family and find out and sympathise with their particular reasons for not wanting to go. Moreover, the village collective would spend 500 or 1000 *yuan* for the candidate’s family’s seeing-off feast. If a village cadre was invited for the feast he should bring a red bag of 1000 *yuan* to attend it. If the family didn’t invite a village cadre for the feast, the village collective still needed to give a red bag of 500 *yuan* to the family to express its greeting. c) Normally if a candidate went to the Army his or her family would receive 4200 or 4500 *yuan* allowance per year, the village enterprises would employ a member of that family, or waive some fees, or make a special allowance for the sick members of the family, etc. Furthermore, the village collective made more offers to the candidates’ families. If the person behaved very well in the Army and gained a title of “excellent soldier (*you deng shi bing*)”, the allowance was increased by 10 per cent. If he kept the title for three years the allowance was increased by another 10 per cent, etc. The village collective adjusted their offers according to the problems raised by a candidate’s family, but didn’t accept all the bargains. For example, they agreed to repair a road to one candidate’s house for free, which could cost a couple of thousand *yuan*. It refused a family which asked the collective to buy its newly bought motorcycle (about 10,000 *yuan*) because it couldn’t be used for three years while the candidate was in the Army. Based on criteria of rational choice the village collective refused this family because they didn’t want to set a precedent for the future (*bukai xianli*). d) The religious sense of *lishang* criteria can also be seen in this case. One reason some families won’t invite a village cadre for the seeing-off feast is because they don’t

want the cadre to bring more bad luck to the family, even though this meant to receive 500 *yuan* less from the village collective. Instead of saying “lucky” as in the past, the villagers think it is unlucky (*daomei*) that somebody has to go to the Army nowadays.

### 1.2.3. Bidirectional vertical instrumental *wanglai*

The bottom up and top down vertical instrumental *wanglai* always work reciprocally which can start from either directions. Here I will demonstrate a case which involved bidirectional vertical instrumental *wanglai* between local and senior officials and the village cadres. In 1996 all Kaixiangong Villages’ Collective Enterprises were bankrupted with nearly 10 million *yuan* debt in total. It was equivalent to 18,000 *yuan* of debt per household. Normally the relationship between the village collective enterprises and its lenders, such as a bank, credit union, local government, other enterprises, etc. is a financial relationship and business relationship. However, the process of borrowing and repayment to all parties involved bidirectional vertical instrumental *wanglai* with local or senior officials’ personal relations.

The bankruptcy was caused by the systematic changing of collective village enterprises into private (*gaizhi* or *qiye zhuanzi*). By 2004 the debt was almost cleared. Initially a village cadre told me that they repaid 67% and avoided 33% of it. However, when I went through the details I found there were two tables. Table 6 is an external table which can be provided to outsiders. It made four categories for the debt: repaid (*huandiao*) 7.5%, mortgaged (*didiao*) 59.5%, avoided (*miandiao*) 23% and repudiated (*laidiao*) 10%. Table 7 is for internal use because it was a true record but sounds embarrassed (*bu guangcai*). It shows they only repaid 7.5%, mortgaged land, workshop and equivalents for 46% and repudiated the debt up to 46.5%.

Let’s use *lishang* to demonstrate the case as a whole. a) A village cadre said they repaid 67% and avoided 33% of the debt because he believed the basic moral principle that a debt should be paid. For the village cadres the more debt that was paid and the less debt that was repudiated the better it sounded. So they made the Table 6. However, the 1,300,000 *yuan* in the column of mortgaged was actually

repudiated because the village collective mortgaged two dynamotors to the Shengze factory. It is a symbol of mortgage because it was only worth about 20,000 *yuan*. The Shengze factory gave up the 1,300,000 *yuan* eventually for two reasons. One was that the investment in the Kaixiangong Village silk enterprise was originally a senior official's achievement in his post (*zhengji*) of Wujiang City. It would be nice for him not to be bothered with the debt. Another reason was the Shengze factory already gained back far more money than its original investment in 1988. Furthermore, the 23% avoided debt should be counted as repudiated because the village cadres had been asking the township and other sources which belonged to the township government to waive it. This is how these two items went into the category of repudiated in Table 7.

b) The reason the village cadres expected that the 23% debt from different departments of the township government could be repudiated was because they believed in a common human feeling of sympathy towards the weak. After the village collective enterprises became bankrupt the redundant workers asked them to pay back the account payable (*yingfu kuan*). The village collective sold a plot of land to a private enterprise and paid off all the debt to the unemployed. It also fulfilled the debt of fund raising (*jizi kuan*) for the township hospital. The village cadres played the same role as the unemployed to the township officials and Wujiang City officials, explaining that the village was in too much difficulty to repay the debt, i.e. 300,000 *yuan* road work project loan to the Financial Bureau of Wujiang City, 150,000 *yuan* fee to Grain Management Institution of the township, 50,000 *yuan* construction arrears to the Construction Company of the township, 30,000 *yuan* fee to the Institution of Land Management, etc. So the 23% of debt was waived because both Wujiang City and Miaogang Township accepted the village's proposal. The parlance (*shuofa*) behind the proposal was a Chinese character *kunnan* (difficulty). The *kun* of *kunnan* is the same character as the *kun* of *pinkun* (poor). The village cadres linked the debt with the aid-the-poor programme. Kaixiangong is certainly not a poor village (*pinkun cun*), but it is a village with a particular financial difficulty (*kunnan cun*). Since every department of Wujiang City and Miaogang Township has its quota of aid-the-poor varying from around

20,000 *yuan* to 100,000 *yuan* Kaixiangong's debt could all be covered. This is how the village cadres argued and got the 23% debt waived eventually.

c) Rational calculation is an important way for the village cadres to work out how to clear the debt. In China there wasn't any law or regulation related to an enterprise bankruptcy run by a township and a village (*xiangzhen qiye pochuan fa*). However, there was a regulation that the debt can be dismissed (*buyu duizhang*) two years after following the legal procedure. The village had in total 1,900,000 *yuan* debt from three factories. By law, the debt could all be dismissed. For the reason shown in a) the village only let 600,000 *yuan* of debt be dismissed in this way in order to keep the senior official's face. For the village a real problem was the biggest debt of 4,400,000 *yuan* from the Credit Union of the Miaogang Township, because there was no way to avoid it. The village mortgaged a big plot of land and workshop to the Credit Union. At the same time it asked the township government to waive other debt instead (see last point b)). As a village cadre pointed out, Kaixiangong Village shouldn't take responsibility for the 4,400,000 *yuan* debt because it was a result of some senior officials of Wujiang City's informal notifications (*shangji lingdao da zhaohu*) to both the Credit Union and the village for its special situation (see next point d)).

d) During the last seven years from 1997 to 2004 the village cadres had both good and bad luck over the matter of the debt. YG Zhou told me that it was unfortunate that the village enterprises were bankrupted with a large amount of debt. Luckily the debt is now more or less cleared. A village cadre Yao told me that it was lucky the village had YG Zhou, a manager of a private company, to be a head when all of the village enterprises were bankrupted. Unfortunately as soon as Zhou sorted out all the difficult problems he lost his post. Zhou said luckily a new policy of state banks cleaning up bad capital (*qingli buliang zichan*) came out in 2002, which enabled him to clean up the 480,000 *yuan* debt with a bank before he stepped out of the post. The village paid 120,000 *yuan* and the bank waived 360,000 *yuan*. YG Zhou said, one of his personal achievements as a head of the village for seven years was clearing the debt and clearing how the systems worked between a village cadre and different officials. Although different institutions wasted lots of money, he would say the relationship between the officials is mainly instrumental *wanglai*

because they didn't put money into their pockets – but they were promoted in their posts for using public resources in an inefficient way.

Furthermore, before I left the village a village cadre told me that thanks to Fei (*tuo Feilao de fu*) the village enterprises got 4,400,000 *yuan* loan from the local Credit Union. A few months later they said it was unfortunate the village was suffering such a big debt. The background is that Kaixiangong was a fine example of “Sunan model (successful enterprises of villages and towns of Southern Jiangsu Province)” which was advocated by Fei Xiaotong. In order to implement the model the local officials thought a large amount of loan might be useful. It was also a good reason for requesting the loan because Fei Xiaotong's 60 years academic career conference was held in the village. This is why they asked the local Credit Union and the village for such a big loan, as I mentioned in the above point c). A village cadre even said Fei [*lao*] had an indissoluble bond (*bujie zhi yuan*) with Kaixiangong and experienced a cycle of sixty years (*huajia*) in the village. He started his academic career in the village where he conducted his first fieldwork, leading to a remarkable book *Peasant Life in China* (1939), and ended in the village due to the privatisation of the collective enterprises, but they were still proud of him. All the business of lucky and unlucky, fortunate and unfortunate, *fu* and *yuan* over the debt matter embodied a religious sense.

### **1.3. Negative *wanglai***

In contrast with instrumental *wanglai*, which is mainly based on people's own resources and ability to gain benefit for everyday life or emergency, Kaixiangong Villagers believed if people use public resources to gain their personal benefits or use materials or other ways to gain a high status or control more resources, this should be counted as negative *wanglai*. As I mentioned in the case of Party Secretary Shen, his recruitment of workers involved instrumental *wanglai*. If the workers' social status were higher with more benefits and Shen gained more material benefit from distributing the posts then the relationship between them would be treated as negative *wanglai*.

Negative *wanglai* refers to three kinds of negative transactions: a) getting something for nothing, or to take much more and give much less or return nothing (Sahlins's main usage<sup>22</sup>). It is a kind of horizontal negatively valued tense relationship (*guanxi jinzhang*). b) Getting something for personal interests (to bribe somebody with gifts or to act loyalty to somebody- in order to get promotion by the back door) with public resources as a higher status person, or getting a permit, protection or the promotion with materials or other ways rather than through ability or hard work as a lower status person. It is a kind of vertical negatively valued tense relationship (*bu zhengchang guanxi*). c) Getting something one wants by losing kinship, friendship or even life, which appears as a broken down relationship (*guanxi polie*). It more likely leads to its extreme end: court proceedings for family abuse, rupture between family members for a long time, or even one party taking revenge against another by committing suicide. I will omit previous researchers' related work (e.g. Sahlins 1972; Guo, 2001; Yan 1996b & 2003) and proceed to analyse vertical and horizontal negative valued tense relationships and broken down relationships.

### 1.3.1. A vertical negative valued tense relationship

As I mentioned in paragraph (6) of the section on instrumental *wanglai* a previous Party Secretary Shen recruited some workers from his relatives and relations. It caused a negative *wanglai* between him and the villagers vertically, especially the villagers who lost their possibilities of gaining the posts in the village enterprises. Although Shen gained material benefit with his power, he lost trust from the majority of the villagers and lost his post eventually. This kind of negative *wanglai* is a negative valued tense relationship which appeared in a hidden way. The way in which villagers complained about it in many ways accorded with *lishang* criteria.

a) Morally it is wrong that Shen gave certain positions in the village enterprises to people who sent him gifts. In Yan's Xiajia villagers also look down on this kind of behaviour (Yan 1996b: 69-70). It means Shen lost trust from the villagers, especially those who lost opportunities unfairly. In return they didn't support his work as they did with other villagers cadres, Wang, Yao, Zhou, etc. In other words they wouldn't vote for him if there was a democratic system in the village.

b) Many village girls told me that they were hurt that they didn't get places in the village

enterprises because they didn't have good *guanxi* relations (*guanxi buhao*) with Shen. So they went to far away places to earn bigger salaries in order to make a good showing (*zhengqi*) to Shen. They did this and were full of laughter because they felt they had won when they told me about this. c) The girls told me that there were some criteria for getting into the village enterprises, such as a quota of one per household, the bad-sighted should be disqualified, priority for someone with a family member in the Army, and priority for those with a high school qualification, etc. It is a rational way to judge different cases based on those criteria. However, the redistribution of limited public resources is determined by local cadres. This provides space for some people to pull *guanxi* or use bribery. d) Many villagers told me that Shen wouldn't stay in power long. A few months after I left the village Shen did indeed lose his post as the Party Secretary of the village. During telephone conversations two villagers said this was god's will or providence (*tianyi*), which obviously involves their religious sense.

Based on some villagers' discussions about the above *lishang* criteria on the negative *wanglai* between Shen and the villagers, the moral judgment and rational choice weighed more than others. There are two sayings used by the villagers to judge a cadre or official in the village: they may have both ability and moral integrity (*de cai jianbei*) or corruption and incapacity (*fubai wuneng*). The villagers told me that Shen was not a corrupted cadre, but morally he is not very respectable and he was not able to do his job because he used incompetent persons (*wuneng de ren*) for his own reasons. This was why they didn't run the enterprises well. There was a different situation in Heming village, Anhui Province where Zhu Weimin did his fieldwork in the ESRC social support project. Zhu found *guanxi* didn't work in Heming because the head of village enterprise preferred to use able people (*nengren*), rather than relatives, to work for the enterprise.<sup>23</sup> After Shen left his post Kaixiangong villagers enjoyed the saying that if the economy didn't go up then cadres must go down (*jingji shang buqu, ren jiuyao xialai*).

The above case involved vertical negative *wanglai* between a village cadre and the villagers. However, in real life there are many horizontal negative *wanglai* which exist in ordinary people's lives (Y. Yan 2003: 126 and 129). Here I will show a relationship between HW Zhou's family and her husband's sister's family (in the

case of the break up below) which involved a lifelong negative *wanglai* in a hidden way. Before I go ahead with the case I should point out that this family does not have any particular difficulty in making relationships. There are other types of *wanglai* that co-exist in the family, e.g. generous *wanglai* in No. (3) Of Figure 6 (p F6) and expressive *wanglai* with ten close relatives in Figure 6, etc.

### 1.3.2. A horizontal negative valued tense relationship

HW Zhou (No 17 of Figure 5 and No 1 of Figure 6) told me a case which involved horizontal negative *wanglai* between her family with her husband FL's father's younger sister AN's (No 9 of Figure 5 and No1 of Figure 6) family. AN asked FL's mother for her adopted son DB's wedding presents, as much as a full list of gifts of a *jiujiu*'s (mother's brother) family's share, just after FL's father died and left two little boys. FL's mother did it but was reduced to poverty and ruin. In return for this, AN even refused a bowl of rice to FL when he was very hungry and passing her door on a business trip. At the same time AN was entertaining the head of the township (*wei xiangzhang*) with a grand feast for DB who was head of the village (*wei baozhang*) during the Japanese War period.<sup>24</sup>

In this case, one would think FL's mother was unwise in losing a family fortune in order to present grand wedding presents to her husband's nephew, AN's son. However, what FL's mother did can be understood with *lishang* criteria. (a) Morally it was FL's mother's line of duty to provide grand presents for AN's son's wedding. She couldn't break the local custom especially just after her husband died. The villagers kept different lists for major family events which recorded obligations – a special kind of debt. In order to keep the Zhou family's face and establish a good reputation as a new widow, FL's mother had to carry out *jiujiu*'s family's duty for the nephew's wedding with most of the family property (see chapter 5). This behaviour can be described as a Chinese saying “slap one's face until it's swollen in an effort to look imposing (*da zhong lian chong pangzi*)”. (b) The motivation of FL's mother's behaviour can be described with some Chinese sayings related to feelings of the human heart. They are, e.g. “poverty can't chill one's vital energy of ambition (*ren qiong zhi bu duan*)”, “try to make a good show with vital energy (*zhengqi*)”, be swayed by personal feelings (*yiqi yongshi*), etc. (c)

Although AN was greedy, she only claimed for a *jiujiu's* (mother's brother) family's share for DB's wedding presents. The major gifts are a huge wedding cake equivalent to 150kg rice, a special hat like an official's hat in Qing dynasty and a big envelope with gift money, etc. They were equivalent to the family's expenditure for one year. They were in line with the local custom and can be seen as a kind of rational choice. (d) HW told me that AN received enough retribution (*baoying*) which was determined by her fate (*ming*). AN was a greedy person. She desired to be a rich lady and married a rich person, JR Chen, in another village of the same township. After JR's elder brother and his wife died, AN and JR adopted their son, DB Chen, and inherited their property. Their family became a big landlord. After her husband died AN controlled all the Chen family's property. However, AN didn't manage to stop the misfortunes that happened in her life. Firstly, AN could not have her own child, (which was commonly agreed to be one of the biggest misfortunes). Secondly, she became a widow when she was middle aged. Then she lost most of her property before the Liberation in 1949 because DB was not good at managing, even though her family still was classified as of a landlord class during the land reform. Her grandson's fiancée's family broke off the engagement which was made before the Liberation. Finally, she died a few years after the Liberation. Anyway, HW believed that sweetness and bitterness moved in cycles in AN's life.

Although HW insisted the relationship between the Zhou family and AN's family was mainly negative *wanglai*, she agreed the relationship was not absolutely fixed. Sometimes it turned to instrumental *wanglai*. HW told me that both AN and DB had contacts with the FL's family before the Liberation in 1949 for a long time, although FL's family was poor. When FL needed money for an emergency he borrowed some money from his aunt, although AN charged him a usurious interest.<sup>25</sup> At this period the relationship between these two families can be seen as instrumental *wanglai*. However, after the Liberation AN's family were determined to be of the landlord class and FL stopped the physical *wanglai* with the family because it would have affected his political career, as he was the second member of the Communist Party and one of the heads of Kaixiangong Village. But the negative *wanglai* remained because the negative feelings were still there.

### 1.3.3. A rupture case in a broken down relationship

In written Chinese a broken down relationship is called *guanxi polie*, whereas orally people always describe such negative *wanglai* with *si po lian* (literally, put aside all considerations of face or not spare somebody's sensibilities). I recognised one Chinese characteristic is to be allusive (*hanxu*), not liking to “poke a hole in the window paper”, which allows a space for people to work out different types or quality of personal relationships (see 6.3). Normally, in a relationship of “face society” (Hu's term, 1944) if one's face is not cared for in public the relationship can be counted as a broken down relationship in a negative *wanglai*. It could be repaired, though it would be very difficult. It more likely leads to its extreme end: court proceedings for family abuse (e.g. Y. Guo 2001; Y. Yan 2003: 168), rupture for a long time, or even one party taking revenge against another by committing suicide (Y. Yan 2003: 86 & 162).

I interviewed HW Zhou in 1996 and found a rupture case of negative *wanglai*. She told me that in 1978 the Zhou family was divided into three nuclear families: she and her husband as one, her older son and younger son's families as the other two.<sup>26</sup> Ever since her husband passed away in 1995, she has been living with her older son, XG's family, which became a stem family. It is unusual that a mother lives with her older son's family in the village because it is not in line with the local custom.<sup>27</sup> Thus another case of negative *wanglai* between a son / younger brother and a mother / older brother's families attracted my attention. Although the Zhou family made a family division in 1978, the younger son, FS, was involved in a big scandal with his parents and brother's family in 1986. The incident that touched off a family war was the quota for transferring a rural registered resident to urban (*nong zhuan fei zhibiao*). A new policy transferred HW from a rural registered resident to urban.<sup>28</sup> Since HW was then 70, she and her husband decided to give this opportunity to XG's son, their oldest grandson, YF, who was serving in the Army. FS thought this decision was unfair and had a row with his parents and shouted that he would stop providing his share of grain ration, 500 *jin* per year, to his parents. Afterwards, HW went to see FS and wanted to make up with him but was involved in a physical fight with him. FS hit her head several times. The fights were stopped, but the dispute worsened the relationship between

FS and his parents. The village collective and even the court in the township could not mediate the family quarrel. Finally, FS broke with his parents by announcing that he would never take any responsibility for his parents from life to death (*yeniang shengsi buguan*). Even when his parents passed away in 1995 and 2000 he remained untouched. By 2004 the two brothers' families' relationship still remained negative. Although the relationship between FS and his parents and brother's families seemed to have stopped after the serious family quarrel, this can still be categorised as a negative *wanglai* because they were both thinking of others in a hidden way.

This case involved a mixed vertical negative *wanglai* between HW and FS, and horizontal *wanglai* between XG and FS's families. Let me first use *lishang* criteria to demonstrate how the vertical negative *wanglai* between the mother HW and the younger son FS. (a) On the one hand, some old villagers told me that FS's case was a typical example of returning kindness with enmity (*en jiang chou bao*) and he was a non-filial son (*buxiao*) because he grew up during the Cultural Revolution when traditional moral codes were destroyed. On the other hand, morally FS insisted he was right that his parents should consult him with such an important family matter. FS also kept his promise and has had nothing to do with the Zhou family since the serious family quarrel because to be true to one's word is a high standard of the moral code. (b) The main reason for the expressive *wanglai* between FS's family and his parents turning into a negative *wanglai* is that FS acted impetuously. FS told me that although he said he would never look after his parents' later life, it was said in a fit of rage. After the fight with his mother he still prepared a big gunnysack of unhusked rice for his parents as usual. But instead of sending it to their house he expected one of them to collect it because he felt embarrassed to face them. However, nothing happened afterwards. FS told me that he always wanted to make up with his parents and brother's families after the fights, if only they would forgive him. (c) Based on rational choice FS believed the chance of transferring to an urban registered resident could have taken him from hell to Heaven<sup>29</sup> because he was 33 years old with little hope to get out of the rural area, in contrast to YF who was just 20 years old with a bright future in the Army.<sup>30</sup> (d) Religious sense is the fourth criterion. HW told me, from her point of view, the

most convincing explanation for the negative *wanglai* between her family and her younger son's family is fate. She didn't think she could change it. When I asked HW whether or not FS would receive retribution (*baoying*) from treating his parents badly she choked down her tears and repeated, perhaps, it was a retribution (*baoying*) for her own sin (*zuonie*) in giving birth to FS without bringing him up herself properly. She told me that she worked in the Town from FS's birth until he was 9 years old. She also told me that for an aged person there were two "door steps" to the other world, which were called seventy three and eighty four (*qishisan bashisi*). It meant if one had enough *fu* one's life could last for seventy-three years, or even eighty-four. HW said she had passed the step of seventy- three years old and was content with her life. But she could not pass the step of eighty-four because she was partly responsible for the great misfortune of breaking off the relationship with FS and his family<sup>31</sup>. In the end HW told me that she forgave FS and would pray for him not to get retribution (*baoying*) for what he did to his parents.

I am now moving to show a horizontal negative *wanglai* between the older brother XG and the younger brother FS's families with *lishang* criteria. (a) XG is a model of paying a debt of gratitude (*bao'en*) to his parents in the village. Although his parents lived apart as a separate household after the family division, they both were well looked after from their later years to death and burial by XG and his wife. Normally, a relationship between parents and grown up children is categorised as expressive *wanglai*. Only when some grown up children treat their elderly parents extremely well they can be praised as a filial or dutiful son or daughter (*xiaozi* or *xiaoshun nu'er*) by the villagers. Thus the relationship between them changed to generous *wanglai*. In the example of FS's family's split with his parents and brother's families, XG claims FS returned his parents' kindness with enmity. In 1995 and 2000 when their parents passed away, that FS remained untouched was unforgivable. Therefore, from XG's point of view, FS lost the chance ever to reunite with his family after their mother died. But, from FS's point of view, XG took away his chance of returning kindness to his parents forever as a punishment for the family dispute. XG's son, YF, confirmed that punishment of his un-filial uncle was part of his parents' filial duty to their grandparents. In this case

punishment means the exclusion of FS from the Zhou family. It is the main reason which stopped the recovery of the relationship between his parents and his uncle's family. YF said he could perhaps bend the moral code by reinterpreting it to mean that the Zhou family should be united together in order to comfort the soul of his grandparents. YF said that he might find a gap (*tupokou*) to turn the hidden negative *wanglai* into a visible expressive *wanglai*, but it would take time. (b) The main reason that FS did not turn the negative *wanglai* into an expressive *wanglai* is also emotional concern. FS eventually gave up all hope that his parents or brother would forgive him and felt deeply hurt. He thought he had been punished and abandoned by all of them. He was swayed by his emotions and grew feelings of hate. Such feelings stopped him from mending the relationship several times during the periods when both his parents were ill and passed away. I asked him why was he unmoved after his parents passed away? He explained that it was because they excluded him from the Zhou family by not giving him a chance to express himself. FS said that if his brother had come to his house and informed him of the sad news of his father or mother's death he would have definitely done his duty and attended the funeral. In 1993 YF told me that the reason his generation still did not *wanglai* with each other is because both sides felt too embarrassed to make it up first (*buhao yisi xian kaikou*). It is a kind of human feeling which has to do with face. FS's son had graduated from Tianjin University and worked in Wujiang City and recognised his father's desire to be an urban resident. YF doesn't want to get close to FS's son because he didn't want to be thought to be flattering FS's son, whose social status is higher than his own, having graduated from university and got a good job in Suzou City. (c) Rational calculation is the third criterion. XG explained that according to a local custom regarding illness (*wangxin*), the relatives, neighbours and fellow villagers were supposed to inform FS on their own initiative. So he did not go to his brother's house to tell him about his parents' illness. FS quoted another local custom of informing death (*baosang*) which says it is XG's duty to inform him about his parents' death. The above two pairs of reasons seem all based on rational calculation. But none of them could stop things getting worse. (d) I didn't find any religious sense to do with the brothers' relationship. However, I found XG still kept his duty to his parents to never *wanglai* with FS, which involved religious activities. After I finished the "funeral

section” of this dissertation recently I rang XG to test whether or not he still qualifies to be a filial or dutiful son.<sup>32</sup> I asked him the dates of the anniversaries of his parents’ deaths (*jiri*). He blurted out “My father’s is on the third day of the fifth lunar month, and mother’s is on the second day of the eleventh lunar month”. He told me that he had been holding a memorial ceremony once a year for each of them and will carry this out until the end of his life. Whenever he worshipped them he told them that he won’t forgive FS, but he won’t stop the younger generation from sorting out the remaining family matter in their way.

#### 1.3.4. A suicide case in a broken down relationship

BY Zhou told me of a case which involved the suicide of her sister and negative *wanglai* between families horizontally and generations vertically. BY’s older sister BZ married RF Rao when they were both 22 years old in 1964. After they got married they had two boys, but they were not happy with the marriage. Moreover BZ’s parents-in-law treated her badly. She committed suicide by drinking a large quantity of pesticide in 1972.

This suicide turned an expressive *wanglai* into negative *wanglai* between the Zhou and Rao families horizontally immediately after BZ committed suicide. This can be understood with *lishang* criteria. (a) BZ’s suicide can be explained with behaviour of retaliation (*baofu*) to her mother-in-law which morally counted as a righteous act of objecting to an oppressor (*yiju*). Although BZ was generally unhappy with her marriage, her suicide was immediately after she had a big row with her mother-in-law. BZ’s suicide roused BY’s family and her mother’s relatives to great indignation. Dozens of people were organised immediately and went to the Rao family to avenge (*baochou*) BZ’s death. They said they wanted to kill BZ’s husband RF and put him on the bottom of her coffin to accompany his wife (*peizang*). This was allowed according to old village custom. The custom also allowed BZ’s natal relatives to tear off roof tiles and destroy the house of the Rao family.<sup>33</sup> BZ would be satisfied if she could see it from the nether world, BY said. (b) The above revenge (*baochou*) relates to extremes of attitude and behaviour mainly caused by human feelings. On the one hand, the relatives were truly filled with grief and indignation and expressed their anger to the Rao family for their

treatment of BZ. On the other hand, they expressed their feelings in extreme ways, rather similar to “embodying *ganqing*” (Kipnis’s term, 1997). (c) The score of the suicide case was settled mainly based on rational choice. According to the local custom, RF should die with his wife by lying on the bottom of her coffin to accompany his wife (*peizang*) and the Rao family’s house should be demolished. However, in Kaixiangong Village there has not been a case of suicide for decades. BY’s family moved into this village from a fishing village in the Zhenze Township in 1955. After BZ’s suicide all the relatives came from Zhenze and learnt the above custom from Kaixiangong Village. The outward expression of feeling gave BY the opportunity to work hard and stop her relatives from settling the score in this drastic fashion. In reality if they killed RF it might get BY’s family into trouble because the custom was last obeyed a long time ago. If they destroyed the house of the Rao family it would probably be OK according to the local custom, but where would the two little boys have lived? BY believed the boys should be considered the top priority. So BY made a proposal that the Rao family bury BZ with full honours (*houzang*) and give assurances that the boys would grow up in the Rao family. In other words, the boys were not to be adopted by other people under any circumstances. This proposal was accepted and a related agreement was reached between the two families. This avoided a vicious circle of revenge between the families. BY’s creativity in working out a solution to the conflict between local custom and the real situation allowed a rational and sensible solution. (d) As I mentioned earlier that BZ’s act of suicide can be seen as a kind of retorsion (*baofu*), the villagers called such a negative effect to Rao family as retribution (*baoying*) which embodied a religious sense. On the one hand, BZ believed her death could punish her married family by using her natal family’s resources. On the other hand, she could turn into a ghost to frighten her mother-in-law.

This suicide case also exposed a vertical negative *wanglai* between BZ and her mother. There is no doubt that BZ had a negative *wanglai* with her parents-in-laws. Thus one of the main reasons for her suicide was to take revenge on them. It was the most difficult thing for BY to admit that BZ’s suicide was also retribution to her beloved mother’s marriage arrangements for BZ. I could not interview BZ to verify this, but I showed BY interview notes, by Lu Feiyun of the ESRC project.

She agreed with my explanation with the *lishang* criteria. (a) BZ twice obeyed her mother's marriage arrangements for her because she thought morally it was her obligation to pay for the great debt of her mother's upbringing of her. The first one was that she married her adopted brother, AM, who was two years older than her when she was 14 years old. After they got married they didn't get on well and had a difficult time for years. The second marriage happened eight years later when she married her younger sister BY's boyfriend RF, whereas BY married her ex-husband AM. BY told me that both her sister and she had got the above moral ideas from their mother. BY's mother married a man whom she did not love, arranged by her family. Moreover, BY's father became disabled physically and her mother had to look after him until his death when BY was aged 13. Her mother also worked very hard in order to bring up four children after her husband passed away. (b) BZ thought her mother didn't care for her feelings when she arranged marriages for her, one after the other. BY also told me that her mother also ignored BZ's happiness. BZ's suicide itself was an extreme way of expressing her feelings. (c) BY admitted that her mother's series of mistakes over her and her sister's marriage arrangements caused her sister's tragedy, even though they were based on rational choice. When she was born in 1948 she had an 8-year-old adopted brother AM and a 6-year-old sister BZ. When BY was 4 years old her mother adopted a 7-year-old boy BX as a son-in-law-to-be (*tongyangxu*) for her. Her mother's plan was to get the two daughters to marry the two adopted boys. Such marriage plans were in line with a popular rationalised Chinese saying to get married first then to be in love (*xian jiehun hou lianai*). BY's mother's change of the plan of marrying BY and BX was also a rational choice because she noticed they didn't love each other. She then accepted RF Rao's family's marriage proposal for BY. However, after BZ and AM's marriage failed and she became aware that AM was in love with BY and rational choice again changed her mind. She swapped the marriage arrangements that BY should marry AM and BZ marry RF Rao, although BZ was not happy with it. (d) BY told me that her mother regretted the swap of her two daughters' marriages before her death. She repeated the word of *baoying* (retribution), which has quite a strong religious sense, about her behaviour in making BZ marry RF. The reason it was a retribution for her was because she experienced one of the commonly agreed worst misfortunes in one's life, that her

daughter died much earlier than her. As the Chinese saying goes, people with white hair attended a funeral of a person with black hair (*baifaren song heifaren*).

This suicide case shows different types of *wanglai* can be changed from expressive *wanglai* down to negative *wanglai*, and from negative *wanglai* up to expressive *wanglai* again between the two families. After BZ was buried with full honours (*houzang*) the two families' relationship became instrumental *wanglai* because they had to contact each other due to the two boys left by BZ. Although it was very hard for BY's family to forgive the Rao family, the relationship between her family and the two Rao surnamed boys increased to expressive *wanglai* as close relatives (*jinqin*). When I was there I saw the boys. They have become fathers now, with their wives and children attending a feast on the lunar New Years Day in BY's house. When BY's son got married in 2002 his above two cousins' families loaned 20,000 *yuan* to him, which were his biggest sources of financial support. The way in which they *wanglai* to each other was in the same way as before when BZ was alive.

To sum up, the above cases show that negative *wanglai* does not always come from somebody with distance, just as a generous *wanglai* does not necessarily come from one's close kin. Obviously these findings are different from Fei's (1947) *chaxugeju* and Sahlins's (1972) reciprocity model of close kin, which always have generalised reciprocity (199). Revenge (*baochou*), the extreme end, embodies a character of discontinuity. It means the exchange behaviour can be finished after repayment. For example, after JR refused his brother's proposal of reunion with the Tan family, which was a kind of revenge, he gradually stopped the hostile feeling towards his own family. BY Zhou's family stopped revenge on the Rao family after BY's settlements were realised. Once an action of revenge was finished a new kind of *wanglai* could take a place between the two parties. Yan's (1996b) finding in Xiajia also supports this (143-144). Both *baoying* (retribution) and *lishang-wanglai* have the character of moving in cycles of endless repetition. It can be in one's own life, i.e. FY or in one's family as in the Tan family. This kind of movement can be seen in different ways, i.e. fortune and misfortune can take turns in one's life cycle, or through a family's generations. *Lishang-wanglai* networks can be changed in different ways (see section 6.2.3). As we have seen earlier

anybody can have either one of generous, expressive, instrumental and negative *wanglai*, or all of them at the same time with others, or have one type of *wanglai* at one time and other *wanglai* at another time with the same relation. The changes of different types of *wanglai*, or updating *lishang-wanglai* networks, can be natural or deliberately made through social creativity. As for social creativity the modification of *wanglai* with close relatives would involve more understanding of *lishang*. Any such change or adaptation, however big or small, can be seen as a reaction to local customs demanding reasons (*lishang*).

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<sup>1</sup> See section 5.1 for kinship system.

<sup>2</sup> When Tan XR was 17 years old he became a treasurer in one production team and nine years after that he became a treasurer of the production brigade (Kaixiangong Village). X. Tan became one of the heads of the brigade from 1974 to 1986. From 1986 onward X. Tan was promoted to head a township enterprise, then a manager director of the Industry Company of the township, and finally a vice-director of the township (*fu xiangzhang*) until his retirement.

<sup>3</sup> One of the 24 periods, of approximately 15 days each, into which the lunar year is divided, corresponding to the day on which the sun enters the 1<sup>st</sup> of 15<sup>th</sup> degree of one of 12 zodiacal signs; each period being given an appropriate name indicating the obvious changes in nature at the time it comes round.

<sup>4</sup> A stem family refers to a married couple or surviving spouse in each of at least two generations and unmarried children.

<sup>5</sup> Fresh soya bean after treatment remained a green colour: the villagers call it *qingdou* - green bean.

<sup>6</sup> Compared with Figure 5, a patrilineal family tree, I obtained Figure 6 from MY (No. 28 of Figure 5 and No 3. of Figure 6). Figure 6 includes 9 families of the close kin who are the most positive relatives of the family's *lishang-wanglai* networks, but one can't find them from Figure 5.

<sup>7</sup> For example, they often said "I am not your friend or sister (*wo bu gen ni hao le*) if you don't do what I like, etc."

<sup>8</sup> I will show the rest of types of tea parties in chapters on Expressive *wanglai*.

<sup>9</sup> There is another kind of teashop which provides a service to set up tea parties for different family events as happened in Kaixiangong Village in the old society, and still existed in other villages up to 2002.

<sup>10</sup> For men there is another way of socialising. A woman Gu pointed at her door and explained to me that her house's main door never closed from the time she got up until she went to bed. This meant anybody is free to pop in (*cuanmen*) for a chat or a rest, without warning. In fact it usually was men who normally popped in after dinner and she always offered them a cup of tea.

<sup>11</sup> *Yangchun baixue xiali baren* (Spring Snow melodies of the elite in the State Chu – highbrow art and literature, the Song of the Rustic Poor – popular literature or art).

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- <sup>12</sup> There are no male actors in the Shanghai Opera, which always uses a woman to play a man's role.
- <sup>13</sup> I use the plural because the villagers worshipped many of their ancestors by using many wine cups and several pair of chopsticks whenever they presented sacrifices to them.
- <sup>14</sup> Except one woman who stopped it after she became a Christian in 1987.
- <sup>15</sup> It always refers to Qu Yuan, a famous patriot and poet of the state of Chu.
- <sup>16</sup> Cidianzu, *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Revised version), Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, P1059, 1995.
- <sup>17</sup> In Neiguan Village they kept the form of *zhongtang* with a replacement of the dining table to the side table. Villagers normally eat at a small short-legged table (*kangzhuo*) on *kang* (a kind of bed).
- <sup>18</sup> In China there are two different types of bean sprouts: soya bean sprouts (*huangdouya*) were made of soya bean, and green bean sprouts (*laoye*) were made of green beans which are commonly seen in UK.
- <sup>19</sup> The name of the township is Miaogang means temple port because it was located by the Lake Tai and used to have hundreds of temples in the past.
- <sup>20</sup> See "All villages social support summary" pp10, in *Social support in rural China (1979-1991): A statistical report on ten villagers*, by Chang and Feuchtwang, London: City University, 1996.
- <sup>21</sup> Please note in this thesis I have no intention to treat business relationships with *lishang-wanglai*.
- <sup>22</sup> See related review of Sahlins' negative reciprocity in (1) of 2.2.2 and "Negative *wanglai*" of 2.2.3.
- <sup>23</sup> A fieldwork report in a conference on the ESRC social support project, City University, London, 1993.
- <sup>24</sup> *Bao* is an old administrative system organised on the basis of households. It is equivalent to a village.
- <sup>25</sup> FL's story is quoted from Lu Yinghao's fieldwork notes.
- <sup>26</sup> HW is No 17, XG is No. 27 and FS is 29 in Figure 5; HW is No1, XG is No.2 in Figure 6.
- <sup>27</sup> It says that a mother should always live with a younger son because normally an older son marries and separates from the joint family earlier. Moreover, it is a mother's job to look after the younger son's child and in return it is mainly the younger son's job to look after the aged mother.
- <sup>28</sup> HW was a child labourer in the silk factory established by Fei Dasheng (Fei Xiaotong's sister) when she was 13 years old until the Japanese War broke out. After the war she worked in different silk

factories in Suzhou City and Zhenze Township. Like many people in the special difficult period after three years of natural disasters in 1962, HW lost her urban registered residence and was sent back to her hometown, Kaixiangong Village. To rectify this, under the new policy HW could be transferred from a rural registered resident to urban.

<sup>29</sup> It was true before the middle of 1990s. It was no longer true from the late 1990s along with the privatisation of the rural economy. Even YF came back to Kaixiangong Village for the family private business, although he was still an urban registered resident.

<sup>30</sup> YF was just 3 marks below the passing mark to enter an army college and was promised by his company commander that he could have another try in the following year. According to State policy then if YF graduated from the college he was guaranteed work and a life in an urban area with a white collar job, which was a dream for a villager.

<sup>31</sup> HW died in 2000 when she was aged eighty-four.

<sup>32</sup> I learned this way from a villager at a late stage of my writing when I looked at my fieldwork notes about funerals.

<sup>33</sup> This is mentioned in Fei Xiatong's first monograph. If the daughter-in-law committed suicide her own parents and brothers will seek redress, even destroying her husband's house and she will become a spirit and is able to revenge herself (1939:49).